

Issue 2, 2013

# dṛīṣṭikone

Evangelical Perspectives on Mission and Ethics



reducing vulnerabilities  
and ensuring well being

**“If there is a poor person among you... you must not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother.”**

Deuteronomy 15:7 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

**Drishtikone** means perspective or viewpoint in Hindi. The magazine seeks to provide a space in which Christians can share their perspectives and points of view on wholistic mission in India.

Our Vision is that **Drishtikone** will motivate change in readers. The experiences of development practitioners, theologians, grassroot workers and others demonstrating God's love in a practical way, will influence and encourage Christians to join the struggle for peace and justice in this country.

**Drishtikone** seeks to present a Biblical perspective on social issues and provide readers with information and models of engagement in wholistic concerns. It is a forum for evangelical reflection and dialogue on development issues in India.

**Drishtikone** is published three times a year by EFICOR to mobilise Christian reflection and action. Financial contributions from readers are welcome to support EFICOR in its efforts to influence the mind towards action.

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*Letters to the Editor...*

Dear Editor,  
Drishtikone is a wholesome, practical and timely Christian magazine. Indeed it is the voice of conscience to the grassroot workers like me. Keep up the good work! God Bless.

Rev. Ashing Panmei  
Mission Director  
Zeliangrong Baptist Church  
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Dear Editor,  
Greetings from HELP!  
Thank you so much for sending Drishtikone magazine continuously. All the articles are very effective and heart touching. God bless you and hope I will continue to receive it.

Yours sincerely,  
Lingaraj Ramgrahi  
Secretary, HELP  
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Dear Editor,  
Greetings!  
Thank you for sending us the magazine Drishtikone regularly. We praise God for the insights and statistics shared to the Church in India. The magazine triggers our thoughts for action. We shall continue to pray for all your efforts. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,  
John Thomas  
Sunkarpeta  
Malicherla P.O. Vizianagaram – 535 005  
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## Editorial...

**O**ne of the main purposes of social protection is to secure the lives of the poor. In times past, families and communities were the only ‘safety net’ or ‘social security’ for individuals to take care of their basic social needs and this was culturally imbibed in every member of the community. The needs ranged probably from financial, emotional to social supports. Values such as love, care and support for the young children, women, physically challenged or the old has been passed on from one generation to the next. In keeping with these norms and cultural traditions, family members and relatives discharged a sense of shared responsibility towards one another. However, various social trends in society like the modern system of a nuclear family, increasing migration, urbanization, changing demography and such other factors left the individuals highly vulnerable. It is at this juncture that the formal system of social security/social protection gains importance in the families of the world today.

However in modern parlance today ‘safety nets’ refer to non-contributory and publicly financed transfers including conditional and unconditional, cash and in-kind and public works programmes. Two critical components of social protection are social services and transfers. The key objective of social protection is to reduce the vulnerability of the poor. Several such schemes aim at enabling access to health services for the poor by reducing barriers to the access of existing services or providing incentives for their access. Individuals as well as families who belong to the BPL (Below Poverty Line) category could now rely on the state for some of their basic needs like food, housing, health care, etc. However, there are flaws in the implementation of these schemes which limit the rightful beneficiaries from access. Corruption, improper monitoring, or redtapism hampers the efficient distribution of these schemes.

While we encourage our communities to access the social protection schemes, a matter to ponder is also the recovery of our community safety nets. Increased sensitivity to the vulnerabilities of the poor and assisting one another is an issue which needs to be addressed as it is the basic human virtue to be guarded despite the changing times.

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# Social Protection: Reducing Risks or Increasing Vulnerability?

**Mrs. Joan Lalromawi**

## Introduction: Poverty and Deprivation

Despite the current rate of economic progress in our globalized world, estimates indicate that poverty and deprivation remain widespread in many of the countries of the world according to the United Nations Millennium Development Report 2012.<sup>1</sup> The prevalence of hunger remains uncomfortably high in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Southern Asia and in spite of recorded reductions in income poverty, there are no signs of improvement in undernourishment rates in Eastern Asia since 2000. This disparity calls for an improvement, which needs to be worked at the policy level so that many of the poor could gain from accessing basic human needs such as food, shelter, livelihood, etc. from public funding. The sources of risks and vulnerability for the poor have increased with globalization, exposing the poor to new forms of risk, both due to systemic factors and shocks. This has brought the term ‘Social Protection’ into increased current usage as a broad range of public measures deemed necessary to protect populations against sources of risk.

## Defining and Categorizing Social Protection

Social protection, as defined by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), is concerned with preventing, managing, and overcoming situations that adversely affect people’s well being.<sup>2</sup> Social protection consists of policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by providing income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups. World Bank defines social protection as a collection of measures to improve or protect human capital, ranging from labour market interventions, publicly mandated unemployment or old-age insurance to targeted income support.<sup>3</sup>

Though social protection has established itself as a core function of development policy in recent years, in many respects it remains firmly rooted in its origins in social safety nets and humanitarian relief, where assistance was provided on a ‘discretionary’ rather than an ‘entitlement’ basis, usually for a limited time period, often in the form of food, and recipients were pejoratively labelled as ‘aid beneficiaries’, and

insufficiently focused on achieving social justice outcomes, both in terms of their objectives and in their implementation. The primary objective of most social protection interventions is to protect minimum subsistence levels in low-income households, and the ‘triple F’ crisis (food, fuel and finance) underlined the importance of social transfers in assisting affected people to survive livelihood shocks and preserve their assets. But social protection should not only help poor and vulnerable people to manage risk in the short-term, it should also tackle the sources of vulnerability in the long term. Since many sources of risk and vulnerability are social and political, this implies understanding the socio-political context and engaging with the holders of power and the drivers of inequality, to achieve socially equitable outcomes.

Within the ILO framework, social protection is differentiated between:<sup>4</sup>

- Protective measures – include social assistance for the “chronically poor”, especially those who are unable to work and earn their livelihood. This equates most closely to mainstream “social welfare”.
- Preventive measures – seek to avert deprivation. Preventive measures deal directly with poverty alleviation. They include social insurance for “economically vulnerable groups”.
- Promotional measures – aim to enhance real incomes and capabilities, which is achieved through a range of livelihood-enhancing programmes targeted at households and individuals, such as microfinance and school feeding.
- Transformative measures – seek to address concerns of social equity and exclusion, which include changes to the regulatory framework to protect “socially vulnerable groups” (e.g. people with disabilities, or victims of domestic violence) against discrimination and abuse, as well as sensitization campaigns.

It has been observed that social protection has increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012*.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). 2010. *Combating Poverty and Inequality: Structural Change, Social Policy and Politics*.

<sup>3</sup> Norton, A., Conway, T. and Foster, M., 2000, ‘Social Protection Concepts and Approaches: Implications for Policy and Practice in International Development’, Working Paper 143, London: Centre for Aid and Public Expenditure, Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Devereux and Rachel Sabates-Wheeler, *Transformative Social Protection*, IDS Working Paper 232, October 2004, P.10

been in the development agenda of both public and private initiatives. However there have been debates on whether providing social protection will contribute for long-term poverty reduction. Stephen Devereux and Rachel Sabates-Wheeler are of the opinion that advocates for social protection fall into two broad camps, which were labelled as the ‘instrumentalists’ and the ‘activists’.<sup>5</sup>

‘Instrumentalist’ argues that providing social protection may not necessarily reduce extreme poverty, inequality, risk and vulnerability, which is one of the goal for the fulfilment of Millennium Development Goals. They campaign for the promotion of efficient development by using social protection measures – an ‘efficient’ development which truly caters to the needs of the poor and the vulnerable.

‘Activist’ arguments view the persistence of extreme poverty, inequality and vulnerability as symptoms of social injustice and structural inequity, and campaign for social protection as an inviolable right of citizenship. They advocate that these welfarist schemes are provided to citizens who are rightly entitled to it based on their citizenship, and this is not based on philanthropy or enlightened self-interest of the state.

Despite rapid advances in social protection thinking and practice in recent years, much work remains to be done, at both the conceptual and operational levels. In particular, the linkages between social protection and social justice are neither fully elaborated nor fully internalized by policy-makers, even those who are sympathetic to ‘rights-based approaches’. At the level of implementation, too few social protection interventions are designed and delivered in ways that truly respect and empower the beneficiaries. However it has been significantly observed that a well-designed social protection can help achieve greater equity by channelling resources to disadvantaged, poor areas and expanding access for vulnerable populations who are excluded from services.<sup>6</sup>

### **Significance of Social Protection in Development**

Social protection programmes tackle multiple dimensions of poverty and deprivation and can therefore be a powerful tool in the battle against poverty and inequality. It should ensure that all people have access to essential goods and services, removing social and economic barriers to access and is an essential investment that contributes to economic growth and makes growth more pro-poor while directly reducing poverty. Social protection can play a fundamental role in creating more inclusive and sustainable development pathways by liberating people from the fear of poverty and deprivations and by helping to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty. If people could have access to educational opportunity, quality and affordable health care, adequate and

nutritious food, secure shelter and basic income security, they will be able to become or remain productive members of the workforce, or remain dignified members of a society that are not dependent on accidental charitable support even if no longer active in the labour market. Only then will societies be able to sustainably reduce poverty, inequality and to ensure social peace and inclusive development.

