Prof. vibhuti Patel's Tribute to Dr. Vina Mazumdar 31-5-2013

Professor Vibhuti Patel

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/professor_vibhutipatel/45/
Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance
Food for Life Campaign

G8’s New Alliance ignores root causes of hunger

A new report sharply criticizes the vision and approach of the G8’s “New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa” for ignoring human rights and root causes of hunger and instead seeking to solve food security through a market orientation.

The report, “Whose Alliance? The G8 and the Emergence of a Global Corporate Regime for Agriculture” by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) and CIDSE, an international alliance of Catholic development agencies, has been published in advance of the “Hunger Summit” taking place on 8 June in London.

This food and nutrition summit will feature the G8’s “New Alliance”, and is held prior to the UK-led G8 Summit, 17-18 June.

“We welcome that G8 leaders put food security high on their agenda. However, the New Alliance treats hunger as a matter of insufficient production while neglecting many of the root causes of the situation in Africa. Issues of access and distribution are largely ignored in this approach,” said CIDSE Secretary General Bernd Nilles.

The G8’s “New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa” was launched last year, and includes six pilot countries and scores of African and international business interests. While EAA and CIDSE welcome its goals of lifting 50 million people in sub-Saharan Africa out of poverty in the next 10 years, they share the concern that, as the report

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A historic moment in the life of the churches in Indonesia

The Church is called to share life and to care for life

The event was organized by the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), the Communion of Evangelical Churches and Institutions in Indonesia (PGLII), the Pentecostal Fellowship of Indonesia (PPI), the Baptist Fellowship of Indonesia (PBI), the Orthodox Church in Indonesia (PGPI), the Baptist Fellowship (PGBII), the Pentecostal Fellowship of Churches and Institutions in Indonesia (PGI), the Communion of Evangelical Churches in Indonesia

A historic moment in the life of the churches in Indonesia was observed in Jakarta from 17 to 18 May in a Celebration of Unity that brought together 100,000 Christians representing many churches and traditions from all across the country.

At a seminar held on 17 May, Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the WCC, said that “Christians receive the symbol of life, has given to us. United, the Church is called to share life and to care for life.”

Tveit noted that the Celebration of Unity was envisioned as an event to acknowledge and welcome the WCC’s 10th assembly in Asia, only the second WCC assembly that will be convened in the region.

Referring to the WCC’s assembly, which will be held from 30 October to 8 November, Tveit made a connection of the quest for unity and the theme of the

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Ecumenical Centre, Geneva

Restore the word ecumenical to proper and positive use

At once critical and encouraging, Clements complained that often an obsession with identity today, evident in resurgent confessionalism, ethniccentrism and nationalism, leaves people less willing “to step outside their home, their tradition and inhabit another’s tradition, meet each other’s needs and serve the larger good.”

Asserting that “We are in danger of losing what the ecumenical spirit is all about,” historical theologian and longtime ecumenical activist Keith Clements argued on 28 May at a presentation in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva that people and churches need to rediscover the essential “ecumenical dynamic” at the heart of the movement. “There is a need to restore the word ecumenical to proper and positive use. The story, past and to the present, needs to be told,” he said.

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A former general secretary of the Conference of European Churches, Clements is a historical theologian and Bonhoeffer scholar.

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Food Security Bill- With an eye on general election?

Ms. Pratibha Patil, the then President of India, in her address to the Parliament on 4 June 2009, announced: “My government proposes to enact a new law, National Food Security Act, to ensure food security to all the people in the country”. Is it not surprising that during the last four years the UPA government did not take the effort to get the Bill passed in the Parliament? Is it when the proceedings of the Parliament got disrupted completely in April 2013, in the wake of the revelations of the super scams and the Supreme Court’s expression of anger against ‘making the CBI a parrot’, that the government put the Bill on the table of the House to divert the attention of the people. Now, in the final year of its term, having almost lost its electoral strength in the Parliament, the UPA government seeks the cooperation of all parties for a special session of the House for passing the Bill. Obviously, such a move indicates not its commitment to ensure the food security of the people, but its anxiety about the general election coming after a few months.

The National Advisory Council (NAC) headed by Ms. Sonia Gandhi and the Working Group (WG) on food security met many times in 2010 and announced its decision to provide legal entitlement to subsidized food grains for at least 75% of the population. The WG divided the eligible families into two categories – one, eligible for monthly entitlements of 35 Kg of grains at the rate of Rs. 1 to Rs. 3 per Kg; and the other, for 20 Kg at a ‘price not exceeding the Minimum Support Price’. The rationale and the impact of this scheme have been under challenge on various grounds. However, in 2010, the government showed strange haste in preparing the Bill, and in diamantting the Public Distribution System which is the best arrangement for ensuring food security. Despite various deficiencies, innocent people in the country wished that the government would pass that Bill and make the needed alterations later.

