

# DON'T SKIRT REAL ISSUE



***“Corruption and hypocrisy ought not be inevitable products of democracy, as they undoubtedly are today.” >>>***



BY DR. JOGINDER SINGH

**W**hen the British were ruling India, their main instrument, and even now, of governance was the bureaucracy. Ninety per cent and even above was staffed by the Indians. They were in India for enriching the British Exchequer and also the individuals concerned who were their instruments for governance. At the same time, they wanted to appear as just and honest.

While making laws, they introduced the provision of grant

of sanction by the Appointing Authority to prosecute any employee who was found guilty of any legal act of omission and commission. This was done to protect the employees for sustaining their rule.

In many ways, corruption was tolerated as long as the rulers felt that it was within the acceptable limits. It continues till this day even when the all pervasive corruption has crossed all limits.

William Cowper in his book *The Task* (1785) wrote:

*“Thieves at home must hang; but he that puts*

*Into his over-gorged and bloated purse*

*The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes”.*

In Free India, it has become difficult to investigate and prosecute the corrupt and

dishonest. The Constitution makes no distinction or classification between different categories of government servants. In 1988, government issued what was known as the ‘Single Directive’ which required prior approval of the government for taking up any inquiry against the officers of Joint Secretary and above.

When it was set aside in 1997 by the Supreme Court, saying that corruption is not a part of any public servant’s duty, it was smuggled via the Central Vigilance Commission Act as a legal provision.

Now the Supreme Court of India, in a landmark judgment on January 30, said: “If we look at Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, we find that no time limit (for sanction to prosecute) is mentioned. This has virtually armed the sanctioning authority with unbridled power which has often resulted in protecting the guilty and perpetuating criminality and

injustice in society.”

The judges added that the government could not sit on complaints seeking sanction to prosecute. It recommended to Parliament to bring a law fixing a time limit of four months. “While considering the issue regarding grant or refusal of sanction, the only thing which the competent authority is required to see is whether the material placed by the complainant or the investigating agency *prima facie* discloses commission of an offence. The competent authority cannot undertake a detailed inquiry to decide whether or not the allegations made against the public servant are true.”

They also added that citizens have a fundamental right to file corruption complaints against government officials and could approach the courts if dissatisfied by the reply. The Bench said: “In either case (grant or refusal of such sanctions), the decision taken on the complaint made by a citizen is required to be communicated to him and if he feels aggrieved by such decision, then he can avail appropriate legal remedy.”

The court noted that of a total 319 requests for sanction to prosecute, the decisions were pending in 126 cases (some for 4 to 6 years). The Apex Court also observed that “Today, corruption in our country not only poses a grave danger to the concept of constitutional governance, it also threatens the very foundation of Indian democracy and rule of law.” It added: “The magnitude of corruption in our public life is incompatible with the concept of a socialist, secular democratic republic. It cannot be disputed that where corruption begins

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In other words, this is what civil society, common man and media have been pleading for decades. The judgment of the Apex Court is most welcome and is more than timely. It has granted the citizens another fundamental right of corruption-free India. In the present system of laws, all fight against corruption is the legal responsibility of the Government which cannot even be said to have been performed

satisfactorily.

The Supreme Court has given a time frame for a time-bound sanction for prosecution of public officials, giving a boost to fight against graft.

The following cases under Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, up to November 30, 2011 against government employees are awaiting action:

2007	375
2008	404
2009	412
2010	336
2011	305

Thanks to the judicial activism, a vibrant civil society, vigorous and proactive media, corruption is being exposed in high places which if left to the government would not happen in the interest of its 'survival' and what many politicians call Coalition Dharma. Coalition Dharma, a new concept, in political terminology has come to stand for loot by the coalition of partners. It does not mean that the dominant and the leading partner has been pure and free from corruption.

It was the government's auditor who exposed corruption in 2G Scam and an activist media exposed the rot in the Common Wealth Games. Common Wealth Games was literally taken as the personal wealth of the organisers and they behaved as if they would never have to account for their acts of omission and commission. While common man is happy at the big flies having been caught in the net of law, one cannot say the same thing about the politicians.

What affects the common man is the daily routine of petty corruption and a bewildering number of people who have to be paid off for his peaceful existence. It could be local health, safety, fire, hygiene, labour, shop or police inspector; this is apart from the bribes to be paid for getting admission to the hospitals or schools and to the Transport Department for getting driving licence.

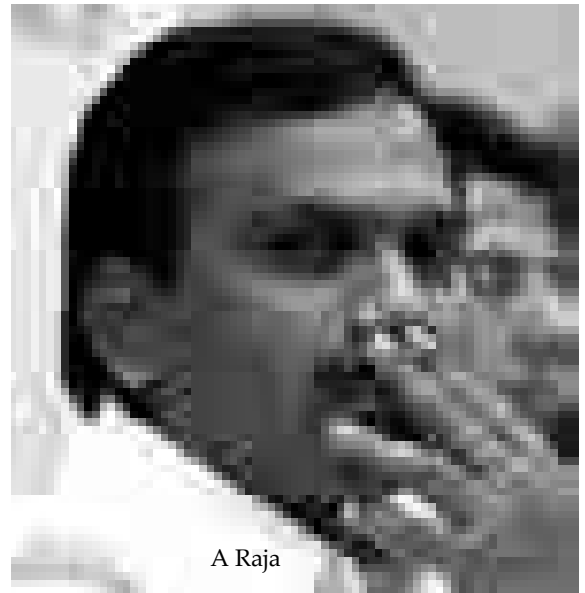
In short you have to pay for everything which should be free as a matter of right. Nexus between the dishonest public officials and crooked politicians leaves an average person in limbo. In fact, the fight against corruption has never been taken

***The fight against corruption has never been taken seriously by the Government. The result is that despite self-praise as India being a growing economy and likely to become an economic giant, we have become oversized and gigantic in the field of graft >>>***

seriously by the Government. The result is that despite self-praise as India being a growing economy and likely to become an economic giant, we have become oversized and gigantic in the field of graft.