### **Social Protection in India**

In the Indian context, social security is a comprehensive approach designed to prevent deprivation, assure the individual of a basic minimum income for himself and his dependents and to protect the individual from any uncertainties. The state bears the primary responsibility for developing appropriate system for providing protection and assistance to its workforce. Social security is increasingly viewed as an integral part of the development process. It helps to create a more positive attitude to the challenge of globalization and the consequent structural and technological changes.

Social protection programmes in India can be broadly categorized as (i) improving living standards of the poor - programmatic framework, (ii) targeted social security programmes for the very poor, (iii) social security measures for unorganized/informal sector workers and (iv) social security measures for organized/formal sector workers.

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The social protection policies and implementation practices have in recent years undergone transition. This implies that there is a need to relook at these programmes and see whether it really functions at the grass root level. The social protection systems need to evolve to meet the needs of their populations. While poverty has gradually reduced in recent decades, vulnerability remains high, new sources of vulnerability have emerged, and the diversity of needs among the poor has increased. Since the 1970s, the poverty headcount has fallen from around one half of the population to closer to one quarter, though poverty rates remain significantly higher in several states. The trickledown effect of economic growth to the poorer sections of the society also did not successfully lead to poverty eradication. Poverty persists mainly due to the inability of some groups of people to participate in the process of economic growth. With increasing urbanization, the share of the urban poor in total has also increased, particularly in small and medium towns. In addition, a large proportion of households, both poor and non-poor, may be vulnerable to poverty even though they may not be currently poor. Variability of incomes and coping with recurring shocks are a common feature, especially among poor households. Despite these

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Devereux and Rachel Sabates-Wheeler, *Editorial Introduction: Debating Social Protection, IDS Bulletin Volume 38 Number 3 May 2007* © Institute of Development Studies.

<sup>6</sup> *Social and Economic Policy Working Briefs: August 2010, UNICEF Policy and Practice.*

developments, most social protection spending remains focused on programs to alleviate chronic poverty, and focused overwhelmingly on rural areas. Large numbers of promotional measures initiated since 1970s and a few significant ones include -

- Food and nutrition programmes
  - Targeted Public Distribution Systems (TDPS)
  - Mid-day Meals
  - Integrated Child Development Schemes (ICDS).
- Housing Programme (Indira Awas Yojana) for rural areas and (Rajiv Awas Yojana) for urban areas
- Self-employment programmes
  - Swarna Jayanti Grameen Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY)
  - Self Help Groups (SHGs)
  - Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)
  - Swarna Jayanti Shahri Rojgar Yojana (SJSRY)
- Wage employment programmes like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)

We probably might have to question its effectiveness, objectives and coverage. India's surge in growth and rapid expansion in public spending in the past decade has created new possibilities for its social protection system. The growing importance of social protection is reflected in the current 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17), which is committed to achieve faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth. It further institutionalizes the various development programmes to legal rights of the poor (as in the case of public works, through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), continued up scaling of interventions (e.g., social pensions and midday meals), and proposals to expand new types of social protection interventions to the large unorganized sector (e.g., social security).

### Critiquing Social Protection Measures

The right to social protection (or social security) does not always translate into access for those most vulnerable. This is discernable from the widespread exclusion and marginalization of most informal economy workers from social protection schemes, particularly social insurance, in developing countries. Most of the social protection schemes cater to the immediate need of the poor who live a hand to mouth existence and does not cater to the long term needs like the need for an adequate social insurance. This could also be due to the fact that there is risk factor involved for the policy makers that catering to the long term needs of the poor may at times be inappropriate for them. It is unfortunate that no clear interventions have been identified to address the extension of social insurance measures to those employed in the informal economy. Although access to social grants is important, this should not be the main focus of a poverty alleviation strategy.

Concrete measures should be put in place to extend social protection coverage to informal economy workers or, alternatively, strategies should be developed to make it possible for them to finance their own insurance schemes with the State playing some role as guarantor. With only a quarter of the world's population having access to social protection, the case for expanding it is gaining ground in international discussions. The debate focuses on how best to design social protection, whether it should be universal or targeted at the poorest groups, and who should provide it and finance it.

In India, while the momentum of social protection reform has been positive in recent years, there is a need to take the lessons of success from individual programs and from the experience of states as a basis for more fundamental transformation of the social protection system in its relevance, efficiency and welfare impacts. Some of the loopholes are - Public Distribution System (PDS) continues its long-term pattern of consuming large resources with huge inefficiencies and leakage. The needs of the growing number of urban poor remain inadequately addressed, and initiatives such as Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) have not proven effective in reversing the situation. Besides, identification of the poor people whom the Social Protection system seeks to prioritize remains problematic, with major issues in design and implementation of the BPL system. Execution of these social protection schemes is a perennial challenge and one where progress is slow.

There is a need to deepen the ongoing policy of the Indian social protection system to meet the changing and increasing diverse needs of its population. Although the socially vulnerable often need income and consumption support, social protection, properly conceptualized, is not just about "economic protection". We need to relook and see whether social protection guarantees protection from economic risks only, or whether it increases vulnerability from the trap of poverty cycle among all the poor (be it the rural or urban dwellers) by enhancing the dependency syndrome. Poverty and vulnerability are about social deprivation as well as economic deprivation, and an elaborate understanding of social protection has the potential to address both the material needs and the social inequities faced by poor, vulnerable and marginalized individuals and groups. The challenge that India faces is a need for more effective social protection system, which would allow India to promote greater equity, which is to ensure that the poor share the benefits of growth.

# Addressing Health Needs of the Socially Excluded Community in Sahibganj, Jharkhand

**Mr. Prashant B. Missal**

There are several health schemes available for the people in Sahibganj district. Most people avail the RSBY (Rashtriya Swasth Bima Yojana) and NRHM (National Rural Health Mission). These schemes to a large extent cover certain health related vulnerabilities that people in this location face and are also contextually relevant and if implemented properly, it can address the major health issues of the people. NRHM is particularly relevant since it provides accessible, affordable and quality health care to the rural population, especially the vulnerable groups. The thrust of the mission is on establishing fully functional, community owned, decentralized health delivery system and it is successful to a certain extent in terms of reaching out to people but still has a long way in reaching the most vulnerable people in our country for whom it is meant.

EFICOR has been involved in Sahibganj district of Jharkhand along with Health and ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) to ensure wide coverage and access of NRHM schemes. In this district, through the knowledge practice and coverage survey done as part of EFICOR's Child Survival Project, it was found that through the Government run NRHM program, Antenatal care coverage has increased from 22% in 2008 to 68% in 2012, likewise institutional delivery coverage from 15% to 45% and full immunization coverage increased from 10% to 33%. This indicates that health coverage is improving, however still a lot of mothers and children are not able to access the health services particularly from the Pahariya tribe who are among those most deprived of these services, although the purpose of NRHM is to reach out to people like the Pahariyas.

There are several reasons why the Pahariyas do not avail the services. Geographically they are located in very remote villages causing much difficulty in accessing the Government schemes. The roads especially in the remote areas are extremely bad. Most of Government service providers find it difficult to reach these villages. There is lack of infrastructure and inadequate staff to provide prompt and quality services for this community. For example, as per the IPHS (Indian Public Health Standard), there has to be one health sub centre for every 5000 population and primary health centre for every 25,000 population. In present context, this is not happening.

In many places one health sub centre is covering population of 10,000 to 15,000. At the same time, many health sub centres do not have their own buildings. ANMs (Auxilliary Nurse Midwives) run this in some rented houses or in Anganwadi centres. Due to lack of staff, ANMs open this centre only two to three days in a week. Therefore people find it difficult to access the health services in times of emergency. Due to this lacuna, people depend on village doctors (Jhola chap) who provide quick services to the people. Most often there is also short state supply of drugs and vaccines. High rate of illiteracy especially among these tribals leave them ignorant of many government schemes. Different situations also compel the Pahariyas to be exploited by various people. Many people do not know about RSBY card. However even though some have and wanted to use this card for their treatment, they are not able to do this, because only few centres provide this services and most of the time RSBY machines do not function or signature of the beneficiary do not match. People say that most of these schemes are good, but they are not able to completely avail its benefits. Thus there are several obstacles both internal and external that prevent the people from accessing the schemes and completely enjoy the government health schemes.

NRHM with the idea of decentralized health delivery system with inter-sectoral convergence at all levels to ensure simultaneous action on a wide range of determinants of health such as water, sanitation, education, nutrition, social and gender equality is an excellent programme and sufficient to cover the people's needs. However it is not properly operationalized at the grass root level. Now it is time for the Government to strengthen the inter-sectoral convergence between various departments to ensure that people access the schemes and completely enjoy the Government health services.

