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A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

Until We Love Life



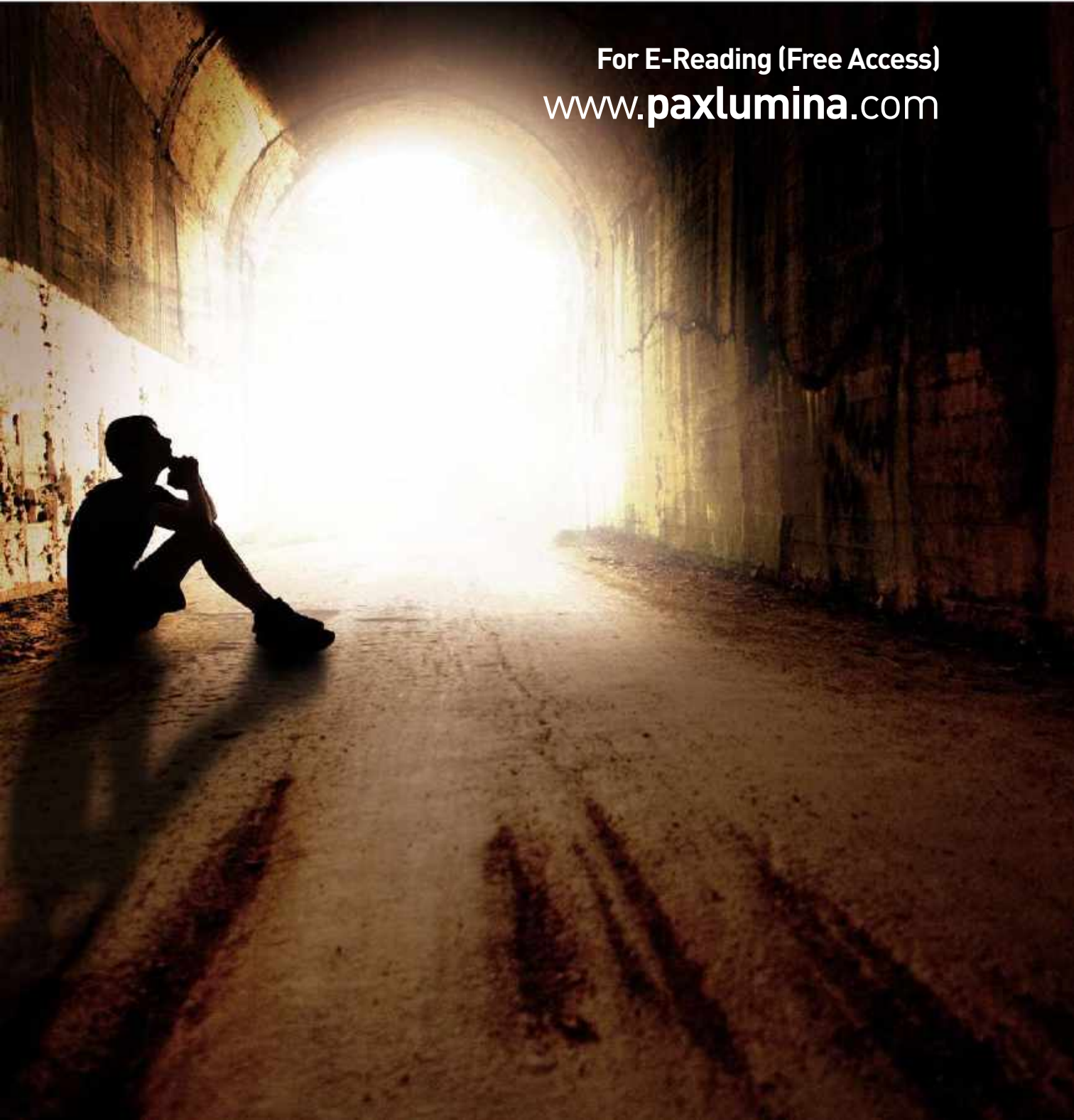
EXCLUDED YOUTH



Pax Lumina

A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

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A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

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Cover: This is a mural at the headquarters of the Ignatian Youth Network in Colombia. It was prepared by young artists from the Ignatian Youth Network (Valentina Cárdenas and Juanita Cruz) in memory of four young people massacred recently in Colombia.

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Alienation of the Youth



Editorial

Children at adolescence break away from the adult-world though adults rarely notice it; they neither have the time nor the empathy for that. This phase of transition creates many biological and psychological changes in the adolescents. Fear of the uncertain years ahead looms large in their minds. The hypocrisy and complacency of the adults in the unjust world they preside over generate moral outrage and a search for retribution and retaliation begins. The lure of violence for meeting the ends of justice becomes irresistible at this point for many.

Depending on the economic, social and cultural background the youth vent their frustration and anger in various ways. Some try to change the system, some broker an uneasy peace and join it and some others opt out of it altogether with tragic consequences. But even others who do not adopt the path of violence but advocate peaceful change while protesting tyranny and exploitation are also looked upon with suspicion by the authorities. Often, non-violence in these cases is met with violence. This seems to be a universal phenomenon. In this issue, we try to portray the spectrum of anxiety, despair and hope the young people all over the world today carry with them especially in the context of the raging pandemic.

Our young contributor from Columbia, Stivel Toloza Blanco says how hope tries to survive amidst violence and the pandemic which has become truly global now. According to him, in these dark times of the pandemic, youth is the only hope for humanity. I wish him truth. Because if he were not to be true, hypocrisy of the adult tyrants, sure, will lead our world to perdition. He has sent us the picture of a beautiful mural created by young people to protest against violence. It shows four young Columbians who have been recently murdered for non-violent protests. It is titled *Until We Love Life*. We have this on our cover.

Another writer of ours, Viginus Xaxa, a sociologist, talks about the conflicts, both internal and external, faced by the tribal youths of India, one of the most marginalized sections of our society. Here the problem the authorities see is not the stark exploitation, deprivation and exclusion of these people but ironically the youth themselves who speak out against this structural violence. So the protesting youth are rounded up and jailed. This happens according to our sociologist-writers all over the tribal world of India. But does this happen only amongst the tribals? The pandemic lock-down is a good time to ask this and related questions.



The condition of the young amongst the fisherfolk may be different from that of the tribals but the dangers facing them are no less and their situation is no better as Benny Chiramel shows.

In the interview with Dr. Binoy Jacob, Managing Editor of Pax Lumina, Dayamani Barla, a tribal activist from Jharkhand, graphically describes how caste and gender come together to dehumanize tribal girls. Actually, this naked aggression on human rights starts with the forced displacement of tribals from their homeland, the forest. All of us know this is said to be done for 'development'. Development for whom by whom? Another question to ponder over during the pandemic!

We have reports from other parts of the world like Sri Lanka, Nepal and the US also. The colour and contour of the exclusion of the youth may look different as places and categories they are from change but its intensity remains the same. I wish the rest of the society may develop the empathy to feel this intensity. And then action will follow. After all, we were all young once.

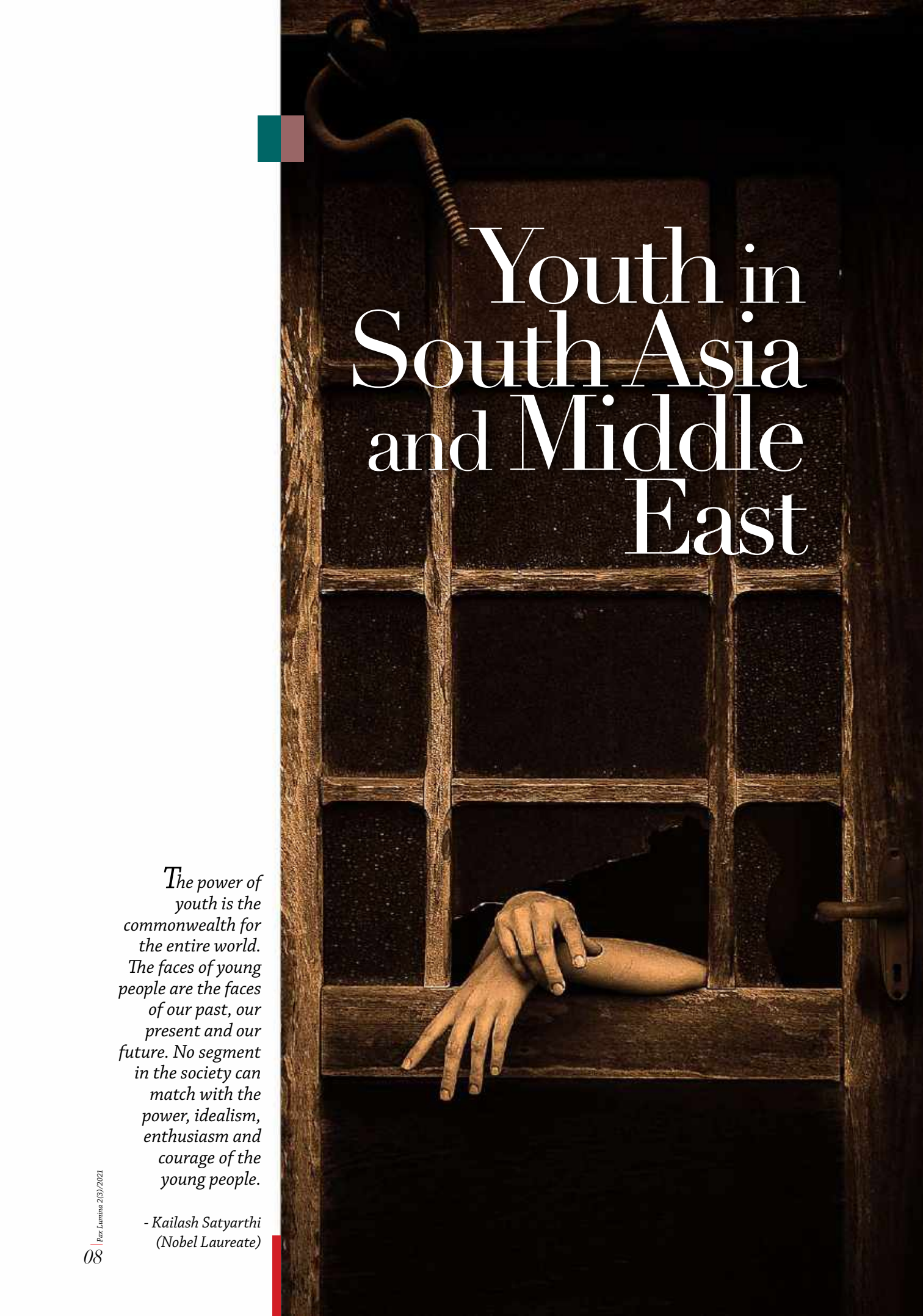
In the Science and Peace column, we have Vincent Bregenza telling us how the life of a remote village in Gujarat was transformed with the introduction of appropriate technology to process mahua seeds. A heart-warming story of hope.

