

Don Bosco's Charism and Asian Culture

Studies towards an Interpretation of
Don Bosco's Charism for Asia

edited by
Sebastian Karotemprel, sdb

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Bosco's Charism for Asia

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SEBASTIAN KAROTEMPREL, SDB

SALESIAN COLLEGE PUBLICATIONS
Dimapur, India
1988

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First Edition 1988

Published by Salesian College Publications, Dimapur, India 797 112
and printed at St Paul Press Training School, Allahabad 211 002

To

FR MATTHEW PULINGATHIL

**For his contribution to the promotion of the Salesian
Charism in Northeast India**

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INTRODUCTION

THIS year the Salesian Family and the Church are remembering the first centenary of the death of St John Bosco, perhaps the most outstanding "educator" and organizer of overseas evangelization work in the nineteenth century. The generation that knew him is no more with us, but his memory lives on and it is the memory of a unique approach to human-Christian formation, applicable both to youth and to the "unevangelized".

Don Bosco was endowed by God with a special "charism" to fulfil a particular "mission" to youth and the "unevangelized".

Now charism may be described as a special divine gift given to an individual to fulfil a concrete mission for the benefit of the Church and society, and exercised at a particular time and place. However every charism has some elements of a permanent and universal character.

St Paul gives us two lists of charisms in his letters to the Corinthians and to the Romans. They are the gifts of apostleship, prophecy, teaching, healing, administration, speech, service, exhortation, assistance, mercy, etc. (I Cor. 12:4-11 and Rom. 12:6-8). St Thomas Aquinas groups all charisms into three categories: those that relate to knowledge, to speech and to miracles. In this sense, Don Bosco had all three charisms for he had an extraordinary grasp of human nature, a power of persuasive speech and the gift of working miracles.

But the greatest charism that Don Bosco had was his capacity to love "educatively and formatively". Don Bosco

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had a special vocation and mission and therefore a special charism. He "was endowed by Providence with gifts which from his early years made him the generous and conscientious friend of his companions. His boyhood years were a sign of an extraordinary mission of education that was to follow".¹

In fact, St Paul placed love above all other charisms: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way" (I Cor. 12:29-31). Strangely enough Paul calls the highest charism a "way", because every charism is to build up "persons", – most of the time broken persons, broken by negative experiences in the family, in society, by poverty, ignorance, unemployment and exploitation by the greedy and the cunning. But the "way" to rebuild persons is the way of love. Thus charism according to Paul is also a "way", a method, an approach. For Don Bosco love was the way, a method, the approach to human-Christian formation.

In his very direct, concrete and simple manner Don Bosco expressed this idea when he wrote about his method of human-Christian formation which is based upon the words of St Paul who says:

"Love is patient and kind...

Love bears all things...

hopes all things, endures all things" (I Cor. 13:4-7).

"Love" is the highest charism. Love is, the one "way" of exercising all the other charisms. Love is, therefore, a gift and a methodology according to Paul. It was the same for Don Bosco. Don Bosco received the charism of love in a twofold sense: he had an extraordinary capacity to love and also to do everything with love. This twofold charism was applied by him to the human-Christian formation of youth and creating a new and original formula for the education of

1. John Paul II, *Iuvenum Patris*, Letter for the Centenary of the death of St John Bosco, n. 3.

the young: "reason, religion and love". Don Bosco had "a singular and intense charity, i.e., an interior vitality which united in him in an inseparable manner, love of God and love of his neighbour".²

Every charism is exercised in a particular historical and cultural context and hence the concrete expression of a charism is conditioned by it. Culture is a very complex reality and does not admit of easy definition. One can only attempt a description of culture. Culture is the resultant environment of perceptions of man about himself, life, about fellowmen, about the universe and about the transcendent reality of God and their expression in language, in worship, in arts, in architecture, in philosophy, in government, in science, in technology, etc.

Culture is a very dynamic reality, since man's perceptions and their consequent expressions do constantly change, are deepened, discarded, developed, etc. Every man is born into a cultural environment, and almost unconsciously accepts its pervading influence not merely passively, but actively. From the very beginning there is an interaction and dialogue between man and his cultural environment till a modified cultural environment is created. But there are also permanent and universal values in every culture even if their expressions may change as time goes on.

Culture has its permanent values and historical expressions, and also its non-permanent, transient values. The permanent values of all cultures are authentically human values.

Now there is an intimate relationship between the permanent and universal values of a charism and the values of a culture. Charism aims at building up of authentic human values and thus of human persons. Culture contains authentic human aspirations, potential human values and expressions of their realization.

2. John Paul II, *Juvenum Patris*, Letter for the Centenary of the death of St John Bosco, n. 15.

Hence we may say that charism is a help for culture,— authentic culture. God's gifts are for the building up of man and society. The charism of Don Bosco was not something for his own day but for all times for building up of the youth to help them realize their noble aspirations. It helps them to realize their full human potentialities, both temporal and eternal.

If we recognize that there is an essential relationship between charism and culture, as we have shown, this is valid also for Don Bosco's charism shared by the whole Salesian Family. The Salesian Family, then, cannot be faithful to one without being faithful to the other too, being aware of the relationship of the two. This task is all the more important, vital and difficult since Don Bosco's charism found its historical expression in a Western, christian society a hundred years ago. Today, the world-wide Salesian Family has to exercise Don Bosco's charism in a culturally pluralistic society.

The problem is made even more difficult since the expression of Don Bosco's charism in Asia so far was not Asian but Western and could not have been otherwise because of concrete historical reasons. Again, acceptance of and adaptation to Asian cultures are difficult. Every cultural change is a slow and delicate operation.

On the other hand, fidelity to the permanent and universal values of a charism calls for fidelity to one's own culture too. Asian Salesians have a two-fold responsibility and challenge: fidelity to their personal charism and fidelity to Asian cultures. They must preserve the substratum of Don Bosco's charism in Asia too. John Paul II clearly states that the permanent values of his charism have universal significance:

I want to point out, in fact, that these pedagogical criteria are not things of the past: the figure of this Saint, the friend of youth, continues to exert a fascinating attraction for young people of the most widely differing cultures under heaven. It is true that his educational message needs to be studied

at still greater depth, to be adapted and renewed with intelligence and courage, precisely because of changed social, cultural, ecclesial and pastoral contexts. It will be well to keep in mind the new lines of thought and the developments that have taken place in many fields, the signs of the times and the indications of Vatican II. Nevertheless the substance of his teaching remains intact; the unique nature of his spirit, his intuitions, his style, his charisma are unchanged, because they draw their inspiration from the transcendent pedagogy of God.³

There is another reason why Don Bosco's charism for human-Christian education is valid in every culture. Culture has an educative role, as John Paul II says: "The primary and essential task of culture in general and also of all cultures is education."⁴ On the other hand Don Bosco's charism is all about education. Hence education, charism and culture are intimately united.

This book on Don Bosco's charism and Asian culture has grown out of the above mentioned insight on the part of some Salesians, particularly of the Salesian Philosophical College of Dimapur. I am happy to have been asked to contribute to and edit this volume, which is but a first attempt and in many ways limited because of various reasons which cannot be gone into now. Our only reason in publishing this book is the conviction that it is better to light a candle than curse all the darkness around. Certainly, more scholarly and accurate studies will have to be made to give an Asian face to Don Bosco's charism and thus make it more effective for the building up of the Asian youth and Asian society, even if the Salesian contribution towards the education of youth in Asia is small. Nonetheless it can be significant and symbolic and hence a catalyst for others

3. John Paul II, *Juvenum Patris*, Letter for the Centenary of the death of St John Bosco, n. 15.

4. John Paul II, *Address to UNESCO*, 2 June 1980, II: AAS., p. 742

also in the reconstruction of the Asian society.

By inculturating Don Bosco's charism in the Asian soil, the Salesian Family will be faithful both to Don Bosco's charism and to Asian cultures and thus add to the spiritual and cultural patrimony both of the Church and Asia.

Culture and charism are not static realities since God, the author of all charisms, is always active in human history leading it to its fulfilment. Man, too, seeks always to be self-transcendent, creating for himself a new morrow. While the permanent and universal values both of charism and of culture remain, their expression, application and the resultant society change. This is part of the dynamism of God and of human history. It is my hope that this book will contribute towards the inculturation of Don Bosco's charism in Asia and thus serve the gigantic cause of the education of youth in Asia!

Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB
Shillong, 31 January, 1988

FOREWORD

THE Salesian Congregation, at 100 years' distance from the death of Don Bosco, is trying to describe its missionary vocation and the inspiration coming from Don Bosco in the context of the particular Churches of Asia with which we are invited to collaborate in the work of evangelization. The fusion of charism and culture is a very vital and dynamic reality. No culture can be described apart from the lives of its people, and no charism is determined solely by the times and environment of the founder of a Religious Congregation.

I am very happy to see the studies made in this volume, in which the contributors seek to bring about a harmonious fusion of culture and charism in Salesian Asia. If we say "Don Bosco in Asia", we refer to three basic concepts: first, the contemplative outlook on reality, convinced that an educator finds roots in God's presence among his people and in the families of Asia; second, the listening ear which is given particularly to the young, the attentive relationship to our young people in Asia as expressed in the teachings and the lives of our great masters, giving priority to the education of the young; third, a learning mind, looking at events and history from the heart of man, giving room for the interiorisation of so many impressions and reflections man automatically makes as he journeys through life.