In recent times we have seen the success of the Pulse Polio Eradication Program. The Government can consider working with the same zeal for other health services as well by reaching the most vulnerable people to reduce the infant mortality rate, maternal mortality ratio and other health issues.

(*Mr. Prashant B. Missal works in EFICOR as Manager – East India and Health project programmes*)

# Social Protection as evident at the Grass Roots

**Mr. Samson Christian**

The Korku tribe in Khalwa district of Madhya Pradesh have a very basic subsistence level and their day-to-day life is defined by several vulnerabilities as well as marginalization. Their lives are constantly ravaged by numerous uncertainties including erratic rainfall leading to crop failure and debts, illiteracy and low status for women. The rains destroy the crops despite their best efforts. Due to this, for one acre of land they have to spend five thousand rupees for buying pesticides, seeds, fertilizers, for cultivation, and such other things. And since they do not have that capital they go to the moneylenders and they lent two to three times the amount as interest. So most people from big farmer to small farmer and from one-acre farmer to fifty-acre farmer, all are under debt. This is the main problem here. The cost of cultivation has gone very high, because they have to purchase the seeds every time as soya bean seeds cannot be used next time since the seed quality is not good.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA), which guarantees hundred days of work, is a major scheme that is availed by the people here. Other schemes include Widow and Old age pension. For carrying out agriculture work they get seeds, pesticides, tractors and other ploughing tools from the government. Government also helped in digging wells for drinking and irrigation purpose as well as land leveling schemes. Ladli Lakhmis Yojna is another scheme where for those who are having girl child, government is making some bond. Accordingly when she becomes 21 years old, she will get around Rupees One Lakh through this scheme. Also, Janani Suraksha Yojana is another health related scheme for pregnant women where the government provides vehicles for delivery, free medicines and free antenatal checkup.

All the schemes are relevant and very good but the problem lies in the implementation since it is not reaching the most needy people. Moreover these schemes are not just sufficient as it does not cover all those who are vulnerable. One primary reason is corruption. The people who receive the benefits of these schemes are also required to pay something to get their benefits. For example, in the Jeevan Dhara scheme the government gives Rupees one lakh to



Photo Courtesy: EFICOR

those who want to dig well. Most often the beneficiary gets around Rs. 50,000, and the other half goes to the other officials through different channels and the middlemen also get their share. Then the fifty thousand is usually spent here and there without utilizing it for the purpose of digging the well. So in spite of a good scheme corrupt practices in its implementation leaves this protection effort nullified. It is also a fact that those really needy ones are deprived of certain schemes. Even among the BPL category, there are some rich and influential people while some people who are much poorer are in the APL. And so when those in the BPL category get the first priority in the government schemes, sometimes it is only the richer people within the community who get the benefit out of it. Even those who are influential in the village have easy accessibility to these schemes, for example, the ones who are politically involved, like the Sarpanch and the village secretary and their relatives. Also in some schemes the amount of money allocated by the government is much lesser than the actual need. The quality of the work delivered is questionable in several schemes.

Most times the community people are not aware of the schemes and their rights. EFICOR's efforts to help the people access the schemes include creating awareness through radio programmes, making CD (audio), wall painting, counseling, poster, banner, street play and through Gram Sabha. A future effort in the offing is to set up an information Centre to assist the people to easily access the government schemes.

*(Mr. Samson Christian works in EFICOR as Programme Coordinator)*

# Understanding Social Protection from the Scriptures

*Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob in conversation with Rev. Dr. Paul Swarup, Mr. C. B. Samuel and Rev. Kennedy Dhanabalan in developing a Christian Perspective on Social Protection*

**At the outset a critically important question is how does one develop a Biblical perspective on current issues?**

**Rev. Dr. Paul Swarup (PS):** The key to develop a Biblical perspective on any issue is to have a biblical overview. One needs to survey from Genesis to Revelation for any particular issue and to see what the Bible has to say in totality from a broad perspective. Unfortunately most people when they want to look at a particular issue pick and choose verses and texts to support their cause. And that leads us into lot of complications. What does the Bible say about these issues? Does the Pentateuch or the law have anything to say about it? Look at the historical books, for similar issues, the social contexts and the prophetic books to see how the prophets actually engaged with such social situations. Next, look at Wisdom literature in terms of the Psalms, Proverbs and finally the New Testament covering several sections including the Gospels and particularly what Jesus has to say about this issue. Acts may provide some examples from the early church and Paul's letters for any teachings in that direction. So that's one side of culling out the principles from the Scriptures. But again on the other side as John Stott says it is very important "to hold the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other." A clear understanding of the context is also important. What are the real issues and how do we get to the root of the particular issue? I think that kind of overview for any particular issue will help us to have Biblical perspectives.

**Mr. C. B. Samuel (CB):** Yes, if you have an overview of the Bible either by constant listening or being taught how to read it, for any issue that you want to develop a perspective you will be able to recollect automatically things which are consistent with the particular incident or those which are inconsistent. So you will not take anything out of context. That is the reason why you want to have a thorough overview.

**Rev. Kennedy Dhanabalan (KD):** When I look at issues I check if God has spoken anything in this regard or has the

prophets addressed them and what are the implications it has to the present world. Such an approach will interpret the contexts from their times to ours and how it can work for us. We need to capture the essence of why it has been said in that context and what are the principles or consequences applicable for our present context.

**How do we approach social protection from a Biblical perspective?**

**PS:** God is the creator and all human beings are made in his likeness and image which is important in how I treat people. Two key words in the Old Testament which are repeated often are justice (Mispat) and righteousness (Sedeqah). This is part of God's character. Sedeqah literally means things as they ought to be from God's perspective. Mispat is the act of bringing that 'rightness' back in contexts where it does not exist. Again in the Old Testament land was given as inheritance as per their family size

and it could never be sold. So many people probably due to debts sold their land. However, in the Jubilee year basically the fiftieth year the land came back to the original owner. The jubilee was there so that all who fall through the social net have something to protect them and restore them back into the community. Also several other laws favoured the poor, for example Leviticus 19:10 says when you reap the harvest of the land do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. Again if we look at verse 13 do not defraud your neighbour or rob him. Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight. Already there was a structure built up so that the poor will not be hungry and they would have been taken care of, as well as of many laws to take care of the orphans, widows and aliens.

**CB:** We understand the character of God in the Bible mainly through his revelations in which he acted in the context of the people of Israel and the nations around. While character is very important it is also important to see how it was spelt out in real life. For instance in Genesis when God asked Cain

where is Abel, God was holding Cain accountable for his brother Abel. Abel in that case was definitely a weaker person in that he was killed. This is a clear demonstration of God's character. Otherwise to say it is the character of God without any events where God has acted makes it very general. Then when Cain was punished by God, God put a mark on his head so he will not be touched or killed by anyone. Again there was protection for a person guilty of murder. Social protection is not just for the vulnerable and marginalized, but for the guilty as well. God wanted to make sure that once God had punished, it is enough and there is no need for the whole society to punish him. We know God's character only because he acted and that has put a lot of content into social protection. God told Moses to go to Egypt to bring the people because he said I heard their cry, their oppression, people who are under paid, and treated as slaves. Now whom you protect under social protection is defined by God who protects people. Like for instance somebody borrows money and then they are unable to pay. You take as a guarantee from them the garment but it says that you have to give it back to them in the night so that they can cover themselves which means there is a protection even for someone guilty by law as defaulter. Otherwise we would choose the people to protect and leave out many who may need protection as well. City of refuge was protection for somebody who killed someone or did something wrong deterring the mob from taking justice into their hands but having a system which will act justly.

**KD:** The character of God surely defines our entire response to people in need of social protection. It all stems from the fact that a just God requires his people to be just and ensure that everyone enjoys abundant life. Such a life would span spiritual and material to live life in fullness which God has designed for everyone. The commandment and principles in the Scriptures of this just and compassionate God ensures everyone enjoys abundant life. I also think that God has a preferential treatment for the poor who are the most exploited and marginalized and God reveals it right through the Scripture. But that does not nullify God's concern for the entire humanity.

#### **What critical difference did such laws make to Israel as a community and how did God deal with disobedience?**

**PS:** For the nations around Israel, justice and righteousness was the domain of the king. The unique difference in Israel was that justice and righteousness was not the role of the king alone but also the responsibility of every single member of the community. So everybody within the covenant community has to practice justice and righteousness. So that is really where the things come together, community which practices justice and righteousness and therefore you know it is in a place where they can take care of the people who are oppressed. When Israelites violated the laws is when the prophetic challenges came.