The book on 'London youth, Identity and Politics' by Daniel Nilson De Hanas is reviewed by Dr. K.M. Dolichan, a professor of psychology. The review clearly shows how race, ethnicity and religion interact with citizenship in the formation of the identity of an immigrant and the social and political consequences of this interaction.

Governments all over are battling with the pandemic. There are problems of logistics, infrastructure and supply of oxygen and medicines. To tide over this crisis people's cooperation in conforming to scientific medical guidelines is crucial. But at the same time the complementary role of alternative healing systems cannot be undermined. Shin Kallungal discusses this citing the experience from a village in the Birbhum district of West Bengal.

Jacob Thomas

Editor



Youth in South Asia and Middle East

The power of youth is the commonwealth for the entire world. The faces of young people are the faces of our past, our present and our future. No segment in the society can match with the power, idealism, enthusiasm and courage of the young people.

*- Kailash Satyarthi
(Nobel Laureate)*

INTERVIEW

Dayamani Barla / Binoy Jacob

A tribal journalist and an activist from the State of Jharkhand, India.

Pax Lumina 2(3) / 2021 / 9-12

EXCLUSION OF TRIBAL WOMEN YOUTH IN JHARKHAND

When we talk about the exclusion of the tribal people in general and young women in particular, the major causes are displacement, migration and human trafficking.





? **What are the problems a young tribal girl faces in North India, especially in Jharkhand?**

Tribal people live in urban and rural areas. When we talk about the exclusion of the tribal people in general and young women in particular, the major causes are displacement, migration and human trafficking.

Displacement is a grave concern for the tribals mainly in the rural areas of Jharkhand. The major reasons are the large-scale industrial projects implemented by multinational companies, coal mining, extraction of mineral resources, the construction of dams and power projects. Land alienation, loss of control over forest produce, lack of proper rehabilitation, and indebtedness.

Displacement is also a serious threat to the autonomy, liberty and dignity of all those who are impacted, but it also tramples on their rights to life and health. When displaced, their identity is lost. These communities had lived in forests and were traditionally dependent on forest resources for their subsistence.

Forced displacement has led these communities to relocate to unfamiliar and hostile environments, away from their traditional habitats. This has increased their vulnerability to

exploitation, pushing them to poverty, chronic malnourishment, starvation and ill health, including psychological trauma. Most of them, especially young women become bonded labourers. The consequences are the same for all those who are displaced, whether tribals or not.

Migration is another vital concern. Migration happens at two levels among the tribals. One kind is from village to city seeking a job and to earn bread for the family. The second kind is migration to neighbouring states or to other places for their livelihood as they do not have full-time employment in their native place.

Migration causes several problems. Land degradation takes place on account of this and cultivation becomes secondary. Migration becomes an obstacle in children's education as they are not given enough attention for their growth and development. Often, migrants become victims of exploitation and abuse.

Another terrifying phenomenon among tribal women is human trafficking. It happens mostly in the rural belt. Most of them are uneducated. Very often, they are brainwashed by the middlemen and are brought to cities like Delhi and Mumbai making false promises of getting jobs, and thus they are trapped. The key social determinants that facilitate trafficking include poverty, ignorance, gender divide, and caste status. According to civil society groups, about 10,000 children and women are trafficked from Jharkhand every year to work as domestic helps or as sex workers.

? **Aren't the government and its institutions responsible for the prevalence of these social evils?**

Yes, of course. The state government is responsible for these, to a great extent. There are human rights



activists and cultural leaders who protest constantly against this. Unfortunately, there is an unhealthy nexus between the police, political leaders and the so-called middlemen. Hence, most of the protests end up in vain.

The Jharkhand government has taken some initiatives to prevent human trafficking. But most of them remain on paper and are poorly implemented. Though the State Advisory Committee on trafficking was set up to combat human trafficking, the same has not been functioning due to poor planning and shortage of staff.

? *What is the impact of COVID 19 on the lives of the tribal women?*

The pandemic affects all, both men and women, irrespective of caste and creed. It was not so devastating in the tribal region in the first phase. It had affected mostly the cities only. But, the second wave has hit the rural areas too.

Many tribal migrants tried to go back home, either by walking or by any other available means, because they were left with no hope of livelihood in the cities or other places of their work. While travelling back home, women and children faced great difficulties. There were pregnant women, menstruating young girls, and infants who had to walk

for miles without food and water. They travelled for many days in physical and mental trauma.

The lockdown has created havoc in the lives of tribal women. They had already experienced poor access to basic needs such as healthcare, safe and pure water, sanitation, and education. Now they face difficulties in obtaining immediate support from the government for healthcare and emergency services

The key social determinants that facilitate trafficking include poverty, ignorance, gender divide, and caste status. According to civil society groups, **about 10,000 children and women are trafficked from Jharkhand every year to work as domestic helps or as sex workers.**



At a time when the world is seeking preventive and therapeutic solutions, India should, by all means, **look for ways in which the traditional systems of medicine can be made use of.**



for their livelihood and survival. This pandemic has created an utter sense of insecurity for these women.

These days people remain at home in isolation. They are reluctant to go to the government or private hospitals. In fact, there are no hospitals in the interior regions. Those affected by the pandemic manage with indigenous herbal medicines.

? Can we promote indigenous medicines in fighting corona?

- As of now, in India, any system other than allopathic medicine and Ayurveda has not been given a role in this crisis. At a time when the world is seeking preventive and therapeutic solutions, India should, by all means, look for ways in which the traditional systems of medicine can be made use of. We must encourage the large-scale use of easily accessible and traditionally accepted herbal plants which serve as immunity-boosters.

? Your life remains inspirational for many. What inspired you to become a human rights activist?

Born in Jharkhand, I am an Adivasi of the Munda tribe. My father, like many other uneducated tribals, was cheated, his property misappropriated and he was displaced. Later, he worked as a servant in the city and my mother as a maid. I had to work as a maid to meet the expenses of my education while in school and college. Even today, I run a tea shop to earn a livelihood for my family.

Jharkhand is a region with rich natural resources. As mentioned already, in the name of so-called development, most of the tribals in the rural regions were displaced without giving them adequate compensation. I have been fighting for justice for our people for the past few decades.

For this, I have initiated an organisation namely 'Adivaasi, Moolvaasi, Astitva Raksha Manch' (Forum for the protection of tribal and indigenous people's identity) and the fight is still on. I have dedicated my life for people's rights. There had been a lot of struggles all along. However, we crossed all barriers with the support and cooperation of the people. Now the greatest challenge is the pandemic. Activism doesn't function these days as it was before the spread of the coronavirus and the subsequent lockdowns. But I spend a lot of time listening to people, instilling in them confidence and hope. And with the help of the people, we will win against the pandemic, too.





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A Roadmap for Inclusion of Coastal Youth

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Social exclusion of the fisher youth from within their communities takes a nuanced expression when the young men are not wanted in the marriage market and when many of the educated women are not able to find educated and employed grooms.

Disaffected and alienated youth addicted to substances and ever-streaming electronic and internet media content, devoid of any current commitment to any institutions other than their partial dependence on their own families or significant others for their basic needs, are a cause of concern in the coastal communities of Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

Applying a disaster management perspective to the socio-cultural, economic and political vulnerability of the section of the coastal population aged approximately between 16 and 30, coastal communities have been experiencing disintegration within the families and local communities, a dislocation and identity crisis which is aggravated by landlessness, homelessness and a lack of collaterals, compounded by climate change-related extreme weather events such as tsunami, Ockhi, floods and water stress.



*Non-formal training programme
by Lok Manch, Anchuthengu*

Increasing their human capital through quality primary education has been a way out of the problem; but it has been recently undermined by the improper implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009) and the consequent deterioration of the public education system in the name of free and compulsory education up to fourteen years of age. Now we have an 'educated illiterate youth' in the coastal communities adding to their burden of finding suitable white-collar jobs for them.

Both non-formal and informal remedial education programmes of the kind promoted by Fr Paul Valiakandathil, S.J., Fr Thomas Kochery, C.S.S.R., and Fr Antony Manipadom, S.J., in the 1980s and 90s are no longer viable and adaptable to the changed education system and the current educational ethos in the coastal areas.

'All promotion' even without a semblance of achievement in literacy and numeracy has destroyed the motivational dynamics in the coastal communities. Majority of the parents of the current generation in primary schools, have not completed their High School and they are more than happy to see their children pass Secondary School Leaving Certificate examination and they are not bothered whether their wards are eligible for higher education or not.

The majority still think that their boy child could be absorbed into their traditional, caste-based occupation, namely marine fishing; or sent to the Gulf countries for some sundry jobs in obscurity. Even if some girls reaches up to graduation, most of them are given away in marriage to some less qualified fisherman even before they finish their courses and get themselves employed.

The plight of the educated coastal youth

The educated male youths are particularly vulnerable when they are in the job market. Some youths take a shift between local fishing expeditions during good seasons and some Gulf jobs including fishing. As elsewhere, many local fisher youths do not participate in religious ceremonies but are active in party politics.

Social exclusion of the fisher youth from within their communities takes a much-nuanced expression when the young men are not wanted in the marriage market and when many of the educated women are not able to find educated and employed grooms. Since the majority of the men are absorbed into their caste-based occupation even before they could get into higher education and are better



From a caste-based perspective, coastal youth, even if they are educated, could feel low personal and collective esteem since their caste-based identity has been devalued and **debased and they have been vulnerable and less endowed with social capital.**



employed than the educated youth, many educated women settle for the less educated men with consequent family conflicts in the offing.

Case studies of educated coastal youth, both male and female, have revealed their uncomfortable experiences, indicating their precarious situation in being included in the mainstream job market even after getting higher education in professional courses.

Brigit (25, name changed), a B. Tech, got frustrated when she witnessed her classmates becoming successful in getting employed before her, even though they had lower marks. She said her training in Communicative English and sustained exposure to other mainstream spaces and persons through Sneharam, a Jesuit social action centre in Anjengo, Kerala, empowered her to counter such exclusionary processes and get into the job market.



