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# **Priests amidst Conflicts**

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**Abstract:** In our conflict-ridden world, priests are called upon to be servants of God and God's people. Those who have power and position have their own vision of society, of structures and their purposes. Those who are powerless have totally viewpoints on these matters. Priests have to be on the side of the weak and accompany them with empathy. Jesus provides the best example for this. Priests have to make the Eucharistic culture their own, to bring about that which Jesus intended. This will involve self-sacrifice, and bringing to the centre those who are in the periphery.

**Keywords:** Priest, conflicts, commitment, appropriate intervention, critique, alternative, Eucharist, humanization.

## **1.0 Wounded Context of Conflicts**

Ours is the age of mindless prostration before powers and privileges. The covenantal bond between money and manipulation, prosperity and pomp, affluence and influence is loudly canonized in the corridors of power. The voice of the wretched is muffled, their rights transgressed and their lives sacrificed upon the altar of the wealthy for their luxurious pursuits. It is against this backdrop, we, the priests, are beckoned to reflect on our priestly commitment to our people in the wounded history in the background of the definitive and compassionate divine intervention through the Jesus-event in continuity with the Exodus-event. Such an exercise might inspire us, the priests, to reprioritize our values that are operative in our life and highlight our responsibility towards the powerless humans.

## 1.1 Divine Intervention

Could one imagine the fear of losing its life, throbbing in the heart of a baby deer surrounded by the pack of organized wolves hunting for their prey and making a dinner out of it? When such fears of hapless victims in any conflict situation is recognized with motherly care and fraternal concern for saving their life and dignity, then one could say that a humanizing intervention by the divine hand is taking place. It will further probe into the layers of the struggling consciousness of the deer with its right to live. At the same time, it will take courage to expose the killer designs of the organized violence of the blood-thirsty wolves. If the civil society is sustained by courage and confidence, it will proceed to intervene in emancipating the life of the deer unscathed and in penalizing the wolves in public space of the society. Healing the deer, it will seek to place it back in the company of the other deer in the fertile forest. Punishing the wolves, it will contemplate on driving them away into the barren wilderness. "The deer are condemned to become the daily bread of the wolves"- Such perceptions and positions deemed to be the normal jungle law, natural law, or even divine law are kept on subverted and deconstructed by civil society.

The servants supposedly representing the God of justice cannot afford, in the name of maintaining the middle path, to opt for callous indifference when encountering conflicts between the killer forces and life-seeking struggles. In such situations it seeks not only to fill the hungry with good things and exalt the lowly, but also takes courage to scatter away the proud-hearted and put down the mighty from the thrones.

## 1.2 Nuances of Conflicts

The priests as the servants of God and His people have to evolve sharp tools to comprehend both the articulate and inarticulate agenda of the disempowered. In this process, it could differentiate how the sturdy structures legitimizing the power-centres and weak energies empowering the vulnerable, function in opposite directions. They could be portrayed as follows:

<b>Orientations Of the Structures of Power-centres</b>	<b>Orientations Of the Energies of the Vulnerable</b>
<b>I. Levels of Ideology/ Education (Brahmana)</b>	
Social honour/ leadership based on one's origin or birth	Social honour/ leadership based on intensity of culture of caring/ sharing
Legitimization to perpetuate the domination of the powerful	Favouring the life struggles of the disempowered
Respect for traditions, documents of yester years	Discourses on the dreams and utopia emerging from present struggles
Upholding the ideology of exclusion by series of reasons	Projecting the ideology of inclusion by every effort
Masking the existing or creating new conflicts in favour of the ruling elite	Exposing the existing and creating new conflicts for the process of democratization
All (body, life, nature, or god) are good enough to be indulged in as commodities	Efforts of not hurting justice or not justifying injustice interpreted as the purity of God
Humans for the law	Law for the humans

Coercive claims of truth as falsehood and falsehood as truth	Intuitive realization of truth emerging from the sense of treating others as co-humans
Other worldly philosophical or theological discourses postponing solutions for the present problems	Urgency of seeking justice here and now on the historical plane
Spirituality shying away from the existing conflicts	Spiritual exploration into the existing conflicts
Normative ethics based on some package of traditions	Explorative ethics seeking new directions according to the needs of adequate response to existing conflicts
Teaching non-violence in public while hiding the truth beneath some reason or other	Raising the question openly on the ready-made teachings on non-violence and daring to explore new possibilities