Now the Supreme Court has cancelled 122 2G spectrum licences granted by former Telecom Minister A Raja on the ground that they were issued in a "totally arbitrary and unconstitutional" manner. The licences were given by Raja for over Rs 9,000 crore, while 3G auctions for a smaller number of licences had fetched the government Rs 69,000 crores.

This one incident speaks of the underhand dealings which have gone behind the scene as the CBI charge-sheet has shown. It is the biggest indictment of the government on corruption and more than a confirmation of latest report of Transparency International that we are the 97th most corrupt country in the world with an integrity score of 31 out of 100. Our actual position is much worse than what Transparency International says.



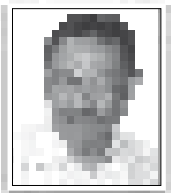
A Raja

Rajiv Gandhi had said in 1988 that out of one rupees spent for development, only 14% or 14 paise is spent on real work. His son Rahul said in 2009, that out of Rs.10 only 10 paise reaches the poor for development. It is time for the Government to wake up and implement what Mahatma Gandhi had said: "Corruption and hypocrisy ought not be inevitable products of democracy, as they undoubtedly are today."

Live with no excuses, live with no regrets, when life gives you a 100 reasons to cry, show life that you have 1000 reasons to smile.

*(The writer is a former Director, CBI. Email: jogindersinghfdips@hotmail.com)*

# 'DIVINE BRIBES' IN POLL TIME



BY PACHU MENON

More than anything else, it is the 'election season' that provides writers like me the necessary fodder to prod into the wild and absurd that sets apart the process of 'choice determination' in this country as nowhere else in the world.

The declaration of policy or intentions issued by political parties that we have come to recognize as their election manifestos have today transcended from adoption of promises of regional development to reflections of a 'freebie culture'. It is never the welfare measures that are emphasized upon, but the assurance of free hand-outs that fascinate people more.

But much before these pledges, party candidates are well into the

habit of offering savouries and many other utility items to the electorate as gifts, all implied to be a sign of their magnanimity. If the politicians view it as an effective implementation of their 'politics of temptation', for the voters it is nothing more than 'a bearer cheque' to be encashed without a moment's delay, for God alone knows when the tide will turn. Now, who is fooling whom!

Since I boast of a Goan domicile, for me the antics that adds up to the grand political-circus in this tiny state of India holds more fascination than the dreary affairs of state in the rest of the country.

Come elections, Goa takes on a carnival look! In fact, after the vivacity of a vibrant tourism, if anything has given life and colour to the humdrum and 'susegado' existence of the Goan, where a laid-back attitude towards life typifies a quintessential Goan, it has been the periodic elections that aims at a change of government; but simmers down to a mere reshuffle of the existing faces to suit the bill,

*One can't but admire the politicians in Goa for their ingenuity. Come elections, they dole out anything and everything including sponsored-pilgrimages for the voters >>>*

and consequently the order of arrangement agreed upon.

Alliances and estrangements in political circles merely serve to fuel the flames of speculation. A stray face here-and-there may create ripples with their sudden emergence into the centrestage of the state politics; otherwise the results are a foregone conclusion. Almost always the case of new wine in an old bottle.

Every announcement of an election brings with it the hopes and delight of a populace that exults in its new-found role as the assigned lot that decides who represents them in the Assembly. Though a temporary phase, it is this brief period of election that is the most momentous for every voter and a 'commodity' that becomes priceless. Of course how advantageous this major bartering tool eventually becomes is a matter of perception, seen in different lights by the multitude.

Now this 'bartering' ultimately boils down to the basics of an election. A political hopeful will go to any limit to ensure that every potential vote in the

constituency is in his kitty well before the actual casting of the ballot paper. It is this addiction to ensnaring the unwary voter that prompts the wily contender to devise and execute novel 'schemes' that leaves no doubts as to the intent of the canvasser.

If pamphlets with his face embossed on them greeting members of various communities during their religious fiestas were not enough, it was rumoured that on the eve of the Christmas celebrations, a political heavyweight from south Goa went about distributing the 'necessary ingredients' for the traditional festival confectioneries to the people in his constituency. Talk of taking the sweet way into his voters' hearts.

Apparently the kitchen and hearth too isn't being ignored during these 'testing times'. At least let us be grateful that our politicians have learnt to be graceful and truly value the 'women empowerment' they have been hyping about all these years.

Booze and cash, over-head water-tanks, blankets, et cetera; well all these are outdated and no more in fashion when it comes to luring voters. But you just can't beat the political fraternity when it comes to making their grey-cells work overtime, can you?

