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EDITORIAL

Living in Hope...

“Most of the lights in my office are off,” and “it is dark” said Yuriko Koike, the governor of Tokyo, at a news conference recently. This happened because of the power crisis in Japan since the temperature rise exceeded 95 degree, for the first time in Japan since 1875. The high consumption of electricity collapsed their power distribution system and hence Japan is now experimenting with avoiding the use of lights to save electricity for their air conditioners.

New experiments and search for alternatives in the ecological realm can be seen worldwide now since climate change brings lots of calamities and it has become worse in different parts of the world. Now we realise that we are the main victims of our own activities and hence our introspection may lead us to confessing about our wrong perspectives about life.

“This beautiful, bounteous, life-giving planet we call Earth has given birth to each one of us, and each one of us carries the Earth within every cell of our body.” says Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk. This statement was published on the UNFCCC website, ahead of the Paris Climate Summit in September 2015. Many faith expressions recognise the genesis of human beings as arising from the Earth. Similarly, the origin of human beings from Earth has been highlighted in the creation story narrated in the Bible.

This ought to mean a lot to us. We are not merely the caretakers of the Earth rather we are carrying Earth within us and with us so we are mutually indebted for our existence. Therefore, the endangered Earth is demanding a radical change in our perspectives from market economy driven values to the values of the community of creation that births, sustains and nurtures life. It advocates for justice for people and the planet.

A justice seeking approach demands an examination of how injustice has marginalised different communities and the planet. This also compels us to have a close examination on how the climate and ecological crisis disproportionately affect different communities. It is an enquiry to be human in the community of creations. It is an effort to develop interdependence and coevolution of human economies and natural ecosystems.

Today ecological concerns are seen as intersectional since the complexities involved in analysing the ecological crisis show us how care of creation is integrally interconnected. Its politics, economy, cultural and social impacts denote the caste, ethnic, gender bias of various ecological movements and their ideological/ philosophical underpinnings. By neglecting the cosmological understandings of the indigenous and subaltern communities, overarching market sponsored creation care models have been imposed upon us now. This creates a dichotomy within our day-to-day experiences and creation care models proposed by the market driven forces.

On the one hand one sees hostility towards attempts at incorporation of the wisdom of people who are close to nature, while on the other the lifeworlds of indigenous communities and subaltern communities are becoming locations of dangerous anti ecological activities. Mines and waste management centres are largely located in their abode forcing them to uproot from their own lands.

Every day practices have to be integrated with creation care initiatives. This demands a radical shift in addressing the environmental issues. The link between environmental degradation and structural inequalities needs to be addressed in the light of social justice. Our action should be an outcome of our responsibilities.

In this context our responsibility is to work for sustainable communities. While sustainable development theories talk about how 'development' can be brought in, we need to work for the creation of equitable and just social, ecological and economic relations. Our existence in the web of relationships has to be recognised and affirmed with life-nurturing principles. Therefore, it is imperative to initiate a change in our life perspectives and in our day-to-day living.

Let us be hopeful about the future. In this task, Archbishop Desmond Tutu's words encourage us to persevere: "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness."

Rev Dr Abraham Mathew

Managing Editor



DONYI-POLOISM: AN ECO-SPIRITUAL WAY OF LIFE

- Aju Kurian*

Abstract

The term 'ecology' has become one of the most discussed topics of research in many circles precisely because of the increased concern and awareness about the irreparable damage that is being done to the environment, leading to the annihilation of our *oikos* (mother earth). Viewed from the sociological perspective, the ecological crisis is a crisis of culture, a crisis that has to do with the substantial loss of the sacrality of nature¹ in various cultures, as nature was once considered as something very divine and of core value to individual existence. The ecological crisis looming over the earth can be overcome by considering the world as sacred (tribal way) and God as the author of creation (Pergamon, 1992). Researches carried among various cultures and their relationship with nature emphasises this fact. The article presents the *Adi* tribe in India's north eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, a tribe which symbolizes in its culture the various important aspects of eco-spirituality (stewardship) and mystery of nature. This paper provides insights into the notion of eco-spirituality from the *Adi* perspective, in particular how their beliefs and practices assist them to live a life of harmony with God and nature. The data is collected from the existing literature on the theme and the author's personal interview with senior members of the *Adi* tribe.

Keywords: Eco-Spirituality, Ecology, Tribe, Donyi-Poloism, Adi, Eco-Theology

Definition of Key Terms

Spirituality: The word spirituality has its root in Latin word '*spiritualis*' which means the state of being spiritual. In a literal

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¹ Attributing sacredness to the nature

sense it is all about what moves and animates a person. Some view spirituality from the angle of life and the world, while a few explain it as an encounter with a personal God and others hold it to be a way of life in which the transcendent being becomes part and parcel of one's life. Spirituality is an endeavour and not merely a set of concepts or beliefs to be investigated or conjectured; it is a vision of life and a way of living which calls for personal choice and an action-oriented approach to life.

Ecology: Ecology is an integrated science, its laws are compatible with the integrity of the creation in which one believes; it basically addresses the inseparable interrelationship and interaction between the biotic and abiotic environment. The term ecology has its origin in the Greek word, *oikos* which means house. The term was first used by Ernst Haeckel in 1873, refers to that branch of biology which deals with the interrelationships between organisms and their environment (Chakkuvarackal, 2004). The in-depth study of ecological interactions offers valuable information on nature and its evolutionary transformation. The key ideal here is the eternal existence of a harmony between *Homo sapiens* and the natural environment in which they reside (Sarkar, 2000). This harmony is preserved and promoted when human organisms, the pinnacle of God's creation with all their competencies, respect and love unconditionally the environment in which they live. Thus, ecology is a major concern for everyone, be they believers or atheists, because it is in this harmonious existence that the earth and all its organisms are preserved.

Eco-Theology: Though spirituality and theology are not the same in literal sense, but both are complementary. Eco-theology means the theories on God originated from authentic experiences of men and women in the mystery of the nature.

Eco-Spirituality: The term eco-spirituality directs one's focus to the cosmos which is considered as the place of God's theophany. This discipline studies one's relationship to God as it develops in the context of the relationships with the cosmos in its totality. The major challenge of eco-spirituality is to discover the Almighty from within not considering as far away entity. Eco-spirituality becomes very much significant for us because, in nature, the unfolding of the personal God is visible and one is able to

encounter and experience it in a tangible manner. In this sense, eco-spirituality is a way of life and foundation and perceives the universe as a sacrament and incarnation of God.

The basic understanding of the key terms challenges one's behaviour and attitudes because down through the centuries human beings lived as if they are the sole authority over the universe and felt that they were not the part of nature or the universe. But an eco-spiritual view surely perturbs our traditional notion as masters of the earth, challenging us with the idea that creation as community of interconnectedness with each other and with the supreme. This understanding of interconnectedness drives one to experience the Supreme in the nature, enables man/woman to conceive the profound meaning of ecology and eco-theology and facilitates eco-spirituality centric life.

ADIS: The Focus Group

Arunachal Pradesh, popularly known as the 'land of the rising sun', is positioned in the north eastern part of India. Arunachal, the largest state (area-wise) in the north-eastern region, is the home land of about 110 tribes and sub tribes, and this ethnically rich region has about 25 major ethnic groups. Each tribe has its own unique culture, customs, tradition and dialect (Deepak Pandey & Byomakesh, 1997). Some of the tribes are *Adi*, *Aka*, *Apathani*, *Mishmi*, *Nishi*, *Manas*, *Panggi*, *Karko*, etc. The *Adis* are the people who predominantly inhabit the Siyang, Siyap, Siyom, Siyik and lower region of Dibang valley of Arunachal Pradesh. This tribe is subdivided into many sub tribes, some of them being *Minyong*, *Galonong*, *Padam*, *Pasi*, *Simong*, *Bori* and *Bokar*.

The name *Adi* means 'hill man'. They are a paleo- mongoloid people who are extremely close to the nature. They speak *Tanii Agom* with dialectical variations from region to region (Ering, 2011). Though there are dialectical differences, the language and culture of *Adis* have many commonalities. They follow an indigenous religion known as *Donyi-Poloism*, the cult of dual-deities, sun and moon. Nature forms an integral part of *Adis'* life. They have direct association with all the natural objects. Their proximity to nature is portrayed aesthetically in songs, dances and crafts and their buildings are a beautiful testimony to their ethos.

***Adis* and their Socio-Cultural Life**

The *Adi* tribe is organized on the basis of clan or village and the social relations are determined by kinship and locality. The social organization of the *Adis* is patrilineal. The smallest unit of society is the family, which consists of father, mother and children. Marriage is legitimate within the tribe, but not within the clan. The clan is very important in the organization of the *Adi* society, and any breach of clan rule is considered a serious offence. They lead an open life, with the entire house consisting of a big hall, which everyone shares. There is no reservation while eating even between the master and the slave. Dances are very popular among the *Adis*. Their traditional dance is *Ponung*, which is religious in nature. There are also other social institutions like *Kebang* (village council) *Bango* and *Rasheng*- boys' and girls' dormitory respectively.²

Festivals, dances, songs and ceremonies are an integral part of the socio-cultural life of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. The festivals mirror the people's culture and their life. Being agriculturalists, the *Adis'* economic, social, and cultural life totally depend on nature. Agriculture being the basic means of livelihood the festivals related to agriculture are celebrated in a very flamboyant manner with the objectives of acknowledging God's providence or of invoking His blessings for a rich harvest. The community sees to the detailed arrangement of the festivals and the ritual part is performed by the priest (Paul, 2003). In addition to routine festivals, there are also a few well planned and articulated schedules of rites where animal sacrifice is carried out (Deepak Pandey and Byomakesh, 1997). During these festivals, all members of the village without any distinction come together and share their joy and excitement and express concretely their oneness and solidarity. Some of the most important festivals are: *Solung* festival, *Mopin* Festival, *Etor* Festival, *Unying* Festival, and *Dongen* Festival (Paul, 2003; Kumar, 1973)

Religion

The origin of the religion of the *Adis* is blanketed in the web of numerous beliefs, myths and traditions. Beliefs in benevolent

² Boys' and girls' dormitory are known as bango and rasheng respectively but the names differs according to the dialectical differences.

and malevolent spirits play an important role in strengthening their faith in religion. They consider that every object whether animate and inanimate has its own spirit and believe in an unseen world, where gods and people live as a huge family. They believe that a supernatural power called *Sedi*³ has created all beings of the universe. Their religion is popularly known as *Donyi-Poloyism* or *Donyi-Polo* religion. The practice of magic and witchcraft are prevalent among the *Adis* (Daniel, 2002). Their religion promotes an eco-friendly life because they are certain of the fact that everything that exists in the world is, in one way or the other, related to God and man.

Beliefs and Practices

The *Adis*' faith and beliefs have evolved through their age-old experience of nature. Through their close relationship with nature they have developed an eco-spirituality, a holistic relationship with God, man and nature. Therefore their beliefs are the basis of their eco-spiritual way of life. A detailed study of these beliefs and concepts helps us to understand better their eco-spiritual way of life.