This study is an invitation to discover thereby a very concrete method of evangelization. Such a discovery will be a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and the peoples of Asia in the task of establishing God's reign in their hearts. In this sense this study is a timely invitation to Asian Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the whole Salesian

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Family and the Youth of Asia to discover the intimate relationship between culture and charism and use it for their personal spiritual growth and for the work of evangelization.

Luc Van Looy, S.D.B.
Councillor for Missions,
Member of the General Council of the
Salesians of Don Bosco

Rome
31 January, 1988
Feast of St John Bosco.

1

Salesian Charism and Asian Cultures

Paul Puthanangady, SDB

THE centenary celebrations of Don Bosco's death are not a mere commemoration of an event, but an occasion to become deeply aware of the reality of Don Bosco living in our midst for the last one hundred years. During this period he has been trying to become visible to the Asian youth through the Salesian Congregation. The Salesian community of Asia is the spiritual body of John Bosco. Now we know that the presence of the glorified Lord is a dynamic one and so is that of all those who have joined Him in His glory. Hence the presence of St John Bosco in Asia is a living presence, it is a presence that is oriented to the eschatological manifestation of the Lord. For this reason the relevance of the presence of St John Bosco in Asia will depend on how we, his sons and daughters, his epiphania, enable him to answer the longings of the youth of Asia.

1. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SALESIAN PRESENCE IN ASIA

a) *It is a Missionary Presence*

All the religious congregations, by their very vocation are missionary, that is, endowed with a sense of mission. But not all of them fulfil their mission in the same way. The Salesian mission is oriented to youth and to ordinary people. This is very clearly stated in the Constitutions: "to be the signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor" (art.2). The structures that

the Salesians make use of in order to fulfil this mission vary according to the needs of the young. There are no specific Salesian apostolic structures. There are some traditional ones, such as youth centres, oratories, schools, missions, parishes, etc.

But these came into existence because of the particular needs of those to whom Salesians were sent in the course of the last one hundred years. Regarding the structures, the only criterion to be followed is the exigencies of those to whom the mission is directed. This is clearly stated in an article of the Constitutions where some models are given not for imitation, but for inspiration and to provoke the creativity of the future generations of Salesians: "Don Bosco lived a pastoral experience in his first Oratory which serves as a model; it was for the youngsters a home that welcomed, a parish that evangelized, a school that prepared them for life, and a playground where friends could meet and enjoy themselves. As we carry out our mission today, the Valdocco experience is still the lasting criterion for discernment and renewal in all our activities and works" (art. 40). It is very clear from this that the criterion for putting up any apostolic structure is the need of evangelizing the youth.

b) *It is a charismatic presence*

Every religious congregation comes into existence by the power of the Holy Spirit, for the good of the Church. The Spirit endows the congregation with gifts that will enable it to fulfil its particular mission. The way the Spirit makes the gift function is very much the same as the way in which He functioned at the Incarnation. He gives to the congregation the ability to reproduce a particular aspect of the Gospel figure of Jesus Christ. The Salesians have received from Him the gift of reproducing the figure of Jesus the Good Shepherd (Const. art. 10 and 11). This brings with it certain exigencies for the lives of those who become members of this congregation. They also give to the Salesians a particular style in their apostolic activities which distinguish them from the other youth workers in the Church. We can say

that this specificity is expressed in the particular system of education handed down to them by St John Bosco which is called "Preventive System", which is both a spirituality and an apostolic methodology for the Salesians.

In order that the Salesian Congregation may be relevant in the world, it is necessary that both these presences be incarnated in the cultures of the people. When this happens, there will be two consequences: a new Salesian identity will be unfolded and the whole congregation will be enriched by it. We would like this to take place in Asia. Up to now, the Salesian presence in this vast continent has been an imitation of that which had emerged in Europe and especially in Italy. In the new century that is beginning we would like to have an Asian Don Bosco and an Asian Salesian Congregation. Undoubtedly, we want to make sure that in this process we maintain intact the original gift of the Spirit given to the Church in the person of Don Bosco and in the community that he founded.

2. ASIAN CULTURES: THE YOUTH IN ASIA

We are dealing here with a vast continent, which is the homeland of many cultural groups. Even though we can discover certain common characteristics that unite the human community of Asia, the diversities that differentiate them from one another are so remarkable that it would not be realistic to speak of one Asian culture, not even of an Asian cultural root. Hence what we are attempting to do here is not a cultural analysis in the strict sense of the term. We are trying to discover certain trends that seem to exist in the youth of Asia as it emerges from the colonial period into the new era of technological progress, renewed national consciousness and a deeper sense of cosmopolitan belonging. This is the youth that is going to give shape to the Salesian mission and consequently to the Salesian life. This will require a re-interpretation of the Salesian charism itself.

a) *Religiosity at the core of Asian cultures*

Although religiosity is at the core of every human being,

its influence on the concrete organization of his life varies from people to people. We find that in the case of Asian cultures, religiosity has played a very important role. In the Hindu-Buddhist view, the world is not created by God *ex nihilo*. The world is a manifestation of the Divine. It is a religious reality. God is involved in it. The development of the world is a religious reality. God is involved in it. Development is a religious activity. Religion, therefore, permeates the whole of human existence. Modern scientific approach has not diminished this understanding. In fact, I am inclined to believe that there is a revival of religiosity. Together with modern scientific development, there is also a reawakening of religiosity: this is found not only in the ordinary ignorant masses of the villages, but even among the educated scientists and technocrats of the cities.

b) *Lack of political stability*

Asia is the home of empires and established kingdoms. Like the colonial era, these empires have disappeared and some imitations of Western democracies and dictatorships have taken their place. But the people of Asia are still searching for a politically stable society. This has its effect on the youth. The involvement of youth in politics is a very special characteristic of Asia. Asia wants to build its political structure through its own youth.

c) *Technological invasion*

The progress of science has offered to the ancient cultures of Asia an opportunity and a challenge to compete with the nations of the West, for there is a legitimate feeling that it is not possible to arrive at dignified existence in the midst of the world today without technological equality or even superiority. This feeling has gripped practically all the nations of this continent and in fact many of them are nearing the status of equality or even superiority in this regard with the Western nations. This, evidently, will affect the life-style of the peoples, especially the youth.

d) *Liberation from a feudalistic society*

The colonial powers did not remove the feudalistic structures of Asian society; instead, they made use of them in order to perpetuate their hegemony. As a result the feudalistic structures remained after the colonial powers left; in some cases they were weakened, while in other cases they were strengthened by becoming the instruments of power for the native rulers after Independence. Today there is a struggle taking place to achieve an authentic liberation from these feudalistic structures.

e) *Marxist Experiment*

The phenomenon of Marxism as an ideology as well as an instrument of Soviet imperialism has played its role in Asia and has affected the society in many countries of the region. The case of China is a clear instance; but this has happened also in other countries with varying effects. However, this is a fact to be reckoned with in understanding the cultural state of modern Asia.

f) *Emerging nationalism*

This is a characteristic of all the countries of Asia and Africa which have emerged from the colonial rule. It is seen in the re-evaluation of the traditional cultures of these continents. It is marked by the desire of the youth to become leaders and determining factors in the shaping of the future of the continent.

Undoubtedly, the youth, perhaps more than any other section of the human community, is affected by all these factors. However, we have to make a distinction between the rural and urban youth of Asia. We have to distinguish the youth of North Asian countries which were very much affected by the technological civilization of the West, from the youth of South Asia, where the traditional religiosity still has a determining role to play in the shaping of the society. Again we have to differentiate the youth of South East Asia into groups: those subjected to the capitalistic vision of society and those under the influence of Marxism. The Salesian charism has to be at the service of all these groups.

3. SALESIAN CHARISM

At the very outset, we must become very clear about the role that our charism has to play in any society. We are not sent by Jesus to civilize, but to evangelize. If some changes in civilization take place as a consequence of evangelization, that is only a by-product. This flows from the fact that the gifts of the Spirit are meant to build up the kingdom of God for which Jesus preached the Word and sent His disciples into the whole world.

We have to see now which are the basic elements of our Salesian charism before we consider how relevantly they have to be used in building up the kingdom of God among the youth of Asia. Evidently this is a very delicate and arduous task. But, without pretending to enumerate exhaustively the elements that constitute the Salesian charism, we can highlight a few of the prominent aspects and see how they can serve the Asian youth.

a) *The pastoral charity*

We cannot express this better than in the words of St John Bosco who wanted to be a priest, different from those whom he met in his childhood: "If I were to become a priest, I would act in a different way: I will approach the little ones, I will call them around me, I will love them, I will make them love me, I will speak good words to them, I will dedicate my whole life for their eternal salvation" (*Memorie Biografiche*, Vol.1, p.227). This Salesian pastoral charity consists in dedicating oneself to the youth, who are abandoned, who need love and understanding.

b) *Union with God*

This is a characteristic of all those who work for the Gospel, but for Salesians there is a special style of living it. They have to discover God in the midst of their activity. It is contemplation in action. It is to discover the divine dimension of all reality. It is to give a religious sense to all the secular activities. It is nothing else but a profound sense of God, present in the world.

c) Initiative and flexibility

This must not be confounded with the search for novelty for its own sake. It is the alertness to read the signs of the times and the readiness to take risks to respond to them. "In those things which are for the benefit of the young people in danger or which serve to win souls for God, I push ahead even to the extent of recklessness" (*Memorie Biografiche*, Vol. XIV, p.662).

d) The educational system based on reason, religion and loving kindness

In the fulfilment of their mission the Salesians start from where they find the youth and contribute to their natural and normal development into full human beings. This is the meaning of education through reason. In this process they are entirely animated by the Gospel values. This is the content of the religion they impart. They build up a community of love with those whom they serve as evangelizers. This is what is meant by loving kindness in the fulfilment of the Salesian mission.

