What is in Store for Women in The Union Budget of India 2015-16?

Professor Vibhuti Patel
To express solidarity with churches and people in Israel and Palestine, the leadership of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee undertook a visit to Israel and Palestine from 7 to 12 March.

The delegation with Dr Agnes Abuom, moderator of the WCC Central Committee, Metropolitan Dr Gennadios of Sassima and Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, vice-moderators of the Central Committee, and Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC general secretary, highlighted the WCC’s focus on supporting peace initiatives in the troubled region, underlining the on-going presence and witness of the churches’ engagements.

The visit was an expression of the pilgrimage of justice and peace, affirming the WCC’s commitment to support the peace process in the Holy Land and in the Middle East, and to reflect on the on-going and clear wish for a just peace.

The visit included meetings with representatives of the WCC member churches, including Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem and Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land as well as other church leaders in Jerusalem, who were hosted by Patriarch Fouad Twal in a gathering at the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

The WCC delegation also met with Jewish and Muslim leaders, human rights groups (both Palestinian and Israelis), at the Peres Peace Centre, with Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Al Hamdallah, and the Presidential Committee for Church Affairs in Ramallah as well as representatives of ecumenical organizations. The delegation

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Ms. Ela Gandhi, Grand Daughter of Mahatma Gandhi, Peace Activist and former Member of Parliament, Republic of South Africa, delivered a lecture on “How can Gandhian ideas be woven into the Social Science Agenda?” on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Institute of Social Sciences (ISS), New Delhi, on 9 Feb.

Ms. Ela Gandhi said, “In most Universities throughout the world and certainly in South Africa the Social Sciences have followed the Western Model. Gandhiji spoke at length, in Hind Swaraj, about the folly of following Western models and his reasoning was that in the western thought a strong element is the link between civilization and bodily comforts. In the Eastern philosophy or way of thinking, everything revolves around the mind and spirituality and African thought revolves around the community – it is always about us not 1”.

Dr. Ash Naran Roy, Director, ISS, welcomed the gathering. Mr. Anand Sharma, former Minister for Commerce, Industry & Textiles, and Deputy Leader of Opposition (Rajya Sabha), delivered the Presidential Address.

Dr. George Mathew, Chairman, ISS, spoke about the 30-year journey of the Institute of Social Sciences. He said that “when the Institute was registered on 28 August 1985, power to the people, based on the Gandhian idea of Gram Swaraj was the rallying point for many intellectuals, activists and concerned citizens. It is against this background that the Institute found its institutional expression. The Institute’s birth was also necessitated by the extraordinary demand from the intellectuals and activists to come forward on a common platform

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**The Land Bill**

In December 2014, hardly six months after assuming office, the government of Mr. Narendra Modi promulgated in haste, an ordinance to amend the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 (LARR Act). But, some clauses in the amendment caused widespread opposition. Even some of the allies of the Govt. were against the ordinance. Despite stiff resistance from the opposition parties and the Shiv Sena, the Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on 10 March.

The amended LARR Act of 2013 that replaces the colonial-era Land Acquisition Act of 1894 is aimed at easing the process of land acquisition to speed up the starting of new industrial ventures. However, the Act ignores the right of the land-owners and the social impacts of the large scale conversion of farm lands into areas for non-agricultural purposes. Before the amendment, under the LARR Act, prior consent of at least 80% of the affected families and also a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) were mandatory for acquiring land for private companies. What is unfortunate is that the amendments remove these conditions without any concern for the livelihood and security of hundreds of thousands of the affected families and the welfare of the society.

It must be noted that these amendments amount to a dilution of the right to private property as a fundamental right. Such a change is to be welcomed, if it is aimed at bringing greater parity in land-ownership and at helping distribution of at least a tiny plot of land for sheltering the homeless in the country. But, such an intention is totally absent in the agenda of the ruling class in general; and of the ruling coalition in particular. When the debate on the LARR Act was alive inside and outside the Parliament in 2013, a demand was raised to implement the land reform policy, and to introduce the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for acquiring land for industrial purposes. Before the amendment, under the LARR Act, prior consent of at least 80% of the affected families and also a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) were mandatory for acquiring land for private companies. What is unfortunate is that the amendments remove these conditions without any concern for the livelihood and security of hundreds of thousands of the affected families and the welfare of the society.