Concept of God

Adis follow a complex system of beliefs in their spiritual practices. They believe that the entire universe and all its organisms are created by a supreme God called *Sedi*. This supreme God has created a number of gods and goddesses who in turn have given birth to so many invisible spirits to control the various spheres of human life. In fact, they consider that the entire universe is the physical embodiment of *sedi*. The *Adi abangs* (folksongs) narrate that in the process of creation, *Sedi*, the creator himself transformed parts of his body into rivers, valleys, air, water, stones, rocks, flora and fauna, the sun, the moon and the stars. After the creation, *Sedi* became a silent observer. However, he continues to keep vigil over the universe and humanity through the pair of searching eyes- '*Donyi*', the sun and '*Polo*', the moon. *Donyi-Polo*, the manifestation of the two eyes of *Sedi*, is regarded as the symbol of the creator and protector of mankind

³ *sedi* or *keym*, or *Jimi* or *sedi-melo* by the minyongs, Galos and Boris respectively

(Rikam,1989). Analysis of the folk tales and myths shows that the *Donyi-Polo* comes next to *sedi-melo*. No sacrifice is made to *sedi* because they believe that the creator God *sedi* (*Sedi-melo*) is beyond such needs and does not require any sacrifices. But *Adis* offer sacrifices and invoke *Donyi-Polo*. This concept of *Adis* is the basis of their concept of sacredness of nature and creation. As God himself is part of nature they consider themselves also as part of nature, not apart from it. This is in fact the foundation for the eco-spiritual way of life.

The Material Aspect of *Donyi-Polo*

Out of all the natural objects *Donyi*, the sun and *Polo*, the moon, attract them the most. The physical existence of the sun and the moon are the truth beyond dispute. The basic belief is that they exist in the distant sky like two large beaming eyes and stand eternally for the welfare of the creation. The *Donyi* rises at the day break to enable humanity to see objects around them and *Polo* appears at night with dim light to soften the human mind and heart. *Donyi- Polo* renders great material services to humanity and to the creation at large without asking for anything in return from human beings (Ering, 2011). The *Adis* express supreme respect to *Donyi-polo*.

Mythical Aspects of *Donyi-Polo*

The *Adis* are very fond of narrating fabulous myths and stories. The most important source of *Adi* myths is *Abangs*.⁴ These tales all have the same theme but the manner of narration may differ from village to village. *Solung abang* is one of the most important *abangs* performed by *Miri* on the occasion of *solung* festival in the form of *ponung* (traditional song). It is cosmogony-centric and deals elaborately with creation, evolution of the universe and the birth of divine, as also all living and non-living things (Tayeng, 2003). A short analysis of these traditional myths and stories can help one to grasp the concept of *Donyi-Polo*.

In the initial stages, emptiness pervaded space; there was neither light, nor matter and sound in space. This state of emptiness

⁴ Ceremonial song, sung by the *miri* or priest on festival and other social occasions

was known as *keym* (*Kero*).⁵ During the course of time a spontaneous *Yumkang* (vibration) unfolded within the vacuum and the continuous vibration led to the formation of *kasi* (a great vibration) which gradually engulfed the entire *keyum-kero*, and after a period of time, *Mukseng* a tiny star like object in the center of the vibration in seen and unseen form appeared. In due course of time, it consolidated into *Sedi*.⁶ From *Sedi*, *Melo* was originated. *Sedi* and *Melo* are the first physical manifestations emerging from the incomprehensible *keyum* or *kero*. *Sedi* a female being turned into the earth while *melo* a male being became the sky. In order to continue the process of creation they married each other and began to produce various offspring in the world (Tayeng, 2003). During this process *Sedi-Melo* merged and the two eyes of the creator became sun and moon. Through *Donyi-Polo* the creator God (*Sedi-Melo*) keeps vigil on the universe (Ering, 1998).

The myths show that nature in its varied manifestations is the object of religious inspiration, reverence and often of fear, worship and supplication. Since elements of nature such as the sun and the moon have awesome power and implications for the individual's existence, *Adis* have evolved an extraordinary faith based on *Donyi* and *Polo*. Though they worship *Donyi-polo* they see them not as objects of worship but the symbols of divine life, truth and beauty (Bhagabati, 1998).

Donyi-Polo: A Way of Life

Donyi-Polo is considered a religion and is an associate member of the world movement for religious freedom. Ering (1998) rightly puts it using his own experiences how the trust in *Donyi- Polo* enabled him to form a concept of religion and God and prompted him to cultivate the spirit of truthfulness, wisdom, blissfulness, compassion, love, friendliness etc. in his life. Though the tag of religion is there, yet I personally find that it is not a religion as such that guides, but a tribal aspiration that motivates the people to live an eco-spiritual way of life.

⁵ Name changes as the dialectical variations. Some call it *Keyumkero* and consider it as the great mother

⁶ It is known as *sedi dimyong mayne*, i.e., the embodiment of the universe.

Donyi-Polo is a philosophy of life with myths and superstitions which give colour of a religion. According to *Adis*, the light of the sun and moon constitutes the established channel of traditional aspiration of the people. They call it *Donyi bene and Polo Gone*, the great path and bridge that leads the tribe to their ideological peak of glory. The essence of *Donyi-Polo* can be traced out by analysing the behaviour, conduct, expression, and traditional myths of the tribe. *Donyi-polo* has different meanings on different occasions and includes meanings such as truthfulness, wisdom, enlightenment, blissfulness, right conscience, compassion, love, selflessness, friendliness, human excellence etc. that lead man to perfection. In short, it can be easily ascertained that truth is the essence of *Donyi-Polo's* faith and culture (Ering 1998). They ascribe everything from life to death, to *Donyi-Polo*.

Traditionally *Adis* consider *Donyi-Polo* as the eyes of human consciousness. *Donyi mikmie seri ne, polo migore serone* i.e., the searching and piercing eternal eyes that watch the humanity ceaselessly. As the two objects in the sky focus light to enable us to see what is what, so the eyes of conscience, i.e., *Donyi-polo* illuminate our mind to take ethically correct decisions (Ering, 2011). They swear in the name of *Donyi-Polo*, and respect people who are outstanding in morality and address them with respect as, *Donyi-Polo omneo-* children of truthfulness, *Donyi-Polo Abu-* representative of *Donyi-Polo*, *Donyi-Polo Ami-* a man after *Donyi-Polo* etc.

As *Donyi-polo* becomes the highest aspiration, the *Adis* live in conformity with the light. The faith and belief find strong foundation in nature. Nature is mother, teacher, and educator. They consider all beings as emerging out of nature, living in nature, and melting into nature and have all objects of nature as their relations.

In order to safeguard the ecological balance, *Adis* try to protect nature through different practices that emerge from their belief that the whole nature and human beings are interrelated and interdependent. For example, *Rinyo* (tiger) is considered to be a brother in direct line and therefore killing of the tiger is equal to murder, and so on. This is one of the beliefs which help them to protect the endangered species. The very concept of brother in

direct line shows a blood relationship and expresses itself in deep rooted solidarity. Their faith and belief enable them to lead an eco-spiritual life. They consider destruction of nature as destruction of themselves. The interrelatedness and interconnectedness of God – Human being –and nature basically form the foundation of their life.

The *abangs* celebrate the divinity of nature and the universe along with the necessity of human beings to be one with the nature. Being very close to nature, they have experiences that have been gained through the generations, which has evolved into a philosophy of life that is deeply rooted in their way of life. Therefore, one cannot divide their way of life into religious and secular spheres, rather one can conclude that their belief in *Donyi-Polo* enables them to be one with nature and the universe leading them to an eco-spiritual way of life.

Theological Reflections: Eco-Spirituality - A Way of Life

Religion without reason is blind in the same way as experience without reflection is void of value. The Adi tribal and eco-spiritual way of life can be a source and inspiration for the rediscovery (retrieval) of eco-spirituality.

Eco-spirituality is a manifestation of the spiritual bond between individual human persons and the environment and is grounded on a basic faith in the sacredness of nature, earth and universe. From an eco-spiritual perspective, God, spirit, or the divine is very much a part of creation, a part with which one constantly interacts using one's senses and intuitions and from such interactions and experiences acquire deeper insight into the wonder of reality. The challenge of eco-spirituality is to discover God within – not apart from – this totality, and to view the totality as dynamic and interdependent, that is, to find our relationship with the whole cosmos, with God as the centre and creator of this masterpiece.

Nature looks after the basic necessities of a tribal man/woman. He/she develops an interdependent culture from the use of materials taken directly from nature. Their religion may be in its primitive form but is in fact the vital essence of faith, not a mere idea. The essence of faith is a matter of pleasure which

only nature can offer. Even though the tribal faith lacks a kind of metaphysical approach like that of the developed religions, it has a pragmatic approach from the very life situation rooted in the nature. *Adis* does not express directly any concepts like transcendence and immanence but their experience of the supernatural makes them see transcendence in this immanent world. In this sense, the love, care and respect for the natural environment and ecosystem shown by the *Adis* shows that it springs from their age-old experience of and relationship with the transcendent in the immanent surroundings. The experience of the natural phenomena of *Donyi-Polo* helps the *Adis* to perceive the unseen (God) Divine power.

Adis experience the transcendent God in the wonder of nature. They respect nature. Their holistic vision of life runs through each and every interaction with nature. Their myths describe powerfully the vital relationship between human beings and cosmic forces. They have keen insights on the healing power of natural herbs. Through their rituals they wake up holistically to the divine dimension of nature. In their festivals they celebrate with great joy their belonging to the cosmic home (Painadath, 1998). The close and intimate relationship of the *Adis* to the natural environment has evolved through several stages of experimentation, trials and errors. The different elements of their culture are interwoven and well configured with the existing ecological conditions and challenges. Their world-view, socio-political systems, religious endeavour, food, dress, habitat, music, and dance are all attuned to their immediate nature. And above all the concept of *Donyi-Polo* as a deity and as ideological perfection helps them to live a life of harmony with nature and the cosmos. Thus the *Adi* way of life is very much eco-spiritual. The beauty of the association of *adis* with nature calls the entire universe to relook and reorient one's attitude towards God and His creation. A caring relationship and commitment to creation by *Adis* definitely paves the way to understanding the real author of creation.

The realization of the mysterious aspect of nature is a concept that helps us to rely on the providence of God. It can be called the mystery of ecology. In this 21st century science and

technology claim superiority over nature and eco-systems but when calamities and problems come we realize that science and technology are not superior to nature and eco-system but the age old customs and practices of the tribals show that their reliance on nature is absolute in faith, not dependant because as part of the nature they don't presume anything worse than a good deal of what is created by man.

