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EDITORIAL

Reaping what we Sow !

Ethnic rivalry has become a debate in the wake of the Manipur violence. The conflict between the Chin- Kuki- Mizo tribes and the Meitei communities has been highlighted as the sole cause of this violence. However, India being a country of differences and 'praised' to be the land of 'tolerance', it is difficult for us to digest the claim that differences in themselves have led to the eruption of violence. Rather, we understand it to be an outcome of attempts to widen differences and use differences for various political, economic and religious motives.

As this issue go to the press, Manipur is still burning and the fury of the people continues to unfold in attempts at mutual annihilation. The rage of the displaced, orphaned, bereaved, economically paralyzed and so on, cannot be easily extinguished. Exercises to over-power the 'other' have been strategized and implemented by the extremists within different groups. In the name of safeguarding any specific groups' culture or tradition, certain kinds of indoctrination are taking place.

While othering can be a way of defining and securing one's own positive identity, it is unfortunately achieved through the stigmatization of an "other." The markers of social differentiation that create an 'I', 'You,' 'us' and 'them' based on racial, geographic, ethnic, economic or ideological signifiers can then become dangerous tools for a self-affirmation that leads to the denigration of the other group.

Therefore, othering is not about liking or disliking someone, rather it is a deep rooted, conscious or unconscious assumption that a certain identified group poses a threat to the favoured group. Such assumptions are usually backed by political motives and tactfully deployed by politicians and the media. Those who have been closely assessing American politics have identified a sophisticated version of this 'othering' process that is applied without directly addressing any

groups. For example, it becomes easier to take steps to call for the deportation of Mexicans from the US by painting them as “rapists and drug dealers.”

“Poppy cultivators and Illegal immigrants” are some of the stereotypes used to stigmatise a group of people in Manipur. It was even reported that the Chief Minister of that state used those words to justify his government’s action to evict certain people from the forest. The language being used by the leaders in charge not only activates people’s anxiety and fear of a perceived ‘other’, but it also creates new processes of exclusion and dehumanisation.

People don’t just figure out on their own that they collectively need to be afraid of another group. Leadership plays a critical role in it. Often people who have been living with one another for years are made to feel suddenly that those differences have become a threat. Sadly, India is undergoing such a profound shift.

Having identified such a phenomenon in India it is also important to recognise the rising tide of extremism across the globe. As part of combating such a divide we must actively create bridges across difference, and resist strategic exploitation of our collective anxiety. Bridging in a highly polarised world is not an easy task. A mentality to open up to others has to be cultivated with a humility to open ourselves up to change. Our world is meant for everyone and hence our society has to be recreated into one in which we can all belong.

The opposite of Othering is not sameness or uniformity rather it is belonging and only belonging. It means we need to learn to live with differences and live with ‘others’ by recognising the need to celebrate our differences. When our constitution begins with the sentence “we the people”, we need to remember that it includes all the people.

In the Bible, specifically in the Gospel according to Mathew chapter 8, Jesus was engaging with a centurion who belonged to a different

faith. After having a discussion with him, Jesus highlighted his deep-rooted faith and showed this to his followers saying; “Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith.” Jesus is seen in this context adopting a contemplative approach where the disbelief of the Israelites was challenged through the highlighting of the belief of the Centurion—a wonderful way, on the part of Jesus, of recognising goodness in others and using it for challenging his followers.

India has to fully recover from the spirit of communal and ethnic prejudices. In the past, political leaders sought to dampen animosities, with public campaigns stressing communal harmony and unity in diversity. But in recent years this is made to appear a non-profitable enterprise. Therefore, a great many people are trying to deepen the climate of hatred in India, forgetting that it can carry a high price

“A man reaps what he sows”.

Rev Dr Abraham Mathew
Managing Editor



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PERSONAL LAWS IN INDIA AND THE CURRENT DEBATE CONCERNING UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

*-Y. Moses**

Personal laws or family laws¹ in India are different for different religious communities. There is now a protracted campaign to do away with separate personal laws and to enact common laws for all under the rubric of Uniform Civil Code (UCC). Soon after independence, the constitutional assembly contemplated a UCC and since they could not come to a consensus on the matter, they sorted it out by expressing their desire to have one, as incorporated into article 44. Ever since the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in India they were talking initiatives for a UCC and asked the Law Commission of India to work on it. After a detailed engagement with people from different strata of society, the 21st Law Commission declared in 2018 that the UCC was “neither necessary nor desirable at this stage”.

In the recent years the debate has picked up steam with some arguing passionately in its favour and some others opposing it vehemently. What I do in this paper, is to juxtapose one set of arguments with another set, for the readers to weigh in and determine their own stand on the issue of UCC. I would like to highlight the complexities of the issue, understand the rationale provided to support or oppose its enactment, delineate hidden agendas from stated goals and examine the suggestions offered for an amicable solution to the problem. The debate is enjoined by a wide variety of professionals: politicians, judges, legal experts, social movement leaders and activists. Of course, all of them do bring into the debate their own ideological and social biases.

But before that, it is important that we take a closer look at the existing personal laws. After all, it is these laws that are under scrutiny for certain imbalances. It is no one’s argument that the existing personal laws are perfect in themselves. They require adaptation and they have

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¹ Laws concerning marriage, divorce, succession, and adoption

been adapted from time to time in the past. Therefore, I start with a brief overview of personal laws in India for better appreciation of the historical context of their origin and evolution.

1. Brief Historical Overview of Personal Laws in India²

The following is a list of personal/family laws in India in chronological order of their enactment:

- i. French Civil Code 1804
- ii. The Widow Remarriage Act, 1856
- iii. The Parsi succession Act, 1864
- iv. The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1865
- v. The Native Converts Marriage Dissolution Act. 1866
- vi. Portuguese Civil Code, 1867
- vii. Indian Divorce Act, 1869 (For European Christians and British subjects)
- viii. The Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872
- ix. Travancore Christian Succession Act, 1916
- x. Cochin Christian Succession Act, 1921
- xi. The Indian Succession Act, 1925
- xii. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929
- xiii. The Parsi Marriage and Divorce (Amendment) Act, 1936
- xiv. Application of Shariat Act, 1937 (*All Muslims to be mandatorily governed by the Shariat*)
- xv. The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939 (*Woman has a right to dissolution of Marriage*)
- xvi. The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- xvii. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- xviii. The Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956
- xix. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956
- xx. The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956
- xxi. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986
- xxii. The Indian Divorce Act of 2001

² Much of the material for this section is drawn from Flavia Agnes, 'Law and Gender Inequality', & Monmayee Basu, 'Hindu Women and Marriage Law' in *Women & Law in India*, (New Delhi: The Oxford University Press, an Omnibus book, first published in 2004). Gitanjali Joshua, 'Marriage and Divorce under religious personal law in India: An examination of the legislative debates which informed the law', *Women's Link*, Vol25, No.2 (April-June 2018),

- xxiii. The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005
- xxiv. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019 (*Triple Talaq banned*)

As can be seen from the above list, family laws in India were first codified by the colonial rulers. In the pre-colonial period, matters related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc., were governed by a local system of arbitration by applying the norms of customary law and adaptations of scriptural injunctions to suit local conditions. When the British colonial rulers introduced the Anglo-saxon legal structure for their own purposes of administration (governing public order and the economy), they left the governing of family matters to the then prevailing religious institutions. This was part of their policy of non-interference in religious matters. For the British rulers, family issues were deeply personal and therefore religious. Nevertheless, they enacted certain reform laws under the pressure of social reform movements. At the same time, they enacted marriage and divorce laws for the British citizens and Europeans residing in India in accordance with the common law rooted in Christian faith. These laws, the Indian Divorce Act 1869 and the Indian Marriage Act 1872 were first applicable only to European Christians and British citizens but were later made applicable also to Indian converts to Christianity. Similarly, the Indian Succession Act 1925 containing the inheritance rights, which applied to Indian Christians residing in the British provinces, was suitably adapted to Parsis. Christians residing in the princely states of Travancore and Cochin were not covered under this Act. They were governed by Travancore Christian Succession Act 1916 and Cochin Christian Succession Act 1921 respectively. These acts of the princely states were based on the then prevailing customary laws. Similarly for adjudicating family matters of Hindus and Muslims, the British relied on the interpretation of scriptural laws. Thus, Islamic law was applied to Muslims and in the case of Hindus, Smriti rules were applied. And for interpretation of the scriptures the British judiciary depended on quazis and pundits. All Muslims were mandatorily governed by the Shariat through the Application of the Shariat Act 1937. It was only after independence and through a long process of consultation that the Hindu Code Bill was adopted in the form of the Hindu Marriage Act 1955, the Hindu Succession Act 1956, the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956 and the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act 1956.

Apart from religion-based family laws, there are secular civil codes such as the French and Portuguese codes and Special Marriage Acts in India. The Portuguese code is still applied in the state of Goa. The Special Marriage Act is an option available throughout India. Under its provisions any person can marry either within his or her own community or in a different community. It allows for solemnizing marriages in any form which the parties may choose to adopt. But if a member of an undivided family who professes the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh or Jaina religions marries a person belonging to other religions they are regarded as severing themselves from their family and hence will forfeit succession rights to property of the undivided family.

What the above list also shows is that there is continuity and change in family laws. Amendments were made from time to time generally in the direction of redressing injustices meted out to women, and favouring legal recognition of higher levels of equal treatment of men and women in matters related to marriage, divorce, maintenance and inheritance. For instance, The Indian Divorce Act of 1869 originally made it easier for a man to divorce his wife whereas for a woman it was difficult to seek divorce from her husband. The ground of divorce for her had to be coupled with cruelty, desertion, incest or bestiality by the man. Its amendment through the Indian Divorce Act of 2001 provided for divorce by mutual consent. Either party to a marriage can petition for a decree of the court for the dissolution of marriage. The Marriage Laws (Amendment) Act 2010 added irretrievable breakdown of marriage as a ground for divorce, subject to certain safeguards to the wife and children.

Similarly, the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 was amended in 2005 to improve women's rights. Under the amendment the daughter of a coparcener (One who shares equally with others in the inheritance of undivided estate) shall by birth become a coparcener by her own right in the same manner as the son. In one instance the courts were engaged in striking down discriminatory laws. In 1957, the Cochin and Travancore High courts affirmed the validity of the discriminatory statutes enacted by princely states to apply to Christians in the two provinces. Accordingly, the brother is the sole heir to the father's property to the exclusion of the daughter. The controversy was finally resolved in a ruling given by the Supreme Court in Mary Roy's case

in 1986. The Christians in these places were brought under the Indian Christian Succession Act of 1925 which grants equal rights to daughters and sons in the parental property.

Where it was necessary new laws were passed to eliminate perceived discrimination against women. For example, triple talaq was banned with the passing of The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act 2019. Shariat law with its provision for the practice of polygamy and triple talaq (instant divorce granted by pronouncement of talaq three times) were considered in general as discriminatory against women. Muslim scholars however argue that divorce was neither instant nor arbitrary according to Shariat law. They also point out to several protect measures provided for women in family matters

The periodic amendments made to personal laws point to two things; firstly, that changes can be brought about through persuasion and legislation within the framework of separate personal laws for separate religious communities. Secondly, that changes brought about favouring women are not even across the religious communities, nor are they complete. There is much more to be accomplished. It is also clear that personal laws exhibit a number of variations from community to community but at the same time are moving towards some form of commonality. This brings us to the question as to what approach to take: should we encourage religious communities to bring necessary reforms from within or should we impose a legislation disregarding their feelings of resentment? The arguments made by supporters and opponents to UCC may throw some light on a reasonable and feasible approach.

2. The Current Debate in Context

i. Political Motives and Push Towards Enacting UCC

As stated earlier, the idea of Uniform Civil Code was considered first in the Constitution Assembly debates. At that time, those favouring UCC maintained that it would help promoting national unity and integration. In their opinion, the existence of personal laws based on religion would keep the nation divided into watertight compartments in many aspects of life. Furthermore, they believed that UCC would add to the

secular credentials of the Indian state. Some Muslim members however disagreed. According to them, the UCC provision would violate the freedom of religion provision in the draft constitution. After much discussion, UCC was left as an optional provision for future legislatures to legislate such that it would come into effect only after the consent of communities.³

In the recent years, BJP revived its campaign for UCC, raising the issue at all levels and in all forums including the state legislatures, Parliament, and in the Courts. Soon after being re-elected in May 2022, the BJP government in Uttarakhand constituted a five-member expert committee to make its recommendation to introduce the UCC in the state. The Madhya Pradesh government, also run by the BJP, has announced its intention to form a similar committee in the state. BJP-run governments of Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh also made similar promises during the re-election campaign in October 2022.

A private members' bill was moved in the Rajya Sabha by BJP MP Kirodi Lal Meena on Friday December 9 2022. The bill intends 'to constitute the national inspection and investigation committee for preparation of Uniform Civil Code and its implementation throughout India and for matters connected with it.'

Having passed laws to empower Muslim women in matters of marriage and divorce, what else is sought through the campaign for UCC? It is assumed that the current laws are not sufficient to eliminate polygamy with a view to controlling the alleged population explosion in the Muslim community. The intentions and motives of the ardent protagonists of UCC have come into question. It is said that while ostensibly fighting for the rights of Muslim women, they are actually harassing the Muslim community based on fears of unrestrained growth of Muslim population in India. In his annual Vijayadashami speech at the RSS headquarters in Nagpur in October, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat flagged the need for a "comprehensive population control policy" that would apply to all "equally", and said it was in the national interest to keep an eye on "population imbalance".⁴

³ <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/constituent-assembly-debate-on-uniform-civil-code/>
M.R Masani, Hansa Mehta and Amrit Kaur

⁴ <https://indianexpress.com/article/political-pulse/uttarakhand-suggestions-to-limit-family-size-swamp-expert-panel-on-uniform-civil-code-8304565/>

However, according to some opponents of UCC, polygamy is not the only factor of population growth. Poverty, low education and low literacy among Muslims contribute to their increased numbers.

ii. Judicial Prodding on UCC

The current campaign for UCC was spurred on by judicial prodding. While hearing cases against Muslim men by women relating to maintenance after divorce and marriage, the courts took it upon themselves to focus on the larger issue of the continuing practice of polygamy and easy access to divorce to men in the Muslim community. In the process, they also interpreted Muslim Personal law which was resented by the leaders of the Muslim community who maintain that shariat should be interpreted necessarily by Muslims and determined by consensus within the community.⁵ Additionally, some members of the judiciary opined that allowing different minority communities to practice different family laws puts the oneness (national integration and communal harmony) of the nation at stake.