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**BTESSC Seminar**

Relocating Theological Education in a Marginalizing Context

We need to examine, whether the term ‘mission’ is an appropriate word in today’s world

Deenabandhu Manchala

We need an alternative to the English term “mission,” which in most languages and contexts, and among non-theological communities evokes meanings associated with Christian religious expansion.

In an increasingly pluralistic world, with resurgence of religions and assertion of religious identities on the one hand, and increasing indifference towards institutional/organized expressions of any religion on the other, “mission” seems both divisive and regressive in spite of the many progressive meanings and definitions that theologians may attribute to it. The challenge, therefore, is to explore an alternative that adequately communicates what it actually means, i.e., as Christian participation in what God wants to do in the world that God created, that invites as well as joins those – the progressive forces from all living faiths and ideologies to work together for the realization of that vision.

[Third part of excerpts from the paper ‘Relocating Theological Education in a Marginalizing Context’, presented at the BTESSC Seminar held at Kottayam on 14 Feb. The Rev. Dr. Deenabandhu Manchala is the South Asia Area Executive of the Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ, USA.]

What are the implications of the points I raised, to our vocation of theological education? Perhaps a more active and consistent engagement with contexts and experiences of marginalization, with public and people's issues and with social movements, and participation in the lives of those involved in justice struggles? It calls for a new understanding of ministerial training as one going beyond merely preparing for clerical ministry and priestly duties, to enable communities and individuals to get engaged with the life and issues of God's people. It also poses the need for theological education in India to propose alternatives, more contextually relevant meanings and expressions of mission and diaconia rather than adapting ourselves to the given and striving to be acceptable to the norms of Western theological academia.

We also need to examine whether the term “mission” is an appropriate word in today’s world which is completely different and rapidly evolving, increasingly pluralistic and complex, and with the possibilities for greater assertion of opinions and identities. We need an alternative to the English term “mission,” which in most languages and contexts, and among non-theological communities evokes meanings associated with Christian religious expansion. In an increasingly pluralistic world, with resurgence of religions and assertion of religious identities on the one hand, and increasing

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**Peace-building and inter-religious initiatives**

**Christian witness to the world**

United Nations resolutions,” said Dr Agnes Abuom, moderator of the WCC Central Committee.

Despite being a religious minority in Israel and Palestine, Christians are strongly active and visible in public life. “Our role is to give Christian witness to the world and work for justice and peace,” said WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit as he explained how the WCC accompanies peace and reconciliation initiatives in the Middle East and beyond. Tveit underlined: “We believe peace can be achieved only together with the other. We are called as the fellowship of churches to take action in support of peaceful solutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.”

The WCC delegation included Georges Lemopoulos, deputy general secretary, Dr. Isabel Phiri, associate general secretary for Public Witness and Diakonia, Hanne Ejdersten, the WCC’s director of communication and Rev. Garland Pierce, senior assistant to the WCC general secretary.

– WCC News

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**Thought for the Fortnight**

Property is not theft, but a good deal of theft becomes property. — R. H. Tawney

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**People’s Reporter**

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People’s Reporter
Biblical Justice as ideologies to work together for

3. God’s Justice as the Vantage Point

Caste and patriarchy are perceived as the two most outstanding forces of marginalization in India. These two factors have not only been the sources of marginalization and exploitation of large sections of the society but also these have in many cases been counter to any assertion of human dignity and rights besides corrupting the Indian sense of human values and structures of human relationships. The worst victims of the caste system are the Dalits who form the majority of the disadvantaged groups. Similarly, a majority of Indian women, besides tribals and adivasis are exposed to multiple forms of violence, violation, deprivation and injustice. We all denounce these but do very little to eradicate them.

Years ago, A.P. Nirmal in his seminal presentations on Dalit theology, in the early 1980s, talked about the methodological exclusionism to insist that only Dalits know what caste oppression is and what it does to their sense of dignity and self-worth, and that Dalits must be ensured space and freedom to speak for themselves, and that they do not need patrons or spokespersons. His call gave courage and determination to many Dalits to assert their identity and rights, and to demand their rightful place in the Church and their voices to be heard. Dalit theology is flourishing and so has Dalit leadership increased.

