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and the Country



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Editorial

Committed to the Church and to the Country

What is the significance of the search for Indian Church? How far has it contributed to the betterment of both the Church and the nation? What are some of the challenges and possible responses the Church in India faces? These are some of the questions we ask ourselves in this special issue of *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies*.

This is a special issue is fondly dedicated to Professor Kurien Kunnumpuram on his 80th birthday. As most of the readers are aware, it was Professor Kunnumpuram who founded this journal in 1998, with the help of JDV staff and support of the then JDV President, Dr Anthony da Silva. He remained the the editor and publisher of the journal till 2010.

So this issue takes up some relevant issues which resonate with Kunnumpuram's theological concerns. Being an ecclesiologist, his primary theological focus was on the emergence of an Indian Church. Being an academician who specialized in Vatican II, he did his best to radiate the spirit of the Council for the Indian Church. Being a committed Christian, his was a forward looking and hope-filled vision. Further, his theology took up specific issues relevant to contemporary India and Church in India and dealt with them constructively.

So the first part of the Journal, subtitled "Towards Together," discusses the collective and communitarian vision of the Indian Church. This first part deals primarily with the essential communitarian (ecclesial) aspect of human beings. The next one entitled "Beyond Borders" dwells on the need to go beyond

ourselves as a community and reach out to others with respect. The third part, "Crucial Concerns," deals with a few specific issues confronting the contemporary Indian Church. The final part is a reflection on his theology by Kunnumpuram himself.

1. Towards Together

The first part, "Towards Together," deals with the collective search for a more authentic Church and humanity. The first article by a budding theologian, Dr Antony D'Cruz, Research Scholar, Gregorian University, Rome, portrays Kurien Kunnumpuram as a champion of Vatican II, pleading for the dawn of a new humanity. He examines the manner and the style of Kurien's writings, which indicate both his scholarly bent for Vatican II's concerns as well as his personal interest in an inculturated theology. These concerns are evident in *Ways of Salvation*, one of his seminal works based on Vatican II. Kunnumpuram understood that "a conciliar decree cannot give systematic and detailed instructions for a such a vast process in the history of humankind, but only enunciate a few guiding principles which can decisively influence, in the long run, the national position of a missionary Church". This article discusses elaborately two claims about the Church's mission: (1) "The one mission of the Church receives its specification from the actual context in which it is exercised, in the concrete situations in which it is fulfilled" and (2) "Mission of the Church is to collaborate with God in his work for the wholeness of the human person, the human community and the cosmos according to the pattern revealed in Jesus Christ."

The young author of this article concludes by asserting that his attempts to devise an indigenous theology of the Church proves that Kunnumpuram's concerns are post-conciliar. Though his works are primarily descriptive, he harmonizes various conciliar and post-conciliar teachings and principles for a contextual ecclesiology. Vatican II has "proved to be a point of departure rather than of arrival for the Indian Church." And Kunnumpuram can be credited with keeping alive the thrust of Vatican II for an inculturated Church in India, and above all the Church as a sacrament of the Kingdom of God in all times. That is an invitation for a new humanity.

The next article by Dr Thomas Kuriacose, Dean, Faculty of Theology, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, studies and situates some important documents of Vatican II, in fact the academic focus of Professor Kunnumpuram. The two key words ‘catholic’ and ‘catholicity’ in the documents of Vatican II, according to him, deserve a closer look. Among the important reasons for this is the fact that the Church is qualified as ‘catholic’, and ‘catholicity’ is an essential dimension in ecclesiology. Therefore, it is an imperative that we make a deeper study of this word in the documents of Vatican II. A very large portion of this article is devoted to a study of the usage of ‘catholic’ and ‘catholicity’ in Vatican II, and then drawing out their implications for a contemporary ecclesiology in India.

The Catholicity of the Church is indicated by the acceptance and fostering of genuine diversity and plurality. This has important lessons and consequences for the local churches in India, as also for the contribution of the local churches of India to local churches outside India. One of the important applications of *Lumen Gentium* has been in the field of inculturation. True ecclesial catholicity demands that attempts be made to inculturate at deeper levels. This would require serious study, in-depth dialogue with knowledgeable people, great generosity, humility, courage, and most of all, total openness to the Holy Spirit.

This is followed by an article focussing on the Church as a “praying community. Based on his personal experience in India, Professor Andreas Vonach, an Innsbruck Biblical Scholar, studies the transition from a “sacrificing society” to a “praying community” within the Hellenistic Judaism. Then he tries to apply it to today’s church. First the author shows how the ancient Israelites made and experienced the shift from a religion of Jerusalem centred cultic offerings into a worldwide spread Jewish community with common and private prayers as focus of their identity and solidarity. He raises the question if this process may function as a model for our future hope, faith and life.