Harmony of God, Man and Nature

Life is the stream where God, Man and Nature flow together. The tribals go further and identify God with nature i.e., they do not differentiate God from the nature. For E.g. *Adis* think that *Sedi* (God) in the process of creation merged into the creation and became land, water, trees, etc. They look at God, Man and Nature from an interrelated perspective. Nature is understood as the symbol of unity of all living creatures, the spirits and the creator. This harmonious world view can be called a *Theo-Anthropo-Cosmic* world view. It can even be called a life-centered worldview - life, not in a univocal sense but in its diversity and complexity. It assigns a place of excellence to human beings as loving care takers but not as dominators. This harmonious world view of the tribals leads them to life in oneness with nature. Therefore, their practices and beliefs are eye openers for us to see the divinity of nature and to give due respect.

Conclusion

If we try to solve the ecological problems by introducing new ethical values or by rearranging the importance of the traditional ones, it is clear from history that we will not go very far in reaching a solution that lasts. In my opinion theology must try to adjust the past to the present by creatively combining it with whatever is best in philosophy, art, science, age-old wisdom, and other areas of thought. *Adis* look at God, Man and Nature from an interrelated perspective. In Thomas Merton's words- 'you have to take God and creatures all together and see God in creation and creation in God and don't ever separate them. Thus, everything manifests God instead of hiding God or being in the way of God as obsolete.' A tribal eco-spiritual way of life is an answer to the present ecological crisis.

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EMOTION REGULATION DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EMERGING ADULT SEMINARIANS AND COLLEGE STUDENT

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Abstract

Emotion regulation (ER) is a focus of positive psychology due to its impact on mental and spiritual health. ER potentials range from explicit, conscious, effortful, and controlled regulation to implicit, unconscious, effortless, and automatic regulation. The current study compares emerging adult Seminarisians to same-aged college students in terms of emotion regulation and other psychological aspects. The cross-sectional study recruited 42 seminarisians with an average age of 21.54 and 42 college students with an average age of 21.05. The Mindful Awareness Attention Scale, the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, the Revised Adult Attachment Style Scale, and the State Trait Anxiety Inventory State Mindful Attention Awareness Scale were utilized to evaluate explicit outcome. In addition, the Emotion Regulation-Implicit Association Test, Eye Tracking, and the Self-Assessment Manikin (SAM) were used to analyze the results of the implicit assessments. We did not find any statistically significant difference between the two groups in all explicit measures, but interestingly seminarisians were significantly better in implicit ER measures like ER-IAT and Eye Tracker. Seminarisians were also significantly better in the experience of arousal, valence, and dominance toward emotional provocations as measured by Self-Assessment Manikin. It is possible for implicit processes of emotion regulation to offer protection against psycho-spiritual demands. These are activities that are carried out automatically, without the need for conscious inspection or explicit effort. The findings of this study provided some basis in the important roles of implicit emotion regulation in the seminary formation.

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Keywords: Emotion Regulation, Seminarians, Implicit, Explicit, Eye Tracker.

Introduction

Emotion regulation(ER) emerged as a focus topic of positive psychology due to its significant influences on psychological and spiritual wellbeing(J J Gross & Muoz, 1995). Gross (1998b) defined emotion regulation as “the processes by which we influence which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express them”. ER potentials range from explicit, conscious, effortful, and controlled regulation to implicit, unconscious, effortless, and automatic regulation(Gyurak et al., 2011). Impaired emotion regulation is a trait-marker for unhappiness, (Kanske et al., 2012), psychiatric conditions (Werner & Gross, 2010) and many psychological problems, including substance misuse, depression, and impulsive conduct.

The emerging adults who have aspirations of enrolling in the seminary come from a variety of settings and have varied psychological and spiritual backgrounds. The seminary serves as a location for the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development of emerging adults on their path to become priests. Owing to the current shift from traditional to modern lifestyles, emerging adults in today's society are undergoing detrimental changes on multiple levels, including their bodies, emotions, cultures, societies, and spiritualities. This change has resulted in a wide spectrum of impaired emotion regulation, which might potentially impact numerous areas related to psychological and pathological problems.

Reappraisal and suppression are two primary forms of emotion regulation that are highlighted in the process model (Gross, 1998a). Reappraisal is the process by which an individual attempts to influence the way in which he or she observes a situation in order to change the emotional impact that the event has on the individual. Suppression is a response-focused strategy in which an individual strives to suppress the behavioural manifestation of personal emotions. There are five steps of emotion regulation included in the process model. These stages are situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, and cognitive change(Gross & Thompson, 2007).

The explicit reactions are assumed to emerge as a result of purposeful conscious, effortful, and rule-based learning (Haefffel et al., 2007). The outcome of an implicit measurement technique is the product of automatic processes (De Houwer et al., 2009). The implicit association test, often known as the IAT, is predicated on a person's ability to categorize information based on their strong association in their memories. Further, user's gaze location can be determined by an eye-tracking device by measuring not just where the user is looking but also the size of the user's pupils. Using this technology, researchers can get a better handle on how much attention a person is paying to what, how often they blink, and how their pupil dilates. The pupils of the eyes appear to become more apparent when a person is exposed to emotionally stimulating or intriguing visual stimuli (Hess & Polt, 1960).

However, there is a dearth of research that deals with the emotion regulation of seminarians. To the best of our knowledge, no research has been undertaken on emotion regulation in seminarians. The goal of this study is to find out what makes emerging adult Seminarians different from age-matched controls when it comes to regulating emotions and other psychological factors. In addition, we compare and contrast the conscious effortful emotion regulation (explicit) and unconscious and automated emotion regulation processes (implicit) between emerging adult Seminarians and age-matched control participants. In this study, an eye-tracking methodology was used to evaluate the implicit emotional control capabilities of seminarians.

Method

Participants

A non-probability, cross section research was implemented. The study involved eighty-four participants, ie. forty-two seminarians and forty-two college students (only men) who formed a control group. The average age in the sample of seminarians was $M=21.54$ years (range = 20–25; $SD = 1.06$), while the average age in the sample of control group was $M=21.05$ years (range = 18–24; $SD = 1.69$). Statistical analysis revealed no significant differences in age between seminarians and control group.

Procedure

The data were acquired from seminarians, who were located at a seminary in southern India. Students attending private colleges in the southern region of India provided the data for the control group. Participants were informed and ensured of the confidentiality of the process. The research was carried out with the participants' informed consent. Participants in the study had normal or corrected-to-normal vision and knew how to use a computer at a basic level. Subjects who had a known history of mental health disorders or a phobia of blood-injection-injury were not included in the study. The ethical committee of the institution provided approval. Every explicit measure was evaluated in a group setting, whereas every implicit measure was carried out independently by each participant utilizing a computer and an eye tracker.

Explicit Outcome Measures

To assess the explicit outcome, we used a well-established psychological questionnaire. For the purpose of evaluating dispositional mindfulness or present-focused awareness, the Mindful Awareness Attention Scale (MAAS), which consists of 15 questions, (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Reappraisal and suppression are two of the most common forms of emotion regulation, and they were both evaluated with an updated version of the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), which consists of nine items (Spaapen et al., 2014). The 18-item Revised Adult Attachment Style Scale (RAAS) was used to assess three key aspects of adult attachment style: close, dependent, and anxiety (Collins, 1996; Collins & Read, 1990). The levels of state anxiety were evaluated using the 6-item State Trait Anxiety Inventory-Short Form (STAI-SF) (Spielberger, 2010), while the state mindfulness was measured using the 5-item State Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (SMAAS) (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Emotion Regulation-Implicit Association Test (ER-IAT)

The Emotion Regulation-IAT task was utilized in order to evaluate participants' implicit attitudes towards emotion regulation (Mauss et al., 2006). INQUISIT stimulus presentation software was used to administer the Emotional Regulation IAT.

The ER-IAT task was utilized in order to investigate the degree to which an implicit association existed between the targets, which consisted of the emotional regulation categories (emotional expression and emotional control), and the attributes, which consisted of emotional terms (positive and negative concepts). During the trials, category labels appear on the top corners of the screen. The words representing the categories appear one-by-one in the middle of the screen (Deng et al., 2017). The subjects are instructed to categorize the words by pressing the E key, if the stimulus word belongs to a category on the left, and I key, if the stimulus word belongs to the right-hand category. Participants are instructed to categorize each stimulus as quickly as possible but not making many errors. The ER-IAT had five blocks, three were practice blocks, and two critical blocks. When the participants pressed an incorrect answer, the program waited for the correct answer, leading to built-in error penalty (Hopp et al., 2011). Higher scores on ER-IAT indicate more positive implicit evaluation of emotion regulation relative to emotion expression. The possible scores range from -2 to +2.

Eye Tracking

Eye tracking is a non-invasive image-based tracking approach that detects pupil dilation and gaze fixations via corneal reflection. We used an eye tracker made by Eye Tribe, which has a sampling rate of 60 Hz, an average accuracy of 0.5–1 degrees, and a latency of 20 milliseconds (TheEyeTribe, 2015). The device was placed in a horizontal orientation just underneath the device display of the laptop. The person sat in a chair that could be adjusted and had a headrest on the back. His eyes were fixed on the middle of the screen, which was about 60 cm away. The position of the tracker is slanted towards the direction of the participant's eyes. Because the room's windows were sealed, the monitor and ceiling light were the only sources of illumination. PyGaze is an open-source Python script that was used to operate the eye tracker. It was run on a laptop (Dell Inspiron 3542 Laptop, Core i3/4GB/1TB/windows 10). Python scripts that were utilized in the experiment may be retrieved from github at the following address: github.com/esdalmaijer/EyeTribe_test.

In three blocks of ten, 30 trials were offered (Neutral, Pleasant,

and Unpleasant). Thirty digital colour photos with a resolution of 1024 by 768 pixels each were chosen by the researchers from the International Affective Picture System (IAPS) and placed into one of three distinct categories: neutral, pleasant, or unpleasant. Emotional Areas of Interest (eAOI) are regions of an image that have strong emotional significance to the individuals. We made points of interest for each of the 30 IAPS images by combining all of the participants' ratings.

Self-Assessment Manikin (SAM)

The SAM is an example of a non-verbal assessment that uses pictorial representations. It measures the degree to which people feel positive or negative emotion (valence), arousal, and dominance when viewing an image (Bebko et al., 2011). Self-Assessment Manikins rate IAPS images' valence, arousal, and dominance on a 9-point scale (Bradley & Lang, 1994).

Data Analysis

There were 84 participants, 42 in seminarians and 42 in control group. We performed independent sample t-test to evaluate difference in means between seminarians and control groups. We kept 0.05 as the level of significance.