However, even after 40 years of active engagement of theologians, activists and institutions, Dalit issues remain the concern mostly of the Dalits. Dalits (at least the Christian Dalits) should take lead and talk about their discrimination and marginalization, if others do not. I must, however, acknowledge the consistent partnership of some theologians and activists from non-Dalit backgrounds who have been passionate about Dalit liberation than many other Dalits who seem to make use of Dalit identity for personal career and power interests. Furthermore, the aspirations of Dalits for liberation and justice are set aside as issues or interests of one caste community among many others who are vying for power and prominence. Likewise, if women

People’s Movements, Unions and Networks

Solidarity with Opposition Parties’ Protest March against the Land Bill

Let not the anti-farmer-labourer bill be passed

We welcome the Opposition Parties’ unity and steadfast opposition to the undemocratic way in which NDA government brought in the Land Ordinance 2014, now the Land Bill 2015 passed by the Lok Sabha. The bullish approach of govt was condemned and opposed by the Opposition in Lok Sabha and now they have rallied together and vowed not to get this anti-people legislation passed in the Upper House.

We express our solidarity against the anti-people land bill. In a parliamentary democracy, the need for effective opposition to keep undemocratic moves of the ruling government under check is imperative. We are happy that the opposition parties have taken a clear stand against the regressive anti-farmer-labourer bill which is to serve the interests of corporates at the cost of people, agriculture and nature of our country. We sincerely hope that this protest will manifest itself into a strong collective opposition in Rajya Sabha against the passing of this bill.

People’s Movements have been opposed to the forcible land acquisition for years and have contributed immensely to the enactment of the Land Act 2013. The land bill has become a political issue and we are happy to note that parties have organised marches, demonstrations, hunger strikes and lobbied against the NDA govt. People’s movements continue to oppose this and demand no changes to 2013 Act, but we would also like to stress the following and urge the political parties in Opposition, who are in power in many states that:

1. Government must bring a white paper on all the land acquired, used till and lying unutilised in land bank of various state departments. This is necessary to prevent any unwanted and unrequired acquisition.

2. Let there be a moratorium on the acquisition of any fertile and irrigated land. This is essential for the food security of the nation.

3. On lines of Nitish govt in Bihar, we urge all parties to pass a resolution against this bill and vow not to implement it in their states.

4. As a long term measure to address the demands of the movements, let governments distribute the land to the landless and implement forest rights, so oppression rights of the people be protected.

5. While, we look at providing further displacement, there is a need to provide R&R to Cremos of project affected people, who have suffered in the name of development.

6. Lastly, people should be not only at the heart of any development project but also in its planning and hence Gram Sabha and Basil Sabha must be made a part of any development planning in the country.

We do hope opposition parties will include these demands too and also appeal to all secular-democratic and pro-people forces to join the movement against the land bill on the ground as well as in the parliament and to demand immediate withdrawal of the Bill.

National Alliance of People’s Movements, All India Union of Forest Working People, Delhi Solidarity Group, Lok Shakti Abhiyan, Pennumirum Iyakum, Jan Sangharsh Samanvay Samiti, Jan Jagran Shakti Sangathan, Kosi Navnirman Manch, Paryavaran Surksha Samiti, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Yuva Kranti, Ghar Bachao Ghar Bachao Andolan.

When you CLAIM something, you have, indeed, an AIM in it.

– NAPM News
Two eminent ecumenical stalwarts depart

James Massey passed away at Patna on 2 March 2015

A profound scholar and a great warrior

Vincent Manoharan

‘He was a gift to church, society and community’ was the fitting remark made by the preacher, the Bishop of Delhi, Brotherhood, at the funeral service organised at the Cemetery in New Delhi on 4 March 2015.

More appropriately, the Rev. Dr. (Habil) James Massey was a ‘rare gift to the Dalits as a whole’ though he was widely known as a Christian and a Dalit Theologist. Prior to my taking over as the General Secretary of NCDFHR in 2003 in Delhi, I had heard about Dr. Massey, but never had a personal acquaintance with him. I had an impression that like many, Dr. James Massey is also an academic and a scholar from the ecumenical domain whose insights would be limited to church based understandings.