In the Jewish history, as opposed to the Jerusalem temple, the “synagogue universalized official Jewish ritual practice while democratizing worship by taking it out of priestly hands. Thus the way was opened for any Jew anywhere to participate and officiate in

the recognized communal ritual. Moreover, the synagogue radically changed the content of this ritual, shifting the focus from sacrifice and libation to Torah study and prayer.” Prayer henceforth was seen as the appropriate divine service and not seldom it was called “offering of the lips”.

The author contends that today’s Christianity finds similar preconditions and chances. Communal as well as individual prayers can have the power to build the inner centre of Christian existence, the gospel offers more than enough models of prayerful actions and attitudes in daily life which at the same time lead to compassion and solidarity.

The next article by Stephen Jayard a philosopher of science hopes for “an enlightened and enriched humanity,” and bases his hope in the contemporary scientific and cultural scenario. Science is, no doubt, a powerful force that cannot be just ignored, while considering human and Christian communities. It is indeed a great asset, not only for making our lives comfortable, but quenching the inborn curiosity to know better and to achieve more. However, science, being aware of its own limits and limitations, is cautious in claiming to be absolute; being led by the spirit of interdisciplinary approaches it realizes more and more the need not to be autocratic; and above all, being a social enterprise, which is by humans and for humans, science realizes its moral and ethical responsibilities and this last realization, in turn, emphasizes the serious commitments of humans towards safeguarding nature, as humans are supposed to be the custodians of nature, rather than exploiters of it.

In the first section, the author focuses on one of the important areas of the contemporary science that pose challenge to the human identity and dignity: Artificial Intelligence. After a brief exposition of this enterprise, he argues that though this is quite challenging to the understanding of the human person. Its shortcomings and inabilities seem to suggest that science cannot handle these issues alone, but need to collaborate with other disciplines. Then, in the second section, the young scholar discusses the limits and limitations of science, showing the need and the urgency of the interdisciplinary approaches to fathom reality and to enhance humanity. This learning experience has made science rather realistic in its claims and approaches. In the Concluding Remarks, after briefly explaining what he means by ‘hope’, ‘enrichment’ and ‘enlightenment’, our scholar shows how the deeper awareness of the intrinsically complex

issues of the mind-body relationship and the limits of science make science more realistic in its claims, more cautious in its investigations and, above all, more humble in its self-image. This, according to the author, enables us to see the rays of hope for the betterment of humanity and the Cosmos.

2. Beyond Borders

This takes us to the next part, “Beyond Boundaries” dealing with the need to realize and transcend our borders and boundaries, a theme very close to Professor Kunnumpuram’s heart. To begin with, Professor Johnson Puthentpurackal, one of the best known Indian Christian philosophers, delves into these rich notions. He begins by acknowledging the growth and development in all realms and dimensions of human existence in contemporary society. Humans have been creatively growing in thought and action, since they have been creative and dynamic in their being. This aspect of humans’ creative dynamism may be referred to as their ‘new-ward journeying,’ a term found often in Kunnumpuram’s theology. This paper takes a philosophical look at the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of this journeying—a journeying ‘with boundary beyond boundary.’ He begins with a philosophical clarification of the dynamic character of human existence (1), and then proceeds to show that human life and thought is a ‘journeying’ (2), and finally dwells on the meaning of journeying ‘with boundary beyond boundary’ (3).

The author concludes this philosophically reflective study with a twofold plea—a plea to keep on creatively journeying ahead in our thinking and acting, and a plea to break open the boundaries that are human constructs.

The next article deals with a particular experience of crossing borders, a cross-cultural conference on *Faith-formation* in India and Germany, which took place in Mumbai about a decade ago. In fact, it became a performative adventure across cultural borders. This report by Christian Bauer reflects on that Mumbai-experience, organised by the JDV in Pune and the *Faculty of Catholic Theology* of the University of Tübingen. As the narrative “we” in the beginning shows, the author of this report had a double-role as participant and as observer of the conference at the same time. This participant

observation is connected with the delightful experience of meeting Kurien Kunnumparam for the first time.