The hurry shown by the government for presenting the Bill both in 2010 and again now is intriguing. After the drama in 2010, the government turned its attention to abolish the practice of supplying subsidized goods and services to the people. Instead, the government prepared many schemes for direct transfer of subsidy in cash. How far the original proposals in the Food Security Bill prepared four years ago, if passed the government shows extra concern to pass the Bill. It is when the government would pass that Bill, the people will be patient with any shortcomings in my perception of Buddhism.

Compassion for all life

I have never ceased to be stirred by the Buddha’s compassion for all living beings; and not humans only. This all inclusive compassion makes sense, since compassion for humans only, if accompanied with disregard for other forms of life, upsets the balance in an interdependent life system. Consequently, the compassion for humans only, is short sighted and counter-productive; it inevitably induces harm for all forms of life, including humans.

Within this wider framework, however this teaching has a direct impact on critical human relations such as ethnic discriminations, inter-religious tensions, economic injustices, political intolerance and the collapse of moral fibre that we wrestle with today. Since compassion according to the Buddha is never selective and will not endorse divisive and oppressive systems, it is full of potential to transform these exclusive and destructive trends into a just and integrated system for all life.

Liberation from Tanha

From my early adult days I have found the Buddha’s analysis of the causes of the four nobile truths, most enlightening. His discernment of Tanha as the cause of suffering is a precise explanation of the human dilemma. The inordinate greed for power, dominance, wealth and material resources that motivate many, leads to aggression, suppression and suffering which eventually destroys all; the greedy, the content and Mother Earth.

The objective of life is consequently to overcome Tanha. This path ranges from the simple life style, to detachment, that state of selflessness which rises above the entomol of the market.

The fullest manifestation of selfless detachment is demonstrated in total renunciation; the ability to point to the way by getting out of the way. This profound insight into self-emptying is an indispensable lens for personal and social evaluation which our leaders and people cannot afford to ignore.

A seeker’s vision

I write in my personal capacity as a disciple of Christ, a student of Buddhism and one who perceives the universal wisdom and values in world religions as gifts for all and not just the adherents of a respective religion.

This is not an attempt to teach you what you know better than I; but an expression of my profound respect for the wisdom potential I see in the Dhamma for compassion, contentment and cooperation. In all, I know you will be patient with any shortcomings in my perception of Buddhism.

The Wisdom of Ahimsa

That the Dhamma is received through self-realisation and bears fruit in Ahimsa, (transforming non-violence) safeguards personal privacy and precludes war and violence. Just as the Dhamma cannot be subject to force or manipulation to bring enlightenment, recipients of the Dhamma cannot indulge in these tendencies and to the contrary strive to overcome them. This, in my understanding, is how surrounding forms of life are respected and the Dhamma is shared with dignity in ever widening circles.

This refreshing option to violence is undoubtedly one of the reasons that has made Buddhism a world religion. Consequently it is those who are the vehicles of this enlightened, non-violent and compassionate teaching who will continue to sustain and commend Buddhism today.

May the Dhamma of the Buddha bring shed enlightenment and enanced our beloved Sri Lanka from greed and violence.

With Peace and Blessings to all living beings.

–The Rt. Rev. Dr. Duleep de Chickera

Long live Asghar Ali Engineer

Asghar Ali was a very simple person. He did not stand on elaborate formalities to attend programmes on themes dear to his heart. It was enough for him to get just a phone call.

He was a prophet in the true sense of the word. He had tremendous courage to speak out truth for the sake of justice. He was willing to pay price for this. He suffered a lot for his convictions.

He was attacked by the fundamentalists several times. He even suffered physical injuries to the point of being hospitalized. He was abandoned by his community and relatives. But he stood his grounds and continued in his prophetic mission.

We honour him and pay our tribute. Long live Asghar Ali Engineer!

–Alex Tuscano, Bangalore

My Esteem for the Buddha

My good friend, the Ven. Bellanwila Wimalarathana wrote a letter to Christians on his understanding of Christ at Christmas last year. This has prompted me to reciprocate with this letter to you at Wesak.

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Thought for the Fortnight

There is a hook in every benefit, that sticks in his jaws that takes the benefit, and draws him whither the benefactor will.