How do these aspects of Salesian charism become operative in the Asian context? This is the next point to consider.

4. EVANGELIZATION OF ASIAN CULTURES THROUGH THE SALESIAN CHARISM

The objects of our evangelizing activity ought to be the marginalised. Our Salesian presence should be selective of this group of boys. In Asia these are found not only in towns but also in villages, where the oppressive feudal system is still operative. We have to make our presence in the villages a challenge to the unjust structures of society. In the towns, our presence ought to be in the slums and poorer suburbs which are found in every developing Asian city.

The soul of Asia is still very religious. This calls for a religious approach in our mission. It is not enough that we

are religious, but it is necessary that we manifest it. The liberation of Asia cannot take place in the same way as that of Latin America. The unjust economic structures are quite often justified by a religious motive. A correct religious perspective which must, at the same time be experiential, is necessary if we want to be effective in our evangelization. The Salesian charism of discovering and living the divine dimension in the secular must be activated powerfully in order to fulfil our mission successfully. This means that the Salesians must be authentic men of God both in their private life and public expressions.

Asian youth is looking towards a meaningful human existence. The many ideologies that offer this possibility to them must be taken seriously: marxism, democracy, technological progress. The Salesians must enter into these situations, with a view to evangelizing these ideologies and thus contribute to the realization of their legitimate aspirations. For this we must reactivate our spirit of inventiveness in the Asian context. We have to find out new ways of conducting our Salesian apostolate; new structures have to be designed; new approaches to youth must be devised.

The three pillars of our educational system: reason, religion, and loving kindness, have much to contribute towards the creation of an evangelized youth in Asia. We must translate education through reason into education to freedom. There is a great danger in Asia of understanding this freedom in terms of liberation from external authority: this is the result of the lingering memory of colonialism. It is necessary to instil into the youth the meaning of freedom as internal liberation, by which one grows into maturity. Another area where education through reason has to become operative here in Asia, is the development of man's capacity to relate. Asian society is still suffering from social discrimination, based on class and caste. It is necessary to inculcate the need of overcoming this barrier in order to become authentically human. Our education through reason should foster a correct critical attitude in youth. It is

necessary to replace judgmental criticism with evaluative criticism. The reaction of youth to a political and social system that has been oppressive is to be destructively critical. It is necessary to replace this gradually with a capacity to evaluate realities and persons. The result of such an effort to build up a human community according to the Gospel in the Salesian style will be to create a community of persons, that is, individuals who are fully grown and mature, capable of meaningful relationship. It is this community that can contribute to a happy future for Asia.

In this process religion plays a very important role. The Gospel must be proclaimed taking into account the religiosity that is deeply rooted in the hearts of our Asian peoples. Therefore our approach to these peoples with the Gospel must be truly dialogical. We have to take seriously the religions of our boys. Inter-religious dialogue in a truly Salesian style must be begun in all our institutions. The Western ways of praying and experiencing God do not appeal to the youth of Asia. We have to enter into their religious ethos if we want to make the Gospel become a power in the formation of an authentically evangelized Asian youth.

The loving kindness of our Salesian system of education must become evident in the Asian context through a life of deep personal relationship between the youth and the evangelizers. The *guru-sishya* pattern of India can help us to give an Asian expression to this important characteristic of our Salesian educational system. Perhaps this would require our educational communities to be made up of small groups, where the *guru-sishya* relationship could be given better expression.

CONCLUSION

Asia is a continent where there is a remarkable growth in the Salesian presence. The increase in vocations in India and the Philippines indicate this. It is high time that we develop an Asian physiognomy of the Salesian congregation.

This should be the result of an authentic interpretation of the charism of Don Bosco. This interpretation will take place only on two conditions: first, the Asian Salesians live to the full their Salesian identity; secondly, the Asian Salesians become deeply conscious of the fact that they have a mission to fulfil. The danger that seems to lurk in this process of genuine interpretation is that of institutionalisation of our existence according to the traditional, Western patterns with their result-oriented approach. This can be overcome only by training our Salesians to be authentic from within, that is men who are totally open to the spirit of Don Bosco and to the Spirit that calls to them from the hearts of the youth of Asia.

Don Bosco's Method of Education in the Asian Context

By Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB

1. INTRODUCTION

A hundred years have passed since the death of our father and founder, St. John Bosco. Distance sometimes adds magic and mystique to persons and things. This must be the case with us Salesians too, but in a positive sense. The distance in time should add to the magic and mystique that Don Bosco still continues to exercise on youth and those who work for him. Hence during this first centenary of the death of Don Bosco we too are drawn to the multi-faceted personality of this great Christian educator.

Among all the remarkable features of his personality and contribution to the world and the Church is his personal method of education. In this paper I intend to discuss Don Bosco's unique educative method and its relevance in the Asian context.

This will be, it is hoped, a useful exercise for us to understand better Don Bosco's educative method and in-culturate it into the Asian context. In this manner we shall be applying it to Asia creatively.

2. THE WRONG TITLE FOR A RIGHT THING

A wrong name usually betrays an inadequate or partial or even wrong understanding of a thing. It can lead to reducing reality to dimensions narrower than the reality itself. Thus by speaking of "hearing" and "seeing" Mass, many reduced the unique and infinitely rich and enriching sacrifice and sacrament of the Eucharist to merely hearing and seeing. For many, the Sunday Mass is only "hearing" and "seeing", rather than a joyful, transforming experience

of and participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the case with the reality of Don Bosco's Educative Method or what has been so far mistakenly called "the Preventive System of Education".

Don Bosco's method of education has been saddled too long with a wrong, negative, inaccurate or inadequate name, namely, "The Preventive System of Education".

a. A System?

As a matter of fact, it is neither a system nor preventive, nor about education in the sense we commonly use this word as we shall soon see. The title "Preventive System" is a literal translation of the Italian title, "Il Sistema Preventivo". Whatever the Italian title may mean, the English title is obviously a misnomer.

A system implies a set of philosophical principles that constitute an organic unity. Thus we speak of the Dewey system of education, the Marxist system of economics. Don Bosco propounded and developed no special theory of education. In fact, Don Bosco does not figure in any authoritative and scholarly study of the history of education. This in no way lessens his greatness as an extraordinary educator for all times.¹

b. Preventive?

Again, Don Bosco's method of educating is not "preventive". The word gives a negative tone to the wonderful reality of Don Bosco's way of educating youth. This is also most unfortunate, since it may tend, if not in theory at least in practice, to give us a negative concept of an extraordinary rich and enriching reality and thus reduce Don Bosco's method of educating to something negative. One sometimes comes across such unfounded criticisms for which we are partly responsible in naming Don Bosco's method "preventive" in educating, practising, and emphasizing certain aspects of this method and downplaying other more important elements.

c. *Education?*

Thirdly, when we speak of education, we are not using the word in the ordinary and popular sense, namely, school or college education, but rather in the original and strict sense, that is, drawing out the best that is in the "educandus" (one being educated).

Hence, in reality the title "Preventive System of Education" is a misnomer since it is not a philosophical system of education, nor essentially preventive nor about education in the usual sense of the word. And using a misnomer is dangerous since it implies a wrong or at least an inadequate or partial concept and such a concept can lead people to a wrong, warped and prejudiced application.

Hence my first suggestion is to make a strong plea to abandon the use of the misnomer, "the Preventive System of Education" for good and for every one's good.

3. AN APPROPRIATE NAME

a. *A Method, an Approach*

What Don Bosco did in his "Oratory" of Valdocco, in Turin, in the early days of his priestly ministry was to gather round him young boys wandering aimlessly through life, uprooted by the industrial revolution of 19 century Italy and Europe in order to "educate" them to a truly human and Christian way of living according to the norms of reason, religion and love, both human and Christian.

Speaking of Don Bosco's and Salesian activities, William Kelly, S.D.B., in his article on "Salesians" in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, significantly does not use the title "The Preventive System of Education". He speaks of norms, methods, formation: "Following Don Bosco's norms, Salesian education is based upon reason, religion and amiability. Its method is to elevate and employ all that is humanly useful in character formation, study, work, associative organization and sports"². Italian scholars too, often speak of Don Bosco's educative method. Thus P. Braido calls it, "...metodo educativo" (educative method)³. Again the word method is interchanged with "system"⁴. The Constitutions of the Salesian Society appropriately call it "the so called preventive system"⁵.

b. Christian

The words educate, education, educator, educationalist, and educationist are often used without much attention given to their exact meaning.

Bringing up children in the family, imparting information, instruction, knowledge, and skills in schools, forming conventionally acceptable manners, behaviour, habits of body and mind, developing physical and mental aptitudes, morally acceptable behaviour and moulding the religious sentiments and dimension of man are all part of education.