Hence it is amusing to note that not even the Gods and their shrines are spared by philanthropic aspirants to the high-seats of power! It is all the more confusing considering that so far the fascination for appeasing various Gods and

***All of a sudden political parties and lone contenders are learning the importance of using religion as an election card and reaping rich electoral dividends >>>***

Goddesses was a routine reserved for the hopeful candidates and their kith and kin who normally descended at these holy places with their entire entourage for seeking blessings.

Undoubtedly, this blessing comes to the local people courtesy the largesse of contestants who have suddenly thought of catering to the religious sentiments of the people by 'sponsoring' these religious tours.



With the model code of conduct being in force in the state, not only do the poll officials keeping a close-eye on the built-up to the Assembly elections need to be on the

look-out for the large cache of money and liquor that ostensibly flows freely during these times, but now also have to content with the 'divine bribes' that are being doled out to the gullible public.

All of a sudden political parties and lone contenders are learning the importance of using religion as an election card and reaping rich electoral dividends. The Pope couldn't be wrong in affirming that "an honest man is the noblest work of God", but what do we call 'a show of honesty' that is supposed to fetch votes, and only votes, for the smooth operator?

But with changing times, even the workings of our wannabe leaders seem to have undergone a sea of change. Apparently not satisfied with their 'personal worshipping', they are now keen on extending this munificence to the electorate, to the people from the constituencies from where they intend contesting.

One can't but admire the politicians in Goa for their ingenuity. Not only are they keeping their prospective voters happy, but by flocking them to the 'abode of the Gods', it appears that they are rekindling faith in the lost and astray, for which the Gods in turn will bless them. "One arrow and two targets," colloquially speaking!

If newspaper reports are to be believed, it emerges that the local populace is smitten by the 'holy bug'! However, this infatuation appears to be more of the 'induced' variety than an 'inherent one'. The sight of groups embarking on pilgrimages to Shirdi in Maharashtra and the Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health at Vailankanni in Tamil Nadu cannot be attributed to sudden seizures of 'a divine paroxysm' among the populace. The devotees from the state have been thronging these famous pilgrimage sites for years now.

*It is important for parents to keep a tab on their adolescent children lest they should fall prey to paedophiles and criminals masquerading as "friends" on Facebook >>>*



BY A. J. PHILIP

**T**echnology has always fascinated me. When I took up journalism as a profession on a measly salary in 1973, abandoning a well-paid but intensely-disliked job in Mumbai, I was given an old Olivetti typewriter to file my stories. I saw my senior colleague and a byword for integrity Narendra Sharma typing out stories after stories using just his index finger. I could have followed in his footsteps and learnt typing the Sharma way.

But my friend K. Raveendran, who is now the editor of a group of publications in Dubai, came to my rescue, as always, by demystifying the QWERTY keypad. He placed four fingers of my left hand on the keys "ASDF" and the four fingers of my right hand on the keys ";LKJ" and asked me to type.

After I practiced typing those letters for a day, he asked me to use the same fingers of the left hand on the keys "QWERT" on the upper deck and on "ZXCV" on the lower deck of the keypad.

Soon I started typing the sentence, "The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dogs", which contains all the 26 letters of the English language, using the correct fingers. However hard I typed, some of the letters like "O" and "A" would not print as they had worn out. But I treated the machine as a treasure for it helped me learn typing the proper, though hard, way. Thanks to Ravi and Olivetti, I have a good typing speed.

Years later, I chose Subhash, a science graduate from Thakazhy in Kerala as my "secretary" at the *Hindustan Times*, Patna. His main qualification was that he was well-known writer

Thakazhy Shivshankara Pillai's neighbour and acquaintance. But he had never in his life touched a typewriter. I became, perhaps, the first "boss" to teach his secretary typing the K. Raveendran way. In the initial days, his typing was so bad that I used to throw the letters he typed into the wastepaper basket and type them myself. But within a few months, he became a good typist.

In the mid-nineties when I joined the *Indian Express*, I got access to a computer for the first time. I found the keypad softer and lighter to type. Its memory and in-built dictionary were what appealed to me. My colleague on the edit page Pratik Kanjilal helped me open a Hotmail account. Soon, I bought a laptop, made by Tulip, a Netherlands company, waiting to fold up its operations in India.

## Freedom from Facebook

# THE VALUE OF FRIENDSHIP

It cost me a princely Rs 110,000. It had a measly memory of 200MB.

Today I use a variety of devices like a laptop, a BlackBerry phone and a BlackBerry tablet and an iPod for my work. Since I get my writing assignments at odd hours, I always remain connected through an Airtel wi-fi modem at home and a Reliance datacard while travelling. Whenever the datacard did not work as in Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir and Phulbani in Kandhamal in Odisha, my BlackBerry phone came to my rescue.

However, one technology that remained alien to me was Facebook. First of all, I did not think the social networking site was a useful tool. But when people started asking me whether I was on Facebook, I finally fell for it. I did not know the rules and the safeguards I must adopt while opening an account and linking it to my BlackBerry Messenger. Every now and then my phone would beep and I would open it to find someone had commented "Woh!" on somebody's photo "tagged" to my account.