**CB:** For instance the book of Ruth has the story of Boaz. The last verse of Judges says there was no king at that time and everybody did what was right in their eyes. It was at that time in which it looks as though people did not have values or they may have had values, but they were not all righteous people. But it is interesting that in this context Boaz practiced faithfully the requirements of the Lord in leaving gleanings for the poor. That means that there were some individual Jewish people who practiced the requirements of the Lord. But on the other hand there are also people whom God raised, to be the voice of God in that situation. So the kings were supposed to be like that. Now as a nation we do not know whether they have practiced Jubilee every fiftieth year, but definitely there were people who wrote off debts, were more kind and freely gave away provisions. Ethics was individual and it did not matter whether the community practiced or not but there were people who did practice the scripture. And there were Kings and leaders who are supposed to correct it and there were prophets who were raised to speak about the concerns. But end of the day obedience was individual and punishment was national. Also whether the leaders practiced it or not, or whether the nation practiced it, they were also held accountable for their practice. Ahab was punished because he took the land of Naboth to which he had no right and God punished the king.

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**KD:** Surely the Kings should have kept the laws and ensured that the rest of the people also followed. Had the Kings walked according to the Lord they would have obeyed the laws and kept all the commandments. They would have cared for the poor and the widows, kept the Sabbath, tithed correctly and many other such things would have followed. It was not just worshipping God alone but what they did not do as well. Thus all the punishment and judgment as pronounced by the prophets came with disobedience.

#### **What are evidences of the outworking of social protection in the New Testament?**

**PS:** In the NT again if you look at the early Church – "From time to time those who own land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostle's feet and they distributed it to anyone who had need. Joseph, a Levi from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas which means son of encouragement, sold the field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles feet." (Acts 4:43). That was how the early church did it, they brought the money and those who are in need took the money.

**CB:** In the New Testament what we find is the establishment of the church and the church becoming a community for those who needed protection. It was for the most vulnerable people in the society. Vulnerable means not only physically

and economically but also religiously because there were people like tax collectors and sinners whom religion had marginalized and were now found in the church. The church becoming the community of marginalized. So basically the Church becomes God's provision in the New Testament for the protection of those who are marginalized. They like the people of Israel when God freed them from slavery were constantly told to remember their past as slaves so treat others differently. So that was an act of protecting those who are marginalized by the society as the new community. But among them also there was the problem of social marginalization as in Acts 6. So they have to act to ensure that they will not perpetuate marginalization that was out in the society because it is easy to marginalize and humans are easy to marginalize.

**KD:** Jesus brings in the wide scope of reaching out beyond just your immediate location that you are to be the Lights and the Salt to the people. Historians record that early Christians kept their house open for aliens, sojourners, and they welcomed everyone, so basically they would have picked out from Jesus' teaching of being the light to the nations, being a salt to the people by showing the concern. So it is beyond their boundaries of Jewish community, because at the end of it Jesus tells that whatever you have done to the least of these people you have done unto me. They believed God would return anytime and did not want to be found wanting in any areas, so they looked at literally all the teachings of Jesus and lived them out.

#### **What should a Christian approach to welfare and Social Protection be in our current societal context and how do we work towards a fair society?**

**PS:** I think we need to operate on several lines. First of all awareness of the issues, highlight the issues and speak to people. It should include Scriptural teachings and understanding of social issues. Social issues first of all draw attention to the fact that there are glaring differences on the gap between the rich and the poor. Unless and until we have that kind of awareness that where we live there are 5 billion people below you and you can help. And then like minded people need to be come together and it does not matter if they are from different fields but they are keen on working together, uplifting the poor, carrying out development projects, addressing the real issues and seeking to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. I think we need both thinkers and doers. We need to strategize on one side and simultaneously have experienced people working at the grass root level. The two coming

together and of course we have the scripture to draw our insights, encouragement and worldview from and these should help us be different and work towards a fair society.

**CB:** The church has become inward looking basically we feel that like Israel that we are being chosen by God to be blessed by him. But Israel forgot the reason for choice was not in order to be blessed but in order to be the people of God. I think that emphasis is not there in our churches. We act as community which are rewarded for believing in God rather than the community which has to demonstrate their belief in God. I think that is the major understanding we need to get in to our churches that it is our responsibility of calling rather than the privilege of our calling. And that responsibility includes the responsibility to demonstrate to the world what it means to be the people of God and what are the concerns of God. That is where we get in to this world to be involved in social protection. We have to keep our eyes open to be on the side of the socially marginalized and work out ways of protection.

What protection means to different groups of people in the church and

outside is something which Christian leadership should think about. It is very important to redefine again who needs to be protected and to study carefully what the Bible says of actual ways in which protection was consciously done. God incorporated in the law a lot of things which has to be protected and we need to look at what it all means. The detailed protection of the vulnerable and the image of God as a protector of everything as God describe himself to Job and others. The church should be the community that models for the world what it means to protect even while we go out to protect those who need protection.

**KD:** In practical ways if one would look at it, it has to start from within the family to ensure care for all within the family. As with the laws in the Old Testament it systematically covered families, clan and tribes. In times earlier the community always took charge of orphans and elderly within its society. However with changing times even with the overwhelming nuclear family focus these traditional community values have broken down. These need to be recovered and promoted so that we do not rob ourselves of that safety net. Simultaneously there are also people on the margins because their condition are stigmatized such as HIV and Leprosy. Church should come out to care for such groups and work alongside families creating awareness and forging acceptance. There are plenty of Government protection programmes and Church can be a key facilitator in helping communities and individuals to access them easily. These should obviously go alongside Churches own programme in reaching out to those in need of social protection.

# An Eye for the People and a Heart for God

## Mrs. Selina Samuel

**K**olkata, the city of Rabindranath Tagore, Amartya Sen, Mother Teresa is also the city of Mark Buntain and Vijayan Pavamani, whose involvement in social justice has impacted the city immensely.

Vijayan was born and brought up in Kerala and was greatly influenced by his maternal grandmother. He was a seeker for Truth about God and soon found in Jesus Christ the answers he was seeking. After his studies in Kerala he moved to Mumbai to pursue a career in Commercial art. A chance encounter during one of his travels with a destitute child at the Howrah railway station changed his life's direction altogether.

He served with Youth for Christ for a short time. He realized his calling was to care for people beyond all religious and social backgrounds. After reading a book called the 'Caring Church' and an article about the crisis intervention work of the 'Samaritans' in UK, Vijayan and his wife Premila took the radical step of starting an Intervention and Counseling center for people who are suicidal. This was called the Calcutta Samaritans. In this new initiative and the journey ahead he always encouraged his staff to 'focus on the person and not the problem'.

Vijayan used to say "My aim is to respond by the grace of God to the urgencies of human need". He was a practical man and never hesitated to get involved or start new initiatives. Pavamanis started a Drug de-addiction center both for boys, girls and even for very young children. The Arunoday Midway Home, a community for recovering addicts, was set up in 1978. The center gives initial counseling, detoxification, treatment, rehabilitation and re-integration along with some training. The government of India, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment recognized the Calcutta Samaritans as one of the eight Regional Resource Training Center (RRTC) making them responsible for training other NGOs in Bihar, Jharkhand, Sikkim and Darjeeling. They are the first to implement Work Place Prevention and Development with Reserve Bank of India and TATA steel etc. Through the Campaign and Advocacy Program they have been able to reach out to rag pickers, rickshaw pullers, railway porters and the homeless communities. Mother Teresa with whom he worked closely encouraged him much.

While pastoring with the Emmanuel Chapel, the sound of



Photo: Vijayan Pavamani with Wife Premila

children playing on the streets tugged at his heart and he responded to their desire for education. The Calcutta Emmanuel School was born with 12 students and today provides excellent English medium education to more than five hundred of the poorest children giving them a chance to dream big and achieve. Vijayan believed that "no child should remain marginalized". In 1985, there was another awakening moment - another 'Tug' at his heart - while waiting at the railway station for Premila to arrive. He noticed the children at the station. Pavamanis started the Pauline Bhavan providing a home, food, clothes, education and a fun filled childhood to those homeless children living on the railway platforms. For child drug addicts they provide a home, Anandoloy, weaning them slowly from their habits and giving them vocational training. The goal of both these homes is to help them heal from past trauma and face the future as self respecting individuals.

The effort to touch the lives of different groups of people continued. The Pavement Club provides non-formal education, slowly integrating them into mainstream schools. The Erica project and Connexions provide vocational training and job opportunities for women from the slums. The Community Care Center provides care, support and awareness to HIV and AIDS patients. Life as a community at the CCC brings healing and transformation to many of them. The Vijayan Pavamani Capital Fund is a micro credit program helping many poor families to break the cycle of poverty. Emmanuel Ministries Calcutta is an umbrella organization aiming to work in all aspects of social justice.

The Pavamanis simply befriended and reached out to the hurting in the city, stepping out in faith to bless, to share the love of God even as they have been blessed. Though Vijayan passed away in 2006 he is remembered for his energy and enthusiasm for involvement. He was a man who conveyed God's love, hope and truth to people from all walks of life, both young and old, rich and poor.