The process of doing or achieving all the above-mentioned is called education and at the same time the resultant positive achievement is also called education. An educator is one who does one of these or some or even all of them or is engaged in organizing the various elements and stages in the process of education. The educand is the person who is both the subject and object of education.

An educationist or educationalist is one who holds a special theory or practice of education. An educationalist has a special philosophy or theory of education or a special pedagogical or didactic method.⁶

Now Don Bosco had no special system of education. He was not an educationist in the ordinary sense of the word or an educationalist with a specific philosophy or theory or method of education usually associated with educational institutions. Certainly, Don Bosco was not an educator as Rousseau, Kant, Dewey, Newman, et cetera.⁷ He was essentially and uniquely a Christian educator. What we call a "system" is really an approach, a human and Christian approach to draw out what is truly human, and therefore Christian, in the young with the aid of human psychology and Christian pedagogy. He had an extraordinary insight into human nature and its workings, its concrete actions and reactions and an exceptional insight into the working of grace in the hearts of the young. "Don Bosco was pre-eminently an educator, whose characteristic approach is known as the Salesian Preventive System of Education",

says E.F. Fardellone.⁸ It is interesting to note that Fardellone calls it an "approach" and then betrays his Italian origin and calls it by its traditional name, "Salesian Preventive System of Education".

Gradually, more by praxis than by theory, Don Bosco developed a very personal approach to educating the youth of his time, especially those outside the reach of a formal educational framework, an approach that is supremely human and eminently Christian.

I would like to call this approach to Christian education, "Don Bosco's method of Christian education" or simply "Don Bosco's Educative Method", or "Don Bosco's Educative Approach".

c. A Style, Manner, Method

It is Don Bosco's since it is based on a very personal style developed by Don Bosco, through a father-son, brother-brother, friend-friend relationship. It is a particular manner of educating youth. It is Christian since its ultimate aims and means are Christian. It uses the Christian means of drawing out the best in youth, namely, Christian love, Christian sacraments and Christian devotions. In this sense it may be called Don Bosco's method of educating youth.

d. Educative

Don Bosco's method is a Christian approach to education in the broader and original sense of the word, namely, the formation of a young boy into an adult, mature, human and Christian personality. This idea is reflected in the Plan of Regulations of Don Bosco's first "Oratory, which was to form upright citizens and good Christians".⁹

All this may be done outside the frame work of formal education: in the place of prayer ("oratory"), on the play ground, in the workshop, etc., as also within the classroom.

4. ESSENTIAL NORMS OF DON BOSCO'S APPROACH TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

When we analyse Don Bosco's actual method of educa-

tion we can clearly see a number of norms that guided his educational work and which he has left as guiding principles for his followers.

a. Mutual Presence

There was a tendency during Don Bosco's time to educate by means of rules and sanctions. It is a recurring tendency, even with Salesians. Long ago St Augustine articulated this admirably: "non legibus, sed moribus," not by laws but by customs.

For Don Bosco, true education takes place when the educator is present to the youth and the youth to the educator in a constant interaction and exchange of values. The values of the educator are not accepted, assimilated and personalized merely through instruction, even religious and moral instruction, but only when they are lived out in the presence of the young. The Salesian Constitutions say: "The practice of the preventive system demands a fundamental disposition on our part: an empathy with the young and a willingness to be with them; 'Here in your midst I feel completely at home; for me, living means being here with you'. We are, actively present among youth in brotherly friendship, helping them in their efforts to grow in what is good, and encouraging them to cast off every form of slavery, so that their weakness may not be overcome by evil."¹⁰

Seeing is believing, we say. But we may add: seeing is accepting, seeing is assimilating, seeing is living. When the young see that the values that are presented to them are lived out by the educator, they tend to assimilate and personalize them. This calls for mutual presence between the educator and the young. There is no remote-control system in imparting human and Christian values. Salesian education is the result of an educative presence which is the real meaning of "assistance" in Salesian parlance¹¹. Such mutual presence is not to control the educand to stifle his freedom, but to communicate values for life. This was the real aim of Don Bosco in prescribing "Salesian assistance"

as a means of Christian education, unfortunately so often misunderstood and misapplied by some.

Such an approach is uniquely human and Christian. It is human, because it is the way human beings assimilate values in life. It is Christian, because it is the way that Jesus Christ followed in educating his close disciples. He was always present to them and they to him and as a result they gradually assimilated Jesus' values. In mutual presence they had a glimpse into the inner personality of Jesus and perceived and accepted his values. Through mutual presence Jesus too gained an intimate understanding of their personal values, attitudes, responses, strengths and weaknesses.

Mutual presence is fundamental to Don Bosco's approach to Christian education precisely because it is not an education to supply humanistic, scientific or technological information, but a formation to human and Christian values. Education is the result of a personal encounter.¹²

Don Bosco was constantly present to his boys, not so much to prevent evil as to let them perceive and assimilate his own human and Christian values. As a matter of fact, many of his boys became like him. They absorbed his values as concretely lived out by him, not merely passed on to them as abstract norms. The young absorb concrete values and not abstract norms. They tend to question norms. These can be gathered from books, talks, rules, etc. Virtue is learnt in a lived-out climate while moral principles can be enunciated in the abstract and learnt from books. The beauty, power, peace, joy and harmony of virtue can be transmitted only through persons living it and not enforced by laws.

Mutual presence is the key to Christ's way of educating his disciples. It was the key to Don Bosco's way of educating the youth, especially those who had been deprived of an education in human and Christian values in their homes because of traumatic social and family circumstances.

Salesian presence among the young is simply human and Christian. It is human because it is consonant with

man's nature and Christian because it is the way followed by Christ in educating his disciples. The educational genius of Don Bosco lies in the fact that he had a keen, natural and supernatural insight into this truth and was able to practise it in an extraordinary manner, as perhaps no other known educator, Christian or non-Christian, in the history of mankind has ever done.

Salesian presence is far from a policeman's presence among potentially troublesome youth. It is far from a disciplinarian's presence among those likely to be disorderly. It is not a preventive presence in the negative sense of the word, namely, to prevent negative conduct. It is a preventive presence in the positive sense of the word, namely, any presence is preventive of what is incompatible with a particular presence. It is a saving, formative presence. The new manual for Rectors says: "Assistance means being with the young. It is a presence that shares and therefore takes an interest and shows concern. It is a kind of solidarity that leans towards them, so to speak: 'Here in your midst I feel very much at home; it is really my life to be with you'. It is a saving presence which communicates the benefits of the spirit through confidence and friendship."¹³ Thus for example, the presence of my parents, friends or persons whom I esteem, prevents me from any conduct incompatible with their presence and the values which they stand for.

Often the young go astray and become problem persons not because of bad will but because they are deprived of the positive educative mutual presence of their parents and educators during their formative years. They do not have the benefit of a positive educative presence during those highly impressionable years. An educator's presence is always preventive, but in a positive sense. "Preventive" does not mean only to hinder something negatively, it means to "come before" the young wreck their life. It is based on the principle, that prevention is better than cure. It means to help youth morally, religiously, and culturally before they fall into bad habits.¹⁴

Don Bosco was able to supply a positive educative presence in a unique manner especially to those who grew up without its benefit and so intensely, that he was able to raise them to extraordinary heights of human and Christian maturity. This is also the task of the Salesian educator: "This presence affords us a true understanding of the world of the young and unites us with them in all the healthy aspects of their restless energy".¹⁵

b. Mutual Availability

The young have many psychological needs. When such needs arise, the educator must be readily available to them. If they can easily walk into each other's lives, many problems of growing up can be resolved. At times the educator may sense the inner conflicts within a youth. At other times a youth may need to consult an educator, if one is available.

Such mutual availability characterized Don Bosco's educative method. He could at the right moment whisper a word of counsel, encouragement, warning, etc., to his boys. They could in turn run up to him on the playground, in corridors, in the confessional et cetera, and have the reassurance of a father, friend and brother.

c. Mutual Guidance

Mutual presence and availability lead to mutual guidance. In his educative work, the educator needs to be constantly guided by his knowledge of the young. He understands more and more their psychology, their strengths, weaknesses, their capacity to absorb human and christian values, patterns of their response to his educative work, etc.

The young, too, need constantly to measure their conduct against the educator's value system as lived out and imparted through religious and moral instruction.