Table1: Independent Samples T-Test for Explicit Measures

	Group	Mean	SD	p
State Anxiety	Seminarians	40.317	10.689	0.086
	Control	45.238	14.946	
Trait Mindfulness	Seminarians	3.857	0.685	0.493
	Control	3.749	0.749	
Emotion Regulation Reappraisal	Seminarians	4.719	0.933	0.062
	Control	4.295	1.109	
Emotion Regulation Suppression	Seminarians	4.155	1.290	0.776
	Control	4.226	0.984	
State Mindfulness	Seminarians	3.252	1.122	0.670
	Control	3.133	1.410	

Table1: Independent Samples T-Test for Explicit Measures

	Group	Mean	SD	p
Close Attachment	Seminarians	3.456	0.661	0.703
	Control	3.405	0.573	
Depend Attachment	Seminarians	3.020	0.682	0.840
	Control	3.048	0.571	
Anxiety Attachment	Seminarians	2.853	0.769	0.776
	Control	2.806	0.763	

Interestingly, we did not find any statistical significance between the two groups in all other explicit measures, like trait and state mindfulness, state trait anxiety, explicit emotion regulation questionnaire, and attachment scale.

Table 2: Independent Samples T-Test for Implicit Measures

	Group	Mean	SD	P
Emotion Regulation Implicit Association Test	Seminarians	0.367	0.334	< .001
	Control	-0.192	0.333	
Pupil Pleasant Non-Target	Seminarians	22.703	2.906	< .001
	Control	25.609	3.448	
Pupil Pleasant Target	Seminarians	23.189	3.033	< .001
	Control	25.980	3.655	
Pupil Unpleasant Non-Target	Seminarians	24.658	3.620	0.092
	Control	26.039	3.791	
Pupil Unpleasant Target	Seminarians	24.646	3.328	0.052
	Control	26.206	3.902	
Pupil Neutral Non-Target	Seminarians	19.999	8.160	0.003
	Control	24.64	5.297	
Pupil Neutral Target	Seminarians	22.276	2.809	< .001
	Control	25.363	3.878	
Dwell Time Non-Target Pleasant	Seminarians	13547.857	10987.022	0.002
	Control	7920.024	3373.030	
Dwell Time Target Pleasant	Seminarians	60940.571	19710.075	0.312
	Control	57048.833	15067.261	

Table 2: Independent Samples T-Test for Implicit Measures

	Group	Mean	SD	P
Dwell Time Non-Target Unpleasant	Seminarians	11390.905	11512.068	0.692
	Control	12179.905	5751.040	
Dwell Time Target Unpleasant	Seminarians	57758.881	18677.641	0.006
	Control	48271.643	11253.122	
Dwell Time Non-Target Neutral	Seminarians	3838.381	5714.954	0.693
	Control	3441.405	3091.749	
Dwell Time Target Neutral	Seminarians	66485.952	21661.091	0.913
	Control	66047.929	14232.413	

There was a significant difference between seminarians and control group in the Emotion Regulation Implicit Association Test, $p < 0.001$, and the seminarians had a mean positive value of 0.37, suggesting emotion expression, whereas control group had a mean negative value of -0.19, suggesting implicit emotion suppression. Among the eye tracker variables, dwell time was found to be significantly higher for pleasant non-target stimuli in seminarians, whereas dwell time was found to be significantly lower for unpleasant target stimuli in control group. All the p values were less than 0.001. Neutral stimuli did not show any statistical difference in any of the comparisons. Similarly, for the pupil dilation variable, in the pleasant and neutral conditions, the mean pupil dilation was found to be significantly lower ($p < 0.001$) in seminarians group compared to control group. In the unpleasant condition too, similar trend was observed however they were not statistically significant.

Table3: Independent Samples T-Test for Self-Assessment Manikin

	Group	Mean	SD	P
Pleasant Valence	Seminarians	5.902	0.622	< .001
	Control	6.783	1.085	
Pleasant Arousal	Seminarians	3.210	0.963	< .001
	Control	4.810	1.515	
Pleasant Dominance	Seminarians	6.838	0.524	< .001
	Control	5.240	1.361	
Unpleasant Valence	Seminarians	4.207	0.679	< .001
	Control	3.088	0.964	

Table3: Independent Samples T-Test for Self-Assessment Manikin

	Group	Mean	SD	P
Unpleasant Arousal	Seminarians	4.364	0.890	< .001
	Control	5.969	1.568	
Unpleasant Dominance	Seminarians	5.279	1.004	< .001
	Control	3.857	1.399	
Neutral Valence	Seminarians	5.176	0.426	< .001
	Control	6.043	0.995	
Neutral Arousal	Seminarians	2.336	0.734	< .001
	Control	4.290	1.483	
Neutral Dominance	Seminarians	6.990	0.529	< .001
	Control	5.233	1.749	

To support the above observations of eye tracker variables, in the IAPS image evaluation, all the measures including arousal, valence, and dominance were statistically significant between the two groups. Arousal was found to be significantly lower ($p<0.001$) in the seminarians group compared to control group for pleasant, unpleasant and neutral images. Valence, which is a measure of attributing a quality of emotional to the image, was found to be significantly lower in the seminarians group in pleasant and neutral images, and it was significantly higher in unpleasant images. Dominance was also found to be significantly higher in the seminarians group in all the three pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral images.

Discussion

Our goal was to evaluate the differences in emotion regulation strategies adopted by seminarians and control group, both in implicit and explicit levels, including the eye tracker variables. The results clearly indicatethe emotion regulation strategy adopted by seminarians group is predominantly through non avoidance of negative stimuli and non-dwelling (focusing more on non-target) of pleasant stimuli. Further pupil dilation results suggest that seminarians group participants adopt less emotional engaging with the highly provoking stimuli. We did not find any difference in any of the explicit measures; however, we found statistically significant differences both in implicit measure of

emotion regulation (ERIAT) and in eye trackers, which suggest the sensitivity of these assessment tools towards assessing the subtle emotion regulation strategies.

These seminarians are emerging adult males undergoing training in preparation to become priest. Even though, psychological and spiritual mental health concerns are prevalent among emerging adults. When compared to the same age group of emerging adults, seminarians scored significantly higher on quality of life, gratitude, and the presence of meaning in life(Andrade et al., 2017). All of the training at a major seminary is meant to build the seminarians' spiritual health, religious beliefs, moral values, and intellectual resilience. Further, a seminarian inherently trains the mind in detachment from the external stimuli, not by escaping from it but engaging in a tactfully detached way. This progress could have a significant impact on their deep-rooted unconscious emotion automation, as evidenced by the results of implicit emotion regulation. Hence, training engaged in the seminary can lead to better emotion regulation and psychological wellbeing. Based on prior research, the findings show that effective management of implicit emotion can linked to automatic, physiologically appropriate down-regulation, making people more capable of dealing with demanding situations (Mauss et al., 2006).

This study provided encouraging results as a first attempt to investigate influences of implicit and explicit emotion regulation and related psychological factors in seminarians. Despite the fact that both implicit and explicit emotion control outcome measures were assessed, future study could benefit from the addition of brain imaging and bio-markers to throw light on the mechanisms behind the potential influence of seminary training. Future research will seek to monitor the implicit and explicit psychological and spiritual characteristics of seminarians at every step of their spiritual formation. The samples were primarily chosen from an emerging adult male population from a specific place in India. As a consequence of this, the findings cannot be extrapolated to any other populations. In subsequent studies, it will be important to take into account additional samples coming from a variety of intercultural, multilinguistic, and diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Implicit processes of emotion regulations that are carried out without the need for conscious oversight or explicit effort can provide protection against psycho-spiritual demands. The findings of this study provided some basis for the important roles of implicit emotion regulation in the seminary formation. The findings of this study can be utilized to create counseling and training module to enhance implicit emotion regulation for seminarians.

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ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN THE AGE OF PANDEMIC

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Abstract:

The paper evaluates the public policy of the Government of India to cope with the challenges of the Covid 19 pandemic under the neo-liberal paradigm. It highlights the lacunas of the policy formulation from the environmental justice perspective. The paper states that India overcame the pandemic because of the 1960s institutionalisation of the public distribution system (PDS). The policy options of the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have little contribution to the fair distribution of support to the global commons. The impact of neoliberal policies has imposed too much harm on the poor in the context of the pandemic. The crux of the paper is the limitations of distributive justice unveiled through the lens of environmental justice.

Keywords: Environmental justice, deliberative justice, Utilitarianism, social exclusion, social inclusion, dialectical naturalism, social ecology, neoliberalism.

Introduction

The pandemic has transformed all spheres of human relationships and perspectives of justice. Sometimes, people spell disaster as a great equaliser. Equality and fairness are central to John Rawls' philosophy of justice. The fair and equitable distribution of resources is at the core of the notion of distributive justice. Alice Kaswan emphasises, "Distributive justice concentrates on how

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harms and benefits are distributed and experienced"¹. Maximising social welfare and reducing inequalities are the two goals of distributive justice in the Utilitarian school of thought. How does the age of pandemics ensure just and equitable distribution of resources and welfare in a democratic political system? The scope of the paper respects the "environmental justice" paradigm. The perspective of environmental justice addresses the relationship between man and nature and the complex issues of the distribution of justice in human relations. Environmental justice is a potential analytical tool to understand public policy from a justice perspective. The theories of the school of social ecology reinforces this understanding. Culture is the expansion of human intervention over nature, and all subjugations have evolved from the dialectic relationship between man and the environment².

Environment Justice Perspectives.

As far as environmental justice is concerned, we look at people's experiences. Environmental justice confirms John Rawls' concept of equitable distribution. While acknowledging justice, we mean that no one should have more harm than others. This pandemic is harmful on three fronts: economic, cultural and political. When we talk about social conditions during the COVID-19, we see that the impacts of the pandemic have intensely affected the poor in India and worldwide. The poor paid a high price for the pandemic, and the rich were protected unimaginably. The most impoverished Indian peasants and communities have lost their jobs and livelihoods. Mahesh Vyas, CEO of the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, explains the gravity of job loss, that over one crore people lost their jobs due to the second wave

¹ Alice Kaswan, "Distributive environmental justice", in Brendan Coolsaet, *Environmental Justice: Key Issues*, (New York: Routledge, 2021) p.22.

² Murray Bookchin, *The Philosophy of Social Ecology: Dialectical Naturalism* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1996).

of coronavirus³. In addition, household incomes have declined sharply since the spread of the pandemic.

The reasons for COVID-19 remain unclear. Cultural and political animosities naturally aligned with the COVID-19 pandemic gave it the name: Chinese flu. The spread of plague and malaria, when aligned with the Jews, resulted in centuries of marginalisation of the Jewish community from the European majority. Hatred for Jews and Jewish fever; impacted the political system of Europe and constituted the Jews as the enemies of the world. It was macroscopic in a sense, but at the same time, the microscopic hatred spread against cultural minorities worldwide. COVID-19 and its link to Muslim hatred is a case point in India. The pandemic was a tool to hate minority cultures and suppress 'other' identities. The pandemics use hate language under the veil of health caution. Usually, such speech creates an unpleasant approach towards nomadic tribes, minorities, or little cultures. Discourses on pandemics turned into a clash between purity and filth. "Filth" is a politically loaded word that may denote caste and colour.