(Mrs. Selina Samuel is a freelance editor/writer)

# FACTS

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

### I. WAGE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES

#### 1) Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)

- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was enacted in 2005 for enhancing livelihood security of household in rural areas.
- Legal guarantee for 100 days of employment to a family.
- Unemployment allowance to be paid if employment is not provided within 15 days demand of work.
- In 2010-11, about 55 million families have been provided 2570 million person days of employment.
- 42% workers are women which are above the mandatory requirement of 33%.
- In the last six years, expenditure under this programme is Rs. 1500 billion.
- There is reduction in distress migration in non-agricultural season.
- Spectacular success has been recorded in water harvesting through this programme.

#### 2) National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)

- This programme is aimed to generate sustainable livelihood for the poor (Below Poverty Line) by mobilizing them in to Self Help Groups (SHGs).
- The programme envisages thrift and credit activity in groups.
- It strengthens the package of credit cum technology support to strengthen rural livelihoods.
- Facilitates the poor to compete on more equal terms in the market.
- Train and develop the skill duly ensuring placement of skilled workers in appropriate jobs.
- 40% of the total advances of Scheduled Banks are disbursed to address the institutional credit needs of the poor.
- 1.6 million self-employed and 2.43 million Self Help Groups assisted economically till 2011-12.

### II. HOUSING PROGRAMME FOR BPL FAMILIES (IAY) IN RURAL AREAS

#### 1) Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY)

- Rs. 45,000 in plain areas and Rs. 48,500 in hill areas provided for each house to a BPL beneficiary.
- Rs.20,000 loan from bank per unit house at 4% interest under the differential rate of interest is also provided to the interested beneficiaries.
- More than Rs.100 billion are being provided every year by the Government under this programme.
- In last five years 11.23 million houses have been constructed by spending Rs. 520 billion.

### III. SOCIAL SECURITY

#### 1) National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)

- To provide assistance to senior citizens, differently-abled persons and others who have suffered due to mishap in life through unconditional cash transfer.
- More than 25 million people covered under this programme during last year.

#### 2) Indira Gandhi National Old Age pension Scheme

- Constitute major component (77%) of National Social Assistance Programme.
- Rs. 200 per month provided by the Government as old age pension to the persons of above 60 years and below 80 years.

#### 3) Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme

- Rs. 300 per month provided by the Government to BPL families of above 40 years age.

#### 4) Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme

- Rs. 300 per month provided by the Government to the BPL person of above 18 years of age with severe or multiple disability.

#### 5) National Family benefit Scheme

- Rs. 20,000 provided as lumpsum to the bereaved BPL household in case of death of primary bread winner.

### IV. WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY OF LANDS (IWMP)

- Watershed Projects are implemented on rained/degraded lands for increasing their productivity.
- Main activities are Soil and Moisture Conservation, Rain water Harvesting, Recharge of Ground Water, Plantations, Pasture Development and Livelihood activities especially for the vulnerable people.
- Cluster approach adopted for treatment of Geo-hydrological unit of average size of 5000 hectares.

## V. RURAL CONNECTIVITY (PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA - RURAL ROAD PROGRAMME)

- Promoting rural connectivity.
- Connecting all habitations with the population of 500 persons and above in plain areas and 250 persons and above in hill states, tribal and desert areas.
- About Rs. 915 billion have been spent in last 5 years duly providing the new connectivity in 84,414 habitations.
- About 2,00,000 kms of new roads and upgradation of about 1,40,000 kms of roads completed in last 5 years.

## VI. FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMMES

### 1) Public Distribution System

- It is a price instrument to help consumers achieve food security at household level.
- PDS supplies commodities at below market prices. Rice and wheat are major ones.
- Largest distribution network in the world.
- The objective of this programme – Maintaining price stability, raising the welfare of the poor, rationing during situations of scarcity, keeping a check on private trade.
- In 1997 targeted PDS started (population were divided into BPL and APL).

### 2) Targeted PDS

- Constitute BPL, APL, Antyodaya destitutes.
- Central Issue Price (PDS price) has not been changed since 2002.
- Out of total subsidy for TPDS, 18% for APL, 46% for BPL and 36% for Antyodaya.
- Total Number of families as per Planning Commission (BPL+APL+AAY) is 180 million. Total number of ration cards issued is 238 million. Number of fair price shops - Nearly 500,000 for distribution of 35 kgs per month per family.

### 3) ICDS and Mid-day Meal Schemes

- Child malnutrition levels are very high in India. To cope up with this problem, Integrated Child Development Services and Mid-day Meal Schemes are two major programs in the country to address it to children below 6 years of age and to pregnant and lactating mothers.
- The objectives of the mid day meal program were to increase the enrolment, retention and attendance of children in school leading to universalization of primary education, impacting learning and simultaneously also improving the nutritional status of children.



Photo courtesy: EFICOR

## PROGRAMMES IN URBAN AREAS

### I. JAWAHARLAL NEHRU NATIONAL URBAN RENEWAL MISSION (JNNURM)

#### 1) Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP)

- Upgradation of urban slums by providing physical amenities.
- Rs. 68.1 billion allocated in 11th Five Year Plan (2007-12) for community infrastructure and social amenities, shelter upgradation or construction of new houses.

#### 2) Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY)

- It aims to provide the poor urban households with shelters or housing free of cost. Launched in June 2011, the Scheme aims to make India Slum-free by 2022.
- Rajiv Awas Yojana will cover all towns, cities and urban agglomerations in India.

#### 3) Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY)

- Main poverty alleviation programme in all urban towns in India (special emphasis on urban poor clusters).
- It seeks to provide gainful employment to the urban unemployment and under-employed poor by encouraging the setting up of self-employment ventures of wage employment.
- 75:25 between the centre and the states.
- Rs. 17.5 billion allocated in 11th Five Year Plan (2007-12).
- Various schemes under SJSRY are –
  - a. Urban Self Employment Programme (USEP).
  - b. Urban Women Self-Help Programme.
  - c. Skills Training for Employment Promotion for Urban Poor.
  - d. Urban Wage Employment Programme (UWEP) which includes a component for assistance to groups of urban poor women under the title ‘Scheme for development of Women and Children in Urban Areas (DWCUA)’.
  - e. Urban Community Development Network.
- Beneficiaries of this programme are people living below the poverty line within the jurisdiction of urban local bodies.

# Riots, Relief Camps and Representatives

**Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob**

The common denominator running through riots, relief camps and representatives is that they often betray the simple hopes and aspirations of the common man who continues to bear the brunt of their impact. It is also unfortunate that there is no light at the end of the tunnel because we either choose to ignore lessons from our experiences or refuse to take any remedial actions as future deterrents. India is no stranger to communal riots and there have been several instances spread across time and region when atrocities committed were intense. Most of the narratives around these riots and the relief camps that follow the violence reveal the insensitivities, callousness and total apathy, which mark the response of the state machinery, its elected representatives and even political parties. What disgusts the average citizen is that every turn in the sequence of events during riots, relief camps and rehabilitation reveals the extent to which different players in the political, executive and legislative settings can stoop to either secure their position or grab some specific gains. It is a grim reminder of the fact that lives of innocent people are but pawns in the hands larger game players.

## Riots

Misrepresentation of facts marks the origin of every riot that India has witnessed over several decades. This has happened with various communities but the storyline in most riots has been the same. For instance, the riots in Gujarat or Kandhamal have similar narratives of antagonism. The minorities of the specific context being at the receiving end and having to flee the terror unleashed by the majority community in the location. The final outcome is that all communities in any riot location bear the burden of the events. Riots also explode the myth that the democratic state apparatus functions in a non-partisan manner for the welfare of all its citizens. Communal riots seem to reinforce the observation that the neutrality of the government machinery is seriously compromised when there is conflict between communities.

Muzaffarnagar riots<sup>1</sup> and all the events that unfolded in its aftermath have been a festering wound in the national scenario for over six months now. The riots were an outcome of a series of small events that were allowed to escalate and take on a communal colour. Rumour mongering was left unchecked and groups with vested interests took full advantage of the situation. Linking the contours of the events in Muzaffarnagar indicate the need for definite political gains for some groups in the district, as has been characteristic of several communal conflicts in the past. The easiest and the best option

as far as politics goes is to redo the local demography. Communal riots are conducive for creating a favourable electorate. Muzaffarnagar riots witnessed just that - the tilting of demographic scales with a colossal flight of mostly a single community to escape violence, death and destruction. It affirmed once again that one group's interests spelt peril for another group. If this was the compulsion of certain groups, the question left asking was what were the ones already in power doing? Theirs was the mandate to protect and defend but the state machinery did precious little either to assuage the feeling of the people or assure them of their security.