While ruling on Shah Bano's case in 1986, Chief Justice YV Chandrachud observed that the Parliament should outline the contours of a common civil code as it is an instrument that facilitates national harmony and equality before law.

In 1995, a case came up before the Supreme Court concerning the issue of polygamy of Hindu men after conversion to Islam. Pointing to the conflict between personal laws existing on matters of marriage, the Supreme Court urged the government to secure a Uniform Civil Code. Furthermore, the court suggested that the prospective UCC should be based on the model of the Hindu code. 'When more than 80% of the citizens are already under a codified law (Hindu Law) then it does not make sense to leave out the rest of the citizens from the ambit of a uniform civil code,' said the court.⁶

Clearly, such judicial pronouncements have had an impact on the public debate over UCC and have helped in galvanizing communal and political forces into taking a stand either for or against UCC.

⁵ *Women's Link* Vol.25, No.2 April-June 2018, p.5

⁶ https://lawcorner.in/uniform-civil-code-a-judicial-analysis/#2_Cases_in_which_Courts_have_talked_about_UCC_and_its_prospects

iii. Rationale Provided for and Against UCC

The first and foremost argument favouring the enactment of UCC is based on protecting the fundamental rights of women. Since personal laws of different religious communities vary from one another in granting equal rights with men, the argument is made that they should be set aside and legal uniformity enforced. It is argued that there cannot be gender equality till such time that India adopts a Uniform Civil Code, which protects the rights of all women.⁷

The second argument links UCC to the unity and integrity of the nation. Allowing different laws for different religious communities is considered very divisive and therefore not good for national integrity. But those opposing UCC maintain that uniformity will endanger cultural plurality and secular character of the Indian society. At the same time, the secular state should maintain religious neutrality and not oppose religion altogether. The family matters are all deeply religious and so personal laws should not be interfered with, without the consent of the religious communities. This group sees in the UCC proposal a threat to the religious freedom of religious minorities. Opponents of UCC argue that personal laws are derived from religious beliefs. They maintain that it is prudent not to disturb them, as this runs the risk of engendering a great deal of animosity and tension between various religious communities. Also, India being a secular country, guarantees its minorities the right to follow their own religion, culture and customs under Article 29 and 30. They argue that implementing UCC will contravene these articles.

The third argument calls for increased secularization of Indian society, thus freeing it from age old religious customs that are not suitable for the modern world. By allowing personal laws we have constituted an alternate judicial system that still operates on values that have been in currency for thousands of years. A uniform civil code doesn't mean that it will limit the freedom of people to follow their religion. The courts have also differentiated between the Right to Freedom of Religion and the applicability of personal laws based on religion. They have drawn a line as to what can be demanded under Articles 25 and 26. Right to

⁷ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/will-implement-ucc-but-after-open-and-healthy-debate-amit-shah/articleshow/95750378.cms>

freedom of religion under Article 25 should not be construed as a right which covers personal laws in civil matters.⁸

Those favouring UCC use the principle of human rights to argue for the liberation of Muslim women from exploitation by Muslim men as sanctioned by Muslim personal law. Some of those opposing UCC disagree, and point to many provisions within the shariat law that protect Muslim women from exploitation by Muslim men. Some others concede that there is a need for reforming Muslim personal law, but prefer that it should be undertaken by the Muslim community and not imposed by the state. According to this group, UCC imposed would affect minority rights guaranteed under the constitution.

iv. Some Practical and Technical Hurdles in Enacting UCC

All the utterances and activities by the BJP leaders in and out of court seem to indicate that they are very keen on enacting UCC. They also seem to follow a strategy. They want to test the waters first, by passing the law in the states and when that experiment succeeds, they plan to bring a nationwide law at the Centre. As of now they are facing stiff opposition from rival political parties as well as from some of their former allies. When the bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha, opposition members from Trinamool Congress (TMC), Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Samajwadi Party (SP), Communist Party of India (CPI), CPI (Marxist), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and Congress protested against its introduction.⁹

Former ally Shiromani Akali Dal has slammed the move for creating a “fear psychosis among minorities”. Senior Akali Dal leader and former MP Prem Singh Chandumajra told The Indian Express: “The basic character of India is unity in diversity, as underlined in the Constitution. Pushing the idea of a UCC is like making people pass through the eye of a needle. This is not acceptable to us. The Constitution underlines the federal character of the country, calling it a Union comprising states, and it is not unitary in nature.” Enacting UCC might unleash communal

⁸ https://lawcorner.in/uniform-civil-code-a-judicial-analysis/#2_Cases_in_which_Courts_have_talked_about_UCC_and_its_prospects

⁹ <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/uniform-civil-code-bill-introduced-in-rajya-sabha-amid-opposition-and-chaos-11670595244930.html>

disharmony and unrest. This is what is dreaded most by political parties. It is for this reason that governments in the past and present, whether of Congress or BJP, have treaded cautiously on the matter. Whenever they were pushed to respond as to whether or not they would bring the law, the governments have adopted delay tactics, asking for more time to study the matter.¹⁰

At the same time as promising the enactment of UCC and unleashing radical elements to raise the issue in all forums, the present regime is also playing a good cop role, assuring restraint and studied action on the matter. In its affidavit to the petition filed by Advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, seeking directions from the apex court to the government to frame uniform divorce law and uniform guidelines for adoption and guardianship of children, the government pushed back saying that the court cannot give a “mandamus to Parliament to make certain laws” and maintained that the power to make laws is exclusively that of the legislature.

Some have pointed to practical difficulties in the way of bringing UCC at the level of the states. For instance, Congress Rajya Sabha MP Shaktisinh Gohil argued that a uniform civil code would require a constitutional amendment, which only the Centre can bring.

Another point of view holds that this can be circumvented because alongside Union and state lists, there is a concurrent list, List III, where both the Centre and states can legislate. “States are empowered under Article 246 read with List III of Seventh Schedule to make laws relating to ‘personal laws’.” Article 246 talks about the distribution of legislative powers between the Centre and states. Marriages, divorces, adoptions, successions, joint families and partitions are listed in the concurrent list and so come under the domain of both the Centre and states. If the state receives assent from the president with respect to its contradictory state law, then that state law will prevail in that particular state. It is more likely that the President chosen by the BJP will give her assent to UCC passed in BJP ruled states.¹¹

¹⁰ <https://indianexpress.com/article/political-pulse/uniform-civil-code-akalidal-8264228/>

¹¹ Umang Poddar, ‘Why legal experts think BJP will never actually implement a Uniform Civil Code’ November 13, 2022 <https://scroll.in/article/1036668/why-legal-experts-think-bjp-will-never-actually-implement-a-uniform-civil-code>

v. The Way Forward: Towards a Pragmatic Solution

Some experts believe that the BJP may not bring in the UCC not out of fear of offending Muslims but because such a move may not be popular among the Hindus. A Hindu Undivided Family is a family-based entity that gets tax exemptions. Hindus may not want to lose this benefit. Also, some realise that UCC calls for compromise, which the Hindus may not want to make. They feel that they have already made compromises. For instance, one of the grudges is that the Hindu Code was made without consulting the Hindus and many customary practices were sacrificed. Therefore, according to the experts, it is unlikely that a government led by the party can actually implement a uniform civil code. It is beneficial for BJP to retain the prospect of bringing up the UCC as a matter of political debate only.

Sai Deepak, a Supreme Court advocate thinks that the Indian state has consistently been anti-Hindu when it comes to interference with Hindu customs. Therefore, more than the impact of the Uniform Civil Code on the Muslim community, he is concerned with the impact it will have on the Hindu community because the standard operating procedure of the Indian state, regardless of the ruling dispensation, is that if the state wants to undertake a measure which is specific to the non-Hindu community, the secular state will not be able to sell it across the board unless there is a compromise that is made by the Hindu community. Therefore, since this is seen as a slap on the face of minorities, the Hindus will also be slapped. This is the traditional position, he adds.¹²

According to experts, the task of actually devising a set of rules that will govern all communities is very formidable. It is indeed very difficult for one uniform civil code to harmonise customs across all religions.

According to Sarasu Esther Thomas, professor of law at National Law School of India University, Bangalore and an expert in family law;

We just assume that uniform civil code means that you are bringing together Hindu law, Muslim law, and so on. But law is much more diverse than that.” “What is a marriage, what is a divorce, what is inheritable property.... are all so different in each religion that a mandatory uniform civil code will be

¹² @jsaideepak@RShivshankar | #IndiaUpfront pic.twitter.com/AGoO2w2yuz — TIMES NOW (@TimesNow) February 11, 2022

unacceptable to everyone equally.” Several provisions even in Hindu law have not been codified. The Hindu Code Bill was a set of laws passed in the 1950s that ended polygamy for Hindus and regulated aspects such as inheritance, adoption, marriage and divorce. This law is often used as a justification by the Hindu Right to bring a uniform civil code across all religions.

“There is no uniform Hindu code to begin with,” she said, pointing out that in several areas such as who can marry whom, Hindu customs operate.

It isn’t just large minority groups which are apprehensive about the UCC of India’s 8-10 crore tribal population, around 12 per cent live in the North East, as per official figures. These tribes follow their own laws based on their customs. For example, in Meghalaya, a matrilineal society, property succession and marriage laws are governed by their traditional and customary procedures.¹³

The Eastern Mirror reported that the Nagaland Bar Association has warned that the UCC would “spell trouble” for the culture of the Naga people. “It will cause social disorder,” the association stated, according to the report, in a copy of a letter addressed to the Prime Minister Modi. “If (a) Uniform Civil Code is introduced covering the entire country, it shall cause so much hardship and social disorder to the Nagas as the personal and social life of the Nagas are quite distinct from the rest of people in the country,’ the representation stated.¹⁴

Therefore, Sai Deepak suggests a more pragmatic solution in place of a Uniform Civil Code. He says that instead of the UCC, the political class should first arrive at a uniform civil code for each religion, which is to say that a process should start first to at least rationalise the internal operation of each religion. A similar position was held by The Law Commission of India in a consultation paper on the uniform civil code in 2018. According to its report, the governments must deal with “laws that are discriminatory rather than providing a uniform civil code which is neither necessary nor desirable”.

¹³ Umang Poddar, ‘Why legal experts think BJP will never actually implement a Uniform Civil Code’ November 13, 2022 <https://scroll.in/article/1036668/why-legal-experts-think-bjp-will-never-actually-implement-a-uniform-civil-code>

¹⁴ *Business Standard*, October 14, 2016

A great option can be to pick out the best personal laws from various religions and enact equal laws in case no religious law is appropriate in a certain area. It is also important not to incline entirely towards the majority religion while doing so and therefore neutrality needs to be shown to be established. A UCC which is not inclined toward a particular community's personal laws can be the key, just like the Special Marriages Act, 1954.¹⁵

It is certainly incumbent on the current government to strive to find a compromise law in consultation with all religious communities keeping in mind the importance of ensuring the overall development of the society, including women, by bringing in a UCC and try to balance the aims of Article 51 A (f) and Article 51 A(e) of the Constitution that deals with the aspects of valuing and preserving the rich heritage of composite culture and renouncing practices that are derogatory to the dignity of women respectively.”¹⁶

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¹⁵ https://lawcorner.in/uniform-civil-code-a-judicial-analysis/#2_Cases_in_which_Courts_have_talked_about_UCC_and_its_prospects

¹⁶ Abhinav Mehrotra, *Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India: An Overview*

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ARRIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE GALO PEOPLE IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH.

-Shabih Abbas Jafri & Hanna Ngomdir***

Abstract: *Early in the eighteenth century, Christianity arrived and started to spread throughout Arunachal Pradesh. The Galo culture of that state has been significantly impacted both by the development of modern education and by the emergence of Christianity. Following the embrace of Christianity, the social, cultural, political, and religious environment of the Galos experienced a sudden and significant shift. It both heralded the end of the previous period of isolation and the beginning of a new one. The historical happenings that changed traditional culture were the spread of Christianity, the founding of Churches, and the construction of missionary schools. It marked the end of the previous period of isolation as well as the beginning of a new one. The historical events that changed traditional culture were the rise of Christianity, the founding of Churches, and the development of missionary schools. Christianity grew and made a significant effect on the culture of the Galos as the harbingers of peace and civilization. Through their teaching and preaching, they changed the ancient, rigorous taboos and practises of Galos with an attitude of compassion and forgiveness. This ushered in a new era of stability, development, peace, freedom, and security for those who embraced Christianity. Galo society has experienced tremendous social and spiritual transformation as a result of the proliferation, fusion, adoption, and absorption of Christian ideology and beliefs. The shift has made people lives 'better and offered hope to others who are constrained by darkness. The study analyses how the introduction of Christianity to the Galo community of Arunachal Pradesh caused changes and process of transformation.*

Keywords: Transformation, beliefs, Galo, adoption, culture, Christianity

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Introduction

According to Arunachal Baptist Church council, Rev. Nathan Brown and Mrs. C.A. Bruce, the first American Baptist missionaries, arrived in Sadiya, Assam in 1834. Christianity flourished throughout Arunachal Pradesh as a result of these early settlers. Their goal was to build schools for the foothills dwellers as well as the tribal people who lived in Abor country, also known as the Adi of Siang District. The indigenous tribal society in Arunachal Pradesh saw a dramatic change as a result of the advent of Christianity. Like several other indigenous communities in Arunachal Pradesh, the Galo society has seen significant changes since the advent of Christian missionaries. The Galo tribe's traditional tribal culture was greatly impacted by the spread of Christianity among them in the early 1990's. The new religion that was promoted and disseminated by cultural forces had its own impact, beliefs, and prejudices. After the Galo people accepted the new faith, certain changes were made in various areas of their lives that had a big impact on their subsequent history.