–John Donne

Letter to the Editor

In the passing away of Mr. Asghar Ali Engineer on May 14, 2013 we have lost a great secular and socialist thinker. He has inspired millions of people through his writing and speeches. The fact that he was being called to address meetings and seminars even almost to the last days of his life shows how people valued his thought. He is regarded as a pithy and evocative thinker by vast sections of the intelligentsia.

Asghar Ali Engineer was a convinced Muslim. He was a scholar of Islam, strongly believing in Allah and he interpreted the gist of the spirit of universal Islamic faith. He drew his inspiration from it as it spoke to him of truth, justice, peace and love. It was therefore very easy for him to relate to the struggles of the people and the vision of socialism.

Socialist ideas for him came out from his reading of Quran. He was committed to the ideas of socialism.

Dr. Engineer’s reading of communism is unique and brilliant. He studied, reflected and analysed innumerable communal riots and he noticed that one fundamental cause both came out of all these riots, fought in the name of religion and community. Those who fought in the name of religion were far from religion and spirituality. They were brute hands of criminal politics.

They desecrated religious values by using religion for economic and political gains. Their politics and economics were not for social good but for money and political power. He wrote more than 30 books and innumerable articles.
A historic moment in the life of the churches in Indonesia

Christian Unity is an opportunity to serve others

The unity of the church is to witness God’s reconciling and redeeming grace and the coming of God’s reign which is marked by justice and peace."

Cross boundaries and know each other

I and ‘WE’ should come together to GIVE
Nature as Scripture

K. M. George

Vichara, an ecumenical collective of academics and activists, deeply engaged, for the last twenty five years, in researches and reflections, studies and trainings, dissemination and publication, and also in acts of concern for the deprived and the excluded, has initiated a new series of programmes titled, ‘Explorations into the Horizon of Faith’. God, the Creator, who is incarnate in Jesus and who is the ground of our being, in the words of Paul Tillich, is revealing Himself in newer and newer ways through scientific and technological breakthroughs.

It is our human responsibility to search how, in history and in nature, the Parent God is revealing Himself/ Herself in various ways and to listen to what God is speaking to us through various events. We, as human beings, are called to be ceaselessly on our faith journey towards our Creator. It is the conviction that we need to widen the horizons of our faith to know God’s will for our times and to commit ourselves to be obedient to God’s will that has inspired Vichara to initiate this series of studies. Fr. Dr. K. M. George, renowned theologian and former Principal of Orthodox Theological Seminary, has, kindly, consented to be the key-resource person. The programme is mainly for young pastors & youth leaders. The first lecture delivered on 28 May at Kottayam by Fr. Dr. George was on ‘Nature as Scripture’.

The topic ‘Nature as Scripture’, hits at probably one of the more difficult and perhaps controversial issues in the Science/Faith debate at least for Christians. Orthodox Christianity has always acknowledged the ability of Nature itself to ‘speak’ or ‘reveal’ certain aspects of the nature of God. And it has certainly been built on the belief that the Bible, Scripture, reveals to us the nature and plan of God. Further, it is generally accepted that both of these ‘books’ or ‘revelations’ are true, as God Himself is true and the Truth. Yet one of the key drivers for the conflict we see between Science and Faith has been the apparent contradiction between what we see Nature reveals about the creation, and what we have thought Scripture reveals about the creation.

To establish that this has indeed been a historical view of the church we can look to both the Early Church Fathers and founders of the Protestant reformation. For example, St. Augustine, the ‘de Civitate Dei’ (City of God) book 16 (written 413-426 AD) says: ‘Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Read it, God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead, He set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?’

Instead of the horizon confining your view, it stretches your vision ever beyond.

To deal with the phenomenon of horizon in the right way we need to be explorers. An explorer is ever on the move, either physically, mentally or spiritually. The word has some negative historical baggage because of the colonial and imperialist past. Nevertheless, we should retain the idea of the explorer since it has spiritual connotations as well.

In the Sayings of the Desert Fathers who were ascetics in the Egyptian deserts in the 4th century, there is this oft-quoted story. A wondering ascetic called Serapion once went to Rome where he heard about a saintly woman who always remained in her cell. The traveler monk Serapion was curious about it. He visited her and asked her, ‘Amma, why are you always sitting here?’ ‘I am not sitting, I am travelling’. Here is an explorer woman ascetic who never moves out of her ascetic cell, but is on a journey. Internally she moves forward, and her spiritual horizon is also moving.