COVID-19 awareness programme

Her involvement in 'Jesus Youth', a faith-based initiative of educated professional Catholic youth, in collaboration with Sneharam, gave her opportunities to meet many professionals from the mainstream communities, affording her the much-needed mentoring.

From a theoretical perspective, debased collective identity and consequent low collective self-esteem impact personal trait and self-esteem of coastal youth. These youths are likely to be driven by aggressive tendencies (Leary et al., 1995; Kavanagh 2007). When excluded youth do not get included in valued positions and socio-cultural spaces, they experience 'social pain'.

Just as physical pain leaves some impressions in the brain cortex, social pain has deeper and more lasting impressions. The physiological analysis of social pain indicates how inclusion is desired, legitimate spaces are naturally designed even from an evolutionary perspective.

Bereft of support from society, individuals cannot survive and fulfil their potential. From a caste-based perspective, coastal youth, even if they are educated, could feel low personal and collective esteem since their caste-based identity has been devalued and debased

and they have been vulnerable and less endowed with social capital.

The following excerpt from the thesis 'A Study of the Phenomenon of Exclusion among the Fisherfolk Youth of Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam Districts of Kerala' indicates how various factors have contributed to their present struggle.

The socio-psychological mechanism of exclusion explains how exclusion is part of inter-related phenomena... If an individual is excluded, it can be seen at 1) the level of deprivations he or she experiences in the social, political, economic and cultural realms; 2) the level of self- and collective esteem he or she enjoys, and 3) the level of aggression the person evinces at the personal and collective levels. It can also be seen that religion and region further differentiate an individual's or group's experience of exclusion. Religion becomes an important variable not merely as one's membership in one particular religion but as how one values one's religious identity...And a rallying point when it comes to receiving social support to deal with one's deprivations. From the perspective of social constructivism, it can be seen that the present scenario of exclusion of the fisherfolk has evolved

over the centuries through a process of social construction involving caste- and class-based actors. The process of globalization has only aggravated the struggle of the fisherfolk youth to find their rightful place in the mainstream society (*Chiramel, 2014, p.95*).

Reaching out to the unreached

Self-exclusion from the primary and higher education platforms by the coastal youth of Thiruvananthapuram, especially by the male youths, has been due to the push and pull factors operational in the coastal communities. Lack of discipline and sustained practice to acquire the required skills after SSLC is a major reason.


The attraction to become financially independent through fishing and to get into a comfort zone of a peer group is a major pull. But recent accidents in the sea due to human-made and natural disasters have heightened their awareness of the increasing dangers involved in fishing. This perception has become a strong deterrent to relying on fishing as an easy occupation.

Grama Panchayat Youth Volunteers Meeting during the pandemic.




Higher education at the margins under Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) has come as a golden opportunity for the coastal youth who would like to get into higher education even if they had lost opportunities due to violence or exclusion. Any youth aspiring for higher education could join the Global English Language programme. Once they get at least a B1 level of English Proficiency as per Cambridge University Online Placement Test, they are guided to start a diploma or professional certificate courses such as Learning Facilitator and Peace Leader by JWL. Right now, there are even graduate courses such as Bachelor of Arts in Sustainable Development.

English is a tool for inclusion and power in the local and global scenario. In the last ten years of my work in the coastal areas, I have seen the efficacy of English language learning as a tool for inclusion. All the staff in Sneharam are now at B1 or a higher level of English proficiency and four of them are from the coastal community. When they joined all of



Higher education at the margins under Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) has come as a golden opportunity for **the coastal youth who would like to get into higher education even if they had lost opportunities due to violence or exclusion.**



them were only around the A2 level, and now, having completed B1 and above, all of them have resumed their higher education under JWL or other universities along with other community members.

Excerpts from their class assignments and reflections reveal how this experiment has made them more confident and capable of becoming good learning facilitators and peace leaders. Once we trigger their passion for knowledge, skills and right attitudes, they can attain higher levels of inclusion. I have personally noticed that despite vulnerable conditions in their family and communities, successful students of JWL courses have been good volunteers and staff in our social action projects.

Athira, the Campaign Facilitator at Sneharam, put this down and handed it over to me with a radiant face:

“I’m one of the two daughters of fishing-dependent family. My father passed away and my mother is in to fish vending. Most of the relatives told my mother to stop our studies. But even as the sole breadwinner she took the initiative and supported us...”

I had never thought about my community before joining Sneharam. Now I can proudly say that I am doing something for my community and I can do better in future. When I came to Sneharam I was only a graduate with difficulty in handling English language. Being part of Sneharam staff gave me two privileges - the JWL platform and the Lok Manch. The former gave me the confidence to manage English language and the latter gave me the confidence to deal with my community and to increase my self-esteem. My skills in English language were appreciated by a Jesuit priest of Loyola College who offered me an admission for post-graduation in social work since I am a graduate in the same subject.

...Even though I am a graduate, I am really worried whether I would be forced to marry an illiterate person...”.

Another significant opportunity for youth for voluntary community service is a rights-based project called Lok Manch. This aims at training leaders to help their community members to access their individual and collective entitlements. In the current phase, selected leaders are trained to engage in social advocacy and campaigns to deal with unresolved issues such as a lack of waste management systems and lack of proper implementation of Indian Public Health Standards in our Primary Health Centres and Community Health Centres. Had the latter issue been timely addressed, we would have gone a long way in preventing the collapse of our health systems in Kerala and elsewhere in the context of COVID.

Mallika(32), another community member and the Capacity Builder at Sneharam, experienced a process of empowerment and now she is passionate to be part of a movement for transformation of herself and her community. When asked about her experience of self-improvement she shared the following:



Through our non-formal education programmes such as training in select themes and follow up of action programmes to deal with our local issues, we are engaging the youth to be proactive.

“I have learnt a lot from my fishing-dependent community and my limited home condition. Despite a poor economic background, my parents have been happy to educate me. So, I earned an MA and a B.Ed. Degree. But, I was rejected in an interview because of lack of English-speaking skills. So, I decided to improve my English. I joined Global English Language Programme. I took a Cambridge University online test and got only A1 level. English classes in Sneharam improved our English. I appeared for the test again and got B1 level. Now I have improved my confidence in speaking English. During the GEL course, I did the Learning Facilitator course and after passing it with distinction I am doing Peace Leader course. I can now understand and identify with my community in depth. Through this course I realized that if I had shared proper knowledge with our people earlier, a lot of changes could have been initiated. So, I joined the Lok Manch project activities to be part of the change process in my community, even through my humble interventions.”

The sharing by Hima Ben, a volunteer staff in GEL programme, indicated how excluded youth are denied of legitimate opportunities to improve themselves and how partnering with JWLSneharam could help some youth reap the benefits of ‘higher education at the margins’:

“I was born and raised in the fishing village of Anchuthengu. My parents depended on fishing for their livelihood. There was no one to help develop my skills. However, I did a postgraduate degree in Economics and then a Bachelor degree in Education. But job opportunities remained closed to me because of my poor language skills in English and identity issues. I went to study IELTS course but found it very difficult since I came from an ordinary Malayalam Medium school.





Plant distribution by the youth

It was then that I came to know that Sneharam was conducting English Language programme. The JWL GEL Programme opened up before me new possibilities.... I could reach up to B1 level in the Listening Comprehension online test just within six months. I got B2 in Listening Comprehension in the Cambridge Lingua-skill test. I was also able to participate in two international professional certificate courses, namely Learning Facilitator and Peace Leader....I was able to complete the Kaya course on safeguarding essentials by Humanitarian Leadership Academy (kayaconnect.org). Then, I participated in Future Learn Online English course. Now I am a trainee of GEL Buddy Initiative course. I am also doing a Bachelor degree in Special Education at St John the Baptist College, Nedumkunnam, Kottayam. My skills in English help me to participate in seminars and discussions actively. Before joining the JWL courses I was a closed-minded person. The reflections during the course challenged me to think about the reasons. Soon I got actively engaged in community issues and now I have the confidence to face the community without any fear."

Some of our community leaders were elected as ward leaders in the last Panchayat election and they are now actively involved in their respective wards. Through our non-formal education programmes such as training in select themes and follow up of action programmes to deal with

our local issues, we are engaging the youth to be proactive. Participation of the male youth has been minimal in such programmes at the beginning and now NGOs and FBOs are chalking out a comprehensive plan to address this challenge. Exclusion is to be seen playing out within the community and without. The most vulnerable youth are the ones who get excluded from within their own communities and from the mainstream society at the same time. Being aggressive, many of them are likely to be labelled as anti-social elements. Inclusion is the way forward for achieving the ideals of Justice and Peace for all.

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Reconciliation and Youth: A Sri Lankan Experience

A few weeks ago, while travelling by a bus, I heard a conversation between a group of young people, three men and two women, who were seated behind me. They were between 18 and 25 years of age.

The subject was the appointment of a leader of a youth group. The majority believed the post should not be conferred on a person from a minority group. They felt this would be a dishonour to the majority Sinhala community. The debate went on intensely until it was time for me to get off the bus. The words ‘racist’, ‘pro-Sinhala’, ‘minorities’, ‘majority community’, ‘reconciliation’, ‘war’ and ‘murderers’ were repeatedly used throughout the conversation.

The conversation kept ringing in my ears. Although I know it may not be fair for me to say this is the view of the youth in Sri Lanka, it is still worrying. Some people consider ethnic origin as a factor in determining the selection of a leader. After going through nearly 30 years of a violent and bloody war, do we still need to confine ourselves to the concept of ‘race’ or ‘ethnicity’?

Just after the Easter attack on April 21, 2019, a Muslim girl approached me and asked, “Will you still welcome us to study in your centre? Will we find a home here?”

Since the Easter Sunday bombings, many Muslims feel that they have been demonised, and have become a target.

Sri Lanka experienced a civil war from 1983 to 2009 between government forces and Tamil separatists, embedded in an ethnic political conflict between the island's majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils. The protracted nature of the conflict inflicted devastating and deeply-felt consequences at the human, social, physical, and institutional level.

The present government has turned its back on reconciliation. It is facing a barrage of international criticism over its continuing suppression of minority rights and its failure to address the wrongs of the past, as it defended its stance at the Human Rights Council in Geneva in March.

In a widely circulated report on the situation in Sri Lanka, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet said, "Nearly 12 years since the end of the war, domestic initiatives for accountability and reconciliation have repeatedly failed to produce results, more deeply entrenching impunity, and exacerbating victims' distrust in the system. Sri Lanka

remains in a state of denial about the past, with truth-seeking efforts aborted and the highest State officials refusing to make any acknowledgement of past crimes. This has a direct impact on the present and the future."