Prior to the arrival of Christianity in Galo territory, the Galo were animists. The Early Galos practised animism, which is the belief in a spirit within the soul. This idea and practise served as a solid foundation for every element of their culture, history, and tradition. Early Christian encounters with Galo were mainly hostile. However, both their cultural and religious beliefs were going through a time of transition. For the indigenous people, Christianity acted as a liberator from social and spiritual problems. Christianity significantly influenced societal changes in their life cycle beliefs, personality development and social life, ambitions and aspirations, the religious position of women, economic life health and cleanliness, as well as changes in the world of ideas and attitudes. One of the oldest agents of cultural change among the present influences is Christianity. The following are the major effects of Christianity on the native Galo people.

Social Impact:

Galo people were segregated into the following categories prior to the arrival of Christianity.

- (i) Galo society being largely patriarchal, women were excluded, seen as weak, and denied any positions of leadership.

- (ii) During the menstrual period, every female member was allowed to dwell in a separate hut or small chamber constructed separately from the main house, and they were also permitted to carry their meals on traditional leaves. They were forbidden to mingle or touch anything of man out of fear that it would bring them ill fortune. During this time, women were viewed as dirty.
- (iii) A person's dead body could not be carried into the village if they committed suicide, were murdered, drowned in a river, or suffered from any other unforeseen tragedy. In addition, if someone in the village or area had been bitten by a snake, their community would disown their body and occasionally, people would refrain from visiting the affected house. In their culture, visiting the affected family is thought to bring about similar terrible omen.
- (iv) Each house in the village had a separate ladder for men and women. Women were not allowed to use the male ladders due to the certain taboos, such as the notion that doing so while menstruating may be unlucky for the men's careers.
- (v) The priests prohibit the entire family from leaving the house for two to three days, or even longer, depending on the ritual and the priest, once family ceremonies are complete. In this case, certain taboos must be observed, and anybody who ignored them would have to deal with the consequences of the rites that were carried out. The individual for whom the ceremonies have been performed must abide by certain restrictions, such as eating only certain plants or depend only on traditional soup. Their health may also be negatively impacted by this strenuous practise.

The Galo culture has seen considerable changes since the entrance of Christianity as a result of Christianity's conviction that everyone is treated equally in God's eyes, regardless of wealth, gender, or other characteristics. In the gospel of John 15: 12 Jesus stated that " this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you", also in Mathew 5:44, " But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you". The principles of the Bible are upheld by

Christianity. consequently, it aided many people in turning from their previous transgressions.

Following the arrival of Christianity, which gives a people sense of freedom, the aforementioned rituals gradually faded. The sick are made well by prayers offered in the name of Jesus, and people are freed from oppressive, onerous customs. There is no need for forced conversion given all the advantages of Christianity, since non-believers are gradually assimilating it into their life.

Religious Impact:

Demonic spirits, devils, and ghosts were once thought to dominate and oppress Galos. The Galos were animistic and held a variety of spirits in high regard. The majority of sacrifices were done to appease them because bad spirits were believed to be blamed for the people's misfortune or disease. Since the arrival of Christianity, the morbid phobias or worries that arose as a result of their ignorance and animistic religion and drove them to perform various ceremonial offerings have been fading. The practice of giving food or meat to the souls of the departed is progressively disappearing since Christianity taught that people's spirits don't roam the earth, quoting Ecclesiastes 12:7. Furthermore, other than a few local celebrations, the Galo did not commemorate Sunday in any specific fashion until the introduction of Christianity. When the gospel came, the Church was founded, and newly converted Christians started attending Church every Sunday. Bible sermons are preached throughout Sunday services to aid in people's spiritual development. Many houses have been preserved by Bible teachings, and those who truly followed the scriptures today lead disciplined lives. They had no prior knowledge of concepts like forgiveness, love, salvation, a Saviour, sacrifice, etc., which are key aspects of the Bible that have changed the lives of many individuals.

The largest solace that Christianity has brought to the Galo converts is that Jesus' self-sacrificial deed has taken the place of the sacrificial act and element in old Galos belief. A person must expel demonic spirits in the name of Jesus in order to be free from them; no longer is it necessary to feed animals to demons. This is a wonderful relief for individuals in need who cannot provide animal sacrifices. Thus, the arrival of Christianity entirely overturned their pre-Christian beliefs.

For the Galos who really accepted Jesus Christ as their personal saviour, Christianity was a tremendous blessing.

Educational Impact:

The Galos used to live in separate communities because they lacked an organisation to manage the needs of the entire tribe. Christian missionaries' presence prompted the spread of good and bad knowledge through education. Over a long period of time, the social, economic, and cultural development of Galo community has been significantly influenced by Christianity. The biggest impact on formal and informal education has come from the Christian faith. Sunday school lessons are highly regarded in the family, especially for young children and teens. Many missionary institutions were established. The effect of education on Galo society aided in removing obstacles and facilitating the acceptance of modern education. Christianity brought contemporary education, which served as the impetus for modernity. Many superstitions and unsocial traditions were abolished as a result of the education given by Christian missionaries. Galos opted to further their professions in a variety of fields of study because of the education they received, which helped them distinguish between the past and the present.

Numerous pamphlets, hymnals, and other publications, including the translation of the New Testament Bible into the regional dialect, educated many individuals. Modern education and Christianity have an ongoing impact on people's perspectives. In addition to strengthening the bonds between various clans, it enhanced the Galo people's individuality. People were able to give up superstition, magic, and other supernatural ways of healing disease, etc., because of the scientific facts provided by modern education. The educational system set up by Christian missionaries transformed the cultural ethos of the Galo and introduced them to a new realm inside a highly respected way of life. As a result, Christianity made new ideas of liberation and transformation accessible to everyone in the domains of politics, economics, culture and literature.

Economical Impact:

Many household animals and birds had to be slaughtered as part of ceremonies in Galo community prior to the coming of Christianity in

order to satisfy the spirits. The poor suffered immensely as a result since, if they didn't give the priests all the goods they demanded, it often threaten the lives of the individuals for whom the rituals were being conducted. As a result, family members were compelled to manage somehow to procure the demanded objects under the penalty of becoming bankrupt.

However, such sacrifices are not required today because of the impact of Christianity. They have the option to sell their domestic animals and utilise the money for their own benefit, such as paying for their children education, medical care, building a house, starting a business, etc. They are now able to live an ordinary, healthy life with their savings. By faith in Christ, prayers are freely offered. Demands like this are not made of sick individuals.

Cultural Impact:

Culture refers to the institutions, beliefs, and way of life that are passed down from parent to child within a population. A society's culture has been described as its complete way of life. Consequently, it includes traditions, language, attire, ceremonies, and other practise. In reality, culture is a way of life that evolves via education. Religion and culture are intertwined. The socio-cultural life of the populace will inevitably alter when a new religious viewpoint is brought to a nation. Galo currently believe that the Christian faith provides a way to get from uncertainty to certainty, from darkness to light, from physical death to everlasting life, and from damnation to salvation. Fundamental, social, and religious changes took place among the Galos when Christianity spread among them.

Christianity had a considerable impact on Galo material culture, and the moral requirements of the Bible's commandments had a substantial impact on the Galo people's long-standing social norms. For instance, Christianity outlawed the use of intoxicants, having many spouses, and overall lowering the position of women in society. It also prohibited divorce and remarriage customs as well as sexual promiscuity before marriage. Galo culture has been heavily influenced by Christianity. Since they perceived no risks in adopting this faith, which liberated people from antiquated customs as previously mentioned and brought hope to many outcasts, they did so without hesitation. Overall, if it weren't for the missionaries, the Galo would not have advanced as much as what we can observe now.

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REVIVING THE PAST: EXPLORING THE HERITAGE CHURCHES (1500-1700) OF MADRAS

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Abstract

This paper proposes to study the heritage churches (1500-1700) of Madras. Most of the studies focused on those built by the British in India. Not much is studied about the early churches of Madras built by the Portuguese and Armenians. This study aims to fill that gap. The early churches have been identified as heritage structures by the government. This paper will focus on the history of these churches.

Keywords: Apostle Thomas, British, Fort. St. George, Luz Church, Portuguese, Santhome Church, St. Thomas Mount, St. Mary's Church,

Christianity came to India with the Apostle Thomas' arrival in India at Muziris (Cranganore) on the Kerala coast in 52 AD.¹ Since then Christianity has existed in India, spread to various parts of the country. With such a development one can presume, churches would be built and they have dotted the landscape in India from then on. It is believed that Christianity reached Madras also during the same time. The Apostle St. Thomas (of 'Doubting Thomas' fame) is believed to have visited Madras and carried out his missionary activities in the city.

The next wave of spread of Christianity was during the period of the Dutch, Portuguese and the British. The coastal belt became the evidence for the spread of Christianity, starting from Pulicat extending to Madras, Nagapattinam, and towards the other coastal regions. The Portuguese and the Armenians were instrumental in constructing the

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¹ Though recent studies refute this claim, there is no conclusive evidence to the contrary.

antique churches of St. Thomas Mount, St. Thome at Mylapore, The Luz Church, The Armenian Church and the St. Mary's Church at Fort. St. George.

St. Mary's is the first church constructed by the British, but there is a reference for an older church built by the Capuchin monks within the Fort of St. George in 1642.² Fr. Ephrem de Nevers established the Capuchin Mission in Madras. St. Andrews was another important personality in whose honour the first church was built near the walls of St. George. The first English school in India was also started by Fr. Ephrem de Nevers in the sanctuary of St. Andrews. The church was later demolished; it was located where the *Namakal Kavijgar* building stands today

The heritage Churches in Madras are extensive, it is impossible to fit all of them in this research paper. Hence it has been decided to limit it to the early churches constructed during the initial centuries of colonial entry into India. The study focuses on the following churches namely, Luz Church-Mylapore-1516; St. Thomas Cathedral Basilica-Santhome-1523; St. Thomas Mount 1523; Church of Our Lady of Guidance -1582; The Portuguese Church, Muthialpet-1642, and St Mary's Church, Fort St. George-1680.

Luz Church - Mylapore -1516

This heritage Church of Our Lady of Light is commonly known as Luz Church in Mylapore. Vasco da Gama was the first Portuguese explorer to land on the shores of India at Kozhikode in Kerala. Goa was the headquarters of the Portuguese and they had settlements at Cochin, Calicut, Mylapore, and elsewhere.³

In 1500 eight Franciscan friars set sail from Lisbon along with Pedro Alvares Cabral's⁴ *Armada* fleet. They landed at Kozhikode, then travelled to Cochin to spread the word of Christ. Later they established

² Patricia Raeann Johnston, *The Church on Armenian Street: Capuchin Friars, The British East India Company, and The Second Church of Colonial Madras*, Unpublished Dissertation, The University of Iowa, May 2015

³ Barlow, Glyn, *The Story of Madras*, Oxford University Press, 1921.

⁴ Pedro Alvares Cabral was the famous Portuguese Explorer who colonized Brazil for Portugal. He was commissioned by King Manuel I of Portugal to find new lands and help in spreading Christianity.

a sea-route between Cochin and Malacca towards the south and found Pulicat where there was a lake that opened into the Bay of Bengal - a place to rest, and transport their goods. They felt the need for a Church, hence the church at Pulicat of Our Lady of Glory was established. It was considered the first church on the east coast devoted to Virgin Mary.

On one such voyage to Pulicat, a storm carried them away and they were lost at sea. While they prayed for help a bright light guided them to safety on land. The Portuguese friars had reached the shores of Mylapore. Legend has it that a light appeared and they were guided to clear the forest and build a Church on the location named Nossa Senhora da Luz or Church of Our Lady of Light in 1516. It is the oldest Christian house and the earliest of European buildings in India. It is still called "*Kaattu Kovil*" in Tamil, which translates to 'Forest Shrine' An inscription states that, "Friar Pedro de Antogngia, of the Observance of Saint Francis built this church of Our Lady of Light in 1516".

It was expanded later and built in a classical European style, with a mix of Gothic and Baroque elements. The church is surrounded by tombs at various places such as at the entry, on the steps, altar and around the walls of the church. Tombs dating from the 1800's can be found here. In the middle stands the full-length figure of Our Lady of Light. The ceilings of the church are covered with frescoes done in a beautiful powder blue.

The Luz Church was damaged between 1662 and 1780 when the forces of the Nawab of Golconda and later on Haider Ali, attacked the British. Luz Church is the prime (First) church in Madras and the second one on the East Coast of India and was devoted to the Virgin Mary. The church has an unbroken list of Parish priests from 1787. The church remains a quiet oasis of peace and light in the hustle and bustle of modern Chennai.

St. Thomas Cathedral Basilica (or Sao Tome de Meliapor) 1523

Santhome Church is a National Shrine situated in the Santhome area of Mylapore in Chennai. It was built by the Portuguese in 1523 and the structure that stands today was reconstructed by the British in 1896, in a Neo-Gothic style. Santhome church is one of the oldest churches in the world.

St. Thomas was killed in 72 AD at St. Thomas Mount and his body buried at Mylapore a port that links Bengal, Pegu and Malacca⁵. It was an accident by a huntsman who was trying to shoot a peacock with his bow and arrow and hit the apostle instead.⁶ The earliest references of Marco Polo and the other visitor was John of Montecorvino (1247-1328), a Franciscan missionary.⁷ He is said to have delivered a sermon in the “Country of St Thomas” for 13 months and baptized nearly one hundred people.

In the 10th Century a group of Nestorian Christians from Persia are said to have founded the Christian village of Santhome and build a church over the remains of the dead Apostle. The Church was ravaged during the 14th and 15th centuries and the Portuguese moved the Apostles’ remains to a new tomb and church which gained the status of a cathedral in 1606.⁸ Historians state that the area was the destination of Christian pilgrimage even before the advent of the Portuguese.

A pair of Portuguese missionaries who explored the locality in 1517 reported that they had visited a domed enclosure which they took to be a church. A Muslim man claimed that he had been cured of blindness by the saint who lay buried in the tomb⁹.