I found Facebook a nuisance and deleted my account. For once, my phone stopped beeping, except to inform me, not infrequently, about my "last chance" to buy a six-bedroom penthouse flat at a small price of Rs 12,000 per sq. feet, "just 25 minutes from the Delhi airport", probably by a chartered flight! I enjoyed the freedom from Facebook for as long as it lasted. In the meantime, my wife had joined Facebook, where she got connected to all her fifth and sixth cousins, spread all over the globe.



Since I literally follow the jingle, aired on FM stations in Delhi, "spend time, not money, with your wife", I often find myself admiring a tiny tot dancing away to glory on her computer screen. And when she explains to me that the child's great-grandmother and her own great-great-grandfather were second cousins, I realise that it is better to spend money, rather than time with your wife.

Then I had a nagging doubt, whether I was missing the wondrous world of Facebook, whose members have been growing at such a rate that at the last count a year ago, it had crossed the 750-million mark. And when my wife began giving me news about the parties my son and daughter-in-law host and show the pictures of the cakes they bake, all on Facebook, I was tempted to re-join the networking site.

To my utter surprise, I realised that though I had disabled my account, it had just been lying dormant with all the postings I had made. Every day I would get several requests from Facebook members seeking my friendship. Since I did not want

to discriminate among friends, I accepted all such requests. Within no time, my friends had grown to a formidable figure of over 2,000. I mistook it as a sign of my popularity.

Certain terms like "tagging" and "poking" remained incomprehensible to me. I had heard people discussing about the dangers of Facebook without understanding them. Soon I began discerning the dangers of accepting all and sundry as "friends". I found to my horror, some of my so-called "friends" posting pornographic pictures on my wall.

I was desperate to have them removed but I did not have the patience to understand the system by reading the Facebook rules. Finally, I sought my son's help not only to remove those pictures but also to teach me how to do it myself. I also learnt how to "unfriend" those friends. I thought that my problem was over.

I seldom chatted on Facebook, for I found it a sheer waste of time. Chatting usually starts with "Hi" or "How are you?" and continues with inane questions like "Where do you

live? What do you do?" Then there are multiple friends wanting to chat with you. One day, a young man desperately wanted to chat with me. He said he wanted some professional advice and sought my telephone number. The impression he gave me was that he was a media student who wanted my help for professional purposes.

The moment I gave him the number, he called me. I told him to meet me at the Institute where I taught journalism. But he did not turn up on that day. Instead, he called me to say that his purpose in calling me was different. "You know the reason", that is what he told me. Finally, he blurted out, "I am a gay and I want to have a relationship with you!" For a moment, I became speechless. I realised the folly of giving him my number. I had to gather my wits and tell him that if he called my number again, I would report him to the police.

Then it occurred to me that I had gathered quite a few "gays" as my Facebook "friends". I did not check the sexual preferences of anyone, before admitting him or her as a "friend". I realised that it was a mistake when I started getting suggestive messages like "Your smile is sexy", "Sexy man" etc. Some of them were really blunt like "I want to sleep with you", "I want to have sex with you"!

I had some perverse "friends" who enjoyed having sex with "old men". I do not know what I hated most about a 26-year-old Christian boy from Idukki district – his sexual preference or calling me an old man? It was futile to tell him that I had sons older than him. So I just removed him from my friends' list which

*I find that frivolous and silly postings on the Facebook evoke better responses than postings that supposedly contain pearls of wisdom >>>*



has become shorter, but not short enough for comfort.

For a writer or a journalist, nothing is more important than a word of appreciation from the reader. It is the thought that there are people waiting to read what is written that encourages a writer to write. As a novice, I thought that Facebook was an excellent forum to introduce my columns to my friends. The more friends I have, the more readers I have, I thought mistakenly.

Then I started giving links to my columns and waited for the responses. If 12 of my 2000+ friends clicked on the button "like" (it does not mean that they read!), I considered it an achievement. To be frank, the number of "likes" for my columns is often smaller. But

when one of my "friends" wrote on her wall, "I feel bored today", I found it evoking a massive response with many anxious "friends" expressing concern over what happened to her.

I find that frivolous and silly postings on the Facebook evoke better responses than postings that supposedly contain pearls of wisdom. Thus when I wrote that my three-year-old grandson expressed a desire to see the film "Dirty Picture" it caught the fancy of "my friends" so much so that one of them wrote a Middle on it in a newspaper and made some money. Of course, Facebook has its advantages, too!

Recently, I attended a lecture at Dharma Jyoti Vidya Peeth at Chandpur in Faridabad district,

took a lot of photographs, came home and uploaded them on the Facebook to realise that two persons had “liked” my effort.

One of them, who lives at Oklahoma in the US, “liked” it, almost instantly, because he could see in one of the pictures his own parents and sister! For once, I realised that my whole effort on Facebook was unproductive. Far more productive was to approach the Malayala Manorma, which published two of my photographs of the function in its Delhi edition.

I know that if I were to close my Facebook account I would never be able to reconnect

with some of my friends. But I have to slash my friends’ list to make it more sensible. These thoughts were triggered by a casual conversation I had with a well-known journalist-turned-Member of Parliament. He told me about a distant relative in Kolkata losing her only daughter, who had become a Facebook addict and had developed friendship with some undesirable elements forcing her finally to commit suicide.