We understand Christian faith as a horizon here. You have two options. Either you can remain in your place and consider your horizon as the whole of your world and accept it as the end of all. Or you can be ever on the move and see more and more...”

Vibhuti Patel

With the passing away of Dr. Veena Mazumdar, our Veenadee, on 30 May 2013, the Indian Women’s movement has experienced an irreparable loss. Veenadee personified in her a far sighted and strong willed thinker and forceful speaker and convincing debater who had faith in ‘human goodness’. Her intellectual prowess did not make her ivory tower in her approach towards her colleagues and fellow travellers.

Dr. Mazumdar always remained warm at heart, easy to approach, patient building of rapport, magnanimous in sharing her knowledge and institutional resources as Director of Centre for Women’s Development Studies. Her charm lay in her electrifying persona, always smiling face conveying optimism, down to earth approach, ideological stance, story-telling with witty humour and the most important courage of conviction combined with honesty of purpose. This is what explained her commanding of agenda setting power whether she was in the decision making bodies of UGC, ICSIR, Planning Commission of India and several ministries outside of them. She could galvanize students, teachers, researchers, women’s organizations, trade unionists, bureaucrats, politicians and law makers into action as she was one of the best ‘argumentative Indians’ produced by ‘women’s studies movement’. She was very good at coming catchy titles.

Her contemporary powerful men in the Universities, research institutions and ministries called her ‘bulldozer’ while women scholars and practitioners found her the most trustworthy friend and mentor. I worked closely with Veenadee during 1981 for the I Women’s Studies Conference hosted by SNDT Women’s University, in 1985 for preparation of ‘End of the Decade’ alternative country report on Status of Women in India, in 1986 for Research Committee 32’s panel discussion on the Ante Natal Sex Selective and Abortions of Female Foetus in the World Sociological Conference and in 1988 for a multi-centric research project on ‘Child Care as an Essential Input for women’s Development’.

Veenadee was born in 1927 and completed her schooling in Calcutta. In 1943, she went to Oxford University to complete her graduation in 1951. In 1960, Once again she enrolled at SNDT University and completed an M. A. in Sociology. She received her PhD from SNDT University in 1984 for her dissertation ‘Women’s Development: Status, Attitudes and Needs’ and she has been working as a Senior Research Fellow (Emeritus) till her death. She was a member of Colombo Plan, Fellow of Social Science Research Council and was elected as a Life Member of the Indian Sociological Society in 1988.

Dr. Veena Mazumdar releasing the book on Savitribai Phule at IAWS, Pune on 30th May 1998.
Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance

Food for Life Campaign

Guarantee people’s access to and control over their productive resources

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states, “the New Alliance risks serving primarily as a vehicle for market access by multinational companies, paving the way for them to extend their reach into African markets and exert control over African resources.”

“We are at a pivotal stage in the transformation of our food production and distribution systems to more sustainable ones that will provide abundance for future generations. The driving force behind this change must be the people themselves, and ensuring that agricultural policies, investment schemes and land tenure laws guarantee people’s access to and control over their productive resources, including land, water and seeds.”

Ensuring that policies are firmly enshrined in the right to adequate food and securing coherent global governance, placing the UN Committee on World Food Security at its centre.

- Enabling the transition to real sustainable agriculture through support for agroecological models of production and supporting local markets as the principal pathway to economic development, and

- Targeting support at small-scale food producers – particularly women and securing a) their empowerment, and b) their access to and control over productive resources.

According to Christine Campeau, EAA Food Campaign Coordinator, “We are at a pivotal stage in the transformation of our food production and distribution systems to more sustainable ones that will provide abundance for future generations. The driving force behind this change must be the people themselves, and ensuring that agricultural policies, investment schemes and land tenure laws guarantee people’s access to and control over productive resources, including land, water and seeds.”

The full report is available at http://tinyurl.com/WinoseAlliance

—EAA News

Tackle food waste

The theme for this year’s World Environment Day (June 5) is food waste. In a world challenged by climate change, rising population, and global economic crisis, we need to be smarter, more efficient, and fairer about the way we produce, distribute and consume our food.

By eliminating avoidable waste in the food chain, we could dramatically reduce the amount of food that we will need to produce, and invest in regenerating natural resources for future decades and an increasing population.

The United Nations Programme (UNEP) recognizes this opportunity and has devoted this year’s World Environment Day to raising awareness about the amount of food produced each year that is wasted – an estimated 1.2 to 2.0 billion tonnes, or up to 50% of all food produced for human consumption!

