



---

## Editorial:

### Humanising Social Life

Ambivalent change – political, social and technological – has been the outstanding feature of the 20th century affecting Indian societies and peoples like it has affected throughout the globe. Whereas the first half of the century witnessed elaborate campaigns of political and economic unification and assimilation culminating in totalitarian systems of suppression, in India it has paved the way for the political independence of this country from the British Empire. The latter half of this century has been emerging, not without its own contradictions, as a movement toward human freedom buttressed by a newly found sense of the dignity of the human person that has found expression in movements like the implementation of Mandal commission report and the political movements of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes demanding greater respect and greater role in the social life of Indian societies. Within this context, the present seminar raises the question of how the humanization of social life is to be understood. One can possibly think that there are two principal dynamics in the idea of humanization of social life: these two dynamics are based on (a) the idea of what a person is and (b) the idea of how a society is. We are often told that a society is the setting in which the person exists and acts, so that person and society seem closely interrelated and hence not very problematic.

However, there are two goals at which both person and society are supposed to strive for and aim at. These two goals are: (1) one becomes more humanized by humanizing one's social

relations (2) humanizing oneself by taking recourse to spiritual path. Though each of the two tasks initially begins with what seems indifferent, in practice, there appears to be different ways for Oriental and Occidental cultures.

What is humanization is a difficult theoretical question. Some may suggest that community is an essential aspect in the idea of humanization; others may suggest that the deliverance of individual ego is the source of every kind of humanization. But, having postulated such an ideal does not mean that one is humanized as a person as well as a member of a given society. The significant question is: Would that all human beings agreed on a common concept of what it is to be the basis of the idea of humanization? Plato in his Republic attempted to give us a view as to how social life can be constructed by basing it on a concept of a humanized individual as one who is just. By justice he meant the interdependent and harmonious relationship of the three parts of the human soul, namely, the rational part, the spirited part and the appetitive part. Aristotle followed Plato and provided his own view of the humanized man as the pursuit of happiness by the fulfillment of all his potentialities, but especially of his rational faculties. The ideal man for him was the contemplative man. In the middle ages, we had Christian humanism, a representative example being that of St. Thomas Aquinas for whom man can only be fully humanized by aspiring toward the supernatural. As a result, the social arrangement was a collaboration of Church and state for the promotion of spiritual life. We have Marxist humanism and democratic capitalism. According to the doctrine of Karl Marx, the inner sense of philosophy consists in being an element of the social praxis. It does not just contemplate the object, but constructs it; it has the form of praxis from the very beginning. Social praxis, in turn, is philosophical; philosophical in the sense that it has to show the path towards humanization. When Marx speaks about changing the world, he means that the social, political and economic resurrection is possible only by a philosophy which is praxis and based on the universal benefit for the humanity. Thus for him, social praxis is the embodiment of

philosophy, making philosophy real; it fuses together the ethical and the ontological, the earthly and the divine.

One shall argue that true humanism is based on unity, harmony and integration. To be humanized is to be in harmony with nature, with fellowmen and with the idea of Transcendent. To be in harmony means to be in an I-Thou relation with nature, with fellowmen and with the Transcendent-God- so as to constitute a “we” relation as opposed to an “us-and-them” relation. Hence, to be humanized is to develop a cosmic sense, a sense of belonging with the cosmic community. Social life includes social life with nature and with the Transcendent and not only with one’s fellowmen. The question is centred on the idea of humanization which we use in determining our social structures? The social and philosophical dilemma is then what is true humanization? Is an affluent country more humanized than a poor starving country? Is an industrialized economy more humanized than an agricultural economy where people are able to feed themselves, though quite poor in modern amenities? The questions are more existential and practical too.

Generally speaking, with regard to the Oriental cultural model, we may say that it is the personality, but not the social life, that is being humanized. In the case of Western cultural model, it is the social relations but not the individual human life that is being humanized. Thus, the issue of humanization of social life appears to be rather problematic and unsolvable. The components, which seemed complementary to one another theoretically, become incompatible in the practical level which can suggest certain pessimistic overtones. The Eastern traditions in general and Indian tradition, in particular, bestow a sense of unity in the human person so as to find out ways of healing the divisive conflicts of egoism. The theme “humanization of social life” requires an effort at clarification to which the Indian (Hindu) approach may both make its own distinctive contribution and at the same time constitute an alternative perspective, enabling others to reassess and approach their own positions anew. Person and action, choice and situation, person and experience are closely

bound to each other not only in their implications but also in their fundamental structure. Thus, the transcendent subjectivity of the self is described differently by Indian philosophical systems, depending upon the metaphysical framework of each system and thus elaborating different perspectives on humanization debate.

But in the case of oriental thought, it is the person who is humanized and revolutionizes the history of social changes and the results of which are very much visible in the social life of India and are still continuing in the form of many kinds of assertions that have been made by the affected, so to say, the marginalized and Dalits. It questions the logic of oppression that goes in the name of ‘tradition’, or ‘religious order’. This means that everything involved in the articulation of social structures, such as the social, political, economic, educational, and psychological aspects should be directed towards the goal of human perfection, for without individual perfection the meaning of humanization cannot be exercised. What we ought to bear in mind is that true humanization cannot be exercised by man merely in terms of law, politics, etc., but by keeping personal perfection as a goal for all aspects of life which is true freedom in life.

With a view to revisit such a unique concept as humanization in social life and make it meaningful and purposive in the context of fast socio-economic, political and cultural changes brought about by spectacular advancements in modern science and technology and the consequent lifestyle of today, a seminar on the topic, “Humanising Social Life: Philosophical Issues and Practical Concerns,” was organised by Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth on the following related themes:

1. Humanization of Social Life: Cultural Responses
2. Indian Cultural Traditions and Humanization
3. Democratic Traditions and Humanization
4. Humanization of Social Life: Ontological and Axiological Foundations
5. Indian Spiritualism: Role of Humanization
6. Humanization of Social Life: Christian responses

7. Globalization and Challenges to Humanization
8. Ethnic and Caste Conflicts: Value Context of Humanization
9. Social Identity and Conflicts: Practical Concerns of Humanization
10. Liberalism, Democracy and Humanisation
11. Enlightenment, Individuals and Human Rights
12. Humanisation and Western Culture
13. Humanisation, Marxism and Socialism
14. Kant, Marx and Nietzsche on the Human Person
15. Death of God as Death of Man, Etc

The two-day international seminar, conducted in collaboration with Christ College, Pune and St Xavier's University, Kolkata began on January 17 and ended on January 18, 2020. Of the 20 papers presented for this International Seminar in Honour of Richard De Smet SJ and Jean de Marneffe SJ, only seven are included in this volume. Two papers related to our contemporary Covid-19 are also included in this issue of our journal.

We are happy to present before you a review article connected with **Prof George Soares-Prabhu, SJ**, one of the most eminent faculty members and Biblical scholars of JDV. He left us unexpectedly 25 years ago, on July 22, 1995. We are grateful for his pioneering spirit, prophetic vision and committed scholarship, which have radically changed Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, India.

With this issue, we are happy that *Jnanadeepa* is entering into its silver jubilee. We welcome your suggestions to make the journal respond to your needs. Meanwhile, we thank our readers who have consistently supported us and provided us with ideas, critiques and comments. While thanking you for your accompaniment, we remember fondly **Fr Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ**, the founder-editor of the journal for 12 years (1998-2010) bringing out 26 issues!

Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ

Editor