Last year, I had read about a girl from Jamshedpur Malini Murmu, doing her MBA from the prestigious Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Bangalore, committing suicide because she found her boyfriend posting on his Facebook wall, “Feeling super cool today. Dumped my new ex-girlfriend. Happy Independence Day”.

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The poor girl could not cope with the fact that she was “dumped” and that too in a public place like Facebook! The same time the previous year, New York police officer, Philip Chland, 29, committed suicide after arguing with his girlfriend about things he had seen on her Facebook page. She had exchanged messages with a Facebook friend about leaving Chland.

When I could see the agony on my friend’s face, I realised how Malini Murmu’s parents would have felt when she became a victim of Facebook, which is expected to raise \$5 billion when its shares are made available to the investing public the world over in a few days.

Facebook is gathering new

members in populous countries like India and Indonesia but it is losing old members in North America, Britain and Canada. For all its potential as a networking tool, Facebook also poses dangers to its users. While it has a rule that bars anyone below the age of 18 from using its services, the anonymity it offers also encourages many children to become active on Facebook.

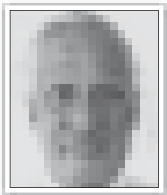
Having myself faced an embarrassing and shocking virtual encounter with a gay, I know how important it is for parents to keep a tab on their adolescent children lest they should fall prey to paedophiles and criminals masquerading as “friends” on Facebook.

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# RENDERING TO CAESAR



BY AVERTHANUS L. D'SOUZA

***An ordained priest entering electoral politics with a limited objective is not necessarily the best way to help to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth >>>***

**T**he famous judgement of Jesus Christ: "Render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" has been generally interpreted to mean that the two spheres – the civic and the religious – have to be kept apart. It has given rise to the political doctrine of the separation of powers between the State and the Church. In the course of history, this interpretation has seen many convoluted practical applications in the relationship between civil government and the Church. The Middle Ages witnessed a constant tension between the authority of the

State and the authority of the Church. This history is as colourful in its unfolding as it is intriguing in the manifestation of the variations in the interpretation of the judgement itself.

One of the main distortions in the understanding of the intent of Christ's statement is that political science implicitly considered the authority of the State to be on par with the authority of the Church. To put it crudely, the question which often tantalized the political philosophers was whether the State existed by sufferance of the Church, or whether the

Church existed by sufferance of the State. In other words, did the King derive his legitimacy because of his installation by a Bishop, or did a Bishop enjoy his legitimacy because of the favour of the King?

Over a period of time, on the philosophical level, an understanding was reached that both the institution of government and the institution of the Church derive directly from God; that both institutions are distinct but fully legitimate in their own rights. Vestiges of the medieval conflict (between the Church and State) are still evident in the many conflicts

(e.g. in China) where the State claims to have the prerogative to appoint Bishops of its choosing.

One thing, however, is clear. Although both the State and the Church are distinct sociological entities, they are not “on par” with one another. There is no equivalence in their authorities, even though there is autonomy in their functioning. It is not possible, within the confines of a brief article, to elaborate on the non-parity between the State and the Church. However, it should be pointed out that the State is a “natural” society – just like the family; and derives from the Natural Law. The Church is an “organization” (for want of a better word), or better still, an organism, directly instituted by Jesus the Christ. The respective domains of the State and of the Church are distinct but coincide in many areas.

It is necessary to study the subtle distinctions in the character and the functioning of the two distinct social entities in order to arrive at a proper understanding of the purpose of each of them. Crudely put, the State is a temporal institution and the powers it enjoys are purely temporal. The Church is both temporal and transcendental. The membership of the Church transcends the present and embraces the non-temporal dimensions. The Creed professed by the “faithful” explicitly acknowledges that we believe in the church

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triumphant, the church suffering and the church militant. The extra-temporal dimension of the church is an integral part of her being and is an expression of her “catholicity.”

These preliminary observations are necessary to provide the context for an understanding of the furore which has been created by a young, inexperienced and over-enthusiastic priest who has entered electoral politics, with the active support of many Catholic laity as well as some clergy. Opinions, in the print media, range all the way from enthusiastic support to strong condemnation of the decision of the priest. Many believe that the presence of a priest in the Legislative Assembly

will help to curb corruption, if not to eliminate it completely. Anyway, the issue of corruption is just one of the many maladies confronting any government.

The more fundamental issue is whether an ordained priest ought to get involved in the hurly-burly of partisan political engagement. In reflecting on the temptations of Christ in the desert after his 40 days of fasting and prayer, Pope Benedict XVI draws attention to the temptation in which Satan offers to give Jesus power over all the kingdoms of the world. This is a very clever ruse. Is it not the objective of the Messiah to rule over the whole world? A Messiah who unifies the whole earth in one great kingdom of peace and well-being? Yet, Jesus

rejects the offer because “The Kingdom of Christ is different from the kingdoms of the earth and their splendour, which Satan parades before him.”

The Pope draws pointed attention to the fact that the Christian empire attempted at an early stage to use faith in order to cement political unity. The Kingdom of Christ was now expected to take the form of a political kingdom and its splendour. He points out that “The temptation to use power to secure the faith has arisen again and again in varied forms throughout the centuries, and again and again faith has risked being suffocated in the embrace of power.” “The fusion of faith and political power always comes at a price: faith becomes the servant of power and must bend to its criteria.”