## **II. Levels of Authority/ Governance/ Weapons** **(Kshatriya)**

Accumulation of power	Democratization of power and collective responsibility
Weapons are in the hands of those authorized by the ruling elite	In the face of violence, it may not hesitate to advocate democratization of weapons
Intervention of the rulers is always right and that of the ruled amounts to treason	Intervention from within and outside is invited for upholding the legitimate rights and human dignity of the victims
Citizens are to be ever	Citizens are capable of

treated with vigilance and control	making decisions as their duty
Surreptitious imposition of the decisions from higher echelons of the ruling structure	Consensus evolved from the general public in the process of weighing the pros and cons in any decision
Fanning the emotions behind non-contradictory conflicts leading to bloodshed (SCs $\leftrightarrow$ BCs)	Contradictory conflicts will be gradually identified and unveiled (Economic Globalisation $\leftrightarrow$ Landless Labourers)
Active hierarchy through the undercurrents of monarchical / feudalistic practices even in the name of democracy	Opportunities are distributed to all according to the needs and efficiency both at the collective and individual levels
Public exhortation on the need of law and order with veiled threat and statistical data	Discourses on basic needs like drinking water, rise of the price of rice, unemployment, need for basic educational and health facilities
Emergency ordinances/ crisis management with armed forces	Dialogical style of gradually evolving working relationship even in the face of conflicts
Custodial deaths / encounter deaths	Creating disorder when possible / apparently peaceful with repression but no compromise with state terrorism
Easy and fast process of decision making due to the	Delayed and tough process of decision making due to

unilateral approach	multipolar                      dialogical approach
Conveniently justice will be delayed /denied	Restless and impatient till justice is rendered

### **III. Levels of Economic-Political Networking (Vaishya)**

Higher the status→ Higher the Privileges→ Lower the Sanctions	Rewards and Punishments according to one's performance irrespective of one's status
Favouring the powerful with privileges in the name of equality, i.e., Meritocracy defying the Reservation Policy	Favouring the under- privileged in the name of discriminatory justice, i.e., Reservation for the SC/ ST/ BC/ MBC
Capable of producing fake historical data for the convenience of gaining more benefits	Consistent interpretation of the historical data in favour of the disempowered people
Others = Plunderers, Criminals, Deviants & Competitors	Others = Co-humans meant for mutual sharing
Prosperity of the nation is measured through the welfare of the Business Establishments / Stock Exchanges	Prosperity of the nation measured through avail- ability , basic needs, health care, educational facilities and employment oppor- tunity for all
Alliance of the local and international investors in the name of globalization of capital and market	Alliance of the local and international labour class people as the globalization of solidarity
Economy thriving on the basis of stock exchange, e-	Economy with the preference for the

commerce, foreign exchange, mega development projects	availability of potable water, food, guarantee for employment and personal security of each of the last and the least
Profit as the only criterion for development	Human solidarity as the yard stick for progress
Insensitivity towards one's neighbour - "Am I my brother's keeper?"	Sensitivity even to the anonymous corpse on the road with sense of belongingness

Amidst these conflicts between the minority of the ruling elite seeking to accumulate power for its own sake and the majority of the common folk looking for alternate ways of democratization of power, the ministries of the servants of God are evolved. When the heat of the conflicts becomes enhanced, then the creative expressions of their ministries become creatively multifaceted.

### **1.3 Need for Appropriate Intervention**

When the structures of the democratic governance (Legislature, Judiciary, and Executive) fail in their duties of protecting the Human Rights through the democratization of power and actively protects the vested interests of the dominant but minority power elite, there rises a dynamic restlessness amidst the common folk. This dynamic restlessness from the grassroots is the spiritual foundation and the inspiring energy of the servants of God. The same very dynamic restlessness would express itself in terms of individual or collective interventions as the constructive measures against destructive forces actively operative across the society. The righteous anger actively inspiring the less powerful to undo the schemes of

the powerful elite blocking justice to be meted out to one and all cannot escape the attention of the priests as the servants of building the community of God's people.