After the discovery of the relics the Portuguese took over the site and formally certified them as the remains of St Thomas the Apostle.¹⁰ Almost immediately the Portuguese settlement near the site was renamed St Thome (or Sao Tome de Meliapor) and the Portuguese proceeded to build opulent churches in the name of St Thomas at Mylapore modest church at St Thomas Mount and at another one at Little Mount in Saidapet area¹¹. Construction of the church began in 1522 and was completed

⁵ K.V. Raman, *The Early History of the Madras Region* (Madras, 1957), pp . 30-2 .

⁶ L.F . Benedetto, ed., *The Travels of Marco Polo*. Trans. Aldo Ricci (London, 1931), pp. 298-9, 311-12.

⁷ His accounts written from Madras are the earliest noteworthy account of the Coromandel Coast furnished by a West European.

⁸ www.santhomechurch.com

⁹ Herman D’Souza, *In the Steps of St Thomas* (Poona, 1964), pp. 36-7.

¹⁰ Brown, *Indian Christians*, pp . 56-7 .

¹¹ The Little Mount is known as the site of St Thomas’s forest refuge: there is a cave on this hill in which the apostle is said to have hidden while being pursued by his assassins. The Little Mount also has a miraculous fountain which is said to have been formed when the apostle struck the ground with his stick

in a year. The cathedral spire of the Santhome Church was erected in 1628. These churches and their surrounding areas became part of the Catholic church in Madras and they were promoted as holy sites by the Portuguese.¹² In 1545 Saint Francis Xavier visited Santhome Church.

The Portuguese also started annual festivals at the Cathedral and the churches associated with St. Thomas which continues to this day. The most important of these was the feast of the Exaltation of Our Lady, first celebrated in 1558. It was during this festival that the shrine's great cross was first seen to bleed, an event which was repeated many times over the next 400 years.¹³

The Santhome Church was constructed in the Gothic Revival style¹⁴. In 1523, a statue of Mother Mary was brought from Lisbon to Santhome church. It is known as Our Lady of Mylapore or Mylai Matha and is kept on the left side of the church altar.

St.Thomas Mount Church, Parangi Malai - 1547

The St.Thomas Mount Church or situated in Parangi Malai in Guindy is the spot where the lance pierced the back of the Apostle-in other words, where he received the mortal blow that killed him later. A blood-stained cross he was carrying at the time is said to have bled every year on December 18th from 1551 to 1704.

On top of the Mount, in 1523, a shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Expectation was built. The Shrine's altar was built on the site where Saint Thomas' death was traditionally thought to have occurred. At the northern foot of the Mount is a gateway with four impressive arches topped by a cross inscribed with the date 1547. A flight of 160 steps leads to the Mount's summit. On the way to the summit, 14 Stations

¹² D'Souza, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 45-6. The miraculous stick legend invites comparison with stories of the sacred staffs of Tamil pirs such as Kulumai Sahib and the Penukonda pir Baba Fakiruddin. See above, p. 138.

¹³ It has been noted that the bleeding of miraculous cult objects is also a common motif amongst south Indian Hindus and Muslims. These bleedings or 'sweatings' are signs of great power, and the Mylapore cross became an object of intense veneration in south India, attracting huge crowds of devotees whenever a new emanation of blood was reported. The Portuguese authorities had begun to organise mass pilgrimages of Syrians and other Christians who were brought to Mylapore from Cochin and other localities on the Malabar coast.

¹⁴ A late 19th century architectural style

of the Cross have been erected. The steps leading to the Church were built by Petros Uskan, a notable member of the Armenian community of Madras.

The cross that the saint was carrying was discovered by accident by the Portuguese while digging the foundations for the new Church in 1547. According to historical records, the cross bled during Father Gaspar Coelho's Holy Mass on December 18, 1558.¹⁵ In 1908 the inscription around the cross was transcribed as "Through the cross, the Messiah brought Salvation to the world".

A well-known oil painting of the Madonna of the Blessed Virgin can also be found in the church. In 1545, Father Gaspar Coelho, the Vicar of the Church in Mylapore, recorded that in 1523, a Portuguese named Diego Fernandes built a small oratory on top of a hill over the foundation of an ancient church.

The Shrine also has the Tomb of Father Gaspar Coelho and an inscription over his Grave at the very entrance of the church. St Thomas Mount continued to give special saliency to indigenous forms of 'Apostolic' Christianity in India.

Shrine of Our Lady of Good Health, Little Mount-Chinna Malai-1551

The Little Mount is known as the site of St Thomas's forest refuge: there is a cave on this hill in which the apostle is said to have hidden while being pursued by his assassins. The Little Mount also has a miraculous fountain which is said to have been formed when the apostle struck the ground with his stick.¹⁶

This shrine which is part of the St. Thomas sacred geography is said to have its origin in the year 68 AD. The location where the Shrine of Little Mount stands today was said to be the favourite preaching spot of St. Thomas the Apostle in Madras.

The Nawab of Carnatic was the ruler of the area and Chinna Malai and its shrine was under his control. Armenian merchants also testified to

¹⁵ In the early years the cross used to sweat blood every year then every 2-3 years and then later at long intervals the last occasion on which it was found sweating blood was in 1704.

¹⁶ D'Souza, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 45-6.

the fact that the Shrine was initially under the control of the Nawab of Arcot. Later Robert Clive gave the lands to the mission by the official grant number 933 dated 28 October 1803.

It was decided that the Bishop of Mylapore, Father Jose De Piedade would be the owner of the religious endowment. The land was given as a religious service *Inam* to the church without any restriction whatsoever.¹⁷The church at Little Mount was built only after 1551.

Fr. Tashard also mentions other monuments at Little Mount. One is the cave and the other is the miraculous spring, Chinna Malai called the Saint Thomas fountain.

St Mary's Church, Fort St. George-1680:

The British East India Company was set up in 1600 AD for the express purpose of trading with India. Madras, on the Eastern Coast of India, became one of the earliest trading centres next to Pulicat situated close to it. The British constructed Fort St. George in 1644 in the model of Fort Geldria, the one at Pulicat that has now been destroyed. Madras became the centre of activity for the British, and has remained the headquarters of the State.

St. Mary's Church at Fort St. George is the first evangelical church of India, and the oldest British building in Madras city, and even in India itself. St. Mary's Church, called the 'Westminster Abbey of the East', the first Anglican Church in Asia. It is considered the oldest Anglican Church east of Suez. St. Mary is its name as its origin was on the day of Annunciation to Virgin Mary.¹⁸

The Governor himself or his delegate conducted the Church Service on Sunday morning and evening. In the evening there assembled the employees of the Company, and some of the selections from the published sermons of distinguished Elizabethan divines were read out.¹⁹

¹⁷ According to the terms of the grant the area that was transferred to the Church was bounded on the north by Saidapet Road on the south by venkatapuram road on the east by venkatapuram road and on the west by the bridge. This was the area in which Saint Thomas the apostles preached frequently.

¹⁸ The divine day that the declaration of Jesus' birth had been announced to Mother Mary.

¹⁹ Barlow, Glyn,*Op.Cit.*, P.47.

The presence of a French priest and chapel in the White Town was not admired; it was seen as an insult to the British settlement. Hence in 1645 the company made a petition²⁰ that resulted in services at the fort. Chaplains continued service for 16 years, but it was not sufficient for the ever-growing company's employees and others at the White Town. Mr. Streyntsham Master became the Company's Governor and his first act was the circulation of a voluntary subscription paper for a church that should be worthy to occupy the rapidly increasing South Indian possession. He initiated it with a subscription of a hundred pagodas (Rs. 350), equal to his one month pay as Governor of Madras. Many sections of the communities including Councillors, factors and writers and apprentices contributed grants to the church. Mr. Richard Portman, the Minister, received the direction from the Bishop of London for the inauguration of the church.²¹ On 28th of October, 1680, St. Mary's Church was solemnly opened with the roar of guns at the Fort. ²² St. Mary's Church was built in 1678-1680 AD by the East India Company in the reign of Charles II. Sir Christopher Wren was the builder in chief, who designed it along the lines of London churches at the time. As the church was one of the factors of war, the governor and its chief architect decided that the roof of the Church must be bomb-proof carved structure with a polished lime. ²³ The architect of this historic church was either Edward Fowle, Master Gunner of the Fort St George or William Dixon, Chief Gunner of the Fort in 1678. The confusion about the architects exists due to the lack of clear historic records.²⁴

The construction is based on three aisles with semi-circular roofs and the outer walls are erected with solid masonry of two feet thick to resist bombing, siege and natural calamities. Wood was restricted in the construction to avoid the depredations of termites. This historical church has solemnized the marriages of important figures of East India Company like Robert Clive and Elihu Yale (Co-founder of Yale

²⁰ "a petition from the soldiers for the desiring of a minister to be here with them for the maintenance of their soules health;" Barlow, Glyn, *The Story of Madras*, Oxford University Press, 1921, P.48.

²¹ Penny, Frank, *The Church in Madras*, London, 1904, P. 89-90.

²² Barlow, Glyn, *Op. Cit.*, , p.48.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.49.

²⁴ The architect was probably William Dixon, the Master Gunner of Fort St George at the time but it has also been attributed to his successor Edward Fowle. <https://victorianweb.org/history/empire/india/107.html> also see

University in USA) as one learns from the writings and monuments of the early seventeenth century. The sacrament (Baptism) was started here in 1680. One of the other special features is the highest tower that is eye-catching from very far. It was added at a later period according to instructions from Sir John Goldsborough, a sea-captain and administrator of the British East India Company.²⁵

The bomb-proof roof proved its usefulness during the besieging of the Fort by the French in 1746. The church organ was taken to Pondicherry as part of the spoils of war. They also used the church as barracks and also its steeple as a watch-tower.²⁶

At a later time, it also had a Sanctuary, Steeple, Tower and the Vestry. Colonel Gent added the church top in 1795. The inner part of it is embellished with wooden and glass furnishings. The Organ of St Mary's seized by the French was retrieved, and the Last Supper is a spoil of war from Pondicherry captured by the British on the occasions of the three seizures. The famous painting of the Last Supper is exhibited but its artist is unknown. Other antiques available here are a 1660 Bible and also silver plates of the time.²⁷

The Churchyard has many paving stones with inscriptions as 'Here lyeth' and 'Hie jacet'. The Burial Ground was a neglected spot, as an employee of the Company might be a bachelor with no relatives in India to mourn his loss. The funeral was accompanied by the colleagues who gave him a grand send-off.

Interestingly only two tombstones are undisturbed: they are those of Joseph Hynmers, Senior Member of Council, who died in 1680, and Elihu Yale, Governor of Madras. Yale married a woman who lost her husband six months previously. The tomb holds her little son David of four years, her first husband and Elihu Yale. The other monument is of the Powney family, the tomb was not disturbed as the members of the Powney family were still in the Madras service.

The first burial at the church was of George Pigot, who was sent out to Madras as a lad of eighteen for the post of a writer in the Company. As a reward for his efficiency, he was appointed Governor of Madras

²⁵ <http://www.chennai.org.uk/religious-places/churches/st-mary-church.html>

²⁶ Barlow, Glyn, *Op.Cit.*, p. 50

²⁷ <http://www.chennai.org.uk/religious-places/churches/st-mary-church.html>

when he was only thirty-six. During his governorship the French under Lally besieged Madras for sixty-five days. At the age forty-five he resigned office and went to England. He was considered a strenuous upholder of British honour in the East and was rewarded with an Irish peerage. Twelve years later he accepted the offer of a second term of office as Governor of Madras. In his second appointment he felt himself a stranger, as conflicts arose with officials. He ordered the arrest of the leading members of the Council including the Commander-in-Chief. The Councillors check-mated the Governor's order by arresting the Governor: he was sent as a prisoner to a house at St. Thomas's Mount. His captivity lasted for nine months during which he fell ill and died. He was specially honoured with burial within St. Mary's Church, the first burial within the building. St. Mary's Church, the heritage of the British in India, has remarkable history within it, from the days of origin to the present.

The Armenian Church, George Town-1772:

The Armenian people were among the leading merchants who travelled around the world for trade; India also witnessed their arrival. On 29th February 1691 the directors wrote to Fort St. George and ordered the council to find a convenient place of worship for them.²⁸

The Armenian Church initially was a wooden church which has not survived due to the French siege of Madras in 1746. The present Armenian Church of Madras in George Town was the private chapel by Agha Shawmier Sultan. He was a rich Armenian merchant of Madras. This was reconstructed and rebuilt as the Armenian Church in 1772. It is one among the oldest churches in the Indian subcontinent. Many private chapels were converted to churches. Another such is St. Matthias Church at Vepery, the chapel of Khoja Pogus. It is famous for its belfry with six bells each of which weighs around 150 kg. One of the bells has writing in Tamil. These bells are made in the same Whitechapel Foundry as the Philadelphia Liberty Bell, in Philadelphia Westminster Abbey Bell in London, and St. Paul's Cathedral Bell in Rome.

A graveyard adjoining the church has tombstones of Armenians who lived in Madras. These graves and their tombstones, unlike those the St. Mary's church, provide a lot of information about the people who

²⁸ Penny, Frank, *Op.Cit.*, London, 1904.P. 114-115

lived in Madras. Among the notable graves in this church are those of many important personalities like Khoja Petrus Woskan, Agha Shawmier Sultan, Rev. Haruthiun Shmavonian²⁹, Petrus Wokan,³⁰ and Khoja Pogus. Once the centre of a thriving trading community, the church holds no regular service now, but is open to the public to view. The church has its original structure though it was deconsecrated in January 2007. Services are held on special occasions by the priest of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Calcutta.³¹

Conclusion

The churches in this study give us a glimpse of the origins of the churches and their growth. Though Madras was one of the first sites that was chosen by the colonialists to engage in trade and in political expansion, the growth of the early churches built by the Portuguese and the British give us an idea of the socio-cultural life of the period and how this was enmeshed with the political history of the area.

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²⁹ Haruthiun Shmavonian (1750-1824) is credited with bringing out the first Armenian newspaper in the world, in 1794 from Madras, namely “Azdarar” meaning “The Intelligencer”. The draft of the Armenian Constitution was also made in Madras.