We feel establishing peace and reconciliation should be a priority for the Sri Lankan population. Peace and reconciliation among different religious and ethnic groups are important to achieve the economic, social and environmental development of a nation. Reconciliation is an urgent paradigm of peace in Sri Lanka.

The methodology adopted by the Jesuits of the Sri Lanka province is to bring healing and reconciliation via Higher Education i.e. by setting up Loyola Campus – Higher Education at the Margins. This move is in line with our aim to build a just, equal and reconciled Sri Lanka through primary, secondary, tertiary and higher education.

As a post-conflict response to build the lives of the youth, the focus of

Loyola Campus - Higher Education at the Margins Programme, Sri Lanka





As a post-conflict response to build the lives of the youth, the focus of formal education is to promote national integration **by invoking the communities' consciousness and sensitivity of their responsibility towards themselves, the ecosystem and the future generations.**



formal education is to promote national integration by invoking the communities' consciousness and sensitivity of their responsibility towards themselves, the ecosystem and the future generations. The General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (GC 36), which gathered in Rome in 2016 mandated the Society of Jesus to work for reconciliation and justice with a special decree entitled, 'Companions in the mission of reconciliation and justice'.

The experience of working with the youth through the Loyola campus – Higher Education at the Margins programme, suggests that young people should not be neglected within any long-term peace building and reconciliation process since memories of injustice and violence persist and can undermine this process unless they are specifically addressed.

Restoring broken relationships and learning how to live non-violently with each other, plays a major role in preventing future conflicts. The contribution of the youth in undertaking such an important national activity is crucial.

Reconciliation can be fostered by undertaking innovative and dynamic activities that can catalyse a youth movement that can bring the North and South together. The youth of Sri

Lanka - from every village, city and district - must be inspired, equipped and empowered to take on the barriers and challenges that stand in our way. It means the younger generation has the full capability to engage in this. I believe the key to transforming our nation lies with the youth. With the right investment, moulding a broader worldview, and combined with the selfless sacrifice we can achieve what currently too many seems an unlikely goal – a reconciled, prosperous and great nation.

Reconciliation is a process of change and redefinition of relationships. It was consoling, as we remembered the dead of the Easter attack, it was the same Muslim girl who approached me with the suggestion, "Father, we should hold a prayer service at the centre to remember the dead of the Easter attack. I feel more at home here, your pain has taught me perseverance, your kindness, compassion and your understanding, love."

It is clear the role of youth is a vital factor in post-war reconciliation - to find a home!

(The author is a Jesuit of Sri Lankan Province and Country Director, Loyola Campus)





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TRIBAL YOUTH AND ITS STRUGGLE FOR A JUST SOCIAL ORDER IN MIDDLE INDIA

The importance of youth is invariably lauded, as they are the future leaders of society. It is therefore imperative they understand the critical problems of society and develop ideas and a vision to take it forward.

This is of even greater importance in a diverse society like India. People speak different languages, adhere to different faiths and practices, belong to different castes, tribes and sects, and inhabit distinct territories and regions. Notwithstanding that, they have been

living in peaceful coexistence. This is not to deny the stress and strain it has gone through from time to time and at times even resorting to violence.

The differences do give rise to tension but the main contributing factor is the inequality of the communities that exists in the society in terms of income/wealth, power, and honour/social status. These are reflected in the economic, political, and social development indicators. It is inequality to access these resources that lie at the heart of cleavages, conflicts, and violence. However, even after the



Conflict may be of different types. In middle tribal India, it is primarily social, economic, and political which is being fought at the level of the Village, Block, District, and State.



violence, people have recovered, made peace, and marched forward. In all of this, the role of the youth has been notable.

Peace means harmony. It is an ideal to strive for. It is difficult to conceive peace outside of conflict. It invariably stands in contrast to conflict and is, therefore, to be thought of both as a normative and empirical phenomenon. At no other time is the value of peace more strongly felt as in the case of conflicts, especially the prolonged and intense ones resulting in loss of lives and property.

Conflict may be of different types. In middle tribal India, it is primarily social, economic, and political which is being fought at the level of the Village, Block, District, and State.

In the social world, there has been a tendency to wish away conflict. All the same, it has remained. In fact, conflict is pervasive and endemic in society. This has agitated the human mind leading scholars to think about what makes social order possible.

Broadly, there are two lines of thought in this regard. One emphasises social order as maintained through consensus in the form of shared values, interests, and sentiments. The other posits conflict

as the possibility of social order, in the sense that the social order is possible only through coercion and force. Hence its legitimacy is constantly challenged and the attempt is made to change the existing system. In contrast, the consensus is articulated as good and desirable and the attempt is to maintain it.

The probing into the structure of social order arrived out of consensus is often set aside on claims of consensus. This means there is an inherent weakness in the perspective of consensus. Social order through consensus turns into the social order of conflict in course of time and is governed through brute force. It is this dynamic that governs the stories of tribes and their youth in middle India today.

Middle tribal India comprises the States of West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. About 80 percent of the total tribal population of India inhabit this region. It has since the early 1990s grown into the hotbed of extremist left-wing politics popularly referred to as the Naxal or Maoist movement.

Tribal youth has been its key cadre. Many social, economic, and political factors have contributed to their joining the movement. To begin with, tribes have





been provided with various constitutional and legal provisions. These are mandated at protecting and safeguarding tribal interests especially their land and forest, which is the life-supporting system of tribal life. Yet the provisions have remained unimplemented in letter and spirit. The State introduced varied kinds of schemes and programmes for enhancing the economic, educational, and health status of the tribal population but these projects have not reached them. Even today, they represent a disproportionate share of people living below the poverty line along with poor health and educational status and the dismal presence of social infrastructure.

Over and above, there has been a continuous process of large-scale dispossession of tribal communities from their land and forests since the 1950s due to State-sponsored development projects of mineral exploitation, industrial development, dams, irrigation and power projects.

These developments have been pursued by brushing aside the constitutional and legal provisions aimed at the protection of tribal communities. Tribal youth today views such developments as anti-constitutional and illegal.

For long tribal people had been at the receiving end of inhuman treatments. However, with the awareness of their exploitation, oppression, and discrimination, resistance to these and an

assertion of their constitutional and legal rights are being fought at many levels and platforms outside of extremist politics. Their struggle and movements have been democratic, peaceful, and within the framework of law and the Constitution. Yet, the State agencies and people at large tend to discredit their struggle for a just and humane social order by branding them as Maoist and anti-national.

The State and the people at large never found tribal people problematic and saw the tribal region as peaceful and the centre of growth, development, employment, and other opportunities. Yet today when the tribal people are asserting their rights and entitlements guaranteed in the constitution and law and demanding their participation and share in the fruits of development, the issue of law and order and peaceful coexistence are raised by the state and the public.

A peaceful social order and coexistence without adequate share and participation of the excluded are unfair and unjust. It may be referred to as peaceful but only in the formal and legal sense. A genuine and peaceful social order is possible only when the marginalised are treated as a member of society with equal rights and dignity.

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The Challenge Before the Youth in IRAQ

**“We have to retrieve
the ethos of a lost
civilisation”**

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? *What are the special
features of the history of
Iraq which characterise the
aspirations of the young as
well as the challenges they face?*

Iraq is a country with diverse ethnic groups which include Arabs, Kurds, Turkmens, Assyrians, and Armenians. Around 99% of the country's 38 million citizens are Muslims with minorities of Christians, Yarsans, Yezidis and Mandeans. Two major rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, run south through Iraq and the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, historically known as Mesopotamia, is called the cradle of civilisation.





Culturally, Iraq has a very rich heritage. It was here that mankind first began to read, write, create laws and live in cities under an organised government. But the glorious past years of a great civilization is long gone. Iraq has witnessed invasions and wars of several kinds since the twentieth century. The greatest challenge for the present generation, especially the youth, is to retrieve the cultural ethos of the lost civilisation where justice, freedom and equality prevail.

? What are the political, social, cultural and economic factors that pose challenges for the youth?

Politically, Iraq is a federal government. However, Iraq is one of the most unstable countries in the world because of civil wars, the rise of the Islamic State, the American invasion, the Iraq-Kurdish conflict, and the Iraqi insurgency.

Between 2013 and 2017, when northern Iraq was under the control of ISIS, about 5.8 million Iraqis had to flee their homes. The war had devastating consequences, breaking down trust between communities and between the state and its citizens. The war also saw human rights violations including widespread acts of violence and the social exclusion of religious and ethnic groups.

Iraq had a high rate of economy in the 1970s and 80s with the nationalization of the oil industry. Since the 90s Iraq suffered severe economic sanctions due to the frequent conflicts and wars. The ensuing instability in economic, political, social, and security conditions continues to threaten every kind of developmental efforts. Hence the road ahead is still long and difficult.

The political changes in Iraq down the decades have badly affected the people and their aspirations. The youth (aged between 15 and 24) are among the most negatively affected group in Iraqi society. Today, they are the ones who have been locked into the predicament of unemployment and poverty. The youth are regarded to be the source of hope for every society, at the same time; they can also be a source of danger if they do not have adequate employment opportunities and dignified status in life. The government has not implemented any fitting policies for youth enhancement down the decades. The Ministry of Youth has been disbanded for long. This has caused an increase in psychological frustration leading to a raise in the number of prisons and rehabilitation centres.



I mean, religion as a private matter should not intrude into State affairs and governance. On the other hand, religion must focus more on the spiritual enhancement of the people providing value orientation for the younger generations.



Trauma, displacement, and joblessness are the major challenges faced by the youth today. Youth unemployment has significantly risen due to the stifling economic conditions resulting from the ongoing conflict. Iraq's economy is dominated by the oil sector, which has traditionally provided about 95% of foreign exchange earnings. The lack of development in other sectors has resulted in 18%-30% unemployment.

Another challenge for the people is the increasing violence over the decades. Hence, promoting peace initiatives, building youth skills, and providing opportunities for rapid employment and long-term livelihoods is critical to bringing about recovery and rebuilding social cohesion.

? *What is the role of the military in the political system?*

The army has an essential role in protecting the country from attacks on its land and people. This is what the Iraqi army did in several crises, especially while defending the homeland against ISIS.

The Ministry of Defence forces includes the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. They render great service to safeguard the country and its citizens. Many youths join the army to protect the country. Iraq accepts voluntary recruits from the age of 16 onwards. However, according to Human Rights Watch in 2016, Kurdish armed groups in Iraq have been using child soldiers.