The author describes the dynamics and nuances involved in such a complex encounter on faith formation. Reflecting theologically he concludes that inter-religious dialogue will not have to seek an utopic identity of the different, but instead it will have to mediate real differences of the identical. This theological turn from abstract identities on the level of theoretical ideas to concrete differences on the level of practical problems brings about changes within the religions taking part in that kind of dialogue – as an Indian participant illustrated at the conference in Mumbai. Many *Small Christian Communities* shift from being “agents for a change within the church” towards *Small Human Communities*, becoming “agents for a change in society”, who discover common concerns in the light of the gospel, since there is “no Muslim-electricity, no Christian-toilet, no Hindu-road”

The next two articles take up the issue of transcending human body and nature and crossing the threshold of being ourselves, through genetic engineering. Charles Davis, Sankt Georgen, Frankfurt, asserts that human beings have now the power to alter their very nature through a programmed change in their biological character. Earlier humans wanted to resemble the gods, separate themselves from their body or get near the arena of higher spirits on the ladder of low and higher natures. Today’s cutting-edge technologies may overtake the performances of human limitations with the rise of biotechnological developments, like genetic engineering, gene therapies, nanotechnologies and stem cell researches. Now “superhuman” performances can be achieved by altering bodily elements. Humans want to be creators. This new power of “Playing God” brings forth many ethical problems.

This article discusses the ethical dilemma connected with bodily enhancements, transhumanism and instrumentalisation of the human

body. It pleads for Greater Human Sensitivity and Responsibility in fostering human dignity while engaging in technological innovations. It asks for for a “permanent confrontation with technology” since Technology would always remain a human act. It recalls the plea of Pope John Paul II: “If the scientific research in this area should serve the person, it must be accompanied by a careful ethical reflection on every step, which reflects in corresponding legal norms for keeping the human life intact. Life can never be degraded to an object.”

The next article by another promising scholar, Gini T.G., Research Scholar, Loyola College, Chennai, places before us two crucial choices. According to her Human Genome Project unfolds our collective identity as humankind. We progressively seem to acquire more power and greater responsibility. Our collective identity reminds us that all our actions have a profound effect on the environment and on virtually all forms of life. We become stewards of our own Genome and this calls us for greater responsibility. With the discovery of the nature of DNA and the genetic code, a new previously unknown world was opened up that lies within each of us; within the cells of all other living creatures. Insights into all that was considered to be human nature, from disease possibilities to dispositions were poised to enter humankind’s collective consciousness. Our explorations of the then unknown world which now have initiated unfolding in and through Genetic Revolution impels us to delve into the anthropic implications of the genome mapping and of the project of being human.

In the middle of the 20th century, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin viewed human beings as “Evolution become conscious of itself.” Today in the beginning of the 21st century we can well broaden this understanding as “Evolution become capable of consciously extending or eliminating itself.” So too in the reflections ahead, the author probes into the shift that has taken place in our understanding of Human beings as co-creators; Human understanding of God; Human longing for fulfilment; Humans as being at-home in the universe; human capability to affirm life; human urgency to make choices as well as human vocation as trailblazers of self-extinction or self-extension.

After focussing on the unique role and responsibility of humans in the universe of life, the author says that it is the task of the present humanity has to make constant and responsible choices collectively to determine our destiny – to extend or to extinct. In this sense today's human beings are the train-blazers for the whole of life. We have reached the level of consciousness that other living beings can hope for. Either we can foster the evolution in all living creatures or we can wipe out evolution and consequently life itself from earth.

3. Crucial Concerns

In the third part of this book, we take up some crucial concerns of the Indian Church and society: the nature of knowledge and the intentional spread of ignorance leading to exploitation; the need for an ecologically sensitive folk religiosity and a deeper analysis of the intricacies of and religious response to the caste system.

Since India claims to be a knowledge society and a knowledge-hub for the world there are two articles dealing with knowledge and ignorance. So the paper by Nishant Irudayadason, a budding scholar who has specialised in postmodernity and ethics, attempts to study the nature and significance of knowledge. He treats the subject from the perspectives of postmodern authors Foucault and Lyotard. The paper discusses first the ideas of Foucault followed by Lyotard's understanding of knowledge. Then it tries to show how their perspectives on knowledge affect the information-knowledge distinction and their relevance for contemporary society. Foucault's and Lyotard's extensive treatment of knowledge rests on a very important principle, that is, knowledge is necessarily a matter of social relation. They differ in their view of what type of social relations underlies knowledge. While for Foucault, it is power and techniques associated with power, for Lyotard, it is related to the shifting language games. However it is quite clear from their analysis that the distinction between information and knowledge gets blurred in postmodern perspectives. Knowledge is not pre-given or internalization through appropriation but is already and always interwoven with information we receive depending on our social position and on the language game we are playing.