Incidentally sometime in 2005 in Delhi, I peeped into a consultation, where I saw Rev. Massey delivering a lecture in which he handled the question of Caste and Dalits very knowledgeably and emphatically, making references from the Rig Veda to Ambedkar and Christ. I was challenged of my perception about him and I was inclined to sit and listen to him. During the break I met, appreciated and handed over my business card to him. On looking at the card, he profusely exclaimed ‘Oh, You are from NCDFHR! We need to meet!!.’ This gave me an opening to relate with him directly and personally.

I visited CDSI in Uttam Nagar, which was promoted by him as CDSI in 2001, where I found him and the centre, not only scholarly but also very caring in terms of analysing the issue of Caste and strategizing to address the discrimination with Christian ethos. There only I learnt about his stature and the vital positions that he held in the Church and related institutions viz ISPCK (Its Chair of Communication Unit etc.), I found him to be a vibrant member of the Minority Commission of India, who used the Govt space for raising the issue of Christians mainly the Dalit Christians. Thereafter, I strengthened my contacts with him and shared what we strived in NCDFHR to hold the Indian State accountable for the Caste based violence on Dalits and our interventions in the UN, the EU and other international forums to internationalise this issue. Every time, he used to listen to me silently until I finished, but came back with his own insights and thought provoking ideas for challenging the Caste within the Church as well.

There, I found him more relevant, practical and meaningful. Perhaps such interactions would have motivated me to undertake my PhD in Dalit Theology.

When I met him in 2011 for an interview for my Thesis in the same centre, I found him great, as he had authored more than 25 books and penned around 100 articles on Dalits and Dalit Theology. I was amazed to see the names of his Associates, the renowned stalwarts, which included Rev Fr. T.K. John, Rev. Fr. Lourdusamy, Dr. Shalini, Dr. Mohan Razu, Rev Dr. Maoseepunun, Rev Fr. Dr. Maria Arulraj and Dr. Lourdunathan, who joined him for reflections and writings. Also he and CDSI had an extensive academic relationship with premier institutions like Vidyajyothi, CISRS, Delhi Brotherhood, UTC, Nava Jothi PGR Centre, Dr. Hesseth, Dr. M.B. Muthiah, Dr. Jyothi, NTS etc., for teaching, reflecting and publishing. He inspired many Dalits like me to have a deeper understanding about the origin and the manifestations of caste as the source of discrimination and motivated to reflect theologically considering Christian as a Dalit, Challenger and Liberator. He is a true contemporary to Arvind Nirmal, the Pioneer of Dalit Theology.

I enjoyed reading many books of Dr. James Massey and to quote a few – ‘Roots, A Concise History of Dalits’, ‘Dalits in India, Religion as a source of bondage’, ‘Dowtrodden: The Struggles of Indian Dalits for Identity, Solidarity and Liberation’ and ‘Towards Dalit humaneness’. I have made many references to him in my thesis; ‘Towards a Practical Dalit Theology; its status among grassroots Dalit Christians in their struggle against caste oppression’. Still I remember him saying, ‘Dalit theology has necessarily to reach out to grassroots to inspire and activate Dalit Christians to challenge the caste within and outside Church’. He recalled how much he faced discrimination in his childhood school in Punjab where he was born in 1943.

I shared platform with him in Delhi in November 2014 during a conference organised by the Commission of the NCCI. He presented a paper on, ‘The role of the

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PRELUDE:

Ninan Koshy and I were contemporaries in the Student Christian Movement of India in the early nineteen seventies – he as the incoming General Secretary of The SCM and I, as the Area (Travelling Secretary) of the North Tamil Nadu Area. In a way, he was one of my favourite mentors in an official ecumenical organization such as the SCM. He did all three years we were together in our respective capacities, we seemed to have hit-it-off, grew more and more as personal friends.

I still remember the times we were together, consoling each other when Susan (Cecily) and Ninan had lost an infant child in an unfortunate circumstance, and later when my aged mother died in that time. He had a tough exterior but a very soft and outgoing mind, heart and spirit. Even as an intellectual giant he loved nurturing and mentoring fledglings irrespective of regional, linguistic, denominational and social differences. He was truly an ecumenist and an ecumenist. We kept our great personal relationship going beyond the mid nineteen seventies and until the time he passed away.

PROLOGUE:

Ninan Koshy was an ecumenical person of a different era.