? *What is the role of religion in the lives of the youth?*

Religion in Iraq is predominantly Abrahamic with a mix of Shia and Sunni Muslims. Unfortunately, there exists a conflict between the two factions. The presence of minorities is insignificant. The minorities, especially Christians, were either killed or displaced as a result of ethnic and religious persecution at the hands of Islamic extremists during the Iraq war in 2003.

After encountering violence and years of war and conflicts, many young Iraqis say that they have grown disillusioned with religious leaders and sceptical of the faith they preach. However, it must be acknowledged that religious extremists are admired in the remote areas of the country and many other parts of the Middle East.

Religion plays a major role in Iraqi politics and religious leaders have increasing political influence. In my opinion, religion needs a revival in its political stance. I mean, religion as a private matter should not intrude into State affairs and governance. On the other hand, religion must focus more on the spiritual enhancement of the people providing value orientation for the younger generations.

? *How can the youth be motivated to become peace-makers?*

The youth represent 19.6% of Iraq's population of 32 million. Thus, Iraq has one of the youngest populations in the world, which has suffered from years of conflict, political instability, and a fluctuating economy. Consequently, many have fallen into despair and hopelessness. The need of the hour is to improve the socio-economic position of the poorest, the most vulnerable, the conflict-affected youth, and restore their broken dreams and sense of belonging.

The youth require security, social cohesion, and psychological well-being. The government should initiate projects to get the youth involved in community development, peace-building, and micro-entrepreneurship. They should provide them with the skills needed to find better job opportunities and contribute to the reconstruction of Iraq.

Investing in the youth is the key to building a stable and prosperous future. The promotion of peace and reconciliation, primarily among the Muslim factions, must be given priority. Consequently, the relationship with the minorities will be fostered. The



The need of the hour is to improve the socio-economic position of the poorest, **the most vulnerable, the conflict-affected youth, and restore their broken dreams and sense of belonging.**



youth must be encouraged to be open to diverse people and cultures, along with freedom of expression, thought and belief and providing long-term livelihoods. This is critical to bringing about recovery and rebuilding social cohesion.

? *How to provide hope to young people during the pandemic?*

Covid-19 has hit Iraq as elsewhere taking the lives of around 16000 people and infecting more than two lakh. The pandemic has harmed employment and income, particularly among young workers and those in informal employment. The vast majority of the youth have no social security or health insurance coverage.

The health ministry must strictly implement Covid protocols like social distancing, and the use of sanitisers and masks. Immediate measures must be taken in the form of financial packages to support the youngsters who have lost their income due to the pandemic. In the longer term, the government must provide social security benefits and access to health services to all citizens, regardless of their sect or region.

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EXCLUDED YOUTH IN NEPAL Searching for Light in the Darkness

Youth are alienated and excluded from society for various reasons. Alienation can be the result of poverty, lack of employment opportunities, lack of government programmes, lack of good education and the existence of social evils like the caste system in Nepal.

Some youngsters are victimised by social injustice and some of them are alienated by choice, especially the rich youth. Each one has the freedom to make choices, so often they choose knowingly what is not favourable. The youth live in a complex society where people are rich and poor, belong to different communities like high and low caste and come from different ethnic groups. Each one lives in a different environment. However, rich youth have sufficient resources, yet they feel alienated.





There was a time when young boys and girls when asked about their aim in life would say, they wanted to become an engineer, doctor, pilot, or air hostess. But now these traditional answers are found less among the young generation.

If you ask about the aim of young boys and girls, their answer is to go abroad. They are not sure what they will do abroad with minimum qualifications but the ardent desire to go outside is very clear because they don't see a future in Nepal.

The government hasn't done enough in the areas of employment opportunities, where the youngsters could see their future and sustain their lives. A survey showed that 5.38 lakh youth who go out for foreign employment every year are unskilled. It is a known fact that youth is the change agent of political, economic and social changes in any country. So, it is a sad reality the youth are compelled to go away from their country in search of a livelihood.

It is also the inability and failure of the government to prevent them from leaving. Of course, going to a foreign country helps an individual's progress but it cannot help nation-building. To some extent, the lack of equality, time-relevant and employment-oriented education, inaccessibility to vocational skills and technology, gender,

religion and caste-related discrimination and exclusion are responsible for the problems of the youth.

The youths' future depends on their academic career and professional training. However, education is a very expensive affair. The poor and weaker sections cannot afford to educate their children in a good school, while there is a lack of good schools in remote mountainous regions. Consequently, youth flock to Kathmandu. So, the lack of proper education and professional training are one of the major reasons for the youth's exclusion. Even qualified youth have a question at the back of their mind; what shall I do with this qualification? There is no job opportunity. Therefore, study becomes insignificant for some youths.

As a result, there is a high percentage of dropouts. The dropout students may not be weak academically but there could be various factors that cause them to discontinue. Youth often fall prey to poverty and hence they lack resources. As a result, they fail to get a good education. The obstacle of poverty is not limited only to education and job opportunities but it leads them to psychological, behavioural and social problems as well. Such depressed youth start consuming alcohol and drugs, get involved in criminal activities and they make it a means for earning money. Finally, they face serious consequences.



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In the present scenario, the Adivasi, Janjati, which includes Dalits and tribals of hills and plains have been exploited by their masters for a few generations. After the multiparty democracy, things have changed by law, yet this kind of bonded labour mentality is still found among the high-caste people who still keep them under their influence.

Caste-related discrimination is very much alive. Often, the indigenous people are exploited by upper-caste people because they are weak and ignorant about the political and social systems. They become victims of structural injustice because of their landlessness, dependency on others, lack of income, insecurity, fear of exploitation, lack of education and lack of good civic sense.

In the government offices, most of the employees are from the higher castes. It could be a coincidence but it is a bitter truth. It is hard for the indigenous people

to get jobs in the government because caste discrimination is so powerful. Is there no qualified youth from indigenous groups? Certainly, there are talented and qualified youths but they are victimised through structural injustice. Cultural and ethnic-based groupism are also seen even among Catholics. As a result, an unwelcoming attitude is prevailing among the traditional Catholic youth. They are not open to the new youths. So, naturally, the newcomer feels inferior to the others.

Does the prevalent caste system still exist? Though it is not lawful, it exists in practice. The youth experience caste bias in different fields. Hence, the youth of the indigenous groups feel excluded; they say they fall prey to structural injustice. These youths have fewer chances to get government jobs. Therefore, most of the qualified, talented and able youths are compelled to compromise.

There are various reasons why youths tend to be isolated but the root cause is the lack of good education and lack of employment opportunities, interconnected with psychological, behavioural and mental disorders. The Nepal Jesuit Society (NJS) has taken a significant initiative to help the youth, especially in the field of education.





Youth in Baniyatar, Kathmandu

The obstacle of poverty is not limited only to education and job opportunities but it leads them to psychological, behavioural and social problems as well. Such depressed youth start consuming alcohol and drugs, get involved in criminal activities and they make it a means for earning money. Finally, they face serious consequences.

The youths from a mountainous region, Tipling, come down to Kathmandu to get a good education but living in Kathmandu is very expensive. They need food, shelter, and money for their education. The NJS reaches out to such youths and helps them financially for their education.

Our institutions give special preference to such youths and admit them and support them with scholarships. Some youth are sent for professional, skilled training like nursing and vocational training. Moran Memorial School is a fully-subsidised school for the poor and needy.

Now education is playing a vital role in bringing awareness among these youths but due to the dropout rate, it will take a decade for them to be independent, and to raise their self-esteem.

(The author is a Jesuit and the Youth Coordinator of Nepal Region)

A person in a dark jacket and pants is walking away from the camera on a dirt path that runs along a body of water. The path is partially covered in water, which reflects the person and the sky. In the background, a large suspension bridge is visible across the water. The sky is filled with soft, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Youth in the Americas

Youth is the best time. The way in which you utilize this period will decide the nature of coming years that lie ahead of you.

- Swami Vivekananda



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SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SOLUTION TO YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN USA:

A SUMMARY OF RESEARCH AND POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS



Research indicates social media negatively impacts youth; however, **it should not be ignored that research also demonstrates youth perceive social media as a societal good.**



In April, 2021 I, along with fellow Niagara University student Adam Kiedrowski, presented a paper at the United Nations Economic and Social Council Youth Forum. We suggested using social media to connect at-risk populations to services to help mitigate future homelessness and other societal problems.

Our research began with two inquiries:

- What are the causes of youth homelessness in the United States?
- How can technology be used to decrease homelessness?

Long-term homelessness has been on the downtrend since the 2007-08 financial crisis. However, homelessness has been increasing 3% a year for the past three

years. Furthermore, the number of youth experiencing homelessness (YEH) has also been increasing. On account of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is expected that any gains in the reduction of homelessness over the past decade will be wiped out. For these reasons, it is critical to reexamine the issues surrounding homelessness and to create innovative, effective, and long-lasting solutions.

The causes of YEH

Our research began by asking: What are the causes of youth homelessness? The research indicated that the causes include poverty, economic insecurity, housing insecurity, mental health issues, history of juvenile delinquency, the status of LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual), sexual history, drug and alcohol use, and being a victim of abuse and/or violence.

After determining the causes, we investigated how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the existing YEH population and other individuals that may become susceptible to homelessness. Our findings suggest that among current YEH, COVID has increased feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, depression,


and substance use. Simultaneously, it has become harder for people to obtain the basic needs and services that are critical for the long-term success of individuals.

Knowing what we know about some of the causes, and the effects the pandemic has had on existing populations, we identified a conundrum: If someone has an issue, as outlined above, where do they go for help? Especially for a YEH during a global pandemic, help is hard to come by. We offer suggestions to overcome this problem.


Understanding youth

Research indicates social media negatively impacts youth; however, it should not be ignored that research also demonstrates youth perceive social media as a societal good. In conjunction with this, youth populations prefer using the internet and social media to seek information. Research suggests the youth are more likely to turn to the internet for various reasons such as illness, sexual activity, mental health, physical health, and well-being. About 90% of the youth





Social media platforms would provide a universalised link that connects the user to an outside source where that person can easily obtain the necessary information they need.



prefer the internet for its anonymity and ease of use. Older youth prefer the internet for convenience, affordability, and social networking; however, younger youth are less likely to seek online health information. This is because younger youth are relatively inexperienced at researching these topics. What is also worth noting is that when researching how YEH obtained information regarding the pandemic, we found that 71% obtained their information through social media, 59% TV/radio, 60% news websites, 52% family, 45% health professionals, and 42% the newspaper.