Such mutual guidance is essential for the formation of attitudes, habits and character. It leads the young to greater self-understanding. The wise educator will also become conscious of his own weakness and inadequacies in the work of education. He will strive to overcome them by prayer

and self-discipline, self-giving and self-sacrifice. Thus his work of education becomes a spirituality, a means of his own spiritual growth.

d. Mutual Trust and Freedom

Mutual presence, availability and guidance lead to ever growing mutual freedom and trust. Sometimes educators use aloofness and threats to enforce their will, their values, their views. But once the pressure is lifted, the young return to their old ways. But true education can take place only in a climate of mutual trust and freedom. The Salesian Constitutions say: "In imitating God's patience, we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom. We then accompany them, so that they may develop solid convictions and gradually assume the responsibility for the delicate process of their growth as human beings and as men of faith."¹⁶

Mutual freedom and trust are characteristic of the family. Don Bosco strove to create in his Houses an atmosphere of family, namely, mutual freedom and trust. As a result, he could use an extraordinary degree of freedom in educating his boys and they in turn could have perfect trust in him: "Don Bosco wanted everyone to feel at home in his establishments. The Salesian house becomes a family when affection is mutual and when all, both confreres and young people, feel welcome and responsible for the common good. In an atmosphere of mutual trust and daily forgiveness the need and joy of sharing everything is experienced, and relationships are governed not so much by recourse to rules as by faith and the promptings of the heart."¹⁷

5. FOUNDATION OF DON BOSCO'S EDUCATIVE APPROACH

Fortunately or unfortunately, Don Bosco did not develop a theory of education, not even a theory regarding his educative approach. It is a style: "Preventive system is a style of action proper to educators".¹⁸ This is true of his spirituality too. Don Bosco was simply not a man of theories. He relied upon human nature and the Gospels for his works. But he made a simple, yet profound statement about the

foundations of educational method: reason, religion and love. This statement is like the simple parables of Jesus or his paradoxical statements that have been etched on the memory, consciousness and imagination of mankind ever since. These three words, reason, religion and love, sum up the entire educative method of Don Bosco, his human-divine approach to educating youth.

a. Reason: the Human Element

In Don Bosco's mind the word "reason" is a comprehensive word. It means all that is positive and noble in man's nature. His educative approach is based on human nature and is adapted to the needs and demands of human nature.

People, and especially the young, have a natural insight into what is in accordance with human nature. Discipline, work, order, property, etc., are not alien to human nature. The young have a connatural instinct to sense when these are imposed upon them by an authoritarian educator and when they are demanded as part of their growing-up process.

It is not only reason that matters in education. Reasonableness is equally important. The reasonableness of an educative framework that is built up must be explained to the young. It is not enough to be reasonable, but reasonableness must be made evident to the young by the educator. They rebel against self-will, caprice, arbitrariness, idiosyncrasy, lack of self-control, authoritarianism, vindictiveness, possessiveness, domineering attitude, et cetera, in the educator and the expressions of the same in concrete educational arrangements.

Even sanctions and punishments must be according to reason and their reasonableness must be seen by offenders and non-offenders alike.

Appeal to human nature, reason and evident reasonableness of all educative requirements is, therefore, the bedrock of Don Bosco's educative approach: "This system is based entirely on reason, religion and loving kindness. Instead of constraint, it appeals to the resources of intelli-

gence, love and the desire for God, which everyone has in the depths of his being."¹⁹ Strictly speaking, there is nothing novel in this idea. What is novel and admirable is Don Bosco's personal insight into this enduring truth and the manner in which he embodied and expressed it in his own life and educative work. It is the unique incarnation of this truth that we admire and strive to imitate in Don Bosco.

b. Religion: the Religious Element

The second foundational principle of Don Bosco's method is religion. By religion, Don Bosco had in mind primarily the Catholic Christianity with which he was best acquainted. But we may note in passing that it is significant that he did not qualify it by adding Christian or Catholic religion. This certainly implies that in any educational effort appeal to religion is an essential element in the mind of Don Bosco.

Again the word religion is used in a wide and comprehensive sense. It includes religious sense, religious convictions, religious rites, prayers, devotions, etc.

Don Bosco was convinced that the harmonious maturing of a human person is possible only when he comes into contact with the transcendent dimension of his life. True education is possible only when the young are helped to be in the presence of God and ultimate values. If this is not done early enough in life the chances are that they will be warped personalities.

Without appealing to philosophical reasons, we may safely say that human experience bears out this truth. Other things being equal, religious sentiment has power to refine human attitudes. Modern psychologists such as Carl Jung confirm this statement.

According to Don Bosco the practice of religion through prayer, ritual, sacraments, popular festivals, et cetera, have an irreplaceable formative value in the education of youth.

In prayer, the youth is able to commune with God. In God's presence, he learns to view life from an angle different

from all others. Perceiving God's will and law makes it easier to accept self-discipline as well as educative discipline.

The practice of religion in its various forms contributes to the formation of a right conscience. The formation of an enlightened and educated conscience is vital for an individually and socially well-integrated adult life.

Religion also places before its adherents models of integrated personalities. This is true of science, literature, art, etc. Every area of human activity has its heroes whom people look up to, for example, inspiration and help. Such heroes in religion are called "saints". Young persons need to be exposed to "saints" in their formative years.

For Don Bosco, religion, Christian religion, was the second most powerful educative force. In fact the place where he met and gathered his boys and carried out his educative work was called "oratory", a place of prayer. He taught the young to pray, that is, to enter into deep communion with God their creator.

In all religions, communion with God is mediated through symbols called sacraments. The Christian sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation were the concrete means Don Bosco used to educate the consciences of the young, strengthen their character, and appeal to their nobler sentiments.

The Christian heroes of virtues of faith, hope and love of God and neighbour, the saints, were constantly placed before the young as models for them to imitate. Saints like Aloysius Gonzaga, St Francis of Sales and, most of all, Mary the mother of Jesus, were constantly held up to them as models of virtues, as inspiration and supporters in their life-struggles.

By means of religion Don Bosco appealed to the nobler sentiments of the young and drew out what was best in them. This is what education really means: drawing out and helping to develop what is good in the young. In the use of religion too the great educator of Turin was unique not so much in the idea itself but in the manner and extent. His

genius was not in weaving out a web of theories about the use of religion in education but in living it in a unique manner. For this reason he continues to be an inspiration to all educators, Christian and non-Christian.

Don Bosco's emphasis in Christian education was always a positive one. Thus he often spoke of the beauty of virtue, both human and Christian and the ugliness of vice. He was able, therefore, to inspire the young to extraordinary heights of holiness.

c. Love: the Psychological Element

The third factor on which the entire educational approach of Don Bosco rests is love, kindness, charity, or whatever other name we might give to genuine interest, concern and readiness to serve the young which an educator should have. Again, the love that Don Bosco spoke of is both human and Christian. This too is significant since it has an application to a non-Christian context also.

It is axiomatic that nothing grows, develops and attains to maturity in a hostile or unfavorable climate. Things grow and mature only in a favourable, congenial climate. This is true of inanimate and animate beings, but most of all of human beings.

The earliest education of a person takes place in the family and usually it has permanent overtones in one's life. And family means, more than any other material things, love. Human beings perceive, accept and assimilate values, especially moral and human values only in a climate of love. "There must be a communication of values and truths. A good educational environment entails the presence of models of behaviour whose witness guarantees the value of the plan of life offered and ensures the success of the commitments made".²⁰ Merely informational, scientific, technological values are emotionally neutral and are accepted and put into operation even outside the context of friendly, kindly, loving interpersonal relationships. But personal values that shape the temper of a concrete human personality are accepted only within a climate of Love. Love

is the only congenial and favourable climate for "human" growth and education is all about human growth. Don Bosco's method "brings together educators and youngsters in a family experience of trust and dialogue".²¹

Outside the climate of love, there is only rebellion, rejection, indifference. Thus the Manual for Rectors says: "A sound educational approach demands that those being educated gradually deepen the motivation for their external behaviour through profound personal experience. Otherwise, when a young person leaves the particular setting in which he is being educated, he runs the risk of leaving aside the values which that environment had emphasized."²² Human values cannot be imposed any more than love and friendship can be imposed. This is especially true of the young. Without the atmosphere of love, human values die out, even when they seem to have taken root. The young are usually wary, suspicious and fearful of any values presented to them if not wrapped in the acceptable coating of love. Fear and suspicion can be removed only by love. What John the Evangelist wrote long ago is valid for all times: "Perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love" (I Jn. 4:18). According to Don Bosco, we should take youth as they are: "Imitating God's patience, we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom. We then accompany them, so that they may develop solid convictions and gradually assume the responsibility for the delicate process of their growth as human beings and as men of faith."²³

On many counts Don Bosco understood the supreme educational value of love: "For him it meant recognizing the need for the young and their educators to be with one another and to live the same formative process together. His experience taught him that many attitudes and behavioural patterns are more easily picked up by youngsters if transmitted in the spontaneous atmosphere of daily living. In this context the importance of 'assistance' (friendly presence) is readily understood."²⁴ He had experienced the most tender

love of a mother and friends in his childhood and boyhood days. He also experienced rejection, and indifference and callousness both at home and in his neighbourhood during his early years.

Don Bosco was also naturally and supernaturally capable of giving and receiving intense love. He could love with the intensity of a mother, father, brother and friend. In turn, and as occasions and persons demanded and needed, he was capable of every type of genuine human love. What was said of John Henry Newman could be literally applied to Don Bosco and his capacity to attract friends and influence them: "We who had never seen such another man, and to whom he appeared, perhaps, at special advantage in contrast with the normal college don, came to regard Newman with the affection of pupils (though pupils strictly speaking he had none) for an idolised master. The simplest word which dropped from him was treasured as if it had been an intellectual diamond. For hundreds of young men *Credo in Newmannum* was the genuine symbol of faith."²⁵

Don Bosco was capable in a unique manner of another type of love: the way Christ loved his disciples. He had mastered Christ's way of loving perhaps more than any other person whom we know of in history. He could love with a sacrificial love, a love that impelled him to serve, to give, to sacrifice himself.

Don Bosco's love was highly balanced love, without the pitfalls that lie in wait for many persons. He could love intensely but without possessiveness and exclusiveness which betray selfishness in the very expression of love. His love was free from emotional dependence which is a sign of personal immaturity and insecurity.