## 2.0 Nation with Contradictions

As a great nation, we are heading on towards becoming the super power of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. India is a great developing country challenging the developed countries.

- We live in a nation where the price of rice of Rs. 40/- per kg in the open market and the dual or multiple SIM cards are free of charge.
- Pizza is door-delivered with lightning speed than the snail-pace arrival of the police and the ambulance service during the cry of emergency.
- Loans for buying cars are allotted immediately just with 5% interest whereas for educational purposes the loans are only available with 12.5% interest.
- Assembly Complex Building are getting ready within one year but even after ages the Public Transport bridges are being constructed endlessly with the ultimate purpose of being demolished again and again.
- We are an incredible nation, the great India, the supreme power of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- The violation of human rights is unprecedented in our age. Such violations are overtly and covertly performed by rulers who are supposed to protect the human rights of their own citizens.
- The aggression of armed forces in Kashmir, seven states like Manipur in the North East
- Cases of murders of 10000, tortures of 100000, and hundreds of thousands of missing – all people with flesh and blood



- The new face of fascism in Gujarat
- Orissa is marooned by the invasions of the MNCs/TNCs besides the besiege of the religious fundamentalists
- Hundreds of the villages of Narmada Valley inundated by the mega project of the new dams
- Tribals are driven out from their native habitat of hectares of forests, denuded with bulldozers and earth removers, for the so-called development projects
- Virtual conditions of civil war in Jharkhand and Chattisgarh
- The suicide of thousands of farmers in the states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra
- Intercontinental Agni missiles are successfully launched, but the wretched are reduced to be rag-pickers on the city streets and the humans forced to become manual scavengers carrying the human excreta on their heads.

The dogma of the terrorism of so-called development seems to be proclaimed from the roof-tops as if it is the only way to humanize the world and the people. The market powers are networked and the people and their Governments are viewed only as market entities. The ultimate outcome is nothing short of bloodshed and civil war in almost 150 districts of our country.<sup>1</sup>

### **3.0 Critique and Alternative**

The situation of marginalisation rightly generates righteous anger in the minds and hearts of the subalterns. This anger is anchored upon the deprivation of life that they are subjected to. It seeks to replace the prevailing order bearing out the status quo of the rulers with an

entirely new one. The righteous wrath of the subalterns against dehumanization, even while functioning as the critique of the oppressive means and mechanisms, looks for possible alternatives implicitly or explicitly. For instance the following three subaltern socio-cultural locations have their respective aspects of the critique and alternative as indicated below:

Socio-cultural location	Critique	Alternative
Dalits	Permanent pollution/arbitrary segregation/ attributed status/ immutable social hierarchy imposed in the name of tradition/ gods/ order/ harmony	Annihilation of caste hierarchy/ discriminatory justice against discriminatory injustice/ universal egalitarianism irrespective of one's origin of birth/ radical relational anthropology
Adivasis and Tribals	Imposed alienation from the ethos of autonomous community uprooted from Mother Nature in the name of development for the society at large/ profit-oriented nature-destroying mechanistic world-view promoting	Autonomy of the culture of egalitarian communities with inclusive growth of all in harmony with the symphony of Mother Nature

	ruthless consumerism	
<b>Women Constantly Haunted even with Productive Hard Labour</b>	Sexist hierarchy based on irrational patriarchy, in collusion with caste hierarchy, relegating women with minimum rightful space in society	Participation as co- human-persons in deciding for sharing of power and resources, irrespective of one's gender identity

By and large, one could observe the in-built relationship between subaltern critique and subaltern alternative. The priests will be on the right track when they carefully identify the seismic movements beneath the critique as well as the alternative. If so, they become capable of effectively excavating even the latent or inarticulate subaltern agenda from the interior movements of the victims of history. The culture-specific and history-specific expressions of the subaltern critique and alternative have to be gradually evolved when dialogue takes place between the Subaltern People and the Priests. In this dialogical space both partners become learner-teacher with a sense of exploration with ongoing mutual understanding. Corrective measures will be addressed and undertaken by both partners (Subaltern People and the Priests). In this dialogical interaction the anti-subaltern forces could be identified both within and without through the dialogue of sharing the 'critique-and-alternative'.