## Relief Camps

While riots were a disaster in themselves the relief camps did not provide adequate respite and solace for those escaping the violence. The living conditions were dismal and the rations handed out were insufficient. Sanitation was a major problem causing unhygienic conditions with the threat of disease. So also was medical care and education for children particularly when the relief camps extended for several months. Relief Camps thus continued to be an extension of the traumatic experience for the victims with the state not abiding by even the basic humanitarian standards. The active state involvement in taking care of the citizens was absent with mostly private agencies handling the camps. The reports of many fact-finding missions that came out really condemned the apathy of the state in taking care of the victims. Even the citizens did not think it was their legitimate right to claim their due from the state in terms of relief and rehabilitation or any possible help in their situation but rather received everything as plain charity. People with lowered expectations resulting from a misplaced understanding of their rights as citizens only reinforce the unwillingness of the state to play its legitimate role.

The relief camps continued for several months on end with hardly any concrete efforts to assuage the communal situation. When the winter set in the ill equipped camps witnessed several deaths of young children. As the condition in the relief camps got worse, it drew a lot of national attention from various quarters much to the embarrassment of the state government. The high profile visits from significant politicians and leaders to alleviate their problems however continued to spell out further doom for the hapless victims. The state soon had the victims evicted from

<sup>1</sup> Details on the riots and relief camps presented in the paper are sourced from references listed at the end of the paper.

the camp location under duress totally denying any basic right as citizens. In fact, this distinguishes Muzaffarnagar, the repeated instances of the state being actively involved in further alienating the victims of violence. The relief camps were forcibly closed down and the state claimed to have settled all their dues. They had to leave their only secure place they knew as refugees and forcibly shunted out to no place in particular. Most of the victims could not even go back since they were living under multiple threats. In terms of apprehending the perpetrators nothing concrete had been done leaving it dangerous to return. The victims also feared that any outward evidence of religious identity would be disastrous. The compensation packages offered by the government were also not well thought out. There was no attempt to regain their confidence or even solve the problem rather it was just a haphazard attempt to wind up the situation. The attitude displayed by the state was that it would not allow some "worthless" victims to hold their repute to ransom. The State did not want any undue attention drawn to its inefficiency and thus it came down heavily on the victims by evicting them. These were complex power plays, not simple arithmetic of state responsibilities or people's rights.

### Representatives

In the light of the deplorable riots and relief camps what is the responsibility of the people's representatives in containing such tragedies. At this critical juncture came the Central Government's effort to introduce the Communal Violence Bill in parliament. Though the UPA promised it in 2004 manifesto, it woke up to it as late as 2013. The attempt to introduce this bill has been on since its initiation by the National Advisory Council in 2011. Communal Violence Bill encompasses a whole range of issue that aim to secure for the victims what has so far remained a casualty, and demand strict accountability structures at various levels. There are strong strictures for inefficient handling of communal riots. But the bill despite having been cleared by the Cabinet in December 2013 had to be deferred in the face of several pressures, one major contention being the blurring of the jurisdiction between the centre and the state while dealing with inconsistencies in handling communal riots. The desperate question that begs for an answer to the lawmakers is who is to hold the citizens' interests at the core of all their efforts regardless of party interests and compulsions. The state cannot shirk its responsibility, there are no two ways about it. It reveals poverty of will power and ethics. Public institutions meant to serve the people have failed at multiple levels. These are the institutions that hold together the fabric of

our society and most often these very institutions fail or are manipulated or motivated by lesser morals. In the context of deferring the Communal Violence Bill, the recent communal violence and other riots in the past we need to ask again whether the central and state governments have acted fairly in all of these events. Definitely utmost clarity and division is required in jurisdiction but what about the plight of the victims overlooked in this whole dilemma. How many more riots should we go through before we decide the main priorities of such bills? The political will is central for this to happen both at the centre and states. As has been evident in several analysis that have come out, this 15th Lok Sabha will go into history as having done the least business during its tenure. But definitely some measures like the Food Security Bill and Right to Education Act have been appreciable. However, on a grim note in the face of Muzaffarnagar riots is the failure to consider the Communal Violence Bill which would have been a great step forward in containing some of the states overtures. It is time our political leaders truly owned up the role of being people's representatives, which would imply that, the interests of the citizens would be the topmost engagement of their public life.

### Conclusion

The question to ponder in closing is who is to take complete charge of the common man's plight when he is let down time and again. It is those who represent him who are supposed to protect him. People are not liabilities and the centre and states must take a protectionist view of its citizens and reflect that constantly in their actions. The story of Muzaffarnagar riots which revealed the compulsions of electoral politics cannot be repeated and those who have to maintain and restore peace should not be found guilty of fanning the flames of hatred and mistrust further. Our shared future cannot be destroyed for momentary or temporary gains. The call of good citizenship would also require of each of us to seek avenues to engage communities in conversations to restore trust and goodwill. Surely riots and relief camps will cease to be a recurring phenomenon when representatives and citizens wake up to secure our societies against the vagaries of irresponsibility.

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# A Roof Of Own

**B**alasore district of Orissa is prone to multiple hazards. But the series of floods in 2007 were unprecedented and ironically brought out the district's unpreparedness in coping with hazards, particularly among the poor. In August 2007, the district witnessed seven flash floods wreaking havoc, in a span of three months. Damages to property and agriculture were estimated to be worth Rs. 508 crores. Due to its proximity to the Bay of Bengal, it is vulnerable to regular cyclonic storm and depression. Being intersected by several rivers like Subarnarekha, Budhabalanga, Jalaka, Kansabansa and Sono, the whole district is flood prone and Jaleswar, Bhograi and Baliapal are the worst flood affected. The flood of 2007 triggered by incessant rain is termed as the worst in the living memory by people. Most of the villages lie underneath 10 feet of water for a week. There were widespread damages to houses and most of them were beyond repair demanding construction of new houses. Impact on the poor and landless was the most, as they did not have the capacity to build new houses. Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS – India) - a national NGO, visited the flood affected areas and after an initial damage assessment, initiated few interventions to rehabilitate the flood victims. It extended interim shelter to reduce vulnerabilities of the affected community in Basta block of the district. SEEDS in partnership with Christian Aid and the European

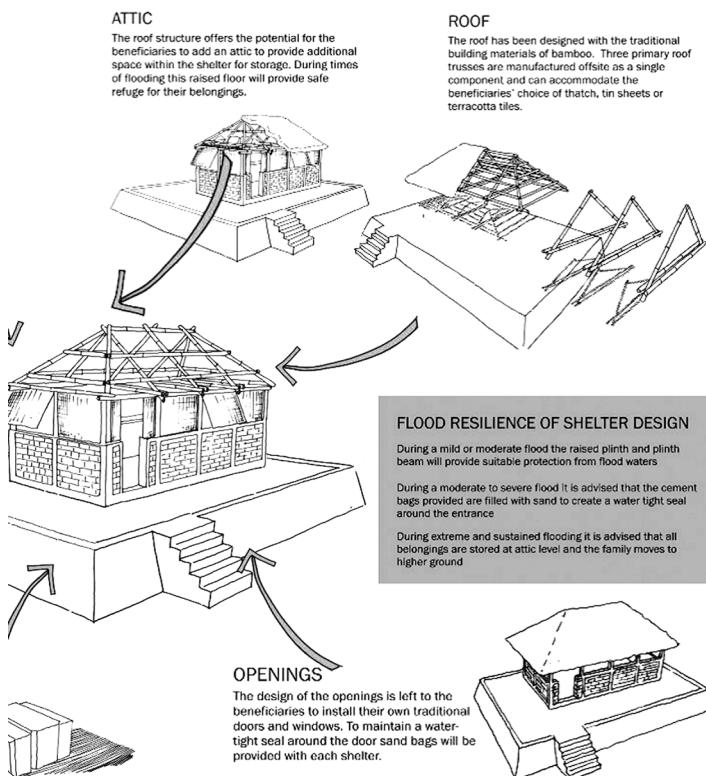


Photo: A New House built by SEEDS

Commission Humanitarian Aid Department initiated the Balasore Aashray Yojana (Balasore Shelter Programme) in few selected villages of Basta block to rehabilitate the flood victims. The programme intended to make vulnerable communities resilient to recurring floods and restrict damage to human life. The strategy is simple: create flood secured shelters. It intervened in four gram Panchayats (Raghunathpur, Kulida, Santoshpur and Paunkuli) covering 43 villages. A total of 400 resilient shelters were constructed for worst affected families, especially for those who had no capacity to rebuild houses on their own. These shelters incorporate traditional features. It also addressed the pathetic sanitation situation by constructing 200 sanitation units. Further, to promote disaster risk reduction, five schools were retrofitted to function as emergency refuge centers for local communities.

SEEDS followed a three - stage process for selecting beneficiaries. Though village elders and local Panchayat members were involved in the selection process, independent assessment was carried out by the team in accordance to set criteria. Acceptance of the design by communities and the beneficiaries was a driving factor during design development. So, the whole process of construction was based on partnership with the beneficiaries instead of donation. The programme called for beneficiary participation and contribution for roof, door, windows, extension of walls and plinth and allowed beneficiaries to express themselves and make each unit according to their own individual needs. Site selection is a community prerogative.