Moreover, we found youth are not proactive when it comes to their health and well-being. Our research found that youth are most likely to seek help out of need and/or fear, or when a crisis has already occurred. And, when youth do choose to seek help, many look for anonymous forms of help because many belong to at-risk populations, and due to their history, fear and/or distrust of adults.

To identify how technology can be used to decrease homelessness, we considered the following questions:

- How does social media become a societal good?
- How can social media be used to obtain proper and reliable information?
- How does one provide quick access to a group that is not proactive about problems?

We attempted to address these in our policy prescriptions.

Using the internet to decrease homelessness

We propose to create a universal platform linking social media and other highly trafficked sites, to directly provide at-risk individuals with information and support. Social media platforms would provide a universalised link that connects the user to an outside source where that person can easily obtain the necessary information they need.

Since social media is considered an ‘online community’, we should work at providing community-like structures on major platforms. Such a programme would require cooperation from social media companies, different support-providing organisations, and government support. It would require agencies and organisations working together at all levels of the government and social services to have common goals.

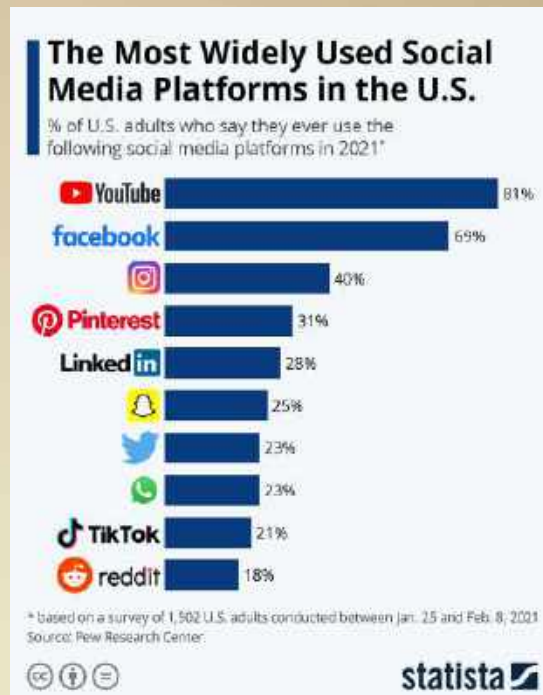
Advantages to this programme would be getting information to vulnerable populations and supporting them to prevent crises before they occur. Additionally, in many areas of study, especially homelessness,

there is a significant lack of data. This programme could allow data mining from various sources to better understand major issues. It is also important to recognise our solution is not narrowly tailored to only address homelessness. Our solution aims at tackling a broad range of issues that not only include homelessness, but also the issues that lead to it. The causes of homelessness are not only problems that plague society but are also preconditions for numerous other social conditions. Thus, our solution is proposed as a tool for solving a wide variety of increasingly complex issues.

How will this service work?

This service would be integrated into social media and other highly trafficked websites. Every social media company and website that partners with this proposed idea would each provide universalised links through their platforms. These links need to be obvious, yet not be overburdening. In our demonstration, we suggested using a universal symbol, a star, to depict our idea. The theory is that eventually, these symbols will become similar to '9-1-1' – you see it, recognise it, know what it is, and when and how to use it.

Once one clicks on the symbol it brings you to an outside website where one can find information and assistance at the local and State level for many issues. On this website, one should be able to find assistance regarding housing, food pantries, drug and alcohol use, mental health, LBGTQIA+ issues; or in other words assistance for major issues where help is not readily available. This website should provide numerous functions including online counselling, access to local support organisations, the storage of personal and medical information, and a source of reliable information, to name a few.



The causes of homelessness are not only problems that plague society but are also preconditions for numerous other social conditions. Thus, our solution is proposed as a tool for solving a wide variety of increasingly complex issues.

Why the need for partnership?

The success of such an idea largely relies on partnerships with social media companies, aid organisations, and agencies. Partnership with social media companies, and highly trafficked websites is important because the purpose is to become an 'online 9-1-1'. Social media websites (Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter) and other highly trafficked websites (Google, Safari, YouTube) already have the exposure and traffic for such a programme to be successful.

As previously stated, youth are not proactive. We want to be able to provide quick and easy access to help youth, and potentially a broader population. By not partnering with social media there is an extra step of ensuring people are aware of such a service. They would have to know the website or go through the extra trouble of downloading an app or other technology. These partnerships would address the issue of exposure.

The second type of partnership is a cooperation among thousands of organisations, health professionals, State, Federal, and local governments, and corporations, to name

a few. If someone looks, they can go to one organisation's website to find help with drug use, then to another to find help with a different issue, and may be two different websites that aid with the same issue but have completely different sets of information regarding the issue and different ways to go about assisting.

Under this plan, it will bring together thousands of organisations under a like-minded goal and system to have one place to provide people with all their help. It will require assistance from the government. It will also require health officials to be readily available to provide online assistance. This plan is ambitious, but it is what would be required for success.

Closing summary

Throughout this summary of our research, I have laid out numerous questions and problems. The main question – How do we use technology to decrease homelessness? – has been addressed through the proposed idea of using a website that focuses on providing solutions for numerous societal problems. Conducting our research led us to the conclusion that access to help and information will become critical to addressing major societal difficulties. Since social media and the internet are now part of everyday life it is crucial to take advantage of these powerful tools to improve our world.

(Author is a student at Niagara University, USA, majoring in political science, international studies, and history)





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UNTIL WE LOVE LIFE ART AND HOPE AMIDST VIOLENCE AND THE PANDEMIC



How to announce hope to young people during a pandemic?

Apart from this, there is another forceful one. Can young people be a fundamental sign of hope in this pandemic? These questions and so many others lead us to delve into how we can continue to accompany young people in the creation of a hopeful future (and, above all, a present).

As Director of the Ignatian Youth Network and the Huellas Youth Movement in Colombia, I have been able to witness young people who have become a sign of hope in this time in of uncertainties about the present and the future. I would therefore like to share one sign of hope, out of many possible ones, which can contribute to the reflection of the questions raised above.

In this reflection, it is not my purpose to prepare an academic dissertation or conduct a statistical analysis of the consequences the COVID-19 pandemic for the young people of our Latin American continent. For this, we have different sources that can adequately illuminate us. Rather, I find it important to point out a question that is far from being resolved.



These young people are the symbol of so many others who have been taken away by the crudest and most absurd violence. Consequently, **the youth not only face a social reality where they are marginalised through unemployment, lack of education and so many other unfair realities**



Until we love life

‘Until we love life’ is the title of the song by a Bogota artist in which he names various Colombians who have been killed in the armed conflict over 60 years. And next to the musical title is a mural called: ‘In memory of the young caring for the transformation of our country’.

This mural made by young artists from the Ignatian Youth Network represents four young people who were recently murdered as a result of violent actions that have taken place amid the pandemic in recent social conflicts in the country.

These young people are the symbol of so many others who have been taken away by the crudest and most absurd violence. Consequently, the youth not only face a social reality where they are marginalised through unemployment, lack of education and so many other unfair realities.





This pandemic is now spreading among the youth, but they know how to outshine it with their their ingenuity and creativity.

It has strengthened its critical and proactive capacity in the face of an inefficient government when it comes to defending the lives and rights of the youngest citizens, both rural and urban.



They also have to daily face a country that is murdering its youth, extinguishing so many lives and trampling on so many dreams. The question of hope emerges again in this context of despair as a reminder; it does not rest.

In the pandemic, making use of social networks and an infinite wealth of artistic expressions, the youth in Colombia have been demonstrating around the defence of the sacred gift of life. They have been demanding effective public policies that dignify the lives of youth.

The words of Pope Francis resound in the hearts of many young Christians, in which he has radically invited the young people of the world not to renounce joy and hope.

It would be naive to ignore the drama of many young people. We could analyse in numerous pages all the social phenomena

that have been faced in this time of the coronavirus. However, what I intend to mention here is their courage and hope which still exist. Their courage is already a true sign of hope. It is a courage that does not manifest itself only in an individualistic or solitary way. On the contrary, young people in their richest plurality are capable of meeting to shout, resist, denounce, propose and act.

This pandemic is now spreading among the youth, but they know how to outshine it with their their ingenuity and creativity. It has strengthened its critical and proactive capacity in the face of an inefficient government when it comes to defending the lives and rights of the youngest citizens, both rural and urban.

The screens of mobile devices have been filled with small boxes where life is also defended and cultivated. As we say in Colombia, the 'patch' comes together to express what most deeply outrages them and that reveals the sincere desire for a peaceful Latin America and a truly reconciled Colombia.

Undoubtedly the Church and, the Society of Jesus are deeply aware of the fundamental and salvific place of young people in our world today. God reveals Himself to us through knowing how to accompany young people, walk and build a non-violent and peaceful community together with them!

Through such a demanding task that implies decision, quality time and a true consciousness of being, we, witness the face of the youthful God that is transfigured into hope for everyone today.

(The author is a Jesuit from Colombia, Director of Ignatian Youth Network and Huellas Youth Movement)





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Pax Lumina 2(3) / 2021 / 43-45

ALTERNATIVE HEALING SYSTEMS DURING A PANDEMIC

In the past few weeks, there has been a steep surge in the number of Covid-infected people in different parts of India. The situation has further worsened as the hospitals are facing a shortage of oxygen supply. Most of the hospitals are filled with Covid patients but no beds are available in many States. The situation is alarming.

Though there has been no national imposition of emergency measures, the States have come out with strict restrictions on movement and by the adoption of other safety measures. The Central government has adopted certain measures for dealing with this new challenge. It is true, models of Western medicine have provided emergency measures of treatment to deal with the pandemic.

In this context, we have to think about the role of alternative systems of healing that can complement the present efforts. India,

being the cradle of indigenous medicines, has developed its natural medicines to fight against Covid. The Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy) was set up in 2003 with a view to developing education, research and the propagation of indigenous alternative medicine systems in India.

There are also other systems of treatment that can heal and are far less expensive. One such system is the Alternative Health Care Clinic, situated in Kalidanga, Rampurhat in the Birbhum district of West Bengal. It was founded in 1994 by Dr. M.J.Peter, a Jesuit from the Dumka-Raiganj Province. He was deeply disturbed by the suffering of the poor patients in the villages. That finally led him to learn and practice alternative healing systems.

Covid Care at the Alternative Health Care Clinic (AHCC)

Alternative systems of medicines help to build up the immunity power of the body. Thus, they are highly useful in the fight against corona.