Don Bosco was a supreme master of human and Christian love and he knew how to express it in words and deeds, to let his boys experience it and thus create the atmosphere of a family, one of trust, freedom and growth, a climate congenial to human and Christian growth²⁶. Such an educative climate produces what he called simply a "family

spirit" because it embodies the love of a mother, father, brother and friend to the boys: "His love is that of a father, brother and friend, able to draw out friendship in return; this is the loving-kindness so much recommended by Don Bosco".²⁷

Once again, there is nothing original about the idea of love. What is original is the man Don Bosco, capable of incarnating human and Christian love to the young in the work of education as few other persons in the history of mankind have done.

In conclusion, Don Bosco's educative method rests on the three solid foundations of reason, religion and love, valid for all times, places, and peoples. We have also seen that Don Bosco used these three words not in their abstract, but in their concrete meaning. Besides, he imparted a new meaning to them. For him reason becomes "reasonableness", religion, "religiousness" and love "lovableness" in the educator and these appear and appeal to the young and call for a positive response to the values presented by the educator.

Don Bosco thus used a peculiar word to indicate the above meaning: "amorevoleza". We may add to this the other two corresponding words, "religiosita" and "ragionevoleza" (religiousness and reasonableness).

6. DON BOSCO: A CONCRETE EXAMPLE AND RESULTS

a. Example

Don Bosco left no theory of education. His was simply a human way of educating, Christ's way of educating his disciples, the Gospel way of educating. Thus the Salesian Constitutions say: "Reading the Gospel we become more aware of certain aspects of the figure of the Lord: gratitude to the Father for the gift of a divine vocation offered to all men; predilection for the little ones and the poor; zeal in preaching, healing and saving because of the urgency of the coming of the Kingdom; the preoccupation of the Good Shepherd who wins hearts by gentleness and self-giving; the

desire to gather his disciples into the unity of brotherly communion."²⁸

b. Results

With the aid of reason, religion and love Don Bosco was able to mould young people with temperaments of every kind into mature persons. While allowing for individuality and idiosyncracies, he was able to draw out from each what was best in them with his appeal to reason, religion and love. No heart remained closed, locked or hardened to his appeal. Through reason, religion and love he could enter their innermost sanctum and challenge, evoke, summon, warn, admonish, exhort, and invite his boys to greater human and Christian heights of conduct and achievement. He had every one's ear and every one had his ear. "By the preventive system, pupils acquire a better understanding, so that the educator can always speak to them in the language of the heart, not only during the time of their education but even afterwards. Having once succeeded in gaining the confidence of his pupils he can subsequently exercise a greater influence over them, and counsel them, advise and even correct them, whatever position they may occupy in the world later on."²⁹

The validity of his educational method is borne out by the concrete results he produced. By means of reason, religion and love he was able to produce extraordinary men: ecclesiastics, missionaries, administrators, scholars, educators, leaders, craftsmen, musicians, organizers, explorers and saints.

7. DON BOSCO'S EDUCATIVE METHOD AND SALESIAN SPIRITUALITY

a. A Method of Personal Education: a Personal Spirituality

Don Bosco's legacy to us, his followers the world over, is now not a theory of education but the saint himself shining into our lives across a distance of a hundred years, inviting, inspiring and exhorting us to be educators like him. Don Bosco and his educative method must become for the

Salesian a spirituality, for himself and for his educative ministry, whether in the school, the youth centre, the parish, or the mission centre, among Christians and non-Christians.

In the first place, Don Bosco was a man of reason, religion and love. Reason, religion and love shaped his life and made him a harmonious personality: "We Salesians admire in him the splendid harmony of grace and nature... He was profoundly human and just as profoundly, a man of God. These two aspects fuse together in the one project that unified his life: work for youth."³⁰ Don Bosco's personal educative method must become our personal educative method. This will mean for many Salesians who have completed the years of initial formation, an ongoing formation.

If the centenary of this extraordinary educator is to be in any way meaningful and relevant, it will not be through solemn concelebrations, glossy brochures, triumphalistic centenary publications, speeches, articles, eulogies about Don Bosco, seminars, symposia, commemorative souvenirs, etc., but by the use of Don Bosco's educative method by all Salesians as their personal educative method. We must educate ourselves, form ourselves through reason, religion, love and thus become like Don Bosco, not theorising about his method, but living out his method in ourselves. This is what Don Bosco is asking us to do now. "Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you... then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose."³¹

Don Bosco's method of education is a spirituality for the Salesians. "Don Bosco passes this on to us as a way of living and of handing on the Gospel message, and of working with and through the young for their salvation. It permeates our approach to God, our personal relationships, and our manner of living in community through the exercise of a charity that knows how to make itself loved".³²

For Don Bosco, reason, religion and love were the specific ways of achieving Christian holiness and perfection. They

were the unique way he chose to become a mature human person, mature as a man and a Christian. The Church has put its seal on this specific approach to God, this spirituality, in canonizing Don Bosco: "Submissive to the bidding of the Spirit we are resolved to carry out the Founder's apostolic plan in a specific form of religious life: to be in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor. By carrying out his mission we find our own way to holiness".³³ Canonization does not immediately mean glorification of the individual or even of God, though, both God and the canonized person are glorified in the process of canonization. But the word should be taken in its original meaning: a criterion, a standard, a way, a norm. Don Bosco through canonization becomes a canon for those who are drawn to him as his spiritual followers. Don Bosco is the Salesian's canon in the process of human and Christian maturity, holiness and perfection.

Don Bosco is a canon, a criterion of life, a norm of life, a way to God, a spirituality for the Salesian. He is a standard for personal maturing: "Don Bosco condensed for his sons all the spirituality of apostolic action."³⁴

Many of us have a subtle misconception that Don Bosco's educative method is for the benefit of children, youth and ordinary people. There is no doubt that it is also for others. But it is, in the first instance, for each one of us. A Salesian must make Don Bosco's way of personal maturing his own: "To put it briefly, Don Bosco's system produces good pupils because in the first place it produces good educators. Hence the Salesians of Don Bosco cannot adequately grasp the meaning of their mission without reflecting seriously on that educational and pastoral system which Don Bosco left us as a precious legacy"³⁵. The emphasis in his self-perfective efforts is on reason, religion and love. They will also form his principal means of asceticism. While the Benedictines, the Franciscans, the Jesuits and others have other emphases, other orientations, namely, spiritualities, the Salesian's spirituality consists in living by reason, religion and love and

his asceticism is expressed in his rejection of all that goes against reason, religion and love in his own personal life. Such emphasis on reason, religion and love in one's pilgrimage to God becomes the distinguishing mark of his religious consecration as a Salesian: "It is an essential aspect of their religious consecration to God"³⁶.

Don Bosco's method of education is intended to be self-educative for the Salesian. This is what he was told in his well known "dream" at the age of nine: "Make yourself strong and obedient...she will teach you". His method should become and continue to be self-educative for every Salesian.

b. A Method of Community Education: a Community Spirituality

Don Bosco's method of education should also become community-educative. Sometimes we may forget that we need to practise Don Bosco's educative method within the Salesian community. Community relationships should be guided by reason, religion and love. These were the principles according to which Don Bosco related to his initial collaborators and later on his spiritual sons and confreres. This is what he expects of the Salesians: "We bring about in our works the educative and pastoral community which involves young people and adults, parents and educators in a family atmosphere, so that it can become a living experience of Church and a revelation of God's plan for us"³⁷.

Don Bosco practised the method of Christian education with his own confreres. He was, therefore, able to build up educative communities. It is no secret that one of the major problems of all Religious Congregations is the problem of bringing together adult persons of disparate temperaments, varying perceptions of life and ministry and divergent views and emphasis on apostolate. This is also one of the major problems affecting the Salesian Congregation. Don Bosco was able, in an extraordinary manner, to bring people of different temperaments, ideals and emphasis together in a united search for personal and community growth and

service to others through apostolic works and pastoral ministry. The secret of Don Bosco in moulding Christians and apostolic communities was his educative approach through reason, religion and love.

During this centenary year, Salesian Communities should lay greater stress on making Don Bosco's method of Christian education the means of community formation and on-going community education. His principles of mutual presence, mutual availability, mutual guidance and mutual freedom and trust are as valid for the Salesian community as they are for the young. In fact, we cannot exercise them in our Salesian educative work unless we have learnt to exercise them in our Salesian religious communities.

c. *A Method of Pastoral Education and Evangelization: a Missionary and Pastoral Spirituality*

Much has been written on this theme and hence I shall be brief on this point. Don Bosco's educative method is meant not only for his own personal education and for community education but it is essentially directed to the young and to the masses, both Christian and non-Christian: "Faithful to the commitments Don Bosco has passed on to us, we are evangelizers of the young, and the more so if they are poor; we pay special attention to apostolic vocations; we are educators of the faith for the working classes, particularly by means of social communication; we proclaim the Gospel to those who have not yet received it".³⁸ Don Bosco was endowed with special natural and supernatural qualities, talents and charisms for a particular pastoral and evangelising task in the world.

The 19th century, in which Don Bosco lived, witnessed extraordinary changes in society and the Church: the industrial revolution, a new style of papacy, new winds of change in the Church with Vatican 1, new philosophical trends, a shift towards democratization of politics and government from monarchical and authoritarian systems of government and social organization, universalization of education, emphasis on human dignity, freedom and

equality, socialization of wealth and means of production, the introduction of trade unions, workers' participation in the organization of labour and production, marketing, emphasis on the dignity of labour, especially manual labour, new philosophical currents of rationalism, secularism and the process of secularization, independence movements, new evangelisation movements in Asia, Africa and South America. All these called for a new educative and pastoral approach.