### 3.1 Priest as Empathetic Accompanier

In the process of enabling the spontaneous release of the life-affirming energies from the flesh-and-blood

subaltern people, the priests have to simultaneously encounter the high-handedness of the powers that be and the dynamic restlessness of the battered subalterns. Thus by way of bringing about the transformation of 'the miseries of oppression into beatitudes of emancipation', the subalterns have to be activated to become the agents of transformation. The intervention of the priests has to enable them to be awakened to the destiny as designed by the Lord of History. The contributions of the priests, by way of systematic articulation of the subaltern agenda, are but the catalysts for the furtherance of people's on-going encounters with multiple conflicts. In this process of identification and articulation of the liberative potentials embedded in the very lives of the subalterns, the priests cannot afford to be the 'outsiders' to the subaltern socio-cultural and politico-economic world. It is only by genuine solidarity with repeated attempts at sharing the subaltern vulnerabilities and sensibilities, the priests could become the 'organic participants' in their joys and sufferings. This process could be further enriched in the following manner:

- The questions emerging from the life-experience of the silenced subalterns are analytically sharpened by the tools provided by the human sciences.
- These sharpened questions related to the situations of oppression are made into problems related to crucial and critical issues in the operative meaning systems, like 'to be human or not to be human?' or 'Is egalitarianism merely an idle talk?'
- These ultimate nature issues are made to dialogue with the life-affirming streams found in the religio-cultural world of other people's struggle for a new life elsewhere are brought as the dialogue-partners.

In this process, the priests, in spite of their privileged

training and expertise, should consciously choose to play the role of the mid-wife serving the subalterns. It is the people who give birth to their own emancipation. Its delivery can be smoothly conducted by the active solidarity of the organically functioning Civil Society.

#### 4.0 Paradigms of Interventions from Jesus

The ideological edifices of the powers that be with the vast networks of communication facilities eloquently hijack the minds of the middle class consumers with communicational networks. But on the other hand the ideological expressions of the disempowered weaklings are voiced out as the forlorn cry in the wilderness. They could be differentiated as follows:

Ideological Orientations of the Powerful Elite Crying from the Himalayan Heights	Ideological Orientations of the Disempowered crying from the Abysmal Subterranean Depths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent &amp; Attractive</li> <li>• Magnificent &amp; Colourful</li> <li>• Eloquent &amp; Eye-catching</li> <li>• Dramatic Grip &amp; Liminal Thrill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent &amp; Intermittent</li> <li>• Anonymous &amp; Unpopular</li> <li>• Insignificant &amp; Ignored</li> <li>• Down-to-earth &amp; Dismissed as Ordinary</li> </ul>

Could the vulnerable group of mice eat up the Himalayan rocks and roots? Yes, if the mice are united in biting with their infant teeth with determination. Even if it might take ages to achieve this Himalayan objective, it is worth undertaking such a challenging exercise. Amidst these challenges, the priests have to unveil the broad spectrum of the historical gifts bestowed upon and tasks demanded of the humans, both as individuals and as society, by the Eucharistic culture ushered in by Jesus Christ.

What are the vibrant demands of the Eucharist?

- In continuity with the historical impact of the Eucharistic outburst of divine energies, could we continue to protect and promote the lives of the common folk in and through our own bodies today?
- What are the reverberations in today's conflict-ridden situations when we remember the stories of the exodus and the Jesus-event?
- What could create a harmonious network of humans – cosmos - God?
- How could we, as individuals and society, spontaneously evolve the fine art of sowing our body and blood in the spirit of a motherly self-gift, without victimizing others?
- What are the enlivening features of the culture of caring with solidarity and sharing with harmony emerging from the spirituality of servanthood?