³⁰ The grave of Petrus Wokan, the grandson of Khoja Pogus, is supposed to be missing his heart, which according to legend was removed from his body after death and sent to Julfa, a city in his homeland which he loved. The grave is located in the graveyard of the St. Matthias Church at Vepery which was built by Khoja Pogus.

³¹ The Armenians of Calcutta number a little more than 100 and they have a church, and an Armenian school in the city.

L.F . Benedetto, ed., *The Travels of Marco Polo*. Trans. Aldo Ricci, London, 1931, pp. 298-9, 311-12.

Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, · 1984

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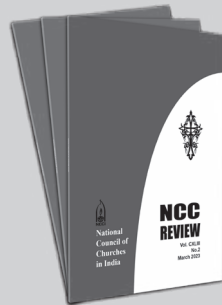
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-Rev Dr Abraham Mathew
Managing Editor

JESUS, THE PROPHET: A PERSPECTIVE

-Aju Kurian*

1. Introduction

Throughout the history of Christianity, people have felt God's presence and experienced His love in many ways. God first spoke with his people through dreams, angels, monarchs, and, finally, through His own Son, Jesus Christ who became man in order to restore the relationship between His Father and us. In both words and deeds, the Gospel portrays Jesus as the prophet. He possesses many of the traits of the Old Testament prophets and seers, but he surpasses all of them. Jesus was and is the only prophet, whom Isaiah and other prophets in their loftiest utterances prophesied and foreshadowed his character. Prophets did not come into office by inheritance; they were not born into a prophetic tribe or family nor were they the sons of a former Prophet or automatically made Prophet because of their family backgrounds. Instead, these prophets were called and chosen by God Himself as Amos would say "I was not a prophet neither was I a prophet's son but I was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit, and the LORD picked me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me 'go prophesy' unto my people Israel" (Amos. 7:14-15). Prophets were aware that they had been summoned and sent to declare a divine message such as repentance, faith, forgiveness, judgement and punishment, righteousness and sin, and moreover, they announced the hopes of Salvation for the Israelites and their future relationship with Yahweh. They never feared death or retribution since they were selected and called to work on God's behalf. A prophet is called to utter oracles and to bring an urgent communication from God, about sin and repentance, judgment and salvation, as the words of Jeremiah remind us: "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou comest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a Prophet unto the Nation" (1:5).

2. The Term 'Prophet'

The word Prophet is derived from the Greek word *Prophetes* or *Prophanai'* which means to speak for². It comes from the verb *Phemi*

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¹ Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and the Society in Ancient Israel*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 22.

² J. Chaine, *God's Heralds: A Guide to the Prophets of Israel*, (New York: Joseph F Wagner, 1995), p. 1.

(“to speak, to say” with the prefix *Pro-* “before” ‘forth’. Thus it means to ‘speak forth’ or “proclaim” the message of the deity.³ In the Old Testament and in Hebrew the term prophet comes from *Nabi* meaning professional practitioners.⁴ It is also said that it is derived from the Akkadian verb *Nabu* to ‘call to proclaim’⁵ which is connected with the ‘*Naba*’ “bubble forth”, thus understanding the prophets as the ecstatic ones who bubbled forth words with great fervour.⁶ *Nabi*, which probably means literally ‘entrusted with a message’ is already found in Syrian Ebla in the twenty third century BCE, but in Israel it turns up relatively late only at the beginning of the period of the monarchy.⁷ While the authors like Rendtorf and Friedrich used the word *neviim*.⁸ The figures who are then called *Nabi* in Israel in the period of the monarchy all seem to have been institutionally connected with a sanctuary or with the court, and therefore they had a number of different duties.⁹ “A prophet is a person, employed by God or by direct inspiration or by the interpretation of sounds and they in turn declared the will of the God, to a person who asked for advice. Accordingly, *Propheteuo* means to proclaim the counsel and will of the God’s, concerning a historical, political, and social situation, in response to questions put by the client”.¹⁰

3. The Role of the Prophets

In the history of Israel, prophets inserted themselves into specific situations and rose above them to lead the chosen people in God’s intended plan, depending on the situation at that time. The prophets were like shamanic prophets, cult and temple prophets, court prophets and free prophets. These prophets were saints, sages, miracle workers,

³ Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and the Society in Ancient Israel*, p. 22.

⁴ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, (London: SPCK, 1984), p. 37.

⁵ Colin Brown, (ed.), “Prophet” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol., 3, U.K.: (The Paternoster Press, 1978), p.76.

⁶ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (ed.), “Prophets” *The international standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), p.987.

⁷ Klaus Koch, *The Prophets*, Vol. 3, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 16.

⁸ David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing company, 1983), p. 4.

⁹ Klaus Koch, *The Prophets*, p. 16.

¹⁰ Colin Brown, (ed.), “Prophet” *The International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, p. 74.

and soothsayers who were closely affiliated with holy locations and religious rites, and they served the position of seer and upheld the society's norms and social values.¹¹ They had dual roles.

a) Preacher: The concept of preaching differs greatly from that of teaching. With teaching, one primarily targets the mind of the listener, whereas in preaching, the preacher addresses the emotions and will of the listener.¹² The preaching is done to elicit a stirring reaction and response from the people. The role of preaching by the prophets was done to reveal the will of God to people at different times according to the situations.¹³

b) The Seer: The 'Seer' comes from the Greek word 'BARU'. The verb *Baru* means 'to see' 'to behold'. *Baru* is a man who had the power of seeing in a special sense. They are men and women who possess the gifts of divination in a particular degree and are able to tell what is happening in distant places. It is believed that they are capable of seeing behind as well as ahead.¹⁴

4. Major Form of Prophetic Teachings

Prophets were no extraordinary people but they did some extraordinary things. They were totally immersed in the socio-political situation of the time. They feared none, but spoke boldly about judgement, punishment, righteousness, faith and salvation. Some of the major forms of prophetic teachings in the Old Testament were: a) the announcement of judgement and punishment, b) repentance, faith and forgiveness, c) the announcement of salvation, d) the righteousness and sin, e) hopes for the future-relationship, and f) eschatological deliberations.

5. Jesus, the Prophet

Although Jesus never expressly claimed to be a prophet, it has been said that such a claim was implicit in his repeated sayings and actions. He performs prophetic labour. He performs miracles, including raising the dead, curing illnesses, and predicting the future. Yet, the people of

¹¹ David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, p. 83.

¹² Reid David P., *What are they saying about the Prophets?*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), p. 39.

¹³ Leon J. Wood, *The Prophets of Israel*, (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 67.

¹⁴ J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 85.

Israel refuse to acknowledge him as a prophet; hence, in LK.4: 22, the villages of Nazareth, although marvelling at Jesus' reading of Isaiah and his proclamation of the fulfilment of this reading in their hearing, ask themselves. "Is not this the son of Joseph?" (LK.4: 36). Through his words and deeds, he truly establishes himself as the true prophet.

5.1. The Title 'Prophet' to Jesus

Analysis and understanding of the prophets of the Old Testament provides ample evidences to point out to the fact that Jesus Christ was true prophet.¹⁵ Isaiah and other prophets' writings foretold His coming, and in their lives they foreshadowed His character.¹⁶ Jesus in the Gospels receives the courtesy title of 'Rabbi' (Mk.9: 5, 11:21, 14:45), uses rabbinic forms of teaching the parables of Mt. 13, images in rabbinic discussions (Mk. 2:1-3, 3:6, 12:13-37), interprets the law like a rabbi (the antithesis of Mt. 5:21-47), and gathers disciples to instruct them as the rabbis were doing (Mk. 1:16-20, 6:7:11). More than His words, his deeds were far more reminiscent of the great prophets of Ancient Israel than the scribal schools of the day.¹⁷ For when Jesus taught, he taught "as one having authority and not as that of scribes" (Mt. 7:28). The authoritative teaching gives us the idea about his mission and prophetic proclamation of imminent salvation (the kingdom of God is at hand) with its call to urgent and radical decision "Be converted and believe in the good news" (Mt. 7:27). As Pope John XXIII declared in 1962 in *Ecclesia Christi, Lumen Gentium*, that Jesus is the prophet¹⁸ who proclaims the coming of the kingdom not in words alone, but in mighty deeds in exorcisms which signal the end of Satan's domination (Mt. 12:27f) and in healings which announce the dawning of God's reign (Mt. 11:2-6), deeds which are not unlike those wrought by the great men of God (Elijah and Elisha) who stand at the beginnings of Israel's prophecy, and symbolic actions and acted parables (like the triumphal entry into Jerusalem in Mk. 11:1-10, or the cursing of the Fig tree in Mk. 11: 12-24, 20:23. All these powerfully drive home the message to us that He is indeed a prophet. He was neither a priest unlike John the Baptist

¹⁵ Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol.1, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 165.

¹⁶ Andrew Black Wood, *The Prophet*, (Michigan: Baker book House, 1917), p. 217.

¹⁷ Andrew Black Wood, *The Prophet*, p. 216.

¹⁸ Joannes H.M. *Christology of "GS" in the Context of Vat. II, 1962-1965*, (Rome: SPU, 1991), p. 47.

who was born in priestly families, nor was he a Scribe; unlike Paul he was not brought up in a Scribal school. Rather Jesus is emphatically a prophet, a spirit filled man (Mk. 1:9-11), “mighty in deed and word” that includes miracles and the message he proclaimed: (Mk. 6:14-15, Lk.7: 16, 24:19, Jn. 6:14).¹⁹ He is called out of the anonymity of a wholly unpretentious ‘lay’ existence (Mk.6: 3) to speak (in an utterly unique and authoritative way) for God, and announce his salvation. So, it is not surprising then, that the ‘crowds’ recognize Jesus as a prophet (Mk.6: 15, Mt. 21:11, 2Kig.7: 16), indeed as the prophet, that is, as the eschatological avatar of Moses promised in Dt. 18:15 (Jn.6: 14). His disciples too make no mistake in acknowledging him as one of the prophets (Lk.24: 19), and Jesus himself too, twice at least compares his destiny to that of a prophet, for like a prophet he is (“not without honour except in his own country” Mk. 6:4), and he too must die like a prophet in Jerusalem (Lk.13: 33).²⁰ Throughout the Gospels Jesus is said to be a prophet. His near associates believe this of him and the crowds came to him (Lk.7: 16, 24:19, Mt. 21:11, Jn.4: 19). He seems sometimes to have used the term self referentially (Mt.13: 57, Lk.13: 33). His enemies call him a prophet sarcastically (Mt.14: 65). David Hill summarizes “within the Judaism of the time, the possession of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of God, was regarded as the mark of prophecy, therefore Jesus’ inspiration and equipping for ministry by the spirit of God signified that he was and probably regarded himself as a prophet. His claim to possess the spirit is quite explicit if ‘the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit’ (Mk.3: 29) is rightly interpreted as the denial of the divine source of the spiritual power with which Jesus casts out demons”.²¹

5.2. From the Perspective of Jesus

Jesus Christ claimed to be a prophet, and this claim is final for Him. At the beginning of His ministry, He had begun to lay stress upon the fact that He was a priest or king. He introduced Himself as a prophet; the synoptic Gospels give only two such passages that demonstrate what is referred to himself as prophet. The first passage is Mark 6: 4 or Mt. 13:57, Lk.4: 24, “And Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country, and among his own kin,

¹⁹ David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, p. 124.

²⁰ Prabhu Soares, G. “Jesus the Prophet” *Jeevadhara: Journal of Christian International*, Vol. 20, (May-June, 1974), p. 207.

²¹ Steven, L. Davies, *Jesus the healer*, (New York: SCM Press Ltd, 1965), p. 44.

and in his own house.” This claim is not so much about his being a prophet but rather He is one who is not accepted in his hometown.²² And the second passage that has been understood as a reference of Jesus to himself as a prophet is Lk.13: 31-33, pronouncement stories drawn from Luke’s special source. “At that very hour some Pharisees came, and said to him “Get away from here, for “Herod wants to kill you.” And he said to them, “Go and tell that fox, behold I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow and on the third day I finish my course. Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem”.²³ From time to time during the course of his public ministry he called attention to this same fact, and as the end drew near, this early truth kept its place in his teaching and very often he said ‘It cannot be that a prophet perishes out of Jerusalem’. To support this claim, he from his very early public ministry began to display to the world such credentials, as all the Old Testament prophets together could not have produced. He performed miracles, not only that he might relieve distress and illustrate his teaching but primarily that he might prove to the world that he came from God. In his teaching he so impressed his hearers that they cried out: “Never a man so spoke.”²⁴ In his predictions, he rested his claim upon his power to read and to interpret the future both near and remote. Some of these predictions needless to say, were fulfilled while he was on earth, others after he ascended into glory, and many yet await his return.

5.3. Indirect Indication of Jesus’ Prophetic Self-Understanding

The message of Jesus Christ to the world was that of a prophet. His teaching meets the needs of every age. C.H. Dodd puts forward many Gospel passages, which are the words of Jesus and these passages gives us the indication about the indirect indication of Jesus as a prophet. The sovereign authority of his teaching in Mk.1: 27, implies the great authority of his word “Amen I say to you.” His experience of visions and auditions (Luke. 10:18), and the prediction that He made like that of prophets of Old Testament (Mt. 23:38, Luke. 13:35, Mk.13: 2, 14:58) and the symbolic actions He performed all points out to the fact he

²² Andrew Blackwood, *The prophets*, p. 220.

²³ David E. Aune, *Prophecy in early Christianity, and the ancient Mediterranean world*, p. 156-157.