Human rights activists and opposition leaders have loudly criticised the impact of the pandemic on the political system. The use of state force to regulate the movement of the people echoes the warning of George Orwell's 1984, "Big Brother Watching You". The presence of Big Brother was visible in all spheres of political and social life. Political campaigns of the opposition parties on public policies are restricted. It challenged democracy and vindicated authoritarianism. It creates a dependency on the state and generates a consciousness that the state is all-powerful and a protector of the grid. Treatise, speech against government, is a sin. New technologies are applied to regulate people's movements. The vaccination certificate is a tool to control human activities in the name of health awareness, and the health care system is deeply politicised. In addition, scientific research and experiments generated a massive flow of data from the south to the north. The result was the reinforcement of the western colonisation process on the rest. We need to research the way capitalism works through COVID-19.

³ Mahesh Vyas, Business Today, Jun 01, 2021 (News Report)

The unequal distribution of wealth, power and care resulting from the pandemic requires a critical intervention from an environmental justice perspective. Environmental justice holds a view from the victims' perspective and does not extend non-critical acceptance to the Utilitarian or neoliberal understanding of justice. Market capitalism and modern democracies express their absolute adherence to the paradigm of distributive justice. From a neoliberal perspective of capabilities are inherent in the dispensation of justice. The hard-working people have a fair right to more wages. Capacities, efficiencies and performance are the pillars of neoliberal justice. Inequality in resource and profit distribution is justified on the premises by the neoliberals. Indirectly, the defenders of neoliberalism advocate that the maximum benefit for society shall be generated by competitiveness. To sustain competitiveness, we must ensure unequal treatment based on talents.

The age of the pandemic claimed that the unequal treatment of the rich and poor was justifiable. The International Monetary Fund launched a relief project in 2015 in the context of the Ebola outbreak and modified the same policy in March 2020 in response to COVID-19. This project is called Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT), envisaged to provide additional financial assistance to developing countries. The main objective of the aid is to "support debt service relief" for IMF borrowing countries by "addressing the balance of payments needs of countries". The net result of the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT) is reflected not in the economy of the developing countries. Still, it ensures an unfettered flow of resources from developing countries to the Western Capitalist Countries. Debt servicing itself is a trap for keeping developing countries in the grip of the capitalist bloc.

Financial policies and regulations

Market regulation and increased support for MNCs and TNCs were at the heart of strategies to deal with the pandemic. Survival strategies focused on digitisation, cryptocurrency and climate investments. A new form of capitalism evolved during the 1990s. Neocapitalism strengthened in the context of the pandemic and extended its grip on all spheres of human life. Digitisation in

health, education and retail trade has increased. Petti shops were closed, schools and colleges were not opened, and hospitals initiated new forms of services. All such changes happened in a short period. The Governments have formulated new policies to reorganise society in a "new" pattern. For instance, the traditional teaching-learning method gave way to blended learning. All these transformations occurred in a culturally fragmented, politically polarised and economically stratified society. Now, we have been forced to address a new form of divide called the "digital -divide". It widened the gaps in society. The poor were repeatedly subjected to discrimination and subjugation. The pandemic sharpened the social divide. The support systems could not produce a positive change in the lives of the poor and illiterate.

Environmental justice sees through the lens of inequality and problematises the daily lives of the poor. Why are the poor suffering more than the wealthy because of the pandemic? During the spread of the pandemic, the poor lost their jobs, and governments failed to compensate them. Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman announced a Rs 6,28,993 crore rescue program to support the Indian economy in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The IMF discussion paper (WP/22/69) on India's post-pandemic scenario shows that poverty and inequality in India have increased due to the pandemic's economic impact. The authors of the working paper expressed their discontent with the method of data collection to measure poverty alleviation in India. They said that, NSS data did not reflect the actual poverty situation in India from 2017 onwards. But the effective implementation of the Public Distribution System (PDS) during the pandemic has successfully alleviated extreme poverty. India's approach to kind transfers through the PDS has been a successful measure, appreciated by IMF researchers. This assessment is not taken into account within the ideological framework of the IMF and the World Bank (WB). The NDA government is loyal to the dictates of the World Bank. At the same time, the PDS is a powerful political instrument during the time of elections. Indian ruling class appeases the rural poor through the PDS system.

The Public Distribution System (PDS) evolved during the 1960s in India to supply food rations to the urban population. By the 1970s,

the system had expanded into rural and tribal areas. The system was very supportive to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. It was accessible to all who had delimited to the bottom half of the urban population and two-thirds of the rural population in 2013. However, it increased the quantity of food grain supplied to the eligible. India's subsidised kind transfer system was not only limited to foodstuff but was expanded to the distribution of fertilisers to the agricultural sector, Gas to household users, Kerosene and diesel to the fish folk, electricity to rural poor etc. The subsidy system itself was seen as an unfair practice by the neoliberal policy advocacy groups and had insisted on reducing the subsidised supply of grains and other items.

The "stimulus packages" proposed by the Government of India Smriti Irani had mainly focused on the centralisation of the banking sector and privatisation. Madan Sabnavis, an economist, points out that India's stimulus package is not reflected on the demand side⁴. The priority for grants transferred from people to companies during the pandemic era was due to World Bank advocacy. The companies introduced a new system of work culture, such as working from home which reduced the company's running expenditure but increased the investment of workers in technological devices, as well as energy and data consumption. At the same time, companies reduced the salaries and other allowances during the pandemic. It has affected the quality of work and the net pay of workers and has increased the working time, even if they are at home. The injection of government funds into industries is not reflected in the lives of the urban and rural poor. The harms were not fairly distributed in society. Edibles are available to vulnerable communities through the PDS but lack technology. Their access to education, health and energy has been depleted due to the pandemic. The support measures put in place by NGOs and philanthropists have hardly been reflected in day-to-day life. A technologically fragmented society came out of the pandemic.

The Real Question

What kind of justice have we done to the victims of COVID-19? It is open to questions that cannot be answered. Against

⁴ Business Standard, 28 June 2021.

the backdrop of a pandemic, the central government has unquestionably implemented neoliberal policies, including privatising the economy, centralising banks, and accumulating political powers by the state. A victim's point of view missed in implementing the policies has been the vital criticism from the environmentalist side. The disaster itself has become a tool for subduing the economically oppressed. Environmental justice considers the victims' point of view and provides a creative and critical interpretation of the Utilitarian distributive perspective. The dictates of WB in 2022 threaten the positive signs generated by the PDS. The World Bank Report on *Subsidies, Trade and International Cooperation* (2022) identified many forms of subsidies as a threat to market strengthening. The report states that fisheries subsidies have caused overfishing and thus damage the ecology. Poor fishers benefit from such subsidies as food or aid during the dry season. The IMF and the World Bank assume that subsidies can be detrimental to market competition, as it has been proven that subsidies are essential to the livelihood of poor people in India. The measurement of "damage" is presented as a central stake in the discourse of justice in the environmental justice paradigm. The sustenance or the profit, which one should be depend on? Is justice warranted for the poor or the dominant?

There has been little exploration of the frontiers of justice in the context of disasters, pollution, floods, etc. The pandemic has opened up numerous avenues for exploring these cross-cutting issues. Gordon Walker noted that "the unequal distribution of impacts, and unequal distribution of responsibilities"⁵ along with "the processes of disrespect, insult and degradation that devalue some people and someplace identities in comparison to others"⁶ and "participation and procedure"⁷ of inclusion and

⁵ Scholsberg D (2007) *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements and Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁶ Fraser N (1997) *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition*. New York: Routledge.

⁷ Gordon Walker, "Beyond Distribution and Proximity: Exploring the Multiple Spatialities of Environmental Justice", in Ryan Holifield, Michael Porter and Gordon Walker (eds.), *Spaces of Environmental Justice*, (John Wiley & Sons Ltd: Chichester, 2010), p.36.

exclusion come under the purview of environmental justice⁸. It is wise to note that the pandemic has created a particular class/caste in the receiving end and made them passive bystanders. Those at the receiving end have no role in the decision-making process. The ruling class determines the policies of the subjects.

Justice is not so naive as the advocates of distributive justice claim. The veil of ignorance is in place. The environmental justice perspective offers a frame of plurality to understand the notions of justice in the context of disasters. COVID-19 has not been the first global catastrophe and may not be the last. For that, we could do justice to the humble while dealing with the disaster in one form or another. The nature of the disaster can be worldwide or local. However, our focus needs to be on crises. Equity and fairness are to be considered within a plurality framework. The measure of injury in a short or long span is not counted in measuring justice. Economic strategies aimed at mitigating the pandemic have not recognised the subjective role of vulnerable communities. Generally speaking, the poor treated as a receptive point or objects of policies and strategies is a significant threat to humanism and democracy, which requires political and spiritual solutions to the world. Spiritual education on public policy needs to be done in the context of COVID-19.

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⁸ Gordon Walker, "Beyond Distribution and Proximity: Exploring the Multiple Spatialities of Environmental Justice", in Ryan Holifield, Michael Porter and Gordon Walker (eds.), *Spaces of Environmental Justice*, (John Wiley & Sons Ltd: Chichester, 2010), p.36.

BIBLE STUDY

“REST” AND “LIBERATION” FOR THE EARTH AND EARTH COMMUNITIES

A DALIT ECO-READING OF LEVITICUS 25: 1-12

*-Vinod Wesley**

Introduction:

Mark Hertsgaard in his article “The Climate Crisis is a Crime that should be Prosecuted”, points out that climate change is a crime against humanity and every human is now living in a crime scene. He explains this as follows:

This crime has displaced or killed untold numbers of people around the world, caused countless billions of dollars in economic damage and ravaged vital ecosystems and wildlife. It has disproportionately affected already marginalized communities around the world, from farmers in coastal Bangladesh, where the fast-rising seas are salting the soil and slashing rice yields, to low-income residents of Houston, Chicago and other cities, whose neighborhoods suffer higher temperatures than prosperous areas across town.¹

Hertsgaard, by defining climate change as a crime points out that we as human beings have violated the laws of creation. We have caused an injustice to the earth and earth communities, hence we need to be prosecuted. While we ponder upon the injustice, it is important to know about some wonderful laws that have been created to maintain justice and to live a sustainable life without disrupting the natural cycle of the creation.

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¹ (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jun/30/climate-crisis-crime-fossil-fuels-environment>), accessed on May 29, 2022.

We can find wonderful laws to protect God's creation from a theological perspective in religious scriptures. And at the same time, we can also see these laws in practice in subaltern earth-based communities like those of the Dalits in India. Two such laws in the Bible have been the laws of Sabbath and Jubilee in Leviticus 25:1-12. In this Bible study, I would like to explicate the theological ideas of "rest" and "liberation" from the text and provide a Dalit perspective to affirm that these ideas are the inherent characteristics of the subaltern communities like Dalits.