The next article by Dr Victor Ferrao, Rachol Seminary, Goa focuses on the paradoxical nature of knowledge and on the circulation of ignorance, a topic rarely discussed in academic circles. Epistemology and ignorance are intimately related. We might naively construe the relationship as hostile because epistemology deals with operations of knowledge, the goal being the elimination of ignorance. It appears that epistemology and ignorance are radically opposed to each other. But a deeper scrutiny will manifest some of the complexities involving the two. Perhaps a juxtaposing of the two, as in 'epistemology of ignorance', might offer an effective semantic tool that will assist us in drawing out the nuances implied and prove to be educative and transformative.

So this article studies the complex phenomenon of ignorance exploring its different forms, examining how it is produced and sustained. It problematizes the role that they play in knowledge production and circulation, and seek to understand how they impact the power relations in our society. Epistemologies of ignorance certainly widen the understanding of ignorance that is often construed as a gap in knowledge or an epistemic oversight that can be remedied once it is noticed. While this kind of ignorance does exist it is not the only kind. There are also other forms of ignorance that can put on the mask of knowledge and produce domination and exploitation. Sometimes these 'unknowledges' are deliberately produced while at other times they are unconsciously generated.

The production, maintenance and circulation of ignorance in our society generates oppression and exploitation. Ignorance is not merely a tool of oppression employed by the powerful. It is also a strategy of survival of the victims. Often the victims of oppression use it to unlearn the ways of the oppressor. This is widely known as the 'strategy of resistance'. In the context of our exploration of how a witness of Christian values can liberate society, we explore how ignorance, in multiple ways, can re-produce oppression. However, we are not merely interested in the understanding of this issue, but also in its remedy. Hence, our study is both diagnostic and therapeutic. The motivation for this study flows from our mission to bring forth the kingdom of God in our society. It is in this regard that we feel that our study of the epistemologies of ignorance can redeem

our society, leading to a praxis of life deeply fueled by the values of the kingdom.

The next article by James Ponniah, Dean, Faculty of Philosophy, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, deals with ecological concerns and folk traditions. Caring for the earth has become an imperative in today's society. In this age of post-modernity and post-development, humans have finally come to realize that the future of humanity and the future of the environment are intrinsically, inseparably and indefinitely related to each other. But the folk and indigenous cultures have always believed in this inalienable relationship and manifested it through their religious and symbolic schemes. This essay endeavours to delve into their religious universe by deploying their frames of conceptualisation and their meaning-schemes of strategic action that reveal their collective self's integration with the natural environment. It does this by engaging in a discussion on various questions and topics such as why study "religion" for ecology?, The relationship between humans and nature, conservation of nature in folk religions, folk ritual realm as a form of indigenous environmentalism, ecological concerns in folk world-view, shaman: an ecologist?, and the role of religion in the conflictual relationship between development and ecology.

While celebrating the sovereignty of the common folk in India, the essay demonstrates how religion can play a vital role in the conservation of endangered bioregions through the folk religious forms and imaginative acts like 'Ganv' and 'Sacred Grove'— which are characterized by their regional discursive formation. It further shows how they are closely related to the natural environment and the human habitat of the place. While modern environmental studies make us increasingly aware of nature's ability to influence and affect human lives, such a truth has always been part of the heritage of folk world-view. It describes religious beliefs and practices as cultural-ecological adaptations that are systemically involved in the maintenance of human ecosystems. It transmits habits, and attitudes of mind to succeeding generations, thereby guaranteeing the perpetuation of an ecologically sustainable religious world-view. Folk religions and their rituals basically aim at generating, maintaining, preserving and upholding a world-view that sees a

fundamental unity between god, nature and humans. It is built on a philosophy that these different dimensions can affect each other, influence each other, and take care of each other. By making nature as an entity with power and by endowing on its objects such trees, hills and waters varying degrees of power, the Indian folk-world-view has constructed nature and its parts as manifestations of diving power, *shakti*. Thus it has made humans respect nature, while modernity has reduced nature and its various parts to 'powerless' objects.

The article further argues that folk religion needs to be understood as an interface between development and ecology. It also shows that the indigenous or folk forms of religious resources can be both prophetic and transformative as well as conservative and constraining.