If the humans take courage to breathe in the Eucharistic culture, then they will be empowered to actively participate in the divine struggle of removing the sins of the world. In order to encounter the recurring currents of the sins of the world, we need to promote human rights, genuine solidarity, and egalitarian sharing with those vanquished in every conflict situation. By enabling the marginalized to realize their God-given human dignity as co-human with others on an equal footing, the oppressive humans too are helped to realize their God-given humanity damaged by their practices of dehumanizing the others. This is how authentic reconciliation between the marginalized and the oppressive humans will take place in human history. In this brief presentation we shall evoke the enlivening orientations of the Eucharistic culture

seeking to remove the sins of the world.

#### **4.1 Tremors of Eucharistic Memory**

The Eucharist cannot be just reduced to the act of ritually elevating the bread and the cup in the context of solemn community worship. The outburst of divine energies emerging from the violently crushed body of the Lamb of God is to be distributed to all creation. Each and every move of the Jesus-event, before and after his brutal murder, has been marked with being broken and distributed to all creation. This divine offer has to continue till the end of the world.

##### **4.1.1 Who are the Closest of Our Kinsfolk?**

In the time of Jesus, a minority but hegemonic elite excluded the vast majority of the voiceless people drenched in the sweat of their daily labour as polluted creatures. The common folk were gratuitously labelled as sinners by the 'pure' people who could never respect them as co-humans. But, the unconditional embrace of such people as equals is the hall mark of the Eucharistic culture.

This creation of an inclusive community does not rest with manifest verbal expressions of hospitality, warm welcoming gestures, or acts of feeding the hungry. One could be charitable with indifference, coldness and practicing untouchability. One could wash the feet of the inferior people with gloved hands and masked face. But the Eucharistic culture had the direct organic link with the following realities usually dismissed as dirty and polluted. Even before the body of Jesus, the Son of Man, was broken as the ransom for many, it had the direct contact with the saliva of the little children, the blood of the woman suffering from hemorrhages, the hair and the

perfumed oily hands of the woman counted as a prostitute, the stinking water, pus, or blood oozing out from the body of the diseased and dying socially or actually. The Eucharistic bond of union shatters the mind-set of 'pollution through touch' and ushers in the new one of 'sanctifying through the touch' and of 'getting sanctified through touch of the so-called untouchables'. This is not salvation 'through remote control' but through intimate oneness with the victims of history.

Perception through Eucharistic eyes takes pain to rightly identify the divine elements organically throbbing in the flesh and the blood of those reduced to untouchability, yet struggling to realize their God-given human dignity on a par with other humans. It further venerates the divine operative in the body and the spirit of the victims. The gratuitous labeling of the victims as 'ungrateful', 'good for nothing', 'illiterate', 'eternal drunkard', 'promiscuous', 'inhuman', or 'socially dead creatures' runs counter to the spirit of incarnational solidarity in which the Eucharistic Lord throws his lot with the victims.

#### **4.1.2 The Sacred in the Periphery**

The culture of gratefulness does not get imprisoned within the culture of pragmatic calculation of buying-selling. Rather the clutches of pragmatism gets broken in genuine gratitude. Acts of genuine reaching-out to the least and the last become the spontaneous expression of the Samaritan who himself was a victim of the systemic evil of untouchability.

On their way to Jerusalem, Jesus' disciples claimed to have been humiliated by the Samaritans while passing through a Samaritan village. These 'Sons of Thunderbolt'



demanded a wrathful outburst of fire and brimstone from the heavens. But Jesus' perception of the Samaritans did not count them as deserving divine wrath. He refused to victimize the hapless people excluded by the self-styled 'pure' Jews. He was able to see the fairness behind the wrath of the 'polluted' people.

In the same way, the detested Samaritan woman with questionable morality became a dialogue partner with Jesus near the public well in broad day light. In course of the spontaneous exchange between the deplorable woman and the venerable 'Rabbi', what transpired was not the exposition of her misbehavior. The horizons of her mind and heart, oppressed so far by gloomy secrets, were widened with the hope of abundant life, committed to a new integrity.

Another Samaritan was portrayed as resuscitating an anonymous person dying on the road after being hit by criminals. The half-dead person was humanized by the caring touch of the Samaritan untouchable. The construction of purity by the priestly classes stands condemned. The Syro-Phoenecian woman gently instructs the Rabbi by her dynamic faith in the life-giving God in the face of the demonic powers assailing her daughter. Jesus' experience of being educated by her faith-praxis is manifested in his profuse compliments on her exemplary faith.