Many victims turned to AHCC during the pandemic. The patients were given medicines and guidance. Daily physical exercises help them keep fit. Dr Peter would always give hope and confidence to those who came for treatment. In his opinion, avoiding unnecessary tension and worries further helps us to be peaceful and relaxed.

Dr Peter treats the patients with Ayurvedic and Homeopathy medicines and advises them to use natural medicines available in the villages. He prescribes inhalation with neem leaves, gargling with salty lukewarm water and ginger juice twice or thrice a day.

Dr. M.J. Peter



What is proposed is a paradigm shift in the hospital centred treatment which is often not patient centred. Hospital-centred treatment does not keep the patient at the centre of the healing system **and often there is neither time nor the patience to listen to the patients and understand their situation with empathy.**

The patients are advised to have a proper diet with proteins and vitamins, which include eggs and fruits like apple, guava, and papaya. Garlic and onion with a little salt are recommended. He suggests breathing exercises for improving the inflow of



oxygen, which, in turn, regulates the lung's mechanisms along with other exercises.

Having a sunbath in the morning also helps the patients to improve their health. However, he instructs them on the strict use of masks and sanitizers and conscientises them of the importance of social distancing. According to Dr Peter, what is required today is an integral treatment system combining both the traditional and modern medicine.

Critical Appraisal

Alternative healing systems should not be in denial of Western medicine and its methodology. What is proposed is a paradigm shift in the hospital centred treatment which is often not patient centred. Hospital-centred treatment does not keep the patient at the centre of the healing system and often there is neither time nor the patience to listen to the patients and understand their situation with empathy. Therefore recognizing the complimentary role of the time-tested indigenous healing systems will only improve the ultimate efficacy of the treatment. It is true that the heavy burden of work and exposure to the disease is taking its toll on the lives of health workers. Hence, decentralizing

the healing approach towards alternative systems and to a great extent away from a few city centred hospitals will also ease the tension and suffering of the health workers including doctors, nurses and health administrators.

One cannot downplay alternative healing systems as anti-scientific just because it does not come under the categorisation of Western scientific methodology. A complex system cannot be reduced to a limited set of parameters in a reductionist manner. It is true that truths which have been established through a large number of observations over several generations cannot be negated by clinging to certain ideologically rigid categorisations. But all the same one should not brush aside established conclusions of Western science simply based on irrational ideological preferences.

(The author is Assistant Director to Migrant Assistance and Information Network-MAIN, ISI- Delhi)



T.P. Sreenivasan
Former Ambassador of India and
Governor for India of the IAEA



PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE: Only Option *for Israel and Palestine*

The uneasy peace between Israel and Palestine since 2014 ended suddenly in the first week of May 2021 as Hamas rocket attacks and Israeli air strikes took the region to the brink of a full-fledged war even as the Covid-19 situation deteriorated. The attack began after forced evictions of Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in Jerusalem. Israel hit back hard as it launched a barrage of airstrikes that have killed over 35 Palestinians. Israel and Hamas announced that several commanders of the Hamas militant group were killed in Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip as clashes between the two sides escalated. The shock waves of the conflict reached Kerala when a young lady from the State was killed in a Hamas rocket attack, which India has deplored.

Israeli airstrikes, targeted at militant rocket launch sites, intelligence offices and the homes of Hamas leaders, have killed 65 Palestinians, including 16 children and five women. At least 365 have been wounded. Meanwhile, six Israelis were killed in Hamas rocket attacks. Hamas has fired hundreds of rockets toward the Israeli city of Tel Aviv and its suburbs since Monday, including a barrage of 130 missiles late Tuesday in response to the destruction of the high-rise building.

The latest violence was sparked by growing unrest over control of Jerusalem and attempts by Jewish settlers to take over Arab-controlled communities. The tensions have spilled over into the West Bank, where hundreds of residents in Arab communities staged overnight protests against recent



It is not unusual for fighting to break out between Israel and Hamas, given the way the Palestinians are treated in Gaza, but they do not last long as no war can resolve the issues between them.



actions of Israeli security forces against Palestinians. A 26-year-old Palestinian was killed on Tuesday in clashes with Israeli troops in a refugee camp near the city of Hebron. In the city of Lod, near Tel Aviv, a 25-year-old Arab man was shot and killed by a Jewish resident. Clashes between the Arabs and Jews have been taking place in civilian areas.

The UN Security Council has been engaged in bringing about a ceasefire, but Israel is determined to wreak vengeance and destroy the will of the Palestinians. With the solid support of the US, Israel will resist a ceasefire till their objectives are met.

The U.S. Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin spoke to his Israeli counterpart and released a statement proclaiming “ironclad support for Israel’s legitimate right to defend itself and its people.” The statement said Lloyd “strongly condemned the launching of rockets by Hamas and other terrorist groups that targeted Israeli civilians” and “reiterated the importance of all involved parties to take steps to restore calm.” At the same time, for the record, the US stated that Palestinians must be afforded the right “to live in safety and security” while calling for de-escalation.



Germany’s Justice Minister, Christine Lambrecht, said Wednesday that Germany is “strongly on the side of Israel” and added it “has the right to defend itself.” Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan voiced support for the Palestinians.

It is not unusual for fighting to break out between Israel and Hamas, given the way the Palestinians are treated in Gaza, but they do not last long as no war can resolve the issues between them. But Prime Minister Netanyahu, who is struggling to win a majority and to overcome corruption charges, warned in a statement that “This is just the beginning. We’ll hit them like they’ve never dreamed possible.”

India, as a member of the Security Council is engaged in counselling restraint since we have good relations with Israel and Palestine. Gone are the days when we stood solidly behind Palestine, but we still demand Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967 and the establishment of a Palestinian state. An all-out war is not likely because Hamas will have little support from the Arabs and a solution is possible after the situation stabilises in the Middle East as a whole. Peaceful co-existence is the only option for Israel and Palestine.



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‘PEACE’ INITIATIVE WITH ADIVASI WOMEN A SCI-TECH WAY

Pax Lumina 2(3) / 2021 / 48-50

The Jivan Vikas Kendra, Narukot (JVKN) in the Jambugoda District of Gujarat, is about 90 kms from Vadodara. It is run by the sisters of the Daughters of the Helpers of Mary. The Jesuit-run Loyola Centre for Research and Development-Xavier Research Foundation (LCRD-XRF) is also about 90 kms away, but going towards Vadodara.

Door to door, our vehicle covers the 190 kilometres from Ahmedabad to Narukot in three hours. Narukot village is at the heart of the Jambugoda Biodiversity Reserve. *Madhucalongifolia* is an economically valuable forest species that grows abundantly in the forests of the area. The local women call it Mahua.

The Vision-Mission-Values (VMV) of LCRD-XRF commits the organisation to leverage science and technology for sustainable livelihood options/capabilities for communities living on the margins of our economy in the rural and urban hinterland.

A few years ago, Dr. Aeshna Amin, one of our staff scientists, inspired by our VMV drew our attention to women’s groups in Africa who had successfully explored a local forest species to produce Shea butter and make a difference to their day-to-day living.

More significantly, she further alerted us about an Indian equivalent species: *Madhucalongifolia*. This is how the unlikely linkage between the Adivasi women of JVKN and the scientific staff of LCRD-XRF took root, barely four years ago.

The value of the Mahua tree is traditionally known to the Adivasi population, not only in



In the dialogue between the Adivasi women and the scientific staff of LCRD-XRF during the past four years a group of 40 women have come together to set up a micro-entrepreneurial enterprise, for the production of edible oil and mahua butter from the Mahuadoli.



Narukot but also in the other forest areas of Gujarat and across the Indian subcontinent. We sensed immediately the model we would set up could have wider relevance.

As a Jesuit organisation, the multiplier effect is a parameter that we set much store by. It drives the choices we make in the work we promote and the projects we implement.

Mahua flowers are used as a vegetable by the people during the summer months when flowering takes place. Perhaps of greater concern from the social angle, is the alcoholic drink that is distilled from them, which is popular in these forest belts, among the menfolk.

Rumour has it that a leading freedom fighter and political figure of Gujarat, who held key positions at the national level as well, to curb the menace of alcoholism in the area, had the trees in the North Gujarat forests cut down and destroyed. Nevertheless, there are significant belts in which it has survived such misguided zeal.



The flowering season is followed by nearly ten to twelve weeks during which the seeds of the tree fall to the ground. The local population in Narukot call them 'doli'. Such is the knowledge of our indigenous peoples that they are aware of the rich oil content (nearly fifty per cent as demonstrated in our lab analysis) of the seed. They have developed home-grown methods to expel the oil. They have been using this homemade oil for cooking. However, the ingress of industrialisation has brought in outsiders with their oil mills.

As we worked among the women in the Narukot belt, we discovered their traditional extraction methods are on the way out. Many of them cart heavy sacks of seeds they collect, to mills in towns 10-15 kms away. They gain time, energy and money to obtain what they have produced instead of self-labour at home. On account of the impact and exposure to commercial advertising and marketing, many families use other refined oils (with adverse health implications due to the chemical processing involved) that are sold in the towns, even though the price is significantly higher than that of the Mahua oil.

Importantly, the women were not aware of the fact that the seed extract has the potential of a Shea butter equivalent, whose price is several times more than that of the edible oil form. They are not aware that this 'cold extract oil' is of significantly higher value to the cosmetic industry, and it can also be used to reduce dependence on imported Shea butter, extracted from a species not growing in India.

In the dialogue between the Adivasi women and the scientific staff of LCRD-XRF during the past four years a group of 40 women have come together to set up a micro-entrepreneurial enterprise, for the production of edible oil and mahua butter from the Mahuadoli.

The LCRD-XRF has investigated *Madhucalongifolia* from the sci-tech angle, and meticulously worked out every step for the production. They have verified the characteristics of the hot and cold extracts of the Mahua seed so that the former is valuable as an edible source for nutrition and the latter is highly relevant to the cosmetic industry.

Quite a few of the women have hardly had any schooling, but such is their motivation that they have learnt how to collect and preserve the seed for year-round processing. They have been successfully trained to extract the hot oil with the machines sourced by LCRD-XRF and to operate them according to the protocols worked out by our scientists. Together, they have decided their labours will be compensated in kind through the oil they produce.

Thus, the oil they once used traditionally for cooking is making its way back through modern expellers identified by us, to their kitchens, with significant monetary gains as well, by not investing in the costlier commercial oils. Our scientists shared the scientific information on the oil to convince the women of its health value.