The Pope reminds us that “No kingdom of this world is the Kingdom of God, the total condition of mankind’s salvation. Earthly kingdoms remain earthly human kingdoms, and anyone who claims to be able to establish the perfect world is the willing dupe of Satan and plays the world right into his hands.”

Pope Benedict XVI further draws attention to the gathering of Jesus’ followers “on the mountain” (cf. Mt.28:16) when Jesus asserts that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt.28:18). The

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Pope explains that “The Lord has power *in heaven* and on earth. And only someone who has this fullness of authority has the real, saving power. Without



heaven, earthly power is always ambiguous and fragile. Only when power submits to the measure and the judgement of heaven – of God, in other words – can it become power for good. And only when power stands under God’s blessing can it be trusted.”

The correct interpretation of the judgement “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” is, therefore, that it is legitimate to submit to civil authority, but all authority, including civil authority, has to submit to the authority of God. Everyone

is painfully aware that the problems besetting the modern world are not merely economic and political problems; they are primarily ethical problems. Governments which legitimize

m o r a l abominations l i k e homosexuality, a d u l t e r y , contraception, a b o r t i o n , e u t h a n a s i a and other evils are in direct conflict with the Kingdom of God. Every effort needs to be made to bring the civil power into c o n f o r m i t y

with the Moral Order.

The Church offers her advice and her institutional capacities to bring about a civilization of justice, solidarity, mutual assistance and charity. The Church is not in conflict with civil authority, *per se*, but she is obliged to ensure that all civil authority is in conformity with the will of God. The challenge is huge and needs maturity and wisdom. An ordained priest entering into electoral politics with a limited objective is not necessarily the best way to help to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. ■

# PRIESTS *and* NUNS AS LAWYERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE



VIRGINIA SALDANHA

We are familiar with clichés that denigrate the legal profession, which appears to be steeped in untruth, corruption and ironically even injustice.

People shy away from courts because they count the cost of being fleeced by avaricious lawyers, with the accompanying stress and long drawn-out legal battles an evil they would rather live without.

It is therefore refreshing to know that a group of dedicated women and men are committed to making the fight for justice a reality for the numerous poor and disadvantaged people in India.

As sisters and priests they may not fit the traditional image of their 'vocation', but a close encounter with them reveals the real depth of their commitment to the mission of Jesus in Luke 4:18.

Sr Julie George SSpS director of Streevani, an NGO in Pune, takes up cases of women only. "Many women would never have reached court without my help." She takes up cases of domestic violence and domestic workers as well. Often just a legal notice to the employers helps settle an issue.



Sr Julie George SSpS

"A judge in the court recognizes my work and sends poor women to me. He even believes my arguments as he knows I am not working to make money but to help the poor," she said at a meeting of the Legal Cell for Human Rights (LCHR) in Guwahati, Assam, where she was a guest to meet other Religious like herself who have taken up the Legal Ministry as part of their mission in the Church.

Advocate Ravi Sagar SJ, the director of LCHR in the North East, said he was attracted to the social apostolate right from his seminary days. He studied law along with his theological studies.

"At first I was discouraged by the negative attitudes towards this profession, but now I am convinced that this ministry is for me," said Sr Shoba Kandathil CFMSS, who works with Ravi

Sagar in the LCHR in Guwahati.

Working in the prison ministry, Sr Asha Preethi UFS decided to qualify as a lawyer. "Law is useful in prison ministry to bring relief to poor simple people. The jail authorities appreciate our work," said Sr Asha, who is the North East coordinator for prison ministry.

When Fr Silvanus Soreng of Tezpur diocese told his bishop that he would like to study law to help people, his bishop agreed but warned: "Do not neglect your pastoral work."

Fr Silvanus said, "I am convinced that law can assist me in my pastoral work."

Fr Owen SJ, also a lawyer, concurs. "Law is an effective instrument for helping people."

The legal ministry is a relatively new area into which a growing number of religious men and women are entering,

because they are convinced that this is an important avenue by which they can bring the “good news to the poor.”

Says Fr Ravi Sagar: “It is not customary for congregations to encourage members to do law. The initiative has to come from the individual.”

The stories shared by the eight religious men and women I met at the meeting of the LCHR in Guwahati were stories of struggle to enter the legal field in ministry. They felt that the support of the Church was not forthcoming. Pioneers in this field got professional support from NGOs who were not necessarily Christian.

Getting familiar with the legal system and the working of the courts is important for legal practice, which can be got only from getting into the system with your eyes and ears open, says Fr Ravi Sagar.

He learned through personal experience that no lawyer in the profession to earn a living is prepared to share expertise with a new lawyer. Therefore he hopes that a network of Catholic lawyers in the North East will support new entrants into legal practice dedicated to serving people.

The LCHR is present in three dioceses in the North East and has sixteen staff members who are lawyers but not necessarily Catholic. It is hoped that the base of LCHR is expanded to have an office in every diocese where not only new sister and priest lawyers get support and help to get initiated into legal practice, but to spread legal awareness among people and act as an instrument to settle disputes between communities, families and individuals using the law but without going to the courts.



Fr. Ravi Sagar speaks about the Right to Information

The North East comprises mainly indigenous groups for whom land issues with the government are a growing concern. The presence of committed lawyers in the rural areas is imperative to help people retain their land rights.