Jesus owns up whoever does good to others, especially to those suffering. He seeks to alleviate the sufferings of the abandoned ones habitually labeled as 'sinners' by self-styled puritans. In doing so, his aversion towards self-proclaimed supremacy runs counter to the disciples' obsession about 'who is the greatest?' This large

heartedness enables him to extend his hands to win over friends even from among marginalized: Levi, the tollgate attendant, and Zachaeus, celebrate their table fellowship in their respective houses. This fellowship is based not on birth or status but on being co-humans. Even when caught red handed, the woman accused of trading her body was treated by Jesus as respectable with a right for personal discernment in the face of men ready to sleep with her in private, but to stone her to death in public. The children, driven away by the disciples, are welcomed kindly. These are typical expressions of Eucharistic culture.

#### **4.1.3 Defiance of Power-accumulators**

The Eucharistic culture of Jesus never shied away from excluding those obsessed with power.

- Those seeking to lord it over others are the gentiles for Jesus.
- Those authoritatively preaching to others in public while never practicing the same in private are the accursed ones.
- Those self-styled puritans setting one yardstick for themselves, while setting another for others are condemned.
- The local power-brokers surrendering the hard-earned resources of the people at the feet of the colonial powers (symbolized by the eagle) just for maintaining their power positions like Herod (symbolized by the fox) are denounced.

This is how the Eucharistic culture defied the power-accumulators who excluded the large majority of the common folk.

#### **4.1.4 Eucharistic Alliance**

One has to enlist those with whom Jesus was seeking to join hands in his mission of democratizing the breath of the living God. All those defaced by habitual exclusion practiced by the Jewish elite are his friends. The land owning/educated elite treated the diseased ones (physically famished or mentally handicapped, perhaps due to malnutrition) as unwanted sinners possessed by the evil spirits. These 'unwanted others' were the natural allies for Jesus. His alliance with these people was at work, not with a claim that he was above them as their king, but with the affirmation that their inner power (faith) was capable of raising them up from their vale of tears to become fully human and fully alive. In other words, the wretched ones were encouraged by Jesus' credible solidarity with them to rise from the debris of their brokenness.

The victims are affirmed by Jesus' intervention to identify and activate their inner energies to fight out the culture of death imposed on them by the power-seeking elite. Jesus' promise of salvation (becoming fully human) became a reality in the lives of those crippled by lack of self-confidence, not through the promotion of a magical consciousness reducing them to passive recipients of his own dominance but as active agents co-operating with God's grace in faith. To enable the broken ones to stand on their own legs with confidence and courage is Jesus' style of healing intervention. The disempowered are awakened to new possibilities of self-confidence, self-reliance and self-esteem based on the realization that they are daughters and sons of the one and the only Mother/Father God. This process of a gradual 'politicization of the poor' goes beyond the scope of mere charitable and developmental contributions.

We look forward to this dynamic process of enabling the disempowered through the Eucharistic culture as nurtured by Jesus. When are we, as the Church, going to be awakened to this dimension of the Eucharist? When are our priests going to function as the vanguards in forging such a bond of union with the last and the least in society?

#### **4.1.5 Broken Body to Heal the Broken World**

In any situation, the act breaking a living body is a cruel act. Because, along with the body, one cannot deny that life and honour with the powers to think, feel and will are also demolished in tandem. Down the centuries, we watch the humans becoming increasingly creative in torturing other co-humans, even with a sense of aesthetic fulfillment. The acts of violence imposed on working class women or the so-called ‘untouchable’ labourers or the defenseless before the law by brutal forces with or without uniform, whether reported or not, bear testimony to this.

But on the other hand, the heart-beat of the God of life never permits any blood-shed. “What I want is not sacrifice, but compassion.” When s/he dismisses the blood of animals, how could s/he be pleased with the weak humans being sacrificed on the altars of the strong?