This waste happens because we don’t have local storage, processing and preservation facilities or adequate transportation infrastructure in many developing countries, and because of the wasteful practices of retailers and consumers in wealthy, developed countries.

National Conference on Dalit Women

Dalits need to strive together to raise collective and determined voice

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aimed to mobilise a minimum of 25 lash of land claim petitions from Dalits from nearly 20 states, mainly from Dalit women, with the slogan ‘land is our birth right’.

NADLR is vowed to ‘claim, reclaim and sustain’ land for the identity, dignity and livelihood of Dalits. It demands immediate action ‘distribution and redistribution’ of land by the Govts. Also it holds Govt accountable for the ‘protection of land by Dalits and other marginalised people of this country, especially Dalit organisations, Movements and Political Parties to join this land struggle, very particularly the ‘Claim Petition Campaign’ that was launched on 14 April 2013 in Delhi, all State Capitals, Districts and Blocks.

NFDLRM and NADLR give a clarion call to all Dalits and other marginalised people of this country, especially Dalit organisations, Movements and Political Parties to join this land struggle, very particularly the ‘Claim Petition Campaign’ that was launched on 14 April 2013 in Delhi, all State Capitals, Districts and Blocks. Dalits need to strive to raise ‘collective and determined voice’ to impress and challenge the Govt that Dalits will not rest until their identity and dignity is ensured by owning land, the legitimate share in this country.

NFDLRM and NADLR invite all to join this “Claim Petition Campaign” to ‘educate, agitate and organise’ our people to voice precisely ‘No land – No vote’, as our struggle is for the reclamation of Human Personality as thundered by Babasaheb!

People’s Reporter

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JUNE 10 – 25, 2013

EAA News
People's spontaneous remarks leave Vatican in a spin

Vatican: Of the various innovations that Pope Francis has already introduced into the way a pontiff lives and works, one of the most significant is his celebration of weekday morning Masses with invited guests. Press office says his morning homilies will not be transcribed.

The practice is revealing of the new pope’s character and of how he understands his role as leader of the universal church. It exemplifies the challenge he presents to the Vatican apparatus surrounding him.

Pope Francis is not the first pope to include outsiders at his morning Masses. The previous pope Benedict XVI, was regularly joined by as many as two dozen people, including visiting bishops and lay people, in his private chapel in the Apostolic Palace.

But Pope Francis, who has chosen to live in the Vatican guesthouse, has been celebrated in his early months by more than 50 people each morning, systematically welcomed to attend his Masses by personnel of the Roman Curia and Vatican City State, high officials and maintenance workers alike.

And while Blessed John Paul II typically followed the readings of the Gospel in his private Masses with a period of silent reflection, not a homily, Pope Francis has been delivering short sermons in the folksy style that has become his trademark.

These morning homilies have been the occasion of some of the pope’s most quotable remarks. In recent weeks, he has told his congregation that “Satan always rips us off” and that a Christian should respond with prayer rather than showing the “face of a pickled pepper.”

Pope Francis has indicated the identity of those attending a given Mass has seemed to lend a special solemnity to the proceedings.

When he told a group of staff members from the Vatican bank that the personnel of the bank “are necessary only up to a certain point,” many observers took it as a sign of imminent change at the controversial financial institution. He clearly intends his sermons to affect how his collaborators see their roles and obligations.

“When a bishop, a priest goes on the road to vary, he enters into that spirit of caritas and ends up being ridiculous,” the pope said May 15.

Such frankness, so uncustomary for the office, has naturally piqued the public’s (or at least the press’) desire for more, in the form of complete transcripts. But the Vatican spokesman has announced that this desire will remain unsatisfied.

Joseph Cardinal of Lombardi explained May 29 that, because the pope gives his off-the-cuff morning homilies in Italian, not his native Spanish, the Vatican would never release a full transcript without “rewriting of the text on several points, given that the written form is different from the oral.” Such treatment would be inappropriate in this case. Cardinal Lombardi added, because the more formal character of the resulting document would not be true to the “familiar” atmosphere that Pope Francis desires for his morning Masses.

The spiritual was puzzling, because the extensive textual excerpts and audio clips of the homilies already available do nothing to disguise the unpolished nature of the pope’s words.

Public “homilies or addresses are transcribed and published in Italian,” Father Lombardi said, but not the pope’s words on “more familiar and private” occasions.

That the Vatican has declined to publish full transcripts of the morning homilies is less significant than the decision to relegate publication of excerpts and summaries to its in-house journalists, rather than the pope’s official spokesman.

