
jnanadeepa

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**Contemporary Quest
for Freedom and Liberation**



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Contents

Editorial	3
Quest for Freedom and Psychotherapy	5
<i>Abraham Mattakottil, CSC</i>	
The Liberative Spirituality of Bhagavad Gita	27
<i>Sebastian Painadath, SJ</i>	
Hierarchy, Equality and Liberation	34
<i>George Karuvelil, SJ</i>	
The Quest in Zen Buddhism	54
<i>Selva Rathinam, SJ</i>	
The Tribal People of the Northeast: A Liberative Quest for Identity, Equality and Respect	63
<i>Peter Haokip</i>	
Women and Power	73
<i>Astrid Lobo Gajiwala</i>	
The Quest of Women Religious	86
<i>Rekha Chennattu, RA</i>	
Human Freedom: The Finite Quest for the Infinite	93
<i>Kuruvilla Pandikattu, SJ</i>	
Jesus, the Mystery of Freedom in History	108
<i>Jacob Parappally, MSFS</i>	
Freedom in the Church	119
<i>Isaac Padinjarekuttu</i>	
Freedom and Liberation	131
<i>Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ</i>	
Changing Perceptions of Indian Christians in Independent India	149
<i>Lionel Fernandes</i>	
Document: Jesuit Provincials Support Their Theologians	164
Book Reviews	166

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Editorial

The quest for freedom and liberation is not altogether a new phenomenon. Throughout history humans have been engaged in this quest. Think, for instance, of slave revolts, ancient and modern, in Rome, in Rio, and in Maryland or peasant rebellions in different parts of the world against feudal lords and tyrannical monarchs. These were expressions of the oppressed people's quest for freedom.

And yet, the contemporary quest for freedom and liberation is something new. For one thing, it is quite widespread today. Many different groups comprising large numbers of people are engaged in this quest: the poor, the Dalits, the tribal people, women, to mention a few. Add to this all the liberation movements you have heard of during the last 50 years. For another, the quest for freedom and liberation has now become strong, powerful and irresistible. People everywhere are refusing to bear the burden of oppression and exploitation and are clamoring for freedom and liberation.

It is in this context that this issue of *Jnanadeepa* has chosen to discuss the contemporary quest for freedom and liberation. The secular quest for freedom and liberation is discussed in an article on psychotherapy. The quest of psychotherapy is an open-minded and open-ended search for freedom to unfold. And the religious quest is dealt with in an essay on Zen Buddhism where it is pointed out that the quest here is for liberation – a liberation which is not merely individual and other-worldly, but also communitarian and this-worldly. There is another article on the liberative spirituality of the Bhagavad Gita. Gita's way of liberation is holistic, comprising as it does all the aspects of life – personal and social, emotional and rational, historical and cosmic.

One of the articles discusses the quest of the tribal people of the Northeast for a clear recognition of their ethnic identity and for the space to shape their destiny freely without undue interference from others. This is in no way a demand for secession from India. Another article deals with the all-pervasive caste culture of India and says that ethical equality does not find a place in it. Hence, it is not conducive to the liberation of the oppressed masses and the creation of an egalitarian society envisaged in the *Constitution of India*. There is one article which discusses human freedom from a philosophical point of view. The paradox of human freedom, it asserts, lies in this that it is a finite quest for the infinite.

Two papers deal with women's issues. The first one discusses women and power. It is the author's contention that women's liberation and empowerment involves both a struggle *for* and a struggle *with* power. The other deals with the quest of women religious for freedom and liberation. Basing herself on the findings of a small empirical study, the author points out that religious life as it is understood and lived today is probably not a liberating experience for many women religious.

There are three articles written from a Christian point of view. The first one discusses Jesus Christ and freedom. It shows how Jesus was a supremely free person whose mission it was to liberate humans from all that stood in the way of their growth and happiness. The second deals with freedom in the Church. While maintaining that it is fundamental to the nature of the Church to be a community of freedom, the author indicates that *historically* this has not always been the case. The abuse of power in the Church has been largely responsible for this. The Third article contends that the Church's vocation is to be a community of radical freedom and that its mission is to work for the liberation of humans today. It also discusses the dimensions of freedom in the life of the Church and indicates areas of liberation to which the Church should pay special attention in our time.

There are two new features in this issue. One is a paper on the changing perceptions of Indian Christians in Independent India. It is an insightful account of the changes that have taken place in the Church during the last 50 years with regard to its inner life as well as the understanding of its place and role in the country. Though the article does not directly deal with the theme of this issue we have decided to publish it. In future, too, we plan to be flexible in this matter.

The other one is a document issued by the leaders of the Society of Jesus in South Asia. These leaders show genuine understanding of the difficult and challenging task Jesuit theologians and others are engaged in and offer them their support and encouragement. It is not often that one comes across Church leaders who appreciate the work of theologians and defend their legitimate freedom of thought and expression. That is why we are all the more glad to publish this document.

Kurien Kunumpuram, SJ
Editor