In order to give life to the least and the last, one has to undertake the righteous struggle against the sins of the world and to pay the price to the last drop of blood as Jesus did. It is not Caiaphas’ brand of sacrificing someone else for the sake of many, but Jesus’ brand of self-sacrifice for the sake of all. Some poetic minds sing eloquently that even when a single stomach goes hungry, we will destroy the whole cosmos. But Jesus offers his own life to give abundant life to the others. Those, Christians or not, who live out this culture of self-gift, after the example of

Christ, become his heirs.

#### **4.1.6 Self-sacrifice - For Whom?**

When the body is broken, the well-placed in the society protect themselves with defensive shields, offensive weapons, or at least with medical treatment. But when the defenseless body is broken, what happens? When the head is attacked, the hands rush to defend it from further damage. When the legs are crushed the back bends down to protect them with the shield of one's own head. Just like the mother who throws her whole body as the shield when her child is about to be crushed by a tree falling, Jesus offers his own body as a ransom for many. When the military cadres ripped open the naked bodies of the hapless tribal women in Manipur in North East India, women Human Rights activists vehemently protested against this atrocity by a non-violent naked parade. The Military camp with heaps of arms and ammunitions could not open their doors or fire against these women who dared to register their righteous wrath through their 'collectively humiliated bodies' against the excesses of the Military. In this context, the 'defenseless body' became a medium of protest against the acts of humiliating the 'defenseless body' of women. The eloquent message from this 'naked parade' was that if the Military with their habitual patriarchal arrogance crushed our 'body' in broad day light, our 'crushed body' will be the weapon of the weak to protect the rights of the defenseless 'body' of the rest of the Tribal women.

#### **4.1.7 Dreaming with the Broken**

The concept of the 'Reign of God' found in the Gospels was the 'heart-beat' of the Divine addressing the people in

crisis. The people with apocalyptic expectations expressed this concept as the world of abundant joy of perfect communion divested of every trace of violence, projected either as the future heaven or as the golden past. They were dreaming dreams out of their helplessness. Such dreams are the luxuries available even within the minimum space occupied by them in society.

On the other hand, their leaders had their control mechanisms. The legalism of the Pharisees, the puritanism of the Essenes, the retribution of the Zealots, the lobbying of the Sadducees, the ritualism of the Priests, the scholarship of the Scribes were projected as mediating the will of God. Each item was 'the weapon of the strong' in their respective ideological schools.

Jesus did not fall into the habitual rut of the helpless dreams of the disempowered and the ideologies of the powerful. Rather, he saw the hand of God when an elderly woman was healed of her fever and a young maid of her hemorrhage, when the dead young boy was restored to his widowed mother at Nain and the buried young man back to his sisters at Bethany; he had an eye for divine intervention when a little girl is enabled to eat her meal after his life-restoring pronouncement *talithacumi*.

These are but glimpses into his entirely different ideology which permits a free hand to the divine heart-beat to usher in transformation like the dynamic restlessness of the mustard seed silently sprouting or the leaven mutely leavening the dough unnoticed. In other words, Jesus has a sharp perception in spotting out the silent steps of the Divine in small details, especially when the hapless victims are restored back to life. All his active interventions in the human world were empowered with

this spirit of attending to the details of the life of the victims which may not become the headlines among the power-holders of his time.

For Jesus, the proclamation of the Reign of God through the acts of transforming the broken world as fully human and fully alive is as important as the institution of the Eucharist during the celebration of the Last Supper. His acts of healing the sick, forgiving the sinners, and feeding the hungry are the continuation of his supreme act of offering his energies and potentials - 'This is my Body! This is my Blood! They are an indispensable part of Jesus' life, mission and priestly ministry.