Such distinctions are likely to be lost on most readers and listeners, if the experience of Pope Francis’ predecessor is any guide.

Pope Benedict XVI published his bestselling trilogy of “Jesus of Nazareth” books under the name Joseph Ratzinger, to make clear that they did not form part of his ongoing teaching. When the second volume of the series reiterated and elaborated on the Second Vatican Council’s teaching that the Jewish people have no collective responsibility for the death of Jesus, Jewish leaders directed their thanks and praise not to an elderly German theologian but the leader of the Catholic Church.

Likewise, after Pope Benedict satirized in an interview on the ethical nuances of carrying and seeking to use a condom for disease prevention, the ensuing controversy could hardly have been greater had he done so in an encyclical or other papal document.

In the age of smartphones and social media, the border between public and private has become more fluid than ever before, and the pope’s comments would suggest that he sees the practice of cardinals, bishops and private citizens as a microcosm of how the Vatican apparatus surrounding him will be run.

Pope Francis, who has demanded that “offices are necessary, but the person is the true church” and that “offices are necessary, but the person is the true church,” was speaking from a position where most observers would agree that he had been “caught unpolished.” Such treatment of the text on several points, given that the written form is different from the oral, would be inappropriate in this case.

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Dr. Veena Mazumdar

Vedana, a popular program called Himalayan Odyssey – an Existential Study of Hinduism included travel to Hindu holy sites, and workshops to promote an understanding of Hinduism.

He also started two publications: Krist Vidyota and Reflection & Action. The “Action” part of the Retreat Center’s mission included a social service program that PO started with Rev. Bob Alter, called Mussoorie Gram Vikas Samiti (MGVS), which served villages in the Garhwal area.

Rev. Sham Rao is survived by his wife Mrs. Rajeshwari Sham Rao, the children, Peter, Anjali and Rachel and their spouses, Janet and Mahnoor, and grandchildren Jerren, Zareena and Zimraan.

Emilio Castrohonoured

Rev. Dr Emilio Castro was remembered and honoured on Friday 31 May in a memorial service at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, Switzerland. Several hundred people gathered at the Ecumenical Centre to remember Emilio Castro.

Castro, who died in his native Uruguay on 6 April at the age of 85, exercised leadership in the Ecumenical Centre from 1973 to 1986, first as director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and from 1985 as the WCC’s fourth general secretary.

Current WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit preaches, recalling words of his predecessor: “We are not called to concern ourselves about our small individual world. The gospel is not the solution to our headaches. It is the solution for a transformation of all things in Christ.”

Professor Julio de Santa Ana, Rev. Dr Roswitha Golder, Methodist Bishop Heinrich Bolleter, program director of the Protestant Church of Geneva, Mr Roberto Collipp and WCC deputy general secretary Yorgo Lemopoulos also spoke.

Re: P. D. Sham Rao passes away

On May 24, 2013 Rev. Prabhakar Devanelli Sham Rao went home to be with the Lord.

“PD,” or “Sham,” as Rev. Sham Rao was known to his friends, has ever been deeply loved and appreciated. His impact on the lives of those who knew him is evident in the love and grief they expressed at his departure. Those who knew the memories that endeared him to them as a humorous, intelligent, accomplished, kind and compassionate and loving person.

PD became a Christian while still a youth and was constantly engaged in dialogue with the Hindu faith in which he was brought up.

Rev. Sham Rao served as Professor at Leonhard Theological College, Jabalpur (1975-1977), and was Director at Christian Retreat and Study Center, Rajpur, Dehra Dun (1977-2001). His publications include: All On最小的阶段性 model for Inter-Religious Dialogue; New Perspectives in Religious Education in Secular India; Spirituality and Social Realities: The Church in the Rodrigues Pluralistic Society in India; The Content of Value Education in a Pluralistic Society; and Church and Politics. PD’s 25 years as Director of the Christian Retreat and Study Center saw his creation of such engaging programs as the Missional Lifestyle Retreats, a series of eleven workshops on topics relevant to Youth. He also organized inter-religious dialogues, called Satsang. A popular program called Himalayan Odyssey – an Existential Study of Hinduism included travel to Hindu holy sites, and workshops to promote an understanding of Hinduism.

He also started two publications: Krist Vidyota and Reflection & Action. The “Action” part of the Retreat Center’s mission included a social service program that PO started with Rev. Bob Alter, called Mussoorie Gram Vikas Samiti (MGVS), which served villages in the Garhwal area.