I should explain. In him there was both agreement as well as disagreement in the meaning, methodology and measurement of ecumenism and ecumenical development. Let us examine a few details:

Ecumenism

Ecumenism is the idea of Christian unity in the literal meaning: one single Church. Ecumenism is separation and brings unity down from Nondenominational Christianity which seeks no common organizing principle. This specific sense of the word contrasts with interfaith dialogue or interfaith pluralism aimed at unity or cooperation among diverse religions and referring to a worldwide ‘religious unity’ by the advocacy of a greater sense of shared spirituality.

It is now widely known that the word is derived from Greek oikoumene, which means ‘the whole inhabited world’, and was historically used with special reference to the Roman Empire. The ecumenical vision comprises both the search for the visible unity of the Church (Ephesians 4:3) and the ‘whole inhabited earth’ (Matthew 24:14) as the concern of all Christians. Therefore, Ecumenism is the movement within Christianity that aims at “the recovery of thought, in action, and in organization, of the true unity between the Church’s witness to the world (its apostolate) and the Church’s obligation to be one”.

Ecumenical Movement

One understanding of the ecumenical movement is that it came from the Roman Catholic Church’s attempts to reconcile with Christians who had become separated. Others see the World Council of Churches as the birthplace of the ecumenical movement. Yet another view is that the 1920 encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarch Germanos of Constantinople “to the Churches of Christ Everywhere” that suggested a “fellowship of churches” similar to the League of Nations.

After World War I, which had brought much devastation to many people, the church became a source of hope to those in need. In 1948 the first meeting of the World Council of Churches was convened in Amsterdam with the theme “Man’s Disorder and God’s Design”. The movement led to an understanding amongst the churches that, despite differences, they could join together to be an element of great change in the world. To be an agent of hope and peace amongst the chaos and destruction that humans seem to create. More importantly the Council and the movement led not only to ecumenism but also to the forming of councils amongst the denominations that connected churches across continental lines.

Wider Ecumenism

The relationship between the word ‘ecumenical’ and ‘unity’ is also a Roman heritage. The emperors were keen to maintain the unity of their territory and power. They threatened the unity of the Empire. The Emperors feared that the doctrinal controversies within the church would lead to divisions and fragmentation. Therefore, they themselves organized the early ‘Ecumenical Councils’ and insisted that the Bishops of the oikoumene get their act together to maintain the unity of the Empire. Those who continued to rebel against the decisions of the Council were condemned as ‘heretics’ and were either executed or expelled from the Empire.

The concern for ‘Christian Unity’ in the Modern Ecumenical Movement is part of this long heritage. In the context in which we now live, the focus has shifted.

I feel that Ninan Koshy represented another worldview, that we need to move away from the church base to a social base to reconsider ecumenism. That is, the ecumenism of the community at large. The people mattered, irrespective of race, color, caste, creed and language.

His early scholastic background gave him

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Phoenix Settlement and later at these aspects particularly at the build up a store of knowledge on both practically and in writing, to He spent a large amount of time mental transformation, interfaith ideas of communal living, of a These have been over-killed by the study of relationships, of absolving the government of any MP Local Area Development diversion of pension funds and corporatization of transport and promoted to further the cause of rich sections to fund the Railway more allocation for social sector, and the marginalized sections of the state is increasingly withdrawing from the social sector in which the financial allocation has been economic burden of the family is shouldered by widows, separated, single and deserted women; the survival struggle would be more painful and extremely arduous in the context of galloping inflation due to the mere symbolic increase in budgetary allocation for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme. The Finance Minister stated that he would allocate an additional Rs. 5000 Cr to the scheme only if there is an increase in the revenue receipts of the government.

Social Security:
The women’s organizations have been demanding universal social security coverage for all women workers. But there is no special focus on the needs of working women, especially in the unorganized sector, in this budget. Though the budget has provided for pension, old age pension and social safety net funding, allocation for these was much needed.
The Union Budget is not bothered about the crucial concerns of women

It is high time that budget recognizes, reduces and redistributes the women’s unpaid care and non-care work. Women pedestrians need footpaths, women vendors and entrepreneurs need market places, women vendors and entrepreneurs need market places, women commuters need affordable and safe transport, rest rooms and public toilets, elderly women, half way homes, but the union budget is not bothered about these crucial concerns of women.