²⁴ Andrew Blackwood, *The prophets*, p. 221.

was a prophet. Jesus exercised a distinctive prophetic function when he announced the reign of God in opposition to the power of evil, and preached repentance.²⁵

a) Jesus Consciousness of Divine Commission: Jesus Christ fulfils the Old Testament prediction concerning the Messiah. This fact is noticed in New Testament and especially when it quotes from the Old Testament as in the Gospel according to Mt., and in the Epistle to the Hebrew- “God having of old terms spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by diverse portion and in diverse manners, now at the end of these days spoken unto us in his son”²⁶ Jesus was very much aware of having been called and commissioned by God to fulfil a particular role as His spokesman. The scripture says “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives. And recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty to them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk. 4:17-19, Is. 61:1-4, Zp.2: 3d). This is very different from the free prophets and the cult prophet. Free prophets were independent of the social, political and religious structures of the time and provided a legitimating for their prophetic role.²⁷ The Gospels contain numerous sayings of Jesus that reveal the conviction that He had been sent by God to perform certain tasks and to announce a particular message. Most of these sayings preserved in the synoptic Gospels have a strong claim to authenticity. Jesus lived in the connection inspired by the experience of his baptism that he had been selected to be the judge and sovereign in the future kingdom of God. “Within the timeframe of this world the messiah is only designated, not enthroned, Jesus knows himself to be the messiah chosen by God, especially when he made his entry into Jerusalem and appeared in the temple as Lord.”²⁸ A sense of divine calling is very much supported in the following passages. The “I came” (Mk.1: 38; 2:17, 10:45, Mt. 5:17, 10:34-36, Lk.12: 49, Mt.11: 19-20, and the “I was sent” (Mt.9: 37, Lk.10: 16, Mt.15: 24). The Baptism of Jesus is frequently regarded as the occasion upon which Jesus became fully cognizant of His calling

²⁵ Soares G. Prabhu, “Jesus the prophet”, p. 210.

²⁶ Andrew Blackwood, *The prophets*, p. 217-218.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

²⁸ Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, p. 160.

and mission.²⁹ And thus once Jesus came to know about his divine calling and mission in which He was fully absorbed in what He had to say and do, he neither looked for better place or honour, nor did He claim for Himself any one of the messianic titles that occurred to Him in the tradition. Instead, He started the messianic work for which he was sent among the people.³⁰

b) Jesus' Interior Life: "Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it" (Lk.11: 28). With these words Jesus reveals His attitude towards the greater goal that man and woman should look for, and His first words remind us that His home is the Father. "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Lk.2: 49) and His last dying words were breathed into the Father. "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Lk.23: 46). There are many more examples from the Bible that show that He came from the Father and is busy in doing the Father's work mainly to proclaim about the kingdom of God. Jesus kept up his closeness to his Father through prayer and whenever he prayed, he steps clean out of the circle of humanity in order to be exclusively in that of his Father. That's why he says 'I am not alone, the Father is with me.' His prayer is nothing but an ever-renewed act of contact with the Father, it is through prayer that he is joined to the Father in a oneness with no one, not even his disciples, can have a share.³¹ Jesus had his root in God; the source was his Father therefore he could say "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you... for my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Mt.11: 28-30). Jesus' preaching demands certain qualities from the listeners. His preaching was prophetic so He expected prophetic qualities that are part and parcel of his mission. Thus, Jesus' interior life clearly shows us that His words and actions were prophetic. Like "change your outlook and believe in the good news" (Mt 11:12-13). Jesus was and is good and possessed the good and proclaimed about the good. This proclamation was based on the compassionate life of the Father.³²

²⁹ David E. Aune, *Prophecy in early Christianity, and the ancient Mediterranean world*, p. 161.

³⁰ Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, p. 160.

³¹ Karl Adam, *The Son of God*, p. 139-140.

³² Juan Luis Segundo, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptic, Vol., II*, (New York: Orbis Book, 1985), p., 140.

5.4. Symbolic Actions

Jesus in His capacity as a prophet performed a number of prophetic symbolic actions like the breaking of bread, and distribution of the cup at the last supper. C.H. Dodd regards the cursing of the Fig tree, symbolizing the rejection of Israel, and the miraculous feeding of the multitude as prophetic actions³³. There are many other actions of Jesus, which could be considered prophetic actions like the messianic entrance into Jerusalem, the sending of the twelve, the giving of symbolic manna to disciples, and the purification of the temple.³⁴

6. The Prophetic Role of Jesus

Jesus, who stands within the prophetic tradition, takes the Old Testament prophetism into new directions. Like the prophets of Israel, He too is overwhelmed by the reality of God and the demands that this makes upon the man who encounters it.³⁵ He proclaims this message with a great and special urgency, because He is very much aware of the time that in Him the kingdom of God's definitive offer of salvation has come, foreseeing the great difficulties in the lives of people and thus summoning them to make the most radical decision. "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near at hand, repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk.1: 15). Thus it could be said that the time has come for the decisive- intervention through which God will free the world from the forces of sin and death, which hold it in their grip, and men and women must respond to this dramatic and urgent challenge by 'repentance' a total turning (conversion) demands the unreserved acknowledgement of God as God, and therefore the one in whom alone we place our security and trust; for our part it demands too, a radical concern for our fellow men, because God is the creator who "claims his creation and therefore requires our unconditional love of our neighbour and our unqualified readiness to serve and forgive, because anything less means the ruin of every creature."³⁶

³³ David E. Aune, *Prophecy in early Christianity and the ancient Mediterranean world*, p. 161.

³⁴ J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in ancient Israel*, p. 174.

³⁵ Prabhu G. Soares, "Jesus the prophet", p. 210.

³⁶ Jacques Dupuis, *Who do you say I am?*, (New York; Orbis book, 1994), p. 44.

6.1. Jesus and the Cult

Jesus, the prophet does the work of replacing the cult that had become a mechanical ritual (Mt. 9:13; Hos. 6:6; Am. 5:21; 1Sam; 15: 22; Is. 1:10-16; 29:13-14; 58:1-3; Jer.6: 20; Micha. 6:5-8; Zach.7: 4-6; Ps. 40:6-8; 50:5-15; 51:16-17). He comes as the eschatological alternative to replace the cult. In Mk.12: 33, the complete overthrow of sacrifice and temple is proclaimed. “Man does not require any particular holy sacrifice or mediation of priests, or Jewish nationalism. His relationship to God is determined not by what he gives to God at a holy place but by whether or not loves God in his neighbour.”³⁷ Therefore God is to be worshiped neither in Jerusalem nor on mount Gerizim for the time has come, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (Jn.4: 23). In this view one can state that the coming of Jesus has sacralized the cosmos, eliminating the distinction between the sacred and profane. The result is that there are no holy places either at Jerusalem nor at Rome, to which the presence of God is confined; also there are no intrinsically holy things (trees, rivers, stones, medals, images) rather everything is endowed with an innate sanctifying power. Thus, today every place can be the *locus* of a man’s encounter with God, for it is the risen Christ, present everywhere, who is now “the place” where man of any time or place can at least be free of place in their worship of God. Therefore, the cult is radically disempowered. “No prescribed ritual can any longer promise purity. No sacrifice can blot out sins; no holy Sabbath laws are any longer valid”.³⁸ Thus it is very much fitting to say the people like tax- collectors and the prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God before the learned Scribes and pious Pharisees (Mt. 21:31). And the Gentiles of East and West will come to enjoy the messianic Banquet, from which the chosen people are excluded (Mt. 8:11). Truly, traditional thinking about cult is turned topsy – turvy by the prophetic preaching of Jesus.³⁹

6.2. Jesus and the Law

Jesus, who liberated us from the restraints of cult, sets us free from the burden of the law as well. Though Jesus does not reject the law outright,

³⁷ Prabhu G. Soares, “Jesus the prophet”, p. 212.

³⁸ Andrew Blackwood, *The Prophets*, p. 210.

³⁹ David E. Aune, *Prophecy in early Christianity and the ancient Mediterranean world*, p. 84.

He does propose a new and liberative understanding of the law, which rids it of its oppressiveness.⁴⁰ Jesus not only rejects the tradition of the Elders, which has distorted the spirit of the law (Mk.7: 9-13), but He even corrects the Torah (Mk.10: 2-9). Jesus interprets the law far more radically than the scribes. The demand of the law now reaches down to the innermost intentions of the heart. They embrace a man's life in its entirety and not only those areas which can be brought under formulated law. Law requires not just the avoidance of evil but a positive, never-ending endurance to do well. These demands are lacerative demands. The law of Jesus then does not constrain our spirit, but invites us to grow in love, for love is ultimately the essence of the laws.⁴¹ This law is not meant to be a collection of decrees telling us to do this or that, it is meant, rather, to be a picture of what we potentially are, what we should be, what we shall become, if only we surrender to the transforming spirit of Jesus. And all the demands of Jesus come down eventually to this one demand: that a man gives himself away wholly in love, so that by losing his life he may truly find it (Mt. 10:39). Thus, the God of Jesus is not the law-giving judge who remorselessly sets out reward and punishment, according to the merits and demerits we have acquired by observance or infringement of each tiny precept of the law. He is *Abba*, our dear Father, who enables us to love him and to live according to that love (Lk. 15: 11-32). Love wholly casts out fear, in Jesus 'understanding of the law'.⁴²

6.3. Jesus' Authoritative Teachings

Jesus' teaching with authority is described very vividly, along with the miracle of healing of the demoniac (Mk.1: 21-27). Jesus came to Capernaum and on the Sabbath day, He began to teach in the Synagogue. The teaching of Jesus made a deep impression on the people. They were astonished, filled with fear, wonder and even with joy. "These people were taken up not because Jesus was expounding a profound doctrine, rather they were astonished at the manner in which he taught". In the Synagogue, at Capernaum, His words and exorcism caused people exclaim His new teaching. They said, He teaches with "New teaching"

⁴⁰ Prabhu G. Soares, "Jesus the prophet", p. 123.

⁴¹ Denis Mc Bride, *The Gospel of Mark: A Reflective Commentary*, (New York: Colour Book LTT, Bal Doyle, Co. Dublin, 1989), p. 116.

⁴² Prabhu G. Soares, "Jesus the prophet", p. 215.

and with “Authority” unlike the Scribes (Mk.1: 27).⁴³ The authoritative teaching of Jesus was in contrast to the teaching of the Scribes. Jesus taught as a prophet by direct authorization from God and not as the Scribes. The Scribes were official teachers of Torah. They had to teach what they had learned. Jesus on the contrary was not educated in the Scribal manner but inspired by divine spirit, who spoke with immediate and personal authority. Jesus’ authority was not from tradition. His teaching was coupled with effective action which was not the case with the Jewish teachers.⁴⁴

6.4. Jesus and His Twofold Message

The message of Jesus Christ to the world was that of a prophet that could be categorized as non-predictive and predictive messages. These messages closely correspond to the law and promise in the Old Testament prophets. The religious world is today greatly divided into two great schools. One of them lays more stress upon the predictive element of prophecy, whereas the other school lays more stress upon the non-predictive elements; the non-predictive teaching of Jesus as in the so-called Sermon on the Mount, consists of spiritual principles for use in daily circumstances.⁴⁵ The teaching of Jesus concerns truths, mostly about God and man, about righteousness and salvation, about sin and redemption. He not only spoke in its final form the truth which the prophets had spoken through His Holy Spirit, but He Himself was the incarnation of that truth, and so He says today: ‘I am the truth’. The teaching of Christ reveals much about the kingdom of God, and about the worth of the individual soul; about the faith which links the souls of men to the grace of God, and about the love which binds the children of God to their brethren on earth. Predictive prophecy is one of the most compelling lines of evidence supporting the reality of the Christian religion. This was based on two remarkable truths: first, Jesus miraculously fulfilled prophecy when He first arrived to earth, and second, He made prophecies that were fulfilled. Hence, predictive prophecy evidence reveals that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah as well as making predictions that have since come true.

⁴³ Ezra P. Gould, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary: On the Gospel according to St. Mark*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark,1995), p. 2.

⁴⁴ George Auther Buthrick (Ed.), *The Interpreter’s Bible*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), p. 606.

⁴⁵ Andrew Blackwood, *The prophets*, p. 224.

6.5. Jesus the “Eschatological Prophet”

The kingdom of God and its coming is the central theme of Jesus’ preaching. This theme was not something new to Him, it was known and conceived differently by various preachers of Judaism. But Jesus conceives it differently and announces it openly. His entire mission is centered on the Reign of God, that is God establishing His rule on earth through His messenger. The kingdom of God that is coming about through Jesus’ life and action is predominantly addressed to the poor, the *anawim*, of God, that is, all the despised categories of people, the oppressed and the downtrodden. Jesus is on the side of the poor, not of poverty; conversely, what Jesus challenges is riches, not the rich. It is the poor who are willing and showing readiness to enter into the kingdom of God, they are more disposed to it, they place their trust in God, not in themselves, and it is among them that the values of the kingdom are seen present and operative.⁴⁶ Therefore Jesus says, “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Lk. 6:20) or “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:3). He identifies with them personally and associates with them preferentially. He is not only **for** the poor; He belongs **to** and **with** them. In this belonging and association of Jesus with the poor in spirit and all those who believe in His message and ministry for them the essential love of God comes to a climax.

7. The Predictions of Jesus

Like the prophets of old, Jesus is overwhelmed by the reality of God and the demands that are made upon him. He is aware of his prophetic role in proclaiming the kingdom. Jesus is aware that in him kingdom of ‘God’s’ definite offer of salvation has come. Therefore, knowing the urgency of the ‘kingdom’, Jesus summons the people to a radical decision. Mark describes this urgency thus; “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel” (Mk. 1:15).⁴⁷ The call to radical decision- a total conversion demands obedience to the will of God and unreserved love for fellow human beings. Hence obedience and love become the two co-ordinates of the eschatological existence lived

⁴⁶ Jacques Dupuis, *Who do you say I am?*, p. 44

⁴⁷ Robert Baldwin, *Conversation with God: A Catholic View of Prophecy*, (New York: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1970), p. 66-67.

and proclaimed by Jesus.⁴⁸ So the ministry of Jesus revolves around a fascinating term- “The kingdom of God.” Everything else is related to it and radiates from it. Some of the key teachings of Jesus points out very vividly his prophetic predictions. They are; a) the immanent arrival of the kingdom of God (the future coming of the kingdom and the present coming of the kingdom, b) the destruction of Jerusalem and temple, c) the passion, death and resurrection, and d) Coming of the Son of Man. Another intriguing aspect of Jesus’ prophecies is that they are frequently tied to the to present (or past) behavior of those to whom he has proclaimed his message. The two-part structure of present and future permeates the saying of Jesus. So that he must be regarded as a forthteller as well as foreteller, and this was the distinctively prophetic thrust of Jesus’ message. Jesus also anticipated his own death and the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem. On the other hand, he also looked forward to vindication in the person of the coming Son of man and the arrival of the kingdom of God in its fullness.