Rev. Sham Rao is survived by his wife Mrs. Rajeshwari Sham Rao, the children, Peter, Anjali and Rachel and their spouses, Janet and Mahnoor, and grandchildren Jerren, Zareena and Zimraan.
They were given the Holy Spirit to take history seriously and to be engaged in historical tasks

Revelatory aspect of nature

We have scripture’s own testimony as to the revelatory aspect of Nature. For example: Psalm 19: “Heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament his work…” So Nature is given a certain scriptural status here. However a strong warning is in order here, following up what St. Paul tells us. The major risk is that natural phenomena or created things can be made into idols. Ref: Rom 1:21-23.

| Vichara : ‘Explorations into the Horizon of Faith’ |

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People’s Reporter

Easter Reflections - 6

The Risen Lord was anointed by the Holy Spirit before the public ministry

When Jesus began his public ministry, he was anointed by the Holy Spirit. This initiated a new phase in his ministry, that lifted his ministry to a higher level, and that led him to public ministry. Luke writes, “... when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him, in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, ‘Thou art my beloved son; with thee I am well pleased.’ Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about 30 years of age.” Luke 3:21-23 (RSV). Luke uses the word ‘ministry.’ The anointing by the Holy Spirit moved him to a new phase of ‘ministry’, or in common parlance, ‘public ministry’. Urged by the Holy Spirit, Jesus got immersed in preaching the good news to the poor, feeding the hungry, giving sight to the blind and liberating the slaves. He himself proclaimed about this ministry, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Luke: 4:18-21.

For being engaged in public ministry

The Risen Lord anointed the disciples with the Holy Spirit to be engaged in public ministry. He did hope, as he had done when he was anointed by the Spirit at the age of 30, that they would come back from ‘desert’ and move out of ‘closed rooms’, and immerse and lose themselves in ‘public ministry’. But the majority of the chosen disciples, even after receiving the Holy Spirit, went for fishing!

Eighthers, but it is a truth of eternal value. There is every chance, those who have received the Holy Spirit might go for ‘fishign’ and be totally caught in earthly tasks! It should always be fresh in the memory of the believers and of those who claim they have received the Holy Spirit.

Disciples’ final conversion

Jesus met them again on the Tibetan sea-shore. He encountered finally and fully converted them to take up the historical tasks. And it resulted, we know from history, in their persecution and death. It was the power of the Holy Spirit that strengthened them to ‘be with him’, Mk. 3:14, in their journey, along the path of the Cross, unto the end of their lives as well as ‘unto the end of the earth’. Acts 1:8.

Power of the Holy Spirit and worldly power are antithetical

The power of the Holy Spirit is essentially for that - to follow Him along the path of the Cross and to be fully engaged in historical missions. These days the power of the Holy Spirit is understood and propagated in worldly terms. The worldly power and the power of the Holy Spirit are antithetical. Totally opposed. Unfortunately, the power of the Holy Spirit is understood and explained, in worldly, political terms and counted using contemporary market measures.

Today too

The Holy Spirit enabled the historical Jesus to raise his historical mission to a critical height. And so the Risen Lord poured on his disciples the Holy Spirit and sent them out from ‘the closed room’ and ‘from Jerusalem’ to be engaged, and lost, in historical mission. Today too, the Risen Lord anoints his disciples with the Holy Spirit to immerse themselves in historical mission and to transform this world into the new heaven and the new earth so that the Father’s will and reign may fully be a historical reality.

The Church is anointed to be engaged in historical mission

We have seen in history, many a time, that the church refused to be anointed with the Holy Spirit and be engaged in historical transformative mission. And in those places and countries we observe, so sadly, that the church has ceased to exist in a lively way or has been totally wiped off! The churches are called ‘not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may prove what is the will of God….” Romans 12:2. Today too, the churches are called to receive the power of the Holy Spirit and be totally engaged in the transformative historical tasks the Holy Spirit is undertaking in history. If the church refuses to do it, it will cease to exist in history as it happened in many, many countries and cultures.
Be the Channel of Justice and Peace

JOHN M. ITTY

In the previous issue of the PR we found that much of the land now owned by individuals: especially landlords, companies and religious trusts, were recently acquired by them either through some social contract or in the form of gifts from the kings and modern governments to enable them to serve the interests of the society better. Along with this, it must be noted that the government has been spending a sizable fraction of its budget every year for the protection of the rights of these property owners.