Therefore the LCHR becomes extremely relevant to mission in this area. The Church in the North East recognizes LCHR. The bishops in the region consult them and have asked them to bring catholic lawyers together.

Congregations send members to study law for the benefit of their congregation. But they do not realize that without being familiar with legal practice they can never be effective.

There are about 70 – 80 sisters with legal training in India, but most only take up legal issues of their congregations. Few practice in court. The sisters who practice law have formed the Women Religious Lawyers Forum. They have helped sister lawyers get familiar with the court system.

There is also the Jesuit Lawyers Association. Of the 79 Jesuits who have studied law, only 14 or 15 are lawyers.

A network of Christian lawyers is so important to help people who are otherwise fleeced by unscrupulous

lawyers. However the Church has yet to recognize the legal profession as an important part of mission and rue these lawyers in practice.

“We need the cooperation of heads of Catholic institutions to help us become familiar with cases. We get called in only when cases are spoiled by the established lawyers. The bishops may not want to give us their cases because we are young, but allowing us to be present when introducing the case to their lawyer will help,” said Fr Ravi Sagar.

Sr Shoba said the LCHR invites judges and judicial officers to the villages as resource persons. After two years they expressed their appreciation of the work being done. One judge was so impressed with the benefits poor people derived in the remote villages where no publicity is given to this work that he expressed a desire to be born again as a Catholic.

Truly the legal ministry of religious women and men together with lay supporters sets them apart from the rest in the profession, as they work in a profession where they are solely committed to justice and not to making money. They are living examples of being in the world but not of the world.

(ucanews.com)



Chichusie Francis Yanphar

*“Will and determination brought the best out of the one who is in the worst of situations.”*

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# THE BEST OF THE WORST

BY R. R. GRAVIOUR AUGUSTINE

A fair handsome young man, Chichusie Francis Yanphar, lies on his bed. A soft quilt is pulled up to his chest. His broad shoulders bear witness to his well-built body which does everything except allowing him to get off the bed. The window curtain hangs close to his right hand. That perhaps is the only screen which brings to his alert eyes the beauty and life of Meluri, a village that lies 166 km east of Nagaland’s Capital, Kohima. Behind the pillow are arrayed books on the wooden shelf fixed on to the wooden walls. On his left, beside the bed, lies a wooden bench which can allow at the most three persons to sit. In the remaining

free space of the room are heaps of electronic goods waiting to be made to function by this young man who was told by the doctors more than a decade ago: “Your spine can never be made to function as in the past.”

The quilt hides his body below the chest. Its agility and athletic abilities were more than proven eleven years ago. For by then this intelligent graduate from St. Joseph’s college, Jakhama, a village about 15 kilometres to the South of Kohima, had appeared in various competitive examinations including those in the department of police and the army in which he got selected and was waiting to join the office in the intelligence wing of the *Sashastra Seema Bal* (SSB). Good pay, good name, bright future waited and

danced before his eyes, but too short a while. Even before his joining the office, fate had scribbled a different story which now has become part of his life’s history. And it began its introduction on the 6th of the fateful February in 1999.

One of the winter months as it was, Francis along with six of his friends left home on that sunny afternoon to Tissu river to bathe, wash clothes and relax. The thirteen kilometer trek through the jungle short cut to the riverside flashed to him that he should take a gun as well to get a game if he should spot any. On reaching the suspension bridge site close to a big shady tree he and his team members dispersed to look for games. By 3 p.m. some one from a different group

shot at him mistaking him for an animal. "It was a terrible, strange, pleasant, confused and peaceful moment", says Francis. "In a moment of few seconds my past, present and future all together seemed to rush like a movie in my mind," he relates.

"I was unable to stand and began to roll down the mountain slope. I yelled at the man: Why did you shoot me? He came and saw my legs but found nothing wrong. And observing blood oozing out from the right of my chest he removed my shirt. Blood bubbled from chest, the smoke still streaked through the bursting bubbles."

"Unable to lift and carry me up, my 'friend' left me for a while to get more men. He left me alone to wriggle like a worm for almost an hour. I crawled and crawled trying to reach the main road, lest I should meet death in the thickest jungle and be left to rot unnoticed by anyone."

"To make the long story short, in about an hour my 'friend' and some men along with him came and carried me up to the main road to Meluri. From that day on to the next few months I was moved to several clinics and hospitals -- from Meluri to Kohima to Vellore in Tamil Nadu. Reputed doctors both in Kohima Naga Hospital and Christian Medical College, Vellore, gave up saying: "Scientifically it is impossible to make you stand up or walk."

"In my humdrum life confined to bed in the first room of the house, when all the available novels and story books had been read, in fact, re-read, I

***"I taught myself reading books. Several years of work improved my confidence besides providing me with some earning while lying down on my bed. More than anything else, it helps me to spend time productively and find meaning to my life." >>>***



chanced to look at my dad's tool box containing different types of small screw drivers. I picked them up and began to meddle with a damaged DVD player. An unknown force prompted me to persevere in putting my hands on the electronic goods. I told my eldest brother, James, who then was doing his MSW in Mumbai to send some books on electronics. I spent all time reading them as well as practicing them on the regular supply of damaged equipments from the people of Meluri and villages near by. The result now

is the heap of electronic gadgets that surround me."