8. Conclusion

Prophets and their revelations played an integral role within early Christianity. Many regarded Jesus as a prophet because He conformed to their images of what an eschatological prophet should do and speak. Since prophets belonged only to the distant past or to the eschatological era, those who thought of Jesus as a prophet would have regarded him in fact as an eschatological prophet. The Jews had the expectation that one day Elijah, Moses and Jeremiah, and others like them would return. Jesus establishes himself as a great prophet and fulfils the prophetic functions through His life and death thereby bringing about salvation. The Good News of Jesus is addressed to all without exception. Jesus goes out looking for the single lost sheep. He is not there to help the healthy but sick. He touches the lepers, the beggars, the blind and the suffering and brings to them the message of God’ love. Jesus believes in the imminent arrival of God’s rule. Jesus announced the reign as something that would emerge in the near future. In Jesus’ preaching, present and future, although distinguished, are essentially bound together. The focus is certainly on the future. Jesus looks forward to the definitive coming of the kingdom.

⁴⁸ G. Soares Prabhu, “Jesus the prophet”, p. 210-211.

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SANTIAGO AS A DISCIPLE ON A SPIRITUAL QUEST IN THE ALCHEMIST

-S. Suganya* & B.J. Geetha**

Abstract

The quest for spiritual life is one of the Bible's central themes. The Bible chronicles how people have responded to the divine summons throughout time. A notable figural sign that appears frequently in Paulo Coeho's novel The Alchemist is that of the "Shepherd." The call to become a Shepherd is a call to commit oneself to a spiritual journey of growth and perfection. This call is similar to the first action made by the Divine in the life of a disciple, which is the first step in the biblical concept of discipleship. A comparison shows how closely the discipleship described in the Bible and the protagonist Santiago's spiritual journey in Coelho's novel resemble each other. The signs show that each one represents a specific period in a disciple's life as described in the Bible. Santiago, the main character, had to pass through the stages denoted by the signs in order to develop into a self-actualized person, much as a man must go through each level in order to emerge as a true disciple. One could say that the protagonist's spiritual search is represented by his or her journey through the various stages. It seems that the "treasure" the Shepherd boy saw in his dreams was the accomplishment of self-realization. This paper discusses the way the protagonist's spiritual journey ultimately helps him to realize that the reality he is seeking is rooted within him.

Keywords: discipleship, self-actualized person, spiritual search, treasure and self-realization

Coelho's writing often explores the issue of spiritual quest. The protagonist's spiritual journey is described in his best-known book, *The Alchemist*. Santiago's journey for a treasure took him from his hometown to a remote Egyptian desert, and his journey serves as a metaphor for a man's spiritual quest for God. Over time, the hunt for

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the treasure transforms a simple shepherd boy into a perfect alchemist's disciple. As Coelho writes, "There were two people who were smiling: the alchemist, because he had found his perfect disciple, and the chief, because that disciple had understood the glory of God" (TA 161).

Santiago's name derives from the word "saint," which gives us insight on how to see the main character. Saints go through difficult trials before they are rewarded. Before receiving his reward at the conclusion of the story, Santiago must pass a number of tough tests of the will. Coelho describes the boy's realization of the meaning of his name: "The boy reached through to the Soul of the World, and saw that it was a part of the Soul of God. And he saw that the Soul of God was his own soul. And that he, a boy, could perform miracles" (TA 160). Santiago finally accomplishes self-realization when he realizes, towards the end of his journey, that he is a part of the Soul of God and that the Soul of God is his own soul.

Crucial components of The Alchemist's literary canon are signs and symbols. The author used to describe this spiritual journey, through signs and codes that relate to the Biblical idea of a spiritual journey. Shepherd, One-Tenth, Melchizedek, Desert, Love, Alchemist, and The Hand That Wrote All are the signs related to the Biblical idea of a spiritual journey. It is interesting to see how closely the protagonist's spiritual journey and the spiritual discipleship described in the Bible resemble each other at different stages of development. The metaphorical use of Biblical discipleship is the finest way to illustrate Santiago's spiritual evolution from the status of a Shepherd child to the level of an alchemist.

The signification of the word "shepherd" aims to comprehend the sign's literal and metaphorical meaning in The Alchemist and the Bible. To comprehend the roles and way of life of shepherds as they are described in the Bible, a brief exegetical analysis of the text is essential.

The word "shepherd" is a metaphor for God in the Bible. A Shepherd is not God. He possesses all the positive traits of a good shepherd who looks after his sheep. We should visualize the constant watchfulness and endurance of God's love when we hear the word "shepherd." It was simple for the people to comprehend the incomprehensible and unfathomable idea of God to some extent since they were familiar with such characteristics of a good shepherd.

In *The Alchemist*, Coelho uses the sign in the literal sense of a shepherd addressing a sheep. Coelho does not refer to his shepherd as God in the way that the Bible does. When he uses the word shepherd, he does not mean Jesus as the lamb and shepherd. He does not refer to a national leader, a shepherd in a judicial capacity, or church ministry leaders. Paulo Coelho's decision to establish his protagonist as a shepherd serves a very different objective. He introduces Santiago, a young man who wants to travel and explore other cultures by becoming a shepherd.

When Paulo Coelho discusses the characteristics and duties of a shepherd, it is clear that the Bible has had a significant influence on the author. The character and obligations of a shepherd in the Bible and in *The Alchemist* are comparable, as shown by the sign "Shepherd." The meanings of the sign in relation to the characteristics and obligations of a shepherd, which are shared by both texts, would be interesting to analyze. Chapter 10 of the Gospel according to St. John has a magnificent dissertation on the Good Shepherd as taught by Jesus. Jesus shows himself as the good shepherd who watches over and cares for his sheep.

When discussing the relationship between the Shepherd and the Sheep, Coelho mentions the intimacy that binds them both. The Sheep knew his schedule, and he knew their schedule: He got up and started rousing the sheep that were still asleep with his crook. He had observed that the majority of his animals had started to stir as soon as he had woken up. He had spent the past two years guiding sheep around the countryside in search of food and water, and it seemed as though some enigmatic spirit had connected his life to that of the sheep. "They are so used to me that they know my schedule," he muttered. Thinking about that for a moment, he realized that it could be the other way around: that it was he who had become accustomed to their schedule" (TA 4).

The boy chose to resume his role as a shepherd after thinking of his sheep while waiting in line for tickets. He has mastered all aspects of shepherding in just two years: "he knew how to shear sheep, how to care for pregnant ewes, and how to protect the sheep from wolves. He knew all the fields and pastures of Andalusia. And he knew the fair price for every one of his animals" (TA 27). The boy considers the intense bond that shepherds develop with their flocks. Each member of his flock was completely familiar to him: "he knew which ones were lame, which one

was to give birth two months from now, and which were the laziest. He knew how to shear them, and how to slaughter them. If he ever decided to leave them, they would suffer” (TA 28).

The willingness of a shepherd to accept risks for the sheep is another facet of similarity. The Gospel of St. John says, “I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep” (10: 11). Coelho also believes that the fascinating part of a shepherd's life comes from taking chances. Santiago encounters an elderly woman who can decipher his dreams. She claims that she intended to charge him for the consultation. The boy then realized that this was just another ruse, but he chose to take a chance. Because he was a shepherd, taking chances was nothing new to him. “A shepherd always takes his chances with wolves and with drought, and that's what makes a shepherd's life exciting” (TA 13).

The Shepherd's willingness to take chances is also mentioned by Coelho when the crystal business began to prosper as a result of Santiago's efforts and inventiveness. In order to increase sales, Santiago suggests erecting a display case at the foot of the slope. The merchant is hesitant because he worries that customers would run into it and smash the crystal. The boy is not afraid of the consequences of trying new experiments in the crystal business. He claimed that shepherds were accustomed to taking chances. “Well, when I took my sheep through the fields some of them might have died if we had come upon a snake. But that's the way life is with sheep and with shepherds” (TA 53).

Coelho also compares Santiago's relationship with his sheep to that of the Bible. Santiago thought that when he called his sheep by name, they understood him. “But there were certain of them who took a bit longer to awaken. The boy prodded them, one by one, with his crook, calling each by name. He had always believed that the sheep were able to understand what he said” (TA 4).

Santiago is confident that he was able to converse with his sheep well without using words. He could communicate with the sheep regardless of their language. “People talk a lot about omens, thought the shepherd. But they really don't know what they're saying. Just as I hadn't realized that for so many years, I had been speaking a language without words to my sheep” (TA 49).

Santiago reflects that they appear to comprehend him and know his routines. This establishes the story's recurring subject of a language devoid of words. It anticipates the alchemist's ability to communicate in any language:

But the sheep had taught him something even more important: that there was a language in the world that everyone understood, a language the boy had used throughout the time that he was trying to improve things at the shop. It was the language of enthusiasm, of things accomplished with love and purpose, and as part of a search for something believed in and desired. (TA 64)

The Shepherd himself, as also described in the Bible, occasionally serves as the sheepfold's entrance.

At night the sheep were gathered into a fold for protection against beasts, thieves, and the cold (Ps. 78:70). Sheepfolds were of various types. At times they were located in or near a cave. Some were permanent enclosures with a roof and stone walls, while others were temporary, consisting simply of an open pen with thorn bush sides. The shepherd guarded the single opening with his own body. (Garber 464).

The shepherd, Santiago, does not act as the sheepfold's gate, but Coelho claims that he takes all necessary precautions to protect the safety of his sheep while describing the shepherd's care for the sheep. "He saw to it that all the sheep entered through the ruined gate, and then laid some planks across it to prevent the flock from wandering away during the night. There were no wolves in the region, but once an animal had strayed during the night, and the boy had to spend the entire next day searching for it" (TA 3).

The Shepherd herding the flock to verdant pastures is described in the Bible. According to Psalm 23, the Shepherd is careful to fulfill all of the requirements of the sheep. "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters" (1-2).

The purpose of the sheep's proximity to Santiago is made very apparent by Coelho. He was aware of their primary requirements. They would be his pals as long as he could guide them to the greatest pastures:

The day was dawning, and the shepherd urged his sheep in the direction of the sun. They never have to make any decisions, he thought. Maybe that's why they always stay close to me. The only things that concerned the sheep were food and water. As long as the boy knew how to find the best pastures in Andalusia, they would be his friends. (TA 7)

According to Coelho, compared to other professions, the shepherd's job seems straightforward. A comparison between a baker and a shepherd is made by the old man, also known as the King of Salem, to the boy. He claims that because they are destitute wanderers, shepherds are not as significant as bakers. The old man said, "But bakers are more important people than shepherds. Bakers have homes, while shepherds sleep out in the open. Parents would rather see their children marry bakers than shepherds" (TA 24).

Although shepherds may seem like homeless wanderers, Coelho claims that God values them highly. The Englishman pulls out his own Urim and Thummim when Santiago brings out the Urim and Thummim. He is curious about where Santiago obtained his. In a defensive tone, Santiago claims that a king gave them to him and adds that he assumes the Englishman would not think that a king would speak to a common shepherd. The Englishman, however, has no issue accepting it since "It was shepherds who were the first to recognize a king that the rest of the world refused to acknowledge. So, it's not surprising that kings would talk to shepherd" (TA 72). The Englishman is referring to the shepherds who were the first to acknowledge Christ as the King of Kings and the Son of God, and they were also the one who initially conveyed the word of His impending arrival. The traditional Nativity story claims that an angel told shepherds to follow the star of Bethlehem to the newborn Jesus's crib after telling them about his birth. Coelho therefore believes that the shepherds are valuable individuals in God's eyes even though they are wandering destitute people.

We might learn more about what constitutes a good Shepherd from Jesus' own depiction of Himself in John 10. According to the Bible, the sheep are the Shepherd's greatest possession; hence the good Shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. Jesus highlights his own life's selflessness in St. John Chapter 10. A "good shepherd's" ability to lead the flock through self-sacrifice is what gives him authority. The reason the father adored the son was because He was willing to die for

the sheep; this was the kind of shepherd the father desired for God's flock.

The Alchemist narrates the story of Santiago, a shepherd who abandons his shepherding duties and his flock in order to pursue a dream he had on two different occasions to find a hidden treasure. Coelho does not view his sheep as the treasure, despite the shepherd's willingness to make sacrifices as depicted in both *The Alchemist* and the Bible. The treasure is more significant to Santiago than his sheep. Because of this, he is willing to give up his sheep to discover his hidden riches. The old man tells the boy when he approaches him to learn about his treasure, "If you want to learn about your own treasure, you will have to give me one-tenth of your flock" (TA 25). The boy and the old man were introduced the next day at noon. He gave the old man six sheep and one-tenth of the sixty he owned. All the other sheep were sold by the boy to his friend. The boy said, "I'm surprised; my friend bought all the other sheep immediately. He said that he had always dreamed of being a shepherd, and that it was a good omen" (TA 29). Therefore, it appears that for Santiago, sheep are not the treasure they are depicted as being in the Bible. Santiago is ready to sell his sheep in order to pursue his quest to find his treasure, as that is important to him.

Shepherding is more of a profession than a vocation in Coelho's writing. God is not entrusting Santiago with this profession. As it is in the Bible, Santiago is neither a national leader nor a church ministry leader. He decides to become a shepherd on his own. As mentioned earlier, he chose to become a shepherd in order to travel and acquire global knowledge. As he reaches this personal goal, he loses interest in continuing to work as a shepherd. In the Bible, God designates and appoints particular individuals as leaders to lead the people. From above, leadership is imposed. Shepherds are innate leaders in Coelho's writing. He eventually becomes a leader as a result of the experiences, difficulties, and hardships of the treasure hunt.