"Rest" as Challenging the structures causing "Unrest" for the Land and People:

Leviticus 25 has captivated the minds of biblical thinkers and ecological activists on this justice-oriented and teleological approach to sustaining the creation of God in its beauty and sacredness. It has been widely discussed whether this law was actually implemented in the life of the Israelite community. Though many scholars agree that these laws were not practiced, they affirm that these laws provide an important ecological vision to sustain the created world and ensure its peaceful existence.² The verses that affirm the idea of "rest" are as follows:

⁴ But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. ⁵ Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. ⁶ Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you – for yourself, your male and female servants, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, ⁷ as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten. (Leviticus 25: 4-7)

Here the Hebrew word used for rest is "šāb bā tō wn" which means "solemn rest".³ The other word that I found important is "sə-pī-ah" which means "whatever grows of its own accord".⁴

² John Goldingay. *Old Testament Ethics: a Guided Tour*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2019). P189.

³ <https://biblehub.com/text/leviticus/25-3-4.htm>, Accessed on May 29, 2022.

⁴ Ibid.,

These two amazing words provide great insights into listening to the voice of the earth and earth communities and allowing them to rest and recuperate. It provides liberation and renewal to the land to get back to its natural cycle and also for the community to restore its egalitarian nature. Most importantly for me, these ideas *šab bā tō wn* and *sə-pī-ah* raise the following two pertinent questions: 1. What causes the “unrest”? 2. What are the inherent values of the earth and earth communities?

The first question *What causes the unrest?* raises further eco-justice questions such as who owns the land? Who are the victims of capitalist aggressive agricultural methods? And what systems should be challenged? I approach these eco-justice questions from a Dalit perspective in order to expound on the liberative ecojustice principles of Leviticus 25:1-12 in the context of the suffering and resurgence of Dalit communities in the context of climate change in India.

The word “*šab bā tō wn*” (Solem Rest) raises the important concern of giving rest to the land and to the servants, hired workers, temporary residents, livestock, and the wild animals in the Land. Basically, it challenges the system that over-pressurizes the land and the people who work with the land to yield more profits. It is a warning to the community that the earth communities cannot be subjugated by dominating communities and forces for their over-consumptive living. Here the idea of “rest” actually exposes and challenges the structures in the society which causes “unrest” to the ecological and social equilibrium through its aggressive approach towards the land and the communities who work closely with it.

In the Indian context, the cause of the environmental crisis which has caused the “unrest” to the ecological equilibrium and affected the lives of communities closely living with the earth has been associated with the arrival of European colonial powers, and later, the Industrial and scientific revolutions. But a Dalit perspective will argue that the system that has perpetuated the “unrest” in the ecological and social equilibrium is actually rooted in the centuries-old caste system in India. Mukul Sharma points out that according to the Dalit perspectives environmental crisis began with Aryan colonization in India and that caste and

environmental crisis cannot be separated in the Indian context. He explains this vividly as follows:

Caste and nature are intimately and inextricably interwoven in India, and yet their interconnectedness has rarely been a subject of examination. However, Dalit experiences and narratives constantly underline their everyday ecological burdens in a marked hierarchal order. Images of land animate caste anxieties around labor, blood and bondage. In dry regions, Dalits must often sacrifice their lives to recharge ponds and water resources. From village to city and temple to school, caste metaphors of pollution, impurity and dirt dominate places and spaces through imaginaries of dangers posed by the presence of Dalits. Forests can be heaven or hell for Dalits. A river is some place to dispose of your body. Nature, entwined with fear and violence, horror and hardship, bloodbath and war, makes environmental experiences of Dalits distinctive and different.⁵

Mukul Sharma very vividly calls this influence of caste on the environment “Eco-casteism” which justifies that caste-based society and the division of labor in India help towards sustainable development.⁶ In this development only the manual labour of the Dalits is utilized for development of the society. Their lifeworld, religious ideas, practices of rituals, and knowledge system are also completely considered polluted. Their ecological knowledge and epistemologies are silenced in this process. Sharma formulates the following observations, of how casteism influences environmentalism, revealing a Dalit perspective on the climate crisis:

1. Caste created a concept of natural and social order in which people, place, occupation, and knowledge are characterized by pollution and ritual cleanliness; where bodies, behaviors, situations, and actions are isolated, “out of place,” and “untouched,” because of deep-down hierarchical boundaries.

⁵ Mukul Sharma. *Caste and Nature: Dalits and Indian Environmental Politics* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017), xiv.

⁶ Ibid.,

2. Caste has shaped environmental attitudes and values of both Brahmins and non-Brahmins.
3. Caste has made it possible for Brahmins to appropriate and exploit natural resources by segregating and subordinating certain sections of the population.
4. Low castes, especially “untouchables,” developed their own understandings of environment and its resources, which were cohabitations of love and sorrow, pain and joy, and alienation and attachment.⁷

While the Dalit perspective highlights how caste has influenced the environmental life and history of India, it also challenges two important ideas that emerge from the dominant Brahmanical perspective: eco-organicism and eco-naturalism. Sharma explains that “eco-organicism understands society as a natural, given community, based on an ecological model of nature... it is an “Indian” approach to nature, where environment is understood as divine, cosmic, and intrinsic, conforming to the laws of nature”.⁸ Hence “pollution” to this organized structure comes from “others” and especially polluted communities like Dalits and western influences. Similarly, Sharma says that “eco-naturalism uses nature to affirm the supremacy of ‘natural order’ in major spheres of life-food, animal, livelihood – which is many a times synonymous with a conservative Hindu Brahmanical belief”.⁹ Hence in order to maintain the holiness of the land based on the Brahmanical beliefs, the lands were almost always owned by upper caste communities while Dalits were used as agricultural laborers. Their manual labor was exploited for the well-being of the upper caste. Here “*śab bā tō wn*” is a call to expose the eco-casteism in India and to challenge the eco-organicism and eco-naturalism which causes the “unrest” for the earth and the Dalit lifeworld.

The second theological idea “*sə-pĩ-ah*” which means “whatever grows of its own accord” really challenges one to turn themselves to the inherent eco-wisdom of the earth and the earth communities and to model our lives based on that. While the Dalit ecological

⁷ Ibid., ix-xx.

⁸ Ibid., xxi

⁹ Mukul Sharma, xxii

critique challenges the idea of eco-organicism and eco-naturalism ,it also affirms a rich and diverse environmental history present in the Dalit communities.¹⁰ Sharma states that “Dalits are active ecological agents in their own right, and their understandings of nature and ethics, planning and management of resources, labor and environment are intertwined with narratives of social justice.”¹¹ Dalit life with nature is also characterized by the complexities of the forced roles and sacrifices they have had to make in order to maintain a sustainable environmental community where natural resources are protected. Sharma explains these complexities as Dalits’ eco-role, eco-sacrifice, and eco-dynamism.¹²

Father Pallath J. Joseph in his article “The Humanizing potential of Dalit Cultures” points out that the basic personality of Dalit Culture is more imaginative, unitive, cosmic, mythic, intuitive, feminine and passive; whereas, that of the Aryan culture is more rational, dualistic, personal, historic, discursive, masculine and aggressive.¹²¹³

For him three factors have eroded Dalit wisdom on ecology and climate understandings they are Sanskritisation, religious conversion and the introduction of market economy. *Sanskritization* has led to the ‘Hinduising’ of the Dalit cultures through the imposition of Brahmanical cultural values. *Conversion* by the missionary semitic religions such as Christianity and Islam have completely uprooted them from their respective

¹⁰ Ibid., xxv.

¹¹ Ibid., xxvi.

¹² Ibid., 83.

¹³ According to him the Dalit cultures are rich with animal and plant symbols taken directly from nature with little or no stylization. Plants and animals are generally considered as manifestations of divine power. Among the animals the Dalit cultures give more prominence to earth bound creatures such as serpent, tiger, rat etc. that live in abodes, inside the earth and the saped trees such as pipal, neem, kadamba, bilva, chembakam and kanjiram.

¹⁴ Father Pallath J. Joseph in his article “ The Humanizing potential of Dalit cultures” <http://campaigns.ahrchk.net/jjpallath/mainfile.php/work/40/>.

religions. The introduction of the market economy and the process of liberalization for globalization is a great threat to the little surviving eco-based and economically sustainable Dalit cultures. He also mentions that modern development understanding should be built on the respective *Nattarivu* (local dalit wisdom, a Malayalam term which he derives from his research on Dalit communities in Kerala), Dalit wisdom and technology which ensures optimum use of the natural resources and hence eco-friendly.¹⁴

Thamburaj Dharmaraj in his research “Indigenous technology of climate prediction among a Tamil Dalit community” observes that the Valluvar community is referred to extensively in ancient Tamil literature as ‘masters of astronomical calculations as well as predictions of climate’. Though it has valid literary and historical evidences of being a literate and scholarly community, it is culturally branded as ‘untouchable’ within the Tamil social system. Apart from the religious role, Valluvars played an important role within the entire Tamil social system ‘as repertoire of climatic change’. Peasant folk still remember a cultural ceremony on the first day of the Tamil month Chithirai (April) in which the Valluvar submits the climate report of the forthcoming calendar year. But today these histories are lost.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid., The market economy has promoted one dimensional consumer culture which denies bio-cultural and technological diversities through the imposition of mono-technology.

¹⁵ Each of them had a collection of panchangams, or calendars for determining auspicious dates, and a bundle of palm leaf strips (Chudamani Ullamudayan) inscribed with slokas for astrological purposes”. Traditional societies have maintained a register of climatic changes in order to predict the forthcoming natural calamities such as flood and drought. These predictions are mostly done by deciphering the changes occurring in nature such as blowing of the wind, movement of clouds, appearance of the constellation of stars, behaviors of animals and plants, etc. Agrarian communities traditionally rely mainly on these indigenous predictions of climatic change for its food production. In Tamil society, the knowledge of climatic changes has been well organized in the form of a written register, ‘Panchankam’ (almanac). Valluvars are traditionally assigned the work of keeping

Hence “*sə-pĩ-ah*” invites us to recognize and value these lost and silenced eco-epistemologies and eco-wisdom of the earth and earth communities like the Dalits..

Liberation: A Jubilee Vision from Dalit Movement

Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. (Leviticus 25:10)

One of the most significant words in this verse for me is “*də-rō-wr*” which means “liberty”. Here the word liberty has several intricate meanings such as return, renewal and restoration. The idea of the jubilee year proclaiming liberty is a wonderful vision to allow the whole Israelite community and all its inhabitants to return to the divine oneness and dignity in which God created them. The same effort is evident in the context of climate change where several initiatives have been suggested to reduce carbon emission to restore the earth. Attaining “*də-rō-wr*” is not easy. This is again clearly evident in how rich countries are unwilling to rapidly reduce their carbon emission which has caused the present climate crisis. Hence “*də-rō-wr*” requires strategies. We are grateful for several strategies proposed by the scientific and the economic world. At the same time, it is important for us to learn from the strategies of “*də-rō-wr*” envisioned and practiced by subaltern communities like the Dalits.