The shelter unit was designed by combining locally available building materials, construction practices and flood and cyclone resistant technology. Locally available materials and components such as RCC columns, fly ash blocks and

bamboo thatch roofing, etc. was used. By design, it allowed stable plinth and strong foundation for the unit. The Commission Humanitarian Aid Department construction from plinth to roof level was done by SEEDS whereas few responsibilities were laid on the households too. Each beneficiary would compile his own plinth and shall decide requisite size, shape and height of the plinth. This was their physical labour contribution towards their own shelter unit. The roofing was also to be done by the beneficiary family. They were allowed to upgrade the roof covering, originally designed with thatch, to their desired material. As all members of family were part of the construction activity, they developed a sense of ownership for the shelter.



Photo: New structures have insured residents from hazards

In a way, the shelter unit has provided a cushion for people, allowing them to divert their existing resources for other fruitful purposes.

One of the strengths of the programme was the theme of owner driven construction. At the start, each beneficiary submitted their land documents to the project field office and then once their registration was complete they began to organize the transportation of materials to the site. From there, they were responsible for dictating the height and proportions of the plinth, the orientation of the shelter and the position of window and door openings. As the shelters were largely built on the site or close to the beneficiaries previous homes, they were aware of the level of water during previous floods, prevailing winds and access routes. The beneficiaries had to mobilize labour and materials to build their plinth before the team of masons

could commence the shelter construction. The roof was the aspect of the design that offered the most potential for permutations and expression by the beneficiary as they were responsible for choice, procurement and construction of the roofing material. The stage at which the beneficiary completed their roof is the point at which they take full ownership over their shelter and begin to start living in it. One such beneficiary was S.K.Phapaujdin of Masada village of Paunkulli Gram Panchayat. Forty-one year old Phapaujdin is physically challenged and lived with his 70-year-old mother who was also visually challenged. Till the BAY was implemented, they both shared a small house which was in a dilapidated condition worsened further with



Photo: Houses built were in harmony with local environment

the consecutive floods in 2007 and 2008. The disability pension of Rs. 200 from the government was insufficient to support the family, so he was forced to begging. Further, his disability prevented him from standing for long period, so in such conditions, living and maintaining a livelihood was a constant challenge for him. With no other assets than his dilapidated house, he was reliant on any assistance that was made available to him. His family got relieved when SEEDS acknowledged his vulnerability and included him in the beneficiary list for constructing a house.

*(Adapted from the book 'Turning the Tide: Good Practices in Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction', published by EFICOR and Sphere India, 2010, p.82-87)*

# Books on our Desk

## **ARRIVAL CITY: How the Largest Migration in History Is Reshaping Our World**

By Doug Saunders, Windmill Books, 364 Pages, Paperback Rs. 943

### **Mrs. Joan Lalromawi**

This a well-documented, lofty and humane book packed with very pertinent facts about the state of migration in the world and presents the dislocation of life in an 'arrival' city. Saunders' writings are drawn from his visits around the world's great sprawling shantytowns and slums — which he referred to as 'Arrival Cities'. Arrival cities are not necessarily the urban areas that absorb the migrants but also refer to the surrounding areas where they first enter such as – the suburbs or slums.

Migration has become a global phenomenon and it has been perceived as a force that can contribute to development. It is often temporary or circular, and many migrants maintain links with their home countries. While migrants make important contributions to the economic prosperity of their host countries, the flow of financial, technological, social and human capital back to their countries of origin also has a significant impact on poverty reduction and economic development.

Saunders' attempt is not to present a very literary and researched presentation of the state of the world's poor rural and urban ghetto dwellers but using simple narratives to present the optimism of floating migrant populations around the world. He presents these fringe worlds not as fetid ghettos or pots of simmering radicalism. Instead, he argues, they are kilns of reverberating energy and optimism where the world's rural downtrodden seek a foothold in the modern world. These migrants wish to receive the developed world's life chances - a chance, through hard work, to enter the flowing middle class. And it is often the urban dwellers that are already well-settled who frustrate their desires at the economic, social and moral peril. However, he points out that these arrival cities need nurturing, in the form of transportation (paved roads, bus terminals), security, sewage treatment, education and, most importantly, citizenship for their people. They are not in need of the present restrictive zoning laws and xenophobic stabs at urban renewal. What they need is social protection or security for their citizens and even for the floating mass of immigrants.

Saunders maintains that some arrival cities succeed in incorporating migrants into middle-class economic and political systems, while others trap succeeding generations

in social and economic stasis. The reason for this success is because it is constantly sending its educated second generation into more prosperous neighborhoods and taking in new waves of new villagers, in a constantly reiterated cycle of arrival, upward mobility and exodus, that the neighborhood itself appears poorer than it really is" (p.82). Yet it is unclear to anyone who visits them that these neighborhoods are not on a downward spiral, but rather are becoming platforms for personal, family and village transformation. The book outlines many factors that influence the potential for success in specific locales. The central factors include individual, social, and fixed forms of capital, as well as a spirit of entrepreneurship. In Saunders' account, gaining and maintaining personal property and credit is the final goal of people transitioning from rural poverty to the urban middle class. To attain this goal, those in arrival cities must adopt entrepreneurial forms of subjectivity and an aspirational outlook focused on incremental improvements and generational deferral of middle-class success. Networks of social capital - embedded in family relationships within urban spaces - provide links to rural villages, which aid new migrants in their transitions and connect urban and rural communities to their mutual economic and social benefit.

The flow into the arrival cities may be slowed or stopped in certain countries for limited periods, but the larger arrival is economically and politically inevitable. It is already happening and every year more than five million people move from the largely rural developing world into the urbanized West.

Overall, the book has presented two related global issues that have generated widespread attention in the last few decades: the growth of informal urban settlements and slums, and the increasing migration from rural to urban habitations. Saunders' vision for these spaces is hopeful for these groups of immigrants, who arrived from rural poor villages to the arrival cities, as he believes that transformation can happen through them. Rather than making them more insecure with our stringent urban planning laws or immigrant rules, we can make them feel more secure by providing social protection for themselves and their families. The more successful the arrival city is the more it will act as a buffer between the poor rural and the prosperous cities. This will further integrate the world's precarious populations into networks of national citizenship and global capital, and they may become sustainable places for living.

(Mrs. Joan Lalromawi works in EFICOR as Programme Coordinator – Publications & Academics)

# **Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living**

By Nick Spencer and Robert White, SPCK (2207), 224 Pages, Rs. 100  
(Available in EFICOR)

## **Ms. Hoinu Kipgen**

The authors cover three broad topics of Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living in their book. Despite the wide range of topics chosen, they have crafted a comprehensive and logical overview. The book has been divided into three parts, addressing the science behind climate change, the biblical basis for creation care and our response by sustainable living.

The authors begin with an introduction to the science behind climate change by addressing the issue of global warming and locating the causes of this global phenomenon to individuals' daily activities and choices. Once the scientific basis has been created, they link the issue of climate change with faith, asking whether Christians should care about climate change. Their main argument being that since God loves and cares for creation, we should also do the same. They complement this with Jesus' command to love our neighbours as ourselves. The authors revisit this command throughout the book, stating that loving our neighbours would entail us to care about our actions and its impact on the environment and on our neighbours, both now and in the future. They broaden the definition of neighbour to include individuals in distant geographical locations and future generations who will be affected by our actions. They also redefine the concept of stewardship, not just limiting it to management but to lovingly care for creation the way God cares and serves it. The authors use Isaiah 40-65 as the vision for sustainable living, providing hope and joy for future transformation of all things. And also to inspire our commitment to sustainable living by encouraging us to live in a way that announces the future Kingdom of God. The book provides practical wisdom and steps that can be taken individually, as a community, nationally and internationally for ecological well-being and sustainable living.

The authors interestingly connect and address various social, economic, spiritual and moral issues prevalent in society today which are a result and product of climate change. It seeks to address the 'hedonistic consumerism' prevailing in the UK, and lessons for India could include that we guard ourselves against aping their consumerist culture thoughtlessly. The book is helpful in providing a comprehensive picture of the science behind climate change, and is a good starting point for Christians who wish to engage in issues of climate change.

*Ms. Hoinu Kipgen works in EFICOR.*

# **The New Friars: The Emerging Movement Serving the World's Poor**

By Scott Bessenecker, InterVarsity Press, 2006 Paper back, 199 Pages, Rs. 1040

## **Dr. Ruth Khongsai**

In this inspiring book Scott Bessenecker delves into the small but potent and still growing movement whom he calls 'the new friars'. Urban Neighbours of Hope (UNOH), InnerCHANGE, Servant Partners, Servants to Asia's Urban Poor and Word Made Flesh (WMF) are a few groups which highlight the understanding of friars in our modern context.