Santiago's lack of dedication to his profession as a shepherd is evident in Coelho. He experiences a crisis in his work as a shepherd "But now, as the sun began to set, he was in a different country, a stranger in a strange land, where he couldn't even speak the language. He was no longer a shepherd, and he had nothing, not even the money to return and start everything over" (TA 41). He is tempted to return home and resume his

previous job as he grows weary of the search. According to Coelho, this is the shepherd's mentality. In Coelho, Santiago is repeatedly tempted by the temptation to return to the fields and his sheep: "I can always go back to being a shepherd, the boy thought. I learned how to care for sheep, and I haven't forgotten how that's done. But maybe I'll never have another chance to get to the Pyramids in Egypt" (TA 66). The boy has a justification for returning to his old profession: "I know why I want to get back to my flock, he thought. I understand sheep; they're no longer a problem, and they can be good friends. On the other hand, I don't know if the desert can be a friend" (TA 67).

Santiago had to decide whether to resume his work as a shepherd or whether to keep looking for the treasure after selling all his sheep. He resists the temptation, though, and chooses against returning to his previous job as a shepherd after a great deal of consideration. He does not wish to live out the rest of his life as a humble shepherd. He decides to forego his livelihood as a shepherd in favour of continuing on in search of his treasure. This attitude is in stark contrast with that of the Shepherd in the Bible. According to the Bible, a shepherd's call cannot be rejected under any circumstances. God bestows the job of shepherd to people. Returning to the previous way of life was viewed as disobeying God's command:

If he wanted to, he could now return to the oasis, go back to Fatima, and live his life as a simple shepherd. After all, the alchemist continued to live in the desert, even though he understood the Language of the World, and knew how to transform lead into gold. He didn't need to demonstrate his science and art to anyone. The boy told himself that, on the way toward realizing his own destiny, he had learned all he needed to know, and had experienced everything he might have dreamed of. (TA 169)

Santiago was actually delighted and content that he had managed to rise above other shepherds. He thought, "He had lived every one of his days intensely since he had left home so long ago. If he died tomorrow, he would already have seen more than other shepherds and he was proud of that" (TA 114).

As a result, there are various ways in which Coelho's profession of shepherding is different from that of the shepherd in the Bible. It seems that, unlike in the Bible, Coelho's shepherding is a means to an end

rather than an end in itself. Santiago, the shepherd, lacks the everlasting dedication of the Biblical Shepherd.

In a nutshell, the paradigm shift implied by the sign "Shepherd" is that, in contrast to the Shepherd in the Bible, who dedicates his entire life to the salvation of God's people, the shepherd in *The Alchemist* exploits his profession for his own gain. Although both *The Alchemist* and the Bible depict the Shepherd in a sacrificial manner, Coelho portrays his shepherd as being more practical.

The sign "Shepherd," as it is perceived by the reader and used by Paulo Coelho in *The Alchemist*, is symbolic to a man who is travelling to fulfill his spiritual search. The key to happiness, or the means to discover God in one's life, is to live out one's life's dream.

It's important that Coelho chose to make his protagonist a shepherd. By casting his main character as a shepherd, Paulo Coelho has successfully introduced the idea of man's eternal search for the truth. The term "Shepherd" allows the reader to infer the various aspects of a spiritual journey like the one described in the Bible by reading between the lines.

The word "Shepherd" is not used by Coelho as a metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, or irony. In the Judeo-Christian context, he uses it to denote the shepherd, an iconic figure. Yet, Coelho's use of the word "shepherd" results in a paradigm shift from its biblical meaning of authority to that of a man on a spiritual search. Symbolically, this sign is meant to represent a man on a journey.

The Shepherd is the only symbol or representation that is suitable for a person seeking the truth. Leading the sheep under their care, the Palestinian shepherds would "pass-over" from a location of famine and drought to one of prosperity and abundance. In reality, this Palestinian shepherds' custom gave rise to the Jewish holiday known as "Passover." For sheep, an area without lush vegetation and flowing water is their final resting place, where only death awaits. Hence, the shepherds lead the sheep away from such a "culture of death" and into a "culture of life." As a result, the symbol "Shepherd" for a person seeking spiritual perfection became mythical for the Jewish people.

One's thirst for self-realization can only be satiated by a spiritual search. *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho expresses exactly this message. The

signs and symbols he uses to carry out this quest give it colour and profundity because they are largely biblical in nature, transforming *The Alchemist* into a common man's Bible.

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BIBLE STUDY

A CALL FOR LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMATION

*- Thomas Edison**

The topic of this reflection is “A Call for Leadership Transformation” which is based on the book of Deuteronomy 16:18-20. Here, in this passage the Israelites are instructed to choose their own judges and officers for every town. In the Promised Land, these judges and authorities are tasked with dispensing justice fairly. This section (16:18–18: 22), which addresses the administration of social justice, is a subsection of a larger section (16:18–18:22) devoted to the roles of the judge, monarch, priest, and prophet.

Delegating Job

In verse 18, Moses instructed the Israelites to elect judges and other officials for themselves in this passage. For Israel’s greatest good, God established a self-governing structure. The rule of law, private property, and the consent of the governed served as the foundation of God’s system of self-governance. The fact that the judges and officers were chosen by the populace indicated that the governed had given their approval to the governing class.

The term judges (Heb. “shāpaṭ”) refers to those who preside over legal procedures in a society. The term officers (Heb. “shōṭēr”) refers to officials who served in different areas of the administration of government and the enforcement of law (Numbers 11:16; Deuteronomy 1:15). All of the towns that the Lord, your God, is giving you were to have these judges and officers appointed to them. These officials were to be chosen to oversee local affairs (literally, “within your gates”). Additionally, they were to be arranged by tribe. Because the male chiefs of every household in ancient times, known as elders, were responsible for administering justice. As a result, each family had a voice in every decision made by each local community, which was strictly democratic. The Israelites were given the order to choose judges and officers for all

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of their tribes. This was due to the difficulty of administering the entire district with the aid of royal appointees. As a result, the local authorities were instructed to choose judges and other officials to divide their duties. In other words, local judges and officers who were drawn from inside each tribe were to be distributed equally among the Israelites. The Promised Land will be divided into what we may term states based on tribes after it has been taken. Therefore, the government was to be spread among the populace. The most important thing that we learn from this verse is decentralizing the authority or power structure. Even though following verses will establish an appeal system, they were to be local rather than central.

Deliberating Just Justice

Verse 19 & 20 state the three fundamental rules of judicial propriety, all of which are repeated frequently in the Scripture. These local judges were commanded to *judge the people with righteous judgment*. The phrase *righteous judgment* is literally “judgment of righteousness.” The Lord who served as the barometer of righteousness (Deuteronomy 6:25; Psalms 119:106, 142; Daniel 9:7). In our context, it alludes to behaviour that is in line with what is just and moral. God’s standards of justice were to be followed by the judges and officers in carrying out their duties. The judges were not chosen to act anyway they pleased. The judges were chosen to apply God’s law justly and equitably. Here, Moses may want to indicate that all Israelites are responsible to ensure that the judges act fairly. Or, he may address all Israelites because any of them might become a judge, either by virtue of being an elder or in some other way like Deborah.

Moses then uses three orders to depict what good judgement looked like to the judges and officers. The first command stated that the judges were not to distort justice. To distort (Heb. “nāṭā”) was to “bend” or “cast aside.” Justice had to be carried out impartially and without intimidation. The first fundamental rule of judicial propriety is, you must not distort justice by ruling in favour of the guilty and against the innocent. This injunction is often invoked in connection with cases involving the needy, who were most vulnerable to judicial mistreatment.

The second fundamental rule of judicial propriety is, you must not show partiality. This principle is addressed to judges in Deuteronomy 1:17

and stated more fully in Leviticus 19:15. “You shall not render an unjust judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great; with justice you shall judge your neighbour.” Being partial literally means “regarding faces” when making decisions or dispensing justice depending on the parties’ social standing or personal ties to them.

The third fundamental rule of judicial propriety is consistent with the fact that warnings against bribes commonly appear in instructions to judges. To accept a bribe is to take money in exchange for making a choice that will benefit you personally. There is no justice when it is for sale. It was noted that accepting a bribe impairs the judgement of the wise and corrupts the utterances of the righteous. These are in clear contradiction to their God’s character and accomplishments. Although bribery was widespread in the Ancient Near East, the Lord desired that the people of God’s covenant stand out from the crowd and behave in a way that reflects God’s just and righteous nature, rather than acting like everyone else.

An unjust profit is always balanced by a just loss. The judges who hear cases should decide them justly and not accept bribes at the expense of the innocent, and gifts blind the hearts of the wise and change the words of the Just. Otherwise, while they are acquiring money, they may lose their soul. No one obtains unjust profit without a Just loss. Where the gain is, there is the loss: a gain in the money coffer but a loss in the conscience.

All of these specifications for the judges are in line with God’s overall commandment that every Israelite loves their neighbour as themselves. Nobody desires unfair treatment. Everyone has a strong sense of justice while considering themselves. In Israel, the way to justice is to make decisions based on the evidence and the law, not on “what is in it for me,” whether it be material, interpersonal, or family gain. Justice must be fair and consistent.

Moses concluded with an emphatic statement, “You shall pursue justice, and only justice.” In the Hebrew language, the phrase “justice, and only justice” actually means “justice, justice.” The repetition of the word indicates intensity, and it is intended to imprint on the judges’ and officers’ thoughts that dispensing the God’s justice is their top concern. God’s law outlines how Israelites should substantially benefit

one another. However, it will only be effective if it is implemented. God delegated enforcement to be done democratically, by those appointed by the people.

If justice was given this highest priority, then the people would be allowed to live and possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you. The word translated as justice (Heb. “šedeq”) here is usually translated as “righteousness” (v. 18). Each word conveys the idea of things aligning with a standard. To be just, or righteous, one must conform to whatever standard is established as the suitable standard. In this example, Scripture defines justice in terms of God’s requirement of treating one another with neighbourly love.

In today’s context many of us and our leaders have failed miserably to incorporate these qualities into our lives because of our selfish attitude. There is a failure in transmitting the leadership from the elder generation to the younger generation and decentralizing the power and authority from the higher power structure to the local communities. Many of our Christian organizations, churches and even political parties failed to transmit their leadership role to the youngsters or co-workers. And leaders are not ready to share their responsibilities, because they have the fear of losing their identity, power and position. And the second most important problem in leadership is that some of our leaders are not ready to do justice because they are very selfish in their attitude. It creates a lot of chaos in the lives of poor, marginalized and innocent people. Friends, our God has called us to be the leaders of the church and society to create a great impact on the lives of the people and to establish the reign of God in this world. And at the same time our current political scenario and the social life of today is badly affected by the unjust evil system and practices, like bribery, favouritism, violence against minorities, and changing the facts as lies and lies as facts. In this situation, the church, Christian organizations and every individual have the role to play the prophetic role to overcome this evil system by following this leadership model and should raise our voice to act against the injustice and unjust structures of this society. This should be our focus and pressing priority in today’s context. May God help and enable us to be effective leaders and peacemakers of the church and society of this hour by following these leadership models and qualities.



NCCI NEWS

NCCI DEMANDS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE; APPEALS FOR LASTING SOLUTION TO THE MANIPUR CONTEXT

The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), a fellowship of Protestant and Orthodox churches, condemns the violence in Manipur and urges the State and Central Governments to take immediate steps to restore normalcy. Attack on life and property, and providing a communal colour to an otherwise non-religious issue is unacceptable.

We are deeply saddened by the sequence of events that have unfurled in the state, polarising people into hostile camps. We recognize that there are long-term grievances within the communities that need to be addressed through dialogue at different levels. In this strained situation we urge the Government and its administration to develop confidence between communities, taking strong and impartial action against those who indulge in violence and spreading of hate campaigns.

Reports reveal the tragic nature of the devastation caused, especially the heavy loss of innocent lives in the clashes. Worship places and houses were attacked and burned, and heavy damages inflicted on public and private properties. In this context, we urge the communities to refrain from any violent acts as violence is not the answer to such issues. We also urge the communities to support the authorities in bringing peace and normalcy to the region.

We urge the National Human Rights Commission and the National Minorities Commission, as well as the State Human Rights and Minority Commissions, to take suo moto cognisance of the matter and address the situation. The Government of Manipur must take responsibility for restoration of life and rebuilding communities, churches and temples vandalised, and restarting destroyed establishments.

We fully understand the sentiments, emotions and grievances of people in thick of the violent context and encourage the faith communities in

the region to take initiative towards dialogue for peace and communal harmony. To this end also we express our solidarity and stand by for any assistance or accompaniment required in building peace.

Acknowledging the steps that have been taken, we appeal that this crisis situation will be used as an opportunity to bring a lasting solution to the long-vexed context.

Rev. Asir Ebenezer
General Secretary.



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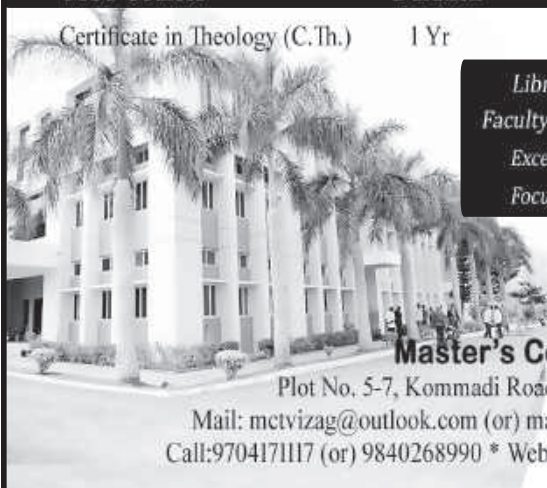
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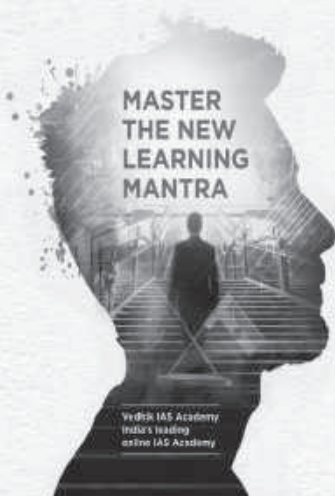
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