It was the genius of Don Bosco to perceive the urgent need for a new educative, pastoral and evangelizing approach consonant with the times, the aspirations of peoples everywhere for human dignity, a share in the wealth of the nations, self-expression and self-fulfilment. His educative method through reason, religion and love was his specific answer to the needs of the times.

It was a method of the pastoral education of youth, uprooted from their traditional social, religious and economic moorings and thrown into the vortex of industrial and cultural revolution, the urbanization and democratization process of the 19th century. It was also a method of pastoral care of the masses.

Don Bosco's immense pastoral success with the youth of Europe and the Christian populace must be attributed to his new pastoral approach and style: "Don Bosco lived a pastoral experience in his first Oratory which serves as a model; it was for youngsters a home that welcomed, a parish that evangelized, a school that prepared them for life, and a playground where friends could meet and enjoy themselves".³⁹

Don Bosco's educative method contributed substantially to a new style of evangelization with non-Christian peoples. Once again, it was not through an abstract theory but by living out concretely a new style of evangelisation based on respect, love, concern, interest in the people to whom the Good News was brought by his followers.

His educative method scored immense success with people normally known to be impervious to the Christian

message, even savagely opposed to it. The secret again was his educative formula of reason, religion and love. Wherever the Salesians have undertaken the work of evangelization in South America, Asia and Africa, there has been notable success, other things being equal, and the underlying reason for the success was the use of the Salesian educative method as a method of evangelisation. This fact is evidenced by the constant demands made on the Salesian congregation by the Church hierarchy for evangelisation in new fields.

Don Bosco's "dreams may be classified in three categories, whatever may have been their origin, whether they were supernatural visions, or the product of his fertile imagination, or the fabrication of his inventive pastoral mind".⁴⁰ First, personal dreams about himself, his human and Christian formation. These were mostly in his formative years. Second, pastoral dreams dealing with his first pastoral ministry towards the youth of his times. These, no doubt, constitute the largest number of his dreams. Third, his missionary dreams, dealing with evangelisation in Latin America, Africa and Asia. They belong to the second stage in his apostolic ministry. Though fewer in number, they are equally significant for an understanding of Don Bosco and his educative method.

Here I am using the word "educative" in its widest connotation. Christ came to re-educate man to a new vision of God, of fellowmen and of life. He came to teach man a new way of life, as God's children and as brothers and sisters to one another. Christ was a teacher, the teacher of nations: "I will make you a light to the nations" (Is 42:6). Christ was a "rabbi". He was often called "teacher". He went around teaching in the synagogues of the towns and villages of Palestine. Christ was an educator, teaching men to be truly human.

Like Christ, Don Bosco was a teacher, an educator not only of Christian youth, but of all peoples. The key to his

method of evangelization was again reason, religion and love. His classic advice to the first missionaries whom he sent to Patagonia was an illustration of the principles of his educative method of mutual presence, mutual guidance, mutual availability, mutual freedom and trust: "Take special care of the sick, of the young, of the old and of the poor; and you will win the blessing of God and the goodwill of men. Show respect towards persons in authority whether civil or religious. Love, revere and respect other religious orders, and always speak well of them. In this way you will be esteemed by all, and will promote the good of our congregation."⁴¹ His approach is characterised by respect, love and concern especially for the more vulnerable sections of society, the poor, the youth, the sick. Though he spoke the 19th century theological and sociological and missionary language, there is something that is fresh and contemporary about it. His primary concern was not with numbers and baptisms, but with love, respect, concern, presence, sharing, etc. We can only wonder at the depth of his insights and imagine to ourselves what he would have said and done in the Asian situation. But he has given us the basics of our evangelistic approach in Asia today: respect, concern, interest, identification with the poor and the needy, sharing.

8. ASIAN CONTEXT

a. Uprooted Youth Situation

I intend here to deal with the Asian situation in so far as it is related to our subject though not in a comprehensive manner.

Like other Third World continents, Asia is a continent of the young. This is true in many ways, especially demographically. This is significant for the followers of Don Bosco who said: "it is enough that you are young, for me to love you." Youth was the first love and concern of Don Bosco. If he were alive today, he would become the father of Asian youth in new ways adapted to the youth of Asia.

b. Peoples to be 'Evangelised'

Asia is the continent of "unevangelized" peoples. Apropos of evangelization, I have advisedly put the word evangelized in inverted commas to signify that it does not have any derogatory sense, but only to mean that we are not, and have not been, able to share the Gospel values and the "inexhaustible riches" of Christ with the Asian peoples in any significant manner.

"Unevangelized" peoples were Don Bosco's second love and the concern of his mature years: "People still awaiting the Gospel message were the special objects of his concern and apostolic effort. They continue to stimulate our zeal and keep it alive. We look upon missionary work as an essential feature of our congregation".⁴² His heart went out to all "unevangelized" peoples. His mind and imagination dwelt constantly on the theme of world-wide evangelizing efforts and it found expression in his missionary dreams.

Today he would share the riches of Christ with the peoples of Asia, not in a triumphalistic, conquistadorial and demographical spirit, outlook and presuppositions, but in a spirit of sharing, mutual respect, mutual service and enrichment.

We may, therefore, safely say that Don Bosco has a very special significance for Asia and Asia has a very special meaning for Don Bosco. If that is true, then Asia has a very special significance for the Salesian Congregation as a whole and for the Asian Salesian in particular and in turn, Salesians, have a special significance for Asia, which is based on history, pastoral and evangelizing methods, namely, Don Bosco's educative method.

The centenary is an opportunity, an invitation and a challenge to the Salesian congregation to discern this significance of Don Bosco for Asia and, in turn, Asia for Don Bosco and the Salesian family.

There is yet another reason that brings Don Bosco and Asia together. Gradually, the axis of the Church is shifting

from the First World into The Third world as Western society becomes more and more secularised. With this shift, the axis of the Congregation is bound to shift from the Western world where Don Bosco's educative method was born, developed and matured, to the Third World. Already about one sixth of the Salesian Congregation is in Asia.

In such a situation a new opportunity is offered and new responsibility placed upon the Asian Salesian Congregation to understand well, and creatively apply Don Bosco's educative method to the Asian situation: "Through our missionary activity we carry out a patient work of evangelization by founding the Church within a group of people. This work mobilizes all the educational and pastoral means proper to our charism".⁴³

c. The Asian Revolution

Asia is in the throes of a revolution, industrial and cultural; much the same as Europe underwent in Don Bosco's day. There is a rapid change from an agrarian society to an urban industrial society in Asia.

An immense number of people, the youth and the working classes, are being uprooted in the process of industrialization, urbanization and workers' migration in Asia. This was also the social situation faced by Don Bosco in the 19th century. Don Bosco's mission was directed specifically to the youth and the working classes. The followers of Don Bosco are today in a situation similar to Don Bosco's then, and they have an opportunity to meet the Asian situation with the creative adaptation and application of Don Bosco's educative method to the Asian social and religious situation and need.

9. SALESIAN EDUCATIVE RESPONSE

a. A Personal Response

In pastoral ministry, Don Bosco responded mostly to three classes of persons: the uprooted youth of his times, the working classes and the "unevangelized". The method he used for all these was his educative method based on

reason, religion and love.

Asian Salesians are called now to make a similar response to the industrially and culturally uprooted youth of Asia. They must respond to the needs of the growing number of working class people. They must respond to the millions of unevangelized peoples and their spiritual aspirations. In all these, the method, the approach is basically suggested and developed by Don Bosco himself and left to the Salesians as his personal legacy, much more than a theory. But it calls for a creative adaptation and application of the educative method of Don Bosco to the Asian situation: "From that time onwards, the plan which Don Bosco looked upon as his experience to be transmitted and be lived again by others, will constantly have to respect its own permanent values on the one hand, and on the other it will have to be enriched by practical contact with the conditions and experiences of young people: thus these values will take on a local colour and form, a project which is in tune with the times".⁴⁴

b. *A Methodological Response*

An adequate response to the three categories of people in Asia, whom Salesians are called upon to serve, can only be made if Asian Salesians assimilate Don Bosco's educative method as a means of personal growth, community functioning, and pastoral and evangelizing approach.

Such assimilation cannot be done by centenary or other celebrations but through the presence of a growing number of Salesians who can and do incarnate Don Bosco's educative method in our midst. As Don Bosco did not communicate his educative method through theories but by living it out in the midst of his confreres, Asian Salesians must also resolve and strive to incarnate in their own lives the educative method of Don Bosco, whether it be as a personal educative method, a community-educative method or a pastoral-evangelizing method: "Our vocation calls us to be deeply united with the world and its history. Open to the cultural values of the lands in which we work, we try to

understand them and make them our own, so as to incarnate in them the message of the Gospel."⁴⁵

Professing the Constitutions of the Society of St Francis of Sales means precisely this. Professing to follow Don Bosco means essentially personalising his educative method.

c. A Formation Response

Our formation efforts must shift from their present emphasis on numbers, to helping candidates for Salesian life to assimilate Don Bosco's educative method for themselves and for their community living and for their apostolate.