Thus, as a scientific organisation while retaining our core competence and expertise **we are making an on-the-ground difference to a community of women in the deep forests of Gujarat.**



As the women increase the production and move into the cold oil extraction which we will teach them shortly, they will become economically self-sustaining and provide employment to a whole set of women. Thus, as a scientific organisation while retaining our core competence and expertise we are making an on-the-ground difference to a community of women in the deep forests of Gujarat.

We are thus enabling them to earn a living for their families through modern sci-tech interventions. If you ask them they will tell you this brings 'peace' to their daily lives. So you can take a call: is LCRD-XRF a peace organisation? Our answer: "It definitely is." And so may it continue through the sci-tech options for the poor that it explores and generates.

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam (For the greater glory of God)!

(The author is the Director, LCRD-XRF, St Xavier's College Campus, Ahmadabad, Gujarat)





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**BOOK
REVIEW**

Pax Lumina 2(3) / 2021 / 51-53

The Role of Religion in Identity Formation

London Youth, Religion, and Politics: Engagement and Activism from Brixton to Brick Lane

By **Daniel Nilson DeHanas**

London Youth, Religion, and Politics' by Daniel Nilson DeHanas considers factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, and citizenship in identity formation and political engagement. The book is based on data collected from 60 Bangladeshi Muslim and Jamaican Christian youth between the ages of 18 and 25 years.

Participants came from two locations in London and were second-generation citizens of the United Kingdom. The findings are based on qualitative research involving in-depth interviews of the lived experiences of the participants. Though multiple factors were brought in



for discussion, the focus was on the role of religion in identity formation and political engagement.

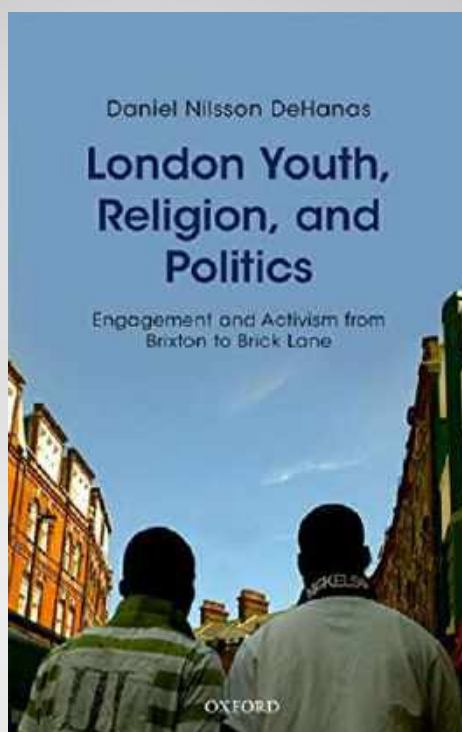
On identity formation, religion does play a major role both for the Jamaican and Bangladeshi immigrant youth. Jamaicans have an intimate connection to Pentecostalism, whereas Bangladeshis have a link to Islam. Many Jamaicans adhere to a Christian identity emphasising spiritual citizenship that goes beyond the concerns of their race. Along similar lines, many Bangladeshis form a de-cultured Islamic identity to form bonds with Muslims beyond ethnicity. That is, they emphasise a form of religion that is free of any cultural elements of their parents.

The respective religious organisations do play a role in the promotion of a religious identity that transcends other categorisations.

However, identity formation is complex and far from naïve media stereotypes highlighting any one aspect. Immigrant youth have to negotiate multiple cultural and societal expectations in the formation of their identities. As a result, racial, ethnic, social, religious, and national identities form different layers. In addition to their religious identity, the majority of Jamaicans display other identities such as 'black' and 'British'. Similarly, Bangladeshis chose 'British' or 'English' as an identity.

DeHanas concludes these multiple identities are not held in opposition; instead, they interact and make an impact on their everyday life.

In explaining the impact of religion on identity formation, DeHanas points to a shift to the individualisation of religion. Western influence as well as religious institutions trying to meet the styles and needs of young people have led to



Oxford University Press, 2016
234 pages / \$90.00

this individualisation. Religion is viewed as a personal quest and goes beyond the specificities of any one culture.

Culture is seen as a hindrance to the practice of religion. DeHanas talks about a 'subjectified Christianity', which emphasises subjective experiences and 'objectified Islam', which calls for ordering one's life by following orthodox practices. For DeHanas, the subjective turn in Christianity and the objective turn in Islam are evidence of the individualisation of religion.

For both the Jamaican and Bangladeshi youth, religion inspires diverse social and political engagements. Existing studies suggest the second-generation migrants typically have low involvement in political and civil engagements. In contrast, DeHanas finds that both in Jamaican and Bangladeshi youth political knowledge was high. The youth also routinely got involved in a range of political issues.



However, there is a difference in the political engagement of these religious communities, which is chiefly mediated through their respective religious institutions. There is a difference in the way Jamaican Christian and Bangladeshi Muslim institutions encourage political action. Jamaican Christian institutions, due to their exclusive focus on individualised spiritual needs, do not encourage political action. Indeed, they are sceptical of the potential of politics to facilitate any community change.

In contrast, Bangladeshi Muslim institutions encourage their members to join political parties. They promote political campaigns aimed at ending economic injustice and changing policies that adversely affect Muslims elsewhere. For DeHanas, institutional involvement does not take place in a vacuum; instead, it is shaped by the larger political context.

Following events such as the attack on the Twin Towers in 2001, the London bombings of 2005, the murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich in 2013, and anti-terrorism campaigns by the government, there is a widespread perception of Muslim radicalisation. Comparatively, stereotypes related to 'black' are weak

due to increasing mixed marriages in London.

DeHanas concludes the youth in either community are not radicalised. However, the future will depend on how successfully governments can provide jobs, economic security, and social mobility for the immigrant youth. This discussion, because of the future, is significant as the study finds both the Jamaican and Bangladeshi youth suffer from material deprivation and low educational achievement.

The book is a must-read for anyone interested in immigration incorporation. Social incorporation and integration of immigrant ethnic minority groups are not merely an academic discussion today. Beyond North America and Western Europe, immigration today churns up the politics in countries such as India, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. The book also provides valuable insights for anyone studying issues related to youth, religion, race and ethnicity.

(Reviewer is Professor of Psychology at Jnana-Deepa, Pune & Boston College, USA)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pax Lumina 2(3) / 2021 / 54

Dear Editor,

The agony & trauma faced by a section of the society across its various segments as well as across national boundaries have been highlighted effectively in PAX LUMINA March 2021. Exploitation, abuse, deprivation etc. faced by the children, a “powerless & disconnected section” of the society have been among serious social maladies across ages & nations. By not receiving caring & loving nurturing necessary for development of wholesome personalities children lose their childhood, a stage needed for grooming themselves to become a part of the sound & healthy society. The social impact of this could be serious.

THE MILITARY COUP IN MYANMAR depicts the brave fight against a coup overthrowing a democratic government. The rule by the armed forces can have serious adverse socio-economic impact on the nation where democracy is rather at a nascent stage. Let us hope the people’s struggle will have victory bringing in a government elected by them along with peace in the nation where scores of innocent children too have been killed by the armed forces.

The historic visit of Pope Francis to Iraq can go a long way in ushering in peace & reconciliation in that country. It has, indeed, been a brave step on the part of the Pope who expressed his deep yearning for peace through the last 3 words he uttered during the mass, viz. ‘Salam, Salam & Salam.’

The pictures right from the front cover have been appealing & quite effective in driving home the messages of the articles.

Regards,

K.A. Joseph, Kochi



Dear Editor,

The January issue of PaxLumina was very solid and relevant with articles of wide variety of fields. Plight of the sex workers was very well depicted. The article by Fr. Jinu Eapen was impressive with real pictures of the persons in the red light area. Sruti Sreenivasan’s case study with the photos of the real victim was very touching. The statistics of global trafficking was also impressive. The farmers’ problems were presented with its ramifications. The opinions of the experts given separately were useful, though an in-depth analysis of the farmers’ issues was missing. Three farmer’s laws with agitation will be useful for the international readers. The articles of Carlos and Ted Peters gave a good analysis of the international scenario of peace. The presentation of the issue was very attractive with beautiful pictures and appealing reading. Congratulations to the Editors.

Dr. Mathew Aerthayil S.J.

Attappadi, Kerala

Dear Editor,

I am very much delighted to see PAX LUMINA March 2021. Hearty congratulations on capturing the harsh reality of manual scavenging all over the world. The article by Cedric Prakash and the story of Jel Urumpil have come out challenging and inspirational. We are working in the mission of Ghana and other regions of West Africa for the past 27 years.

Sr. Cletus JMJ, Delhi.

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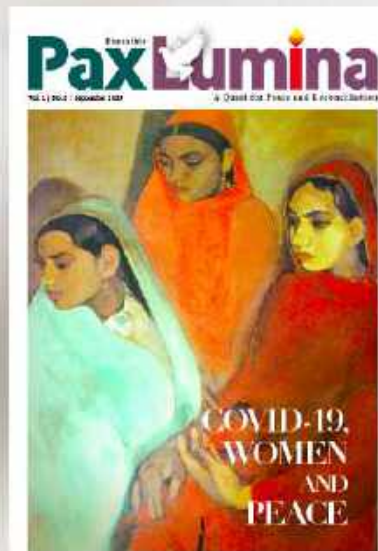
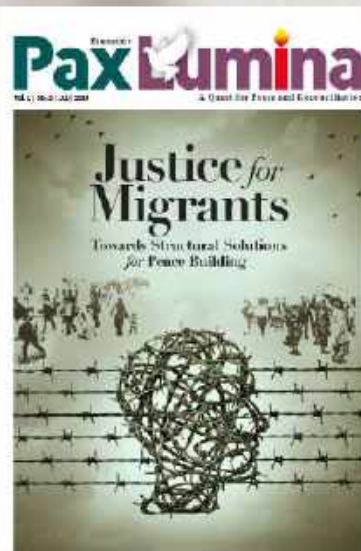
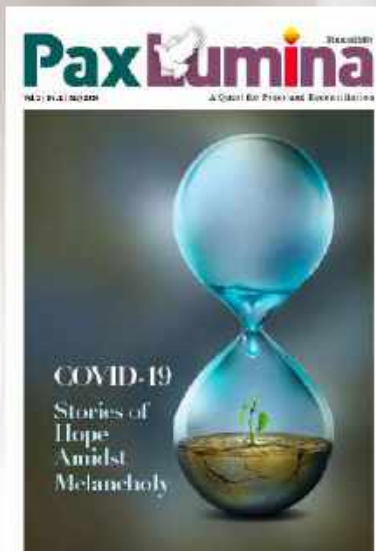
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