One such Dalit movement which lives with a jubilee vision proclaiming “*də-rō-wr*” is Tamil Nadu Women’s Collective, a collective of more than 100,000 poor, Dalit, single, landless and marginal women. Tamil Nadu Women’s Collective (TWC) was started in 1994 as a small grass-root initiative in the state of Tamil

that register of climatic change and of updating it. Therefore, they have to identify the key signs of nature and should engage in the process of deciphering them to predict the pattern of climate in the near future. Thamburaj Dharmaraj , ‘Indigenous technology of climate prediction among a Tamil Dalit community’, http://roundtableindia.co.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3928:the-indigenous-technology-of-declaring-climate-change-among-a-tamil-dalit-community&catid=119:feature&Itemid=132

Nadu, South India, which practices and promotes agroecology - an organic and budget free agricultural method involving growing many mixed crops such as grains, lentils, beans, oilseeds to sustain biodiversity.¹⁶ This initiative of the women's collective is to help the poor women to attain self-reliance and autonomy and to combat climate change by using adaptive and organic agricultural methods. This woman's collective stands as a grassroots initiative to challenge the dominant capitalist agri-industry and provide an alternative organic model for the Indian nation.

In my view, some of the important liberative strategies that they practice are: *sustaining Eco-Memory, demanding women's sovereignty and promoting Agroecology*. TWC encourages all the women in their collective to recite their eco-memory in order to identify the seeds that they have used and the important decisions they have made or what has been passed on them with regard to sustainable agriculture. Caste and gender oppression which affected the Dalit women's lives also limited their rights as women and gave only restricted access to natural resources like land, water, and seeds. Sheelu Francis points out that "land is a very big issue for TWC. Even among our TWC members, only 10% have their own land. 90% are landless laborers."¹⁷ Hence TWC is advocating for the government to give long-term leases to single women on unutilized land owned by companies. For this purpose, TWC organizes women farmers, particularly widows who are landless, into collective farming groups, where they lease land and grow millet, which first ensures food security at the household level. Finally, TWC aims in teaching Agroecology to many subaltern communities like them at the national level in order to promote sustainable agriculture in the context of climate change.

Conclusion:

In the context of climate change, it is very important to learn from the biblical text and also from the earth-based subaltern communities which are the "living text" today. Both the texts,

¹⁶ <https://www.alternet.org/food/womens-collective-using-agroecology-fight-indias-green-revolution> (accessed on May 28th, 2022).

¹⁷ Ibid.,

Leviticus and Dalit lifeworld, challenge us to return to the ways of divine eco-wisdom to challenge the forces causing “unrest” to this created world. While these two texts invite us to a prophetic engagement in challenging the forces causing the ecological destruction, they also invite us to a praxeological mission in order to establish liberation. For this, it calls on us participate and be in solidarity with Dalit collectives like TWC. Let us commit ourselves to the task of promoting “šab bā tō wn (*Solemn rest*), and “dā-rō-wr” (*liberty*) as envisioned in the scriptural texts and Dalit movements.

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA

NATIONAL POLICY GUIDELINES ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN INDIA

"Jesus came that all will have fullness of life" John 10:10

Introduction to the NCCI National Policy Guidelines:

Preamble

The National Council of Churches in India believes that, through the ages God has been a constant, caring and comforting presence in the history of the people, liberating them from oppression and injustice. It is out of this deep conviction and spiritual understanding that the NCCI seeks to evolve an authentic Christian praxis, which will eventually lead to the transformation of society, through works of justice and love.

The National Council of Churches in India as an icon of Christian faith and unity in India and serves as the voice of the hope and aspirations of the Christian community from Protestant and Orthodox Churches spread across the length and breadth of the country. It is a facilitating agent for dialogue, advocacy, intervention and action on common concerns and issues that affect the people and the quality of their lives.

Biblical Theological Foundation:

The Nazareth Manifesto Luke 4: 18-19

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed and announce the year of the Lord's favour

Meaning of Anointed: Messiah (anointed) is the transliteration of the Hebrew term, *Mashiach*. The New Testament (Greek) equivalent is *Christos*. Both terms mean "the anointed one." The

anointing meant that someone was authorized to serve God in a position of honor and responsibility. This is the high call of God into the ministry of great risk and great responsibility. To liberate the people who are under the clutches of various types of oppressions and whose rights and dignity are robbed off. To celebrate God's designed Jubilee Year, which literally means a social festival celebrated as a result of debt forgiveness and returning of the lands which were snatched away unlawfully from the owners. This is the command and the blue print of Jesus' ministry and the most important agenda for the Church to fulfil in order to be called the Church as Christians, the followers of Christ.

Soco-Political and Cultural Factors:

The Churches have been in solidarity with the oppressed and the marginalized, but the time has come when solidarity in spirit alone is insufficient to resurrect failing courage, and hopelessness, in the wake of injustice and atrocities perpetrated on vulnerable sections of society, particularly on the Indigenous Peoples, setting their life and livelihood at risk, affecting them physically, mentally and spiritually, and destroying the collective will for survival. The time has come to recognize that the engagement of the Church is the need of the hour, as it promotes kingdom values and just peace to all. The Indian Church has to be sensitive to the struggles of the indigenous people and cannot remain a mute spectator to the atrocities perpetrated on them, such as human trafficking, marginalization, dehumanization, loss of identity and displacement due to lopsided development. It has to re-define the meaning of 'Development' in the context of globalization that seeks to exploit natural resources without considering its impact on Indigenous Peoples, and ensure a life of dignity, peace and security. It has to be inclusive, acknowledging Jesus as the *dynamic ideal and model for ensuring justice*.

Rationale

"The humanness of a society is determined by the degree of protection it provides to its weaker, and less gifted members. Whereas in a jungle

everybody fends for him/herself and devil takes the hindmost, in a civilized society reasonable constraints are placed on the ambitious and acquisitiveness of its more aggressive members and special safeguards provided to its weaker and more vulnerable sections. These considerations are basic to any scheme of social justice and their neglect will brutalize any human society.” (Mandal Commission Report)

“TRIBALS and ADIVASIS are INDIGENOUS peoples, with a distinct identity and culture that has territorial identification, a harmonious and symbiotic relationship with the earth as her children, internally organized on egalitarian and communitarian basis, with systems of knowledge, self-governance and nationhood”

(ref : accepted definition arrived at by a consensus in a meeting of representatives from 18 states.)

But due to a history of violence and violation of human rights, in reality, they are now a migrant, marginalized and vulnerable community, suffering from extreme poverty, illiteracy, and a loss of their natural and cultural heritage. Apart from this they are subjected to new forms of violence like State repression, where the State instead of being the protector, monopolizes and perpetrates violence, with scant regard for human lives, livelihood and dignity. They are rendered much more helpless when the Church chooses to remain silent and sometimes are themselves the instruments of violence.

As per the Ministry of Tribal Affairs report there are 622 Tribes living in different parts of the country forming 8.2 % of the Indian population. It is estimated that there are many indigenous groups who have not been included in the Government records till date. Their voices are the most unheard in India as they fall outside the Hindu Caste system and remain at the bottom of the Indian Social Hierarchy, as outcastes.

Common problems encountered by the Indigenous communities in India can be identified as follows – Violence and Atrocities

against their Rights to dignity of life, Right to Land and Forest, extreme Poverty, Illiteracy, Poor Health Conditions and Lack of Leadership and integration. Among the 8.2 percent of the tribal/ adivasi/ indigenous people population in India, over 90 percent of them are living under conditions of extreme poverty even though 15 percent of natural resources are in their home lands. About 50 percent of adivasi/ indigenous communities are displaced in the name of development. In terms of education, the drop-out rate of children from tribal/ adivasi/ indigenous communities continues at 77 percent. The traditional rights of tribals over natural resources still lie with the State and the claim for its rightful use by the tribal/ adivasi/ indigenous people is not honored.

In addition, Indigenous people in different zones have their own particular socio-political, economic and religious struggles. For instance:-

- 1. The Central Zone (46% Indigenous presence) is reeling under State oppression due to the combination of factors that go against them. Being resource rich (minerals, forests and potential hydro electric power), and legally weak in terms of control, the local communities are under constant threat. There are multiple interests that are keen to exploit the resources of their homelands. And thus there is a constant pressure from the strong nexus between the bureaucracies, the corporate and the elected representatives to maximize exploitation and grab profits. With local insurgent groups and the military forces dominating the landscape there is a steady increase in violence and displacement faced by the communities. Migration for employment, exploitation and abject poverty have resulted in human trafficking, and flesh trade are eroding the basis of harmony, local self sufficiency and sustainable living has been the hallmark of tribal communities.**
- 2. In the Western zone (27.6% Indigenous presence) the IPs have suffered mass displacement and denial**

of lands and livelihood due to Dams and Economic liberalization.

3. As both the North Eastern zone (12.4% Indigenous presence) and the North Western zone (2%) are situated along the international borders of China, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and Bangladesh in the North-East, and Pakistan and China in the North-West, these zones experience internal and external terrorism, are the hub of State atrocities due to Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and political unrest, ethnic conflicts, human trafficking for tourism & hospitality industry with extreme poverty and extreme lack of health care.
4. Southern zone (11.3% Indigenous presence) is heavily affected by the dominant culture hegemony and misplaced concern for animals at the expense of and indifference towards human beings by environmentalists and animal lovers.
5. Ever since the Tsunami calamity in 2004, the Islands of Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep (0.1% Indigenous presence) and even the mainland eastern coastal areas are continuously facing threat in various forms, to be precise, the tourism industry. Indigenous identity and rights are threatened by many rules and regulations that deny them their right to enjoy their common space, their identity, and traditional & customary practices.

Apart from the specified zonal problems Indigenous women in India irrespective of their geographical location or socio-cultural and religious background remain the most affected ones in spite of them being the backbone of the society from ancient days. Their values and sacred spaces in the society have been systematically destroyed; that has demoralized them with frustration and confusion. Only 18.19% of the 41 million tribal women are considered as literate. They are harassed, exploited and forced into the flesh trade or low paid jobs.

The church having a historical presence in tribal areas geographical, social and religious, taking cognisance of these facts, feels the need to retrospect its own role, policy and position vis-à-vis tribals, tribal christians and church doctrine. This would help the church to play a more proactive role in the progress of the tribal and adivasi communities.