The book surveys both the history and current expressions of missional-monastic individuals and communities whose stories paint an evocative picture of Jesus' incarnation that sent Him into the stench of human poverty, and the mission His disciples were sent to without the insulating power of money, food and extra clothes. The author brings out inspiring stories of movements through history covering Francis and Clare of Assisi; St Patrick and the Celts; the Jesuits; Nestorians and Moravians; New Monasticism and the 24x7 prayers movement. The New missional orders may lack the austerity of the old orders in terms of symbolic significance to their commitment. But they embody the common radical spirit of turning their back on conspicuous consumption and taking seriously the call to downward mobility. The new friars are incarnational in living the gospel; devotional in pursuing intimacy with Jesus Christ; communal in interdependence and wealth sharing; missional in selfless pursue of the Kingdom of God; content to be marginal in order to connect with the marginalized.

Scott provides an insightful exploration of the forces of poverty such as massive economic pressures, political corruption, crumbling infrastructures, inaccessible systems and he reflects on many pertinent questions which matters for the followers of Christ. The incarnation is God's ultimate and ongoing expression of solidarity with the poor, which he describes as the voluntary poverty of God. He observes that human history has never been so steeped in poverty, suffering and evil and that one cannot ignore but consider the scale of despair especially in the developing world.

Though new friars challenges us and Scott acknowledges that the call of the friars may not be a universal one. But he exhorts those fence-sitters to participate in this 'new monasticism' by embracing their values and adopting a simple lifestyle in this consumerist world. His writing is not self-indulgent. Rather it is a wonderfully humble book and provides a sober read for anyone with the love for Christ and His kingdom.

*Dr. Ruth Khongsai works in EFICOR.*

# Nabjeevan Life Centre: Living the love of God

## Mr. Houreilung Thaimei

I remember having mixed-feelings on my way to Nabrangpur to visit Nabjeevan Life Centre to document its good practices. I was wondering if a remote place as this would really have any story of integral mission to offer. However, my next few days there were rewarded with loads of incredible testimonies and stories to prove me otherwise.

Nabjeevan Life Centre is a church started by Pastor Urio Bhatra in 2010 at Padalguda in Nabrangpur district, Odisha. It has a social wing called Nabjeevan Community Transformation Trust. Both the church and the trust are integrated well and share a common vision and mission. This church proclaims the Gospel by demonstrating it. It is actively involved in the lives of its members and also many outside the church. When asked what made them involve socially, Pastor Urio said “We started it after realizing that the Bible tells us to love and be part of the lives of our neighbours, at a workshop on holistic mission...” he added, “After the workshop, we came to know that the church has more responsibilities. It is not a new theory or secular but right there in the Bible, so many times.”

### Work at Mighty Fortress Leprosy Centre

The church’s involvement with the lepers at the Mighty Fortress Leprosy Centre was the first of its social involvements. During a holistic mission workshop, Bisu Jaani a.k.a. Ezekiel, a leper from the centre was invited as the Chief Guest on the last day of the workshop.

Later, the members of the church visited the leprosy centre and began to build a relationship that has grown over the years. Today, the church members regularly visit them, feed them, give them clothes, celebrate birthdays with them and have fellowship with them too. As a result, many have accepted Jesus as their Savior.

### Girls Home and SHGs

When Pastor Urio was visiting villages, he noticed that there were many children either semi-orphans or orphans who usually went without a meal daily due to lack of food. An incident from Bandabagh village in Kalahandi district which touched Pastor Urio deeply was of a starving family in deep crisis with the father almost held as a bonded labourer in Assam, the mother in jail and children roaming as orphans which became the basis to start the home. It wasn’t started with a proper budget kept aside nor was there a big plan. “We had no capacity and no resource. It was totally driven by need. I went around places telling people about it. Some gave me hope and supported with whatever they can. I also told the SHGs,

which were part of the women in our church and they volunteered to give 10 rupees per member towards the home. Through such hope and encouragements, the home was started in 2009.” said Pastor Urio. With 45 children currently residing, the home usually has no ration stock for more than a few days. A board is put up where the daily requirements of the home are written and any help from anyone is welcome. Wherever Pastor Urio goes, he tries to bring back something for the home.

There are 86 SHGs under the trust and comprise of women members only. The type of investment vary widely including businesses of selling milk, mango, broomstick, dry-fish, ladies bags, disposable plates, bamboo baskets, construction, pottery, vegetables, bricks, tailoring, pickles and many others. All the groups have been successful so far.

### Nabjeevan Internet Centre

The centre was started to generate income to make the trust self-sufficient and also provide educational resources and be a means of communication. It is also a place where Christian literature and resources are available.

Apart from these, the church also has ministry among tribal people in the islands on the Indravati River with children, youth, women and adult literacy centers. It is also working on planting 500 churches by 2020 and has already started work in Chattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.

Challenges are no stranger to Nabjeevan Life Centre. The church has been facing them right from its initial involvement at the leprosy centre, to starting and running the home, SHGs, the Internet centre and many other activities and ministries. However, it has adapted well to adversaries through unity and by taking God at His word.

The church has a very active participation of the members and in particular the youth in all its engagements. They often lead and enthusiastically give their time, skills and energy to raise funds or for the works the church is involved in. Many of them keep aside their money meant for celebrating their birthdays and contribute it to the trust or celebrate their birthday at the leprosy centre.

These and many more stories, of influence and hope from dismal situations will challenge well-resourced churches and their commitment to integral mission. God’s power is incredibly at work in Nabrangpur through Nabjeevan Life Centre.

(Mr. Houreilung Thaimei works in EFICOR)

# Social Protection VS Heavenly Assurance

**Rev. Kennedy Dhanabalan**

Recently, I met a lady whose husband had worked as a missionary. They had accepted the Lord from another faith group and had served God for a long time through a mission agency. He had died five years before. The agency had given a small amount to the wife as compensation at that time. Now she lives in utter poverty without proper income.

In the last decade or so some of the mission agencies have worked on the “Member Care”. They have worked on the Social Protection for their missionaries by creating pension schemes, health protection for the staff families, bereavement policy and support for widows.

## I. The Tension

**What is your first reaction of the plans made by the organizations for missionaries?**

Read Matthew 6: 25 – 34, Philippians 4: 19, Proverbs 8: 20, 21 and II Corinthians 9: 8.

### Reflect

#### Kelleg

1. Compare the assurances given in the Scripture passage with the actions initiated by the Mission Agencies.
2. What do you think?
3. Should Mission Agencies properly plan for the future of their missionaries?

## II. Planning for times of shortage

Read Proverbs 6: 6 – 8; 13: 11, 21: 20.

This suggests the wisdom of savings plan in every family budget and future savings.

### Reflect

#### Kelleg

1. Analyze to see if there are any contradictions from what was discussed above and the passages, which we read now?
2. How can we strike a balance in our efforts?

## III. Biblical Social Securities

The Bible does not talk about retirement except in



Numbers 8: 24 – 26 where the Levites are expected to step down and assist their brothers after 50 years.

Read Leviticus 25: 47-49; Ruth 3: 9-4: 10; I Timothy 5:4, 8.

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### Reflect

#### Kelleg

1. For the passages above what do you infer about the aged are to take care of themselves in their old age? How does the Bible provide social security to the old and the aged?
2. Considering that many organizations claim to be an extended family, can we apply the same principle in providing social security to them?

## IV. Conclusion

Surely every Christian parent cares and loves their children and desires the best for them in life. We try very hard to secure their lives with a good education, job and settle happily in life. We recognize bringing up children and preparing the future for them as a duty and there are no questions raised about this. This is tantamount to working out social security for our children.

However, preparing social security for the future is always being questioned. It is time we rethink some of our position and adopt a right attitude towards caring, securing and protecting our families and community.

# Ideas for Action

## As an Individual

- Get to know the schemes available for people in your location.
- Share information about the various social protection schemes to the wider community.
- Enquire if people are aware and availing these programmes, check out why they are not benefitting from these schemes.
- You can help the poor and the needy with the issues they face in their daily life by informing them personally of the benefits they could avail from the various Government schemes.
- Offer help to register a poor family in obtaining their BPL (Below Poverty Line) card.
- You could meet a slum or village community, find out their needs and inform them of the schemes that they are entitled to.
- Be proactively involved in helping the poor access their due share of Government schemes by filing RTI.

## As a Church

- Give awareness about available Government schemes within the church and among the poor community in the neighbourhood.
- Encourage the church members to be involved in the lives of the poor.
  - The church youth can be actively involved in helping poor community obtain their BPL card.
- Consider ways in which your Church could respond to the needs of slum communities nearby.
- Your church can start assistance/help desk cell which could function to identify the needy ones like – widows, physically challenged, the aged, etc who were deprived of their due share of Government welfare schemes.
- Display/stick the various Government schemes for the poor in the Church Bulletin Board.
- Pray for the social needs and problems in your neighbourhood and village/town in your Church Prayer/cell meetings.