Caring for the earth and ecological concerns help us to appreciate our relationship with the whole cosmos. The next paper by Binoy Pickalakkattu, a mathematician and theologian, attempts to study relationality as an integral aspect of reality. For this the author bases himself on scientific and philosophical perspectives, with a view to understanding theology more adequately. The worldview of science plays a significant role in shaping the philosophical and theological worldview and vice versa. In this paper he starts with the Western perspective on relation and relationality with specific reference to the views of Stoics, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. It is followed by the idea of relationality in process philosophy. We bring to light the notion of relationality in Indian Philosophical schools with special emphasis on Sankara's notion of relation. Relationality is further substantiated by the Vedic myth of *Purusa Sukta* which underscores the relatedness of the living and non-living beings of the universe. We move on to the scientific grounding of relationality with special reference to Newtonian Mechanics, Einstein's Theory of Relativity and Quantum Mechanics. It is shown that the concept of relation has been a food for thought in the schools of science and philosophy both in the East and in the West. The scientific and philosophical grounding of relationality enable us to create an adequate platform for interfacing science, philosophy and theology.

The scientifically and philosophically inferred analogical sparks of divine nature on the world also set forth a new scientific framework for theology and an incentive to rethink its traditional conceptions of Theological doctrines and dogmas. In this paper we tried for a historical synthesis of the concept of relation from scientific and philosophical perspectives.

The next article by Kuruvilla Pandikattu, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, deals with the paradoxical relationship between Gandhi and Ambedkar or between classical reformatory Hinduism and revolutionary Neo-Buddhism – a very relevant theme for contemporary India. This is an attempt to study critically the emergence and development of the new religious movement Neo-Buddhism from Hinduism, which has been facilitated by modern technology and education in India. As a powerful protest against the traditional cultural and economic order, as exemplified by caste system, and a serious effort to usher in a radically new social and cultural order, Neo-Buddhism is significant in understanding the contemporary Indian scenario. The two icons that we study are Ambedkar and Gandhi, both of whom have worked sincerely and tirelessly for the upliftment of those enslaved by the caste system. Their religious commitment and scientific openness are also discussed, with a view to understanding better the dynamics of Indian society.

This paper argues that one's social upbringing and personal experience shape, to a large extent, if not totally determine, one's religious commitment and scientific openness. Gandhi was deeply concerned about the untouchables and he wanted to uplift them by being faithful to the cultural and religious system of Hinduism. This made him rather conservative or withdrawn towards scientific and technological innovations. On the other hand, Ambedkar's passionate commitment to the cause of the untouchables made him give up his original religion and opt for another. Their life-experiences and diverging responses, the author believes, has something to teach to the Indian Church.

Whereas in their lifetime Gandhi and Ambedkar were political rivals, now, decades after their death, it should be possible to see their contributions as complementing one another's. The history of Dalit emancipation, advocated by both leaders, is unfinished, and

for the most part unwritten. It should, and will, find space for many heroes. Ambedkar and Gandhi will do nicely for a start. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi was not so much the Father of the Nation as the mother of all debates regarding its future. His fight with Ambedkar continues even today, and Ambedkar seems to be winning in contemporary India.

The article concludes by holding that India has sufficient space for many Gandhis, the social reformers, and many Ambedkars the cultural revolutionaries. Together, even through their controversies, they will facilitate the emergence of a new cultural and economic order in India. The discourse of a multi-cultural, pluralistic and scientifically advancing India with different religious traditions will go on, and this is highly desirable. The Catholic Church can contribute religiously and spiritually to such an on-going discourse in India.

The concluding part deals specifically with Professor Kunnumpuram. An article by Professor Kurien Kunnumpuram, to whom this issue of *Jnanadeepa* is dedicated, briefly discusses some of the theological views he holds. He has been engaged in learning and teaching theology for about fifty years. During the course of these years he has gained some theological insights and acquired certain theological convictions. It is these that he tries to articulate here. What is said here is necessarily tentative and incomplete.

Then carefully and cautiously, he summarizes his theological position on the following topics: God; The Human Person; The World: Jesus Christ; The Church as a Divine–Human Reality; and The Mission of the Church. Essentially these reflections are liberative, life-affirming, future-oriented and hope-based.

His focus has been to evolve a vision of Church's understanding of mission as comprehensive, service-oriented and resonating with the Kingdom of God. It is possible that all our ministries – be they frontier mission, pastoral work, education, health services or social involvement – be directed to the fulfilment of this mission. This may, however, call for a radical reorientation of our ministries.

This is followed by another article that describes the life-journey of Kurien Kunnumpuram, that is found in *Wikipedia*. A few details of his personal life and academic activities are also provided.