Around Francis are heaped many television sets, several CD and DVD players, sound systems, CPUs, mobile sets and switch boards. "I taught myself reading books. Several years of work improved my confidence besides providing me with some earning while lying down on my bed. More than anything else, it helps me to spend time productively and find meaning to my life."

Born on 13th April, 1974 in the family of four boys and one

girl, Francis is the third son of a God-fearing couple, T.M. Varghese and Churhutshu Mary, who now are retired government servants from the departments of Police and Health and Family Welfare. There is a little girl named Ruvisa Dominica, another member in the family, whom he has adopted as his sister.

I was wonder struck at the total absence of pessimism in this bed-ridden young man during the entire period of interview lasting for more than two hours. Whatever he uttered were things that he is grateful for and things that he could do and is doing. For instance he said, "In a way my confinement to the bed has brought my family members much closer. Often I become a reference point for their coming together. I am grateful to God for it."

Recalling the relief and consolation that a little amount of Holy Water brought for him on the fateful day eleven years ago, he says, "God is someone who is ever with me. I feel his presence. I speak to him as he does to me. I argue with him. I scold him, I hold on to him. At times he is very close. At other times he is too far from me. But one thing is sure, he is with me, beside me and around me."

One of the anxious and nervous days he spent in all his life was the day he had to give a testimony of his life during the Nagaland Catholic Youth



***God is someone who is ever with me. I feel his presence. I speak to him as he does to me. I argue with him. I scold him, I hold on to him >>>***

Movement (NCYA) convention held from January 14-17, 2011 at his Parish church, Meluri. "I tried every means to avoid it. But my youngest brother's persistence made me yield. I was carried from my house to the dais. Sitting on the wheel chair and shivering more due to nervousness than the freezing cold weather of January, I narrated my story."

The sharing that began with reluctance and staggering took off with such flair that only a powerful speaker would get such a rapt attention from

the audience which had amid them, after his testimony, a few tear-drenched faces. Francis concluded his heart-rending testimony saying, "Will and determination brought the best out of the one who is in worst of situation."

The message was so clear and convincing that the same was picked up and repeated by the Archbishop of Imphal, Rev. Dr. Dominic Lumon, as his final message to the youth. Perhaps that should be made the message for all of us not only for a day, but every day. ▮



# Widen MID-DAY MEAL SCHEME

BY VIVEK SONI

“The only passport out of poverty to a better life is education,” said Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the Indian-origin Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. Indeed, she made this statement on her visit to India recently at an emotional union at her ancestral village in Bihar. Everyone knows that education brings awareness, clarity of vision, empowerment and cures many ills of the society. However, in an environment of grinding poverty and hunger, what is the incentive to go to school? One successful attempt in this direction was the introduction of mid-day meal scheme.

Introduced in 1995, (based on the experience of Tamil Nadu where this is universalised), the scheme seeks to improve the enrolment, attendance and retention of school children as well as to improve their level of nutrition. It provides for cooked noon meals to children up to 8th standard as an incentive to their parents to send them school. This intervention had a welcome impact upon the objectives sought to be achieved especially in case of girls’ education and education scenario in rural areas.

According to Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2011, percentage of out-of-school girls in 11-14 age group in rural India has declined to less than 6%. Again, 96.7% of children in 6-14

*It will be pinnacle of injustice if children in the tribal and missionary schools remain excluded from the Mid-day Meal Scheme >>>*

age group in rural India are now enrolled in schools. Also, at all-India level, the enrolment and retention have shown marked improvement.

When introduced, the scheme covered only the children up to primary level (5th standard) in government, aided and local-body schools. Seeing its exemplary positive impacts, the scheme was gradually extended. In 2002, it also covered children studying in EGS and AIE centres and also Madarasas/Makhtabs. It was extended to upper primary schools (6th to 8th standard) in 2006-07 to bring it in line with (the then proposed) Right to Education Act.

Since 2009-10, it also covers children studying in National Child Labour Project schools. Thus, there has been a gradual extension of scheme to cover more and more children. However, one important section of children is

left out i.e. those disadvantaged children who study in private and un-aided schools especially in backward regions of the country.

Recently, I visited a private unaided school in Manendragarh town of Koriya district of Chhattisgarh. To serve the predominantly ‘Kol’ tribals there, a charitable trust had established

the Kol Dafaai Adivasi School. The school is only for the children of Kol tribe. But since it is a private school, Mid-day meal scheme is not in operation there. The headmaster of the school said that because of lack of Mid-day meal there is no inducement for children to come to school. I found his statement correct because there was very less attendance of children there, even on the first day of the week.

My experience underscores the importance of extending this important scheme to the private schools in tribal areas. Many such private and unaided schools in the tribal belts across Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and the North-East are run by trusts and missionaries for the students from impoverished families. The extension of the scheme to these schools will definitely increase the enrolment, attendance and retention of children there.

Moreover, the extent of malnutrition in the country (recent report states that nearly 42% of Indian children are malnourished), this will be a welcome intervention. After all, these unprivileged children need the meals the most. It will be pinnacle of injustice, if these children remain excluded anymore. The scheme must be extended expeditiously as even a single child not attending school for even a single day is a great loss to the nation. ■