Two eminent ecumenical stalwarts depart

A profound scholar and a great warrior

One with deep insight and distinctive voice

a. To be rooted in a particular Christian tradition
b. To take an active part in the careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be done for the renewal of one’s own church
c. To be willing to learn
d. To cultivate an historical consciousness
e. To be willing to work together
f. To feel the scandal of our divisions – doctrinal, social & economic
g. To be alert to the presence of God and the action of the Holy Spirit in the lives of other Christians and members of other living faiths
h. To have a biblical patience
i. To pray regularly for the unity of the Church

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schemes is highly insufficient. There is a virtual phasing out of schemes like shelter homes for single women, one stop crisis centres. There is only a meagre allocation of Rs. 30 Cr for hostels for working women. The scheme for improving the working condition women and child labour has got a slight increase.

As far as the allocations for women-safety are concerned, the budget increases the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) by Rs. 40,000 Cr. Let us not forget that last two years’ budget allocations under Nirbhaya fund were not utilized at all. The budget Committee has no concrete plans of action to create structures, channels and mechanisms to use this fund.

Health and Nutrition

The Economic Survey presented along with the budget, criticizes the PDS system and argues for the uniform application of the cash transfer scheme through JAM (Jan Dhan- Aadhar and Mobile network) as a means of implementing food subsidy. Experience shows that this policy measure has failed to ensure proper nutrition for women as it cannot ensure adequate food for them.

ICDS and mid-days meals

The allocations under the ICDS and mid-day meal Schemes have come down by half, from over Rs. 16,000 crores to Rs. 8,000 crores since the last budget. The government has made an empty promise of increasing the allocations for ICDS by Rs. 1,500 Cr on the condition of increase in the revenue receipts. The gender budget in the health sector has been reduced by 17.9 per cent over the last year’s revised estimate. The budget perceives women only as reproductive beings, and the overall health needs of women and girls are neglected. There is nothing in the budget for elderly women.

Budgetary allocation for Housing and Urban poverty alleviation has been reduced from Rs. 6,008 crores in the last year’s revised estimate to Rs. 5,400 crores in the current budget. Financial allocation for the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) has reduced by 5.5 per cent as against the mandated 8.2 per cent. Thus, as compared to the previous year’s budget, the current budgetary allocation for tribal development is short of Rs. 600 crores. SCs & STs is 8.34 per cent instead of the mandated 17 per cent (less by Rs. 12,000 crore) No serious consideration is given to urban habitat, for the 380 million urban population living in sub-human condition.

Education of Girls

The disregard for girls’ education is also evident in this budget. The overall gender-budget for school education has come down by 8.3 per cent over last year’s revised estimate. The budget for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been reduced by 9.5 percent. The much touted Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Abhiyan gets only Rs. 100 Cr which is a mockery of this important slogan.

Rail Budget

The Rail Budget must give priority to improve the number of women’s compartments and prevent men from monopolizing, improving lighting in all compartments, toilets and on several railway stations, post police-women, and have a special surveillance for women passengers. Moreover, the ministry must give top priority to cleanliness, safety, food, clean drinking water, adequate health services on railway coaches and platforms. Most of the cases of kidnapping of women and children take place at the railway stations. Hence, finance for “Women’s Help Desk” functioning 24 X 7 must be created to cover all major railway stations and junctions throughout the country.

Social Security

India’s commitment to universal social security does not offer much in reality. In spite of high maternal and child mortality rates in our country, there is nothing said on universal maternity benefit. In spite of hundreds of thousands of women involved in subsistence production, neither Economic Survey nor the budget recognizes women farmers. The budget talks about the raised agriculture credit target by Rs. 50,000 crore to Rs.8.5 trillion for 2015-16. A lot, in the budget, is being talked about farmers, small farmers but nothing on women farmers!

Infrastructure

The allocation for infrastructure sector is Rs. 70,000 crores, but it does not talk about the investment for reduction of the grueling and unpaid care work done by women in terms of cooking, cleaning, caring, saving food, collection of fuel, fodder, water, looking after live-stock and kitchen-gardening. It is high time that budget recognizes, reduces and redistributes the women’s unpaid care and non-care work.