Process

The National Council of Churches, through its Commission on Tribal and Adivasis, and through its member churches, has recently been in close association with the tribal community in its endeavour to facilitate dialogue between them, the churches and the State. This enriching experience has been mutually strengthening and has challenged the Commission to formulate a policy that would create a permanent channel of communication with Indigenous people. With this in mind the Commission on Tribals and Adivasis organized Consultations in all the regions, meeting NCCI constituent members in collaboration with Church leaders, theologians, social activists, NGOs, people's movement, law makers, members of the legislature, and parliamentarians to discuss, debate and deliberate on the problems and suggest solutions and strategies to form a policy that seeks to affirm, uphold and protect the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Problems

The findings of the consultations, in the four regions, reiterated the fact that the indigenous communities **are victims of historical and contemporary injustices, and challenged the churches were being challenged to address these issues vis-à-vis the protective laws in the constitution, the international instruments of the UN and the ILO, State Laws and to take urgent *steps to redress their suffering and trauma.***

Economic indicators

Realizing that Indigenous people are living in abject poverty, (more than 55.2 % of them live below the poverty line), as majority

have no access to land for cultivation, have lost their livelihood, have no jobs, or are engaged in seasonal jobs, are forced into low paid jobs and vulnerable working situations for survival, illiteracy, lack of infrastructure and non-implementation of welfare schemes,

Recognizing the fact that the tyranny of the market forces has widened the gulf between the rich and the poor, and has ushered in an era of consumerism, and unhealthy competition that benefits only a few,

Realizing that development has brought with it allied problems of tourism that destroys biodiversity and the ecological balance, deprives the indigenous of privacy, natural habitat and livelihood,

Shocked that child abuse and trafficking has been high on the agenda as flesh-trade-tourism,

Distressed that the culture and indigenous wisdom is disappearing in the attempts to be more modern for tourists attractions for economic benefits,

Pained that the development of infrastructure and planning to suit the market needs does not include the indigenous,

Shocked that the indigenous are not consulted while making plans that involve the place that is the natural habitat and source of income

Surprised that mining and deforestation has taken precedence over all efforts to preserve and protect natural resources and much necessary forest coverage that is needed for sustainable development

Realizing that semi nomadic Indigenous people living in the plains are dependent on landlords for agricultural and allied work that are seasonal and low paid, and that nomadic tribes depending on handicrafts, find it difficult to make a living,

Physical indicators

Food Security

Acknowledging the lack of food security due to shifts in patterns of cultivation, rejection of traditional and indigenous practices, aggravated by deforestation, water pollution, destruction of indigenous food crops, and introduction of genetically modified plants.

Health Concerns

Understanding that health concerns are a priority issue due to poor accessibility to medical treatment, medicines, lack of proper infrastructure, and pertinent health issues that need to be addressed in a specific and sensitive manner.

Shelter

Realizing that nomadic and semi-nomadic Indigenous communities who live in the plains are poor and have no proper shelter and suffer from lack of basic amenities.

Shocked that there is a lack of basic amenities like drinking water, lights, roads, health, education and nutrition (63.5% lack access to electricity, 53.1% do not have access to water at a nearby location, 83% do not have access to Toilet facility)

Social indicators

Accepting that literacy, which indicates the social, cultural, health and political status of a community, is at a staggering low at 29.6% (Male 40% and Female 18.19%), with a high school drop-out rate of 77.7%,

Acknowledging the demoralization experienced due to the distortion of identities, and discrimination based on social profiling, rendering them refugees in their own homelands,

Pained by the atrocities that are meted to the community and ill-treated without reason, regret, or punishment

Shocked by the high incidences of exploitation, violence and human trafficking, sexual abuse and other forms of violence against women and children

Cultural indicators

Acknowledging the disappearance of indigenous art forms and cultural practices that contributed to the richness of the communities

Conceding the fast disappearance of the communitarian values and a culture of sharing resources that encouraged living in harmony with people and nature

Ecological indicators

Alarmed at the displacement of 55.15% Indigenous people in the name of development, exploitation of natural resources due to mining and dams, ruining of biodiversity through deforestation, water pollution, and other forms of environmental degradation that destroys the symbiotic relationship between land and indigenous peoples,

Religious Indicators

Realizing that religious sentiments, freedom of professing any religion and innocence of the Indigenous communities who worship the elements are encroached upon by unscrupulous fundamentalists

Political indicators

Distressed at the extreme vulnerability and helplessness of a community exposed to atrocities perpetrated by military power by the Government through draconian Acts like the Armed Forces Special Protection Act (AFSPA) and vested interests , leaving them with no recourse to either judicial redress or relief through state intervention,

Shocked at the continued inaction about, and indifference to, the sufferings of the community, whose poverty and needs render them easy prey to political manipulators, extremists and fundamentalists.

NCCI National Policy Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples in India:

Chapter I

This policy is envisioned on the Christian principles of Just Peace and aims to call on Member Churches, Related Agencies and all other constituents of the NCCI, Civil Society, Non- Governmental Organizations/agencies and other Faith-based organizations to challenge expressions of political authoritarianism and military power; protecting the poor and the marginalized of the Indigenous Peoples from the tyranny of the market forces, creating harmonious and non-exclusive communities, protecting the biodiversity and acknowledging the special bond of the Indigenous Peoples with nature, and rediscovering the prophetic voice of the church, by

- Emphasizing that every human being be treated with dignity and respect.
- responding to acts of injustice and oppression suffered by the Indigenous people, who are victims of human rights violations, dominant cultural hegemony, and displacement due to lopsided development;
- developing an economy that builds on the indigenous values of sharing resources to fight the market forces that widen the gulf between the rich and the poor
- ensuring that there are no developmental projects and plans that exclude the indigenous peoples
- advocating for the restoration of the sacred space in which there is freedom to profess and practice indigenous spirituality and culture;
- reinforcing the symbiotic relationship of indigenous people with land and nature,
- promoting the reinstatement of the right to self-determination and self expression,
- assisting in reclaiming the rightful place of indigenous people as the earliest inhabitants of this great land.
- providing theological reasoning for the intervention and engagement of the faithful in the struggles and socio-political realities of the people.

Through this policy, the National Council of Churches in India hopes to reaffirm and challenge the collective responsibility of churches and faith based communities, to ensure justice and fairness to the powerless and most vulnerable sections of society, to reach out in solidarity with the suffering, to protect biodiversity and to celebrate human plurality.

Chapter II

The NCCI and its Constituent Members resolve:

- 1. To affirm a common heritage with the Indigenous peoples of India and affirm with respect their right to a life of dignity, and celebrate with them their uniqueness in the diversity that this nation is blessed with.**
- 2. To strengthen our understanding of human rights violations against the Indigenous communities, by reaching out to them as an Indigenous communities and not necessarily as Christian Indigenous people.**
- 3. To respect Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination, privacy and autonomy, freedom to maintain and strengthen the diversity of their cultures, traditions and practices that contribute to sustainable development.**
- 4. To accept Indigenous rights to traditional medicines and health practices and at the same time allow them access to all social and health services promoting wholistic health**
- 5. To respect and advocate the restoration of Indigenous rights to land, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or occupied, used or acquired**
- 6. To use the resources of the church to provide good educational institutions that would open up a window of opportunities in the world**
- 7. To urgently employ the abundant health care resources, in terms of infrastructure, human resources and finances, to promote health care of the Church**

8. To impress on the Government to implement the UN Rights on Indigenous People and to ratify the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions which affirm their identity and enable them to have a decisive voice in all matters concerning them.
9. To strive for the complete implementation of the Acts such as the Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989, the Provisions of Extension to Scheduled Areas Act 1996, the Forest Rights Act 2006, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005, Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, and other laws enacted for protecting and promoting rights of Indigenous Peoples and preservation of Land alienation viz. tenancy acts, land acquisition acts, etc.
10. To strive to imbibe the values that upholds the Indigenous community life in sharing resources, caring for nature, in a symbiosis that is nourishing, fruitful and sustaining
11. To hold in high regard the sacred space of the indigenous communities and their relationship with land and nature
12. To affirm and respect the ethnic identity of all people and eschew all forms of violence, exploitation and discrimination based on race, religion, gender, language, colour or creed.

Chapter III

Action Plan

The National Council of Churches and its Constituent members resolve to take immediate cognizance and urgent action to:

Challenge issues on Political authoritarianism and military power; protecting the poor and the marginalized from the tyranny of the market forces, creating harmonious and non-exclusive communities, protecting the biodiversity and

acknowledging the special bond of the Indigenous with nature, and rediscovering the prophetic voice of the church, by adopting the Action Plan:

1. To conduct an in-depth study of all the Acts and International instruments and the Protective laws under the Constitution and International Instruments that have an impact on Indigenous life, document the same, for wide circulation to member churches and other constituent members, in order to educate the Indigenous Peoples in particular.
2. To encourage the formation of a Unit in each Church dedicated for Indigenous issues who will be responsible for creating rights awareness among the communities and be a constant reference point for Indigenous Peoples and for other Churches, NGOs and the Government machinery. To plan and conduct base line studies on status of Indigenous peoples (tribals & adivasis), with a view to consolidate the data across regions with reference to development indicators that can be planned in advance.
3. To encourage and develop an intense theological response towards the Indigenous Peoples' situation.
4. To encourage Priests and Pastors to use the Pulpit to create awareness, dispel prejudices and bias, in a concerted and committed effort to promote harmony.
5. To use the resources of the church to provide good educational institutions that would open up a window of opportunities for the Indigenous Peoples.
6. Use the resources of the church and the constituent members and other experts to revitalize indigenous knowledge and skills, particularly in the field of

traditional medicine, agriculture and forest produce and to urgently employ the abundant health care resources and finances, to promote health care of the Church.

7. To educate policy makers, social workers, teachers and opinion makers regarding the protection and promotion of indigenous rights
8. To be a channel of communication between the Indigenous Peoples and the Government at all times.
9. To stand in solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples in all times and to be available to lend a helping hand in the event of calamities, unjust treatment, violence and exploitation.
10. To be specially sensitive to the needs of women and to encourage women's empowerment through education, special income generating skills, self-help groups, encourage handicraft, evolve good co-operative and marketing strategies,
11. Network with other Christian agencies locally, nationally and internationally working with Indigenous peoples, Human Rights Organizations, NGOs, Community based Organizations, people's movements for dialogue and advocacy.
12. To recommend a National Forum that would enable networking and coming together on common issues that would study Government policies and Acts that are relevant to Indigenous Peoples' life.
13. To ensure that the church gains and embraces from its close association with Indigenous Peoples of their culture and wisdom and that this is reflected in its life and activities.

First presented at the Consultation on "Violence and Violation of Human Rights Against the Tribals/Adivasis in India: Towards a

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The first draft was approved at the Executive Committee Meeting of NCCI during March 2011 at Nagpur and the second draft after making necessary corrections was approved by the Executive Committee and by the General Body of the NCCI during September 2011 meeting at Nagpur.

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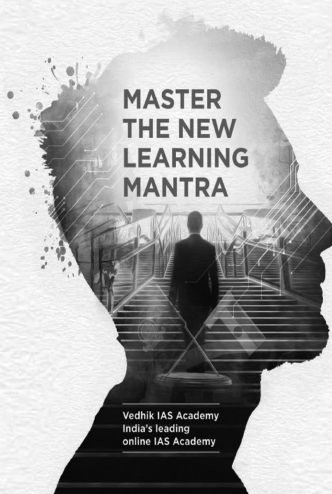
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