However, the very same owners of the property are vociferous in putting forward organized resistance against any suggestion to scrutinize whether this property is used to serve the interests of the community or not. This stance being taken by the property owners and the opinion makers in the society is to be challenged.

What are the main activities of the government today? Revenue department with District Collectors, Revenue Divisional Officers, Taluk Officers and Village Officers as the heads at various levels is the largest wing of the government. Next comes the departments of police, judiciary and registration. These four departments employ majority of the civil servants. What is the job of these four departments of the state government? Registration of sale and purchase of land, maintenance of records of land ownership; protecting the possession of land and settling disputes regarding the ownership of the land are the routine jobs of these departments. Everybody knows that only a small fraction of the people who have land are served by these departments. Vast majority of the people who are either landless or who own only small plots of land are not getting the proper service from the services of these departments. This is not the end of the story. What is the job of the department of defense of the central government? The armed forces are kept alert to defend the country; that is to protect the landed and other properties. During any war, while man-made property and people occupying the land are destroyed; landed property remains intact. It must be noted that the highest percentage of the expenses of the central government for the year 2012–13 is nearly 14% is used for defense.

This shows that the highest percentage of expenses both by the state and the central governments goes for protecting private properties on land. Who pays for this? Is it not the property owners; but the general public. Only the department of registration raises some money from the owners of land at the time of registration of deed. This means that the government is using major share of the revenue it collects from the general public to protect the rights of a minority who own land; mostly received either through social contract or gift by the government. This is the reason why it is widely held that the government is the executive committee of the property owners; discharging the duty of protecting their property. How much money the government is spending annually for the benefit of this small group? Do the landless people who own land constitute the majority; get any services from any of these departments, including that of the defense? Imagine the gravity of the paradox that exists in the modern period. While the government is asked to spend more to protect the ‘questionable rights’ of a minority of land owners, most of which are received through social contract and not asked to exercise any control on the use of that land for the interests of the general public. But, the government is prevented from any right to control the use of that land. The idea of social control on the use of land even without disturbing ownership rights is an anathema to the legislature. If the legislature passes Bills in this regard half-heartedly, the judiciary will set them aside with the remark that it again goes against the spirit of the Constitution. Because the Constitution is written and approved by the representatives of the propertied class; rights to property supersedes all other rights of the people. What a paradox?

The land provided by nature/ God to produce food for the people and other living organisms and to provide a dwelling space for all, is being used by a minority for other purposes! It is ridiculous that the constitution provides right only to the owners of land but denies it to the rest. These leaders do not question the taping of the will of God in creating land; may be because, they possess a sizeable portion of the land everywhere.

Houses demolished at the start of monsoon

Thousands left to fend for themselves

With the onset of pre-monsoon, the slums in Mumbai have been witness to bulldozers and police brutality as today (4 June) saw bulldozers moving over the houses at Ganpat Patil Nagar, Sanjay Nagar, Indira Nagar, Ashdar Nagar - Mumbai. Around 250 houses were demolished at Ganpat Patil Nagar and more than 300 houses were broken down at Adarsh Nagar-Indira Nagar & Sanjay Nagar.

As always, the police force was present in huge numbers and disrespectful to the protestors that included women, children and the aged, even the pregnant ladies were not excused of high handedness. With the onset of the monsoon, the vulnerability is increased as these families have no roof over their heads and their belongings either crushed or lying here and there.

The demolition drive at Ganpat Patil Nagar was done under the pretext of ‘protecting margaros’ as per the orders of the Bombay High Court which not only had said anything about demolishing slums. The over enthusiasm shown by the local politicians in demolishing this slum and evicting the families from the land exposes the nexus between the land mafia which wants to transform this locality into high rise buildings and towers. Even the Forest Department has informed that they do not want for demolition of slums but only protection of mangroves.

At Indira Nagar, Adarsh Nagar & Sanjay Nagar, the demolitions were done under the excuse of widening the nala (sewerage) but that remains an excuse only as last year also, during the same period a demolition drive was undertaken for the purpose of expanding the nala which never happened. Activist Siraj Ahmed was detained by the local police when he led the slum dwellers in protest to the demolition.

This is not the end of the story. Most shocking and deplorable is the fact that in January this year, no less than the Chief Minister of Maharashra & Chief Secretary had promised to under take a survey of the these settlements for the purpose of development of slums and provisioning of basic amenities. Instead of water pipe lines and toilet blocks they have sent bulldozers and police force. It seems that the slogan of ‘slum free India’ is to be realized by destroying the existing slums and not be upgrading or resettling them.

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