Women pedestrians need footpaths, women vendors and entrepreneurs need market places, women commuters need affordable and safe transport, rest rooms and public toilets, elderly women, half way homes, but the union budget is not bothered about these crucial concerns of women.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that the toiling poor, majority of whom are women, are the major casualty as the budget hardly offers anything in terms of protective services. Sabha, Swadhar scheme for women in difficult circumstances, Ujwala Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking, One stop Crisis centre for women and children survivors of violence on a 24 x 7 x 365 mode, night shelters for homeless women and children, short stay homes, welfare of working children.

Social Services - ICPS, JSY, GIA, Creche, CFNEUS, Kishor Shakti Yojana, Nutrition Programme for adolescent Girls

Economic services - such as schemes for training and skill development, and provision for poverty alleviation, infrastructure, marketing etc. which are critical to women’s economic independence and autonomy. E.g. STEP Support for Training and Employment of Girls, working women’s hostel.

Regulatory services - which include institutional mechanisms for women’s empowerment, such as State Commissions for Women, women’s cells in Police Stations, awareness generation programme etc. which provide institutional spaces and opportunities for women’s empowerment. E.g. Child-line Services.

Prof. Dr. Vibhuti Patel is Professor and Head of the Department of Economics, SNDT Women’s University, Mumbai

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The Hindu’ Newspaper, while reporting on his demise said, “Ninan Koshy had been an active presence in Kerala for decades, with his writings, “A multi-faceted personality, a theologian but also a warrior who served the Dalits, it has created an irreplaceable in institutions and an activist.

Dalit History and especially Dalit Theological world will certainly provide an indelible space for Dr. James Massey for the contributions that he made to challenge caste.

We need to thank the Almighty for the life of Dr. Massey and pray for his soul to rest in peace. Also, we offer to the Bishop of the Episcopal Church in California, the Reverend Dr. Roberton, who has written, “a multi-faceted personality, Koshy had been an active presence in the socio-political and educational spheres of Kerala for decades, with his reporting on his demise said, “Ninan Koshy had been an active presence in the socio-political and educational spheres of Kerala for decades, with his writings, “A multi-faceted personality, a theologian but also a warrior who served the Dalits, it has created an irreplaceable...


Lenten Reflections – 4

You do not know.
What is it?

The Church is essentially a social justice movement

The reign of God, as Jesus tells us, includes all the excluded, and for all those who hunger and thirst for justice. As a believer of this tradition, the Church is essentially a social justice movement. If pursued this way – the way of Jesus, the justice of God-this direction is likely to transform us to be churches of the Father. Are our churches ready for that?

Perhaps, it is time that we focused our attention on the agenda of eradicating the two structurally embedded forms of injustice and marginalisation - caste and patriarchy. Failing to do so implies our continued indifference to what God wants us to do – to do justice and to love kindness (Mic.6.8), and reluctance to be the community called to be a sign and instrument of the coming reign of God. The community called the Church is also a fellowship - a fellowship of partners for justice, and a movement towards the realization of God’s purposes for the world. It is this partnership character that enables churches to be just and inclusive communities. In fact, history testifies to this sensitivity and availability of the Indian church through its mission of social transformation in India by enabling spaces and opportunities for Dalits, Indigenous peoples, women and other socially disadvantaged groups in the fields of education and economic emancipation. The Church today seems to have forgotten this legacy, and remains unperturbed by the increasing marginalisation of large sections of the socially disempowered communities.

They failed to ‘know’ the central message of Jesus

Mark records, “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” Mark 1: 14, 15. Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God, totally replacing the reign of Caesar. Or as some Biblical scholars say the ‘empire’ of God in the place of the empire of Rome, the reign of God ending the reign of Rome. The central message of Jesus was that the rule of God would be established in the place of the rule of Caesar. And Jesus, very clearly, unequivocally taught them to pray, ‘Our Father who art in heaven, …….. Thy kingdom come…...’. Matt. 6: 9, 10. They were taught to pray for, to strive for, and if necessary, to lay down their lives for, the establishment of the rule of the Father. No doubt, they were called to reject the rule of the king, the emperor, and to submit themselves to, to embrace the rule of the Father.

He taught them to understand that the ‘way’ or governance of the Father was absolutely different, antithetical to the ‘way’ of governance of the king or the emperor. Undoubtedly, the nature and pattern of the rule of the Father based on love, would be totally different from the rule of the king or the emperor using ‘sword’. The ‘tool of governance, in the ‘kingdom’ of the Father would be not ‘bullets’ but ‘brooms’. They were called to be ‘servants’ but not to seek ‘seats’!