#### **4.1.8 All-embracing Ideology**

During the Last Supper, the Jewish heart of Jesus remembered the originary Exodus-event of the indescribable escape of his forefathers and foremothers as the bare-footed run-away bonded labourers from the murderous chase of the Egyptian army, well-equipped with fast moving chariots of horses and lethal weapons. It was a memory of the defeat of the Egyptian imperialism. This Divine intervention had the strong message, to be communicated through the leadership of Moses and Aaron, that they were supposed neither to be enslaved nor to enslave others. They were to become a counter-cultural community, growing as a tribal confederation promoting the culture of solidarity, compassion, and egalitarianism, especially with affirmative intervention in favour of the abandoned ones – the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the sojourners, with a democratic distribution of all resources like land, water, food. An inclusive ideology of living together in total solidarity with one another, this Paschal memory had the following movements:

Unorganised Bonded Labourers→ Organised People  
Towards Egalitarianism; Exclusive Ideology of Rulers→  
Inclusive Ideology among the Equals. These movements  
enacted by the Aramean wanderers were led by none other  
than God as their only Leader. The tremors of these  
memories were expressed in and through the annual  
Paschal celebration celebrated by the community and  
family.

Remembering the exodus event Jesus must have been  
aware of the abandoned ones of his time – the ordinary  
folk labelled as sinners, faceless *ochlos* (crowds/ masses)  
assailed by the visible human powers of the Romans and  
their own collaborating leaders and the invisible demonic  
forces as he offered his body and blood for them.

#### **4.1.9 Life itself as Liturgy**

The Eucharistic culture enables us to identify the  
movements of the divine Spirit activating the life-seeking  
struggles of the common folk outside the comfort zones of  
the habitual worship within the confines of Church  
buildings. When identifying such divine movements our  
hands of solidarity will be freely extended to the people  
constantly assailed by visible powers and invisible forces.  
Such solidarity could create a synergetic collaboration to  
intensify their on-going struggles against life-negating  
forces in order to bring in the culture of compassion with  
the spirit of egalitarian sharing with one another. In other  
words, the broken body of the common folk will be healed  
by the intervention of those who offer their body to be  
broken in the act of defending their God-given human  
dignity. Such attitudes of self-sacrifice for the sake of the  
many will be the effective antidote to the demonic culture  
of excluding others in the name of creed or caste, birth or



origin, status or gender, language or location. The washing of the dirty feet of the so-called 'untouchables' will definitely ensure the death-knell of the culture of discriminatory hierarchy in every form. Such efforts of struggling against the sins of the world will usher in the culture of effective compassion in place of apathetic indifference.

## **5.0 Commitment amidst Conflicts**

In the act of struggling against the sins of the world, there are prices to be paid. Such concrete acts could demand my own body to be broken and blood to be spilled. When my body is broken in the act of defending the subaltern broken body, then I become the defending shield of the poor. As the Eucharistic body, our lot is to voluntarily become a ransom for many.

If so, never worship anyone (or anything) who should not be worshipped. Never shy away from democratizing the hope-generating and life-promoting prophetic stories even if the stiff-necked stick on to the culture of domination leading to death. Keep on doing the works in continuity with the Lamb of God, where God is also working with right intervention with right intensity at the right time. Cherish the sense of belonging to God as an eagerly awaiting spouse with an open mind and open heart welcoming every initiative for making the universe fertile with life-giving water. Celebrate life in enlivening others by immersing yourself in the culture of life, as the hope-engendering agents of God and never as the minions of the devilish Empires of dehumanization.

Let not the Blazing Fire of the Eucharist and the  
Priesthood

Be Reduced to a Soothing Balm!

Let not the Brilliant Sun of the Eucharist and the  
Priesthood  
Be Minimized to a Wet Match Stick!

<sup>1</sup> According to the recent statistical data (Cf. Dinamalar dated May 19, 2010), we come to know that armed struggles are quite active in 195 Districts in 10 States of India. The numbers of people who were killed violently in 2009-2010 as recorded from among the ordinary folk, armed personnel and the Maoists are given as below:

**2009-2010**

States	People	Armed Person- nel	Naxals	People	Armed Person- nel	Naxals
Andhra	10	0	18	4	0	2
Bihar	37	25	16	22	6	3
Chat- tisgarh	87	121	137	7	87	54
Jhar- khand	74	67	76	27	9	6
Maha- rashtra	12	52	23	1	0	1
Orissa	36	32	13	20	16	11
West Bengal	135	15	9	50	27	23
Other States	1	0	2	0	0	1
Total	392	312	294	131	145	100

It is in the above context of the bloodshed, marginalization, and violation of human rights, that the Civil Society comes out with its critical analysis and alternative visions for a new life.