Terribly sad

Jesus was, really, sad that even two of his closest disciples, and that too when his ministry on the earth was about to come to an end, conceptualized the rule of the Father in terms of, in the fashion of the rulers of the earth!

He must have been terribly pained that his long association and interaction with the two disciples did not enable them to have a different vision about the rule of God, the Father.

“The community called the Church is also a fellowship - a fellowship of partners for justice, and a movement towards the realization of God’s purposes for the world. It is this partnership character that enables churches to be just and inclusive communities. In fact, history testifies to this sensitivity and availability of the Indian church through its mission of social transformation in India by enabling spaces and opportunities for Dalits, Indigenous peoples, women and other socially disadvantaged groups in the fields of education and economic emancipation. The Church today seems to have forgotten this legacy, and remains unperturbed by the increasing marginalisation of large sections of the socially disempowered communities.

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All India Council of Christian Women

Zero Tolerance to Gender Based Violence

Gender based violence has become pandemic in India. To combat and puncture this culture of violence All India Council of Christian Women (AICCW) has launched a campaign 365 Days Zero Tolerance to Gender Based Violence : Make it Happen Now!!

We invite you to promote this campaign so that women and children and vulnerable people - victims of gender based violence - can have ‘Life in its Fullness’.

We request you to watch the video in U tube, India’s Daughter a documentary produced by Leslee Udwin which is banned and precocious form of gender based violence which exists in this country, the culture and mindset that prevents us to break silence.

Moomita Biswas, Executive Secretary, AICCW, NCCI

CONCISION in Style

PRECISION in thought

DECISION in Life

Victor Hugo

Life Giving Agriculture Forum India Launched

Agriculture is Life, Agriculture is Right


The participants representing various walks of life such as farmers, activists, theologians, clergy and academicians from India and South Korea deliberated on the vital issues affecting farmers in India and Korea. They issued a statement at the end of the consultation.

Excerpts from the statement

We the participants therefore call upon both the Indian and Korean Churches and Civil Societies,

(a) To bring to the centre the rural Dalit and Advasi Churches which are predominantly agrarian and who constitute eighty percent of our congregations but have been pushed to the margins for generations;

(b) To re-read the Bible through the eyes of the marginal farmers and evolve liturgies that reflect agricultural motifs, seasons and festivals;

(c) To lobby with the Government to implement radical land reforms and sustainable agriculture in the society-at-large;

(d) To plead with Indian Churches to entrust vast tracts of land in their fold with local congregations promoting LGA rather than keep the land idle.

(e) To motivate Churches in India to campaign for Food Sovereignty and negotiate with their respective States to ensure the just and fair public distribution system.

(f) To organize Indian Churches to lobby for just and pro-farmer Land Legislations, and also reject the Land Acquisition Ordinance, 2014.

(g) To promote alliance building with neighbouring South Asian countries so that churches and farmers’ movements learn from each other.

(h) LGA in Korea and India to address the serious problem of youth abandoning agriculture in villages and address the same on war footing.

(i) LGA in Korea and India to explore new ground for ecumenical cooperation and collective action between rural and urban churches.

(j) LGA in Korea and India to influence Seminaries to adapt theological education per se to include LGA in their regular courses as part of Ministerial Training.

We Resolve:

With regard to mainstreaming LGA in India, we resolve that the NCCI- CJPC promote Life-Giving Agriculture in India, and continue to dialogue and partner with LGA-Korea and promote Joint solidarity struggles and exchange of information on Life Giving Agriculture.

Executive Secretary, Commission on IPC, NCCI <ncci.cjpc@gmail.com>, <ncci.nccindia.in>

Mission Consultation on Indian Christian Obligation towards Global Mission Challenge

In Obedience to the Great Commission

A Mission Consultation will be held at the Ecumenical Christian Centre, Whitefield, Bangalore, from 26 to 29 May 2015. We invite you to come and participate in this thought provoking strategic conference and contribute to a process of innovating a new future for Indian Christian Mission praxis.

There will be strategic paper presentations, workshops and discussion sessions.

Free hospitality will be provided at the ECC.

To be prepared to pay a Registration fee of Rs.1000 per person. Pray that God will bless our gathering for His greater glory.

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