In every stage of formation, candidates must be evaluated on their capacity to live by reason, religion and love. They should be helped to become more and more amenable to the appeal of reason, religion and love in their personal, community and apostolic lives. "In the context of a society characterized by pluralism and rapid changes, the evolving nature of each individual and the quality and fruitfulness of our apostolic religious life calls for an ongoing formation after the initial phases. We try to grow in our human qualities, to conform ourselves more closely to Christ, and to renew our fidelity to Don Bosco, so that we can respond to the ever new demands arising from the situation of the young and poor".⁴⁶

d. A Creative Response

Don Bosco was a man of his times, even though in many things he was a century ahead of many of his contemporaries. He spoke the language of his times. He responded to the specific needs of his times and according to the manner of his times. Today we need to re-apply Don Bosco's educative method while preserving its essentials: "More specifically it means you must 'preserve and renew the fidelity of the confreres to the pastoral principles of the preventive system'. The elements you have to renew are those situational characteristics which must accompany the permanent ones you always preserve".⁴⁷ His theological and pastoral presup-

positions were those of the 19th century Church. Today we live and work in new situations. This fact calls for a creative response to the Asian situation by means of a creative application of the educative method of Don Bosco: "Our Salesian pastoral approach is open to the use of new instruments and new methods but does not reject the perennial and vital values of the past".⁴⁸

(i) *Appeal to Asian Religious Values*

Thus, Don Bosco's emphasis on religion in his educative method will call for a fresh analysis and application. By religion Don Bosco immediately had in mind the Christian religion, its sacraments, ritual, devotions, practices, et cetera. Yet, as mentioned earlier, his unqualified use of the word warrants us to conclude legitimately that we as Salesians, working mostly among non-Christian youth must make use of the positive values of other Asian religions, Hinduism, Bhuddhism, tribal religions, et cetera. They do contain precious human values of reason, religion and love and are complementary: "Don Bosco's mission is an expressly Christian one, even when it is carried out on behalf of those who do not share our religious faith. Even in those cases it is intrinsically open to the Christian dimension. There is a qualitative distinction between the process of human development and the process of salvation in Christ, but in practice these two processes are of mutual help to each other".⁴⁹

We have been educating large numbers of Asian youth belonging to Asian religions. On the one hand, we are not able to use the Christian religion and its practices in our educative work for obvious and not so obvious reasons. The tendency so far, therefore, has been to downplay the use of religion in our educative work for non-Christian youth. This is to truncate Don Bosco's educative method substantially. If this defect in our educative work is to be corrected, the Asian Salesian must begin to use the values of Asian religions in the education of the Asian youth: "Following the example of the Son of God, who made himself in all things

like his fellowmen, the Salesian missionary makes his own the values of these people and shares their hopes and anxieties".⁵⁰

The saying: "If you want to teach Gopal, Sanskrit, it is not enough to know Sanskrit and even possibly have a degree in it and in didactic methods; you must know Gopal", is valid also for Salesian educators. They must know Gopal's religious background. They must be familiar with the religious values, consciously or unconsciously held and upon which he operates, if they are to appeal to his positive religious values in education.

There are many sublime and inspiring values in Asian religions but little emphasis has been laid on learning Asian religious values and appealing to them in their educative work by Asian Salesians.

Asian religions have many significant religious rites and sacraments (Samskaras) which can be brought into our educative work without the fear of religious and liturgical syncretism. Hindu festivals like "Dipali" and "Onam" contain educative values. These and other religious festivals and rites cannot totally be dismissed as superstitious practices. True, whatever smacks of superstition, error and idolatry must be eschewed. This has been the constant teaching of the Church and it can be a safe guide for Salesians also.

(ii) Appeal to Asian 'Saints'

In placing models of holy men before youth in Asia, especially non-Christian youth, Salesians can no longer restrict themselves to Christian saints. Even Pope John Paul II during his pastoral journeys through Asia referred to Asian holy men like Mahatma Gandhi and held them up as persons worthy of imitation by all, even by Christians. If that be so, with even greater legitimacy should Salesians appeal to non-Christian students to imitate the holy men of their countries and religions. We can no longer continue to place before them only Dominic Savio or Laura Vicuna as models of virtue.

All this calls for a new kind of formation for future Asian Salesians, one which acquaints them adequately with Asian religions, their positive values, their rites and "sacraments", their modes of prayer, their popular religious festivals, their age-old scriptures. Only then can they make use of religion as a means of educating non-Christian youth.

Such acquaintance with the non-Christian religions can also enrich the personal and community growth and maturation of Salesians. Thus for example Zen and yoga meditation and ways of concentration can certainly lead to personal and community enrichment.

(iii) *Appeal to Reason*

I said earlier that the word "reason" is used in its broadest sense. In using this word, Don Bosco was not referring to abstract and universal reason, but to concrete and particular reason, to concrete human nature, incarnate in concrete historical cultures.

Don Bosco's educative method was based not only on abstract human nature and reason but upon concrete human nature and reason. Hence he attempted to understand the psychology of each boy and each group of boys. His educative approach was tailored to the age, national and ethnic characteristics of the young. His educative approach took into account individual and national psychologies.

Salesian educators must understand the concrete "human nature" of Asian youth with their ethnic and national characteristics and take these into account in their appeal to reason in their educative work.

These are somewhat new areas of creative application of Don Bosco's educative approach and Asian Salesians will need a new kind of formation in order to grasp Asian "reason" and Asian "human nature" and continued study of Asian youth psychology.

(iv) *Appeal to the Asian Heart*

Don Bosco loved what his boys loved in order to lead them

to love what he loved. This is an important and significant norm for Asian Salesians in their attempt to apply Don Bosco's educative method creatively to the Asian situation. This principle is applicable not only to sports, games, music, et cetera., which the young everywhere love. Apart from these things which youth everywhere love, there are Asian values which Asian youth love.

So far, little thought has been given to such creative application of Don Bosco's method either because many Salesians came from abroad with Western cultural values and tastes or because some Asian Salesians have had their cultural tastes conditioned by years of formation in the West or because of a false, though perhaps unconscious, assumption that Western cultural values and tastes are superior to Asian cultural values and tastes, or because Asian Christian communities are still insufficiently incarnated in Asian cultures. They still carry the burden of Western theological, liturgical, devotional, artistic, architectural expressions and patterns. Hence loving Asian cultural values comes only laboriously to them, if at all.

10. CONCLUSION

(a) A New Name and a New Understanding

Don Bosco's educative method is an extraordinarily rich and comprehensive approach to the formation of an integral human person and possibly an integral Christian. His method is based on integral Christian humanism. Such a rich and complex reality needs to be called by a far better name, than "Preventive System of Education" which as we have seen is a misnomer, for it is neither a system, nor preventive, nor a theory of education. It is simply a human-divine approach towards the formation of the integral human person.

At the close of a century of usage of this misnomer, we should discard it and begin to call it by a far more positive name, indicative of its rich and varied contents. I suggest that it be called "Don Bosco's Educative Method" or "Don

Bosco's Method of Christian Education". The first name exceeds in length the old misnomer by only one word, is short enough, and adequately conveys its full content.

The new title will convey a positive idea of Don Bosco's educative approach. It will also highlight the specific and highly personal character of a new formative educative approach. This is the case with the spirituality of the Jesuits which is referred to as "Ignatian Spirituality".

An accurate caption is important to convey all the positive contents of the method. It will also help to avoid its being misunderstood by those unacquainted with our Salesian background and jargon, and will prevent superficial criticism of our educative method by the ignorant, the shallow or the prejudiced.

A positive name will also help towards its wider acceptance in educational circles by those seeking for models. Such a name will also mean the popularization and spread of the charism and educational spirituality of Don Bosco. All this will lead to a sharing of our Salesian heritage and riches with a wider circle of Christians and non-Christians during the coming century. Thus Don Bosco will continue to serve new generations of youth and educators of youth all over the world. This can truly be the contribution which the Salesian Congregation makes to the 21st century and the specific contribution which the Asian Salesians can make to the youth and peoples of Asia, both Christian and non-Christian.

(b) A Creative Contribution

Don Bosco developed his educative method in a predominantly Christian, social and theological milieu. But his "missionary" dreams foresaw the spread of his educative method among adherents of animistic religions as well as among the followers of the great classical Asian religions, Hinduism and Buddhism.

On the other hand, Don Bosco himself had neither the opportunity nor the time to unfold the lineaments of his

educative method inculturated and developed in a non-Christian social and religious milieu. This is a task that is left to his followers and successors. Besides, the great classical and animistic religions of Asia have many values that find an echo in Don Bosco's educative method. The values of reason, religion and love are very much a part of the Asian cultural and religious heritage, even if they are not always practised.

As we have seen earlier, Don Bosco's educative method was as much a method intended by him for formal educative work in schools and informally in youth centres (oratories) as an evangelizing method which it proved to be in South America even during his own life time. Perhaps the first centenary of Don Bosco's death is an appropriate time to make a creative application of his educative method to the work of evangelization in Asia. Here again, Asian Salesians have great challenges, opportunities and responsibilities to make a creative application of Don Bosco's educative method to the Asian situation and thus make a permanent contribution to the Asian peoples and the Asian Church: "We offer the particular Church the contribution of our work and Salesian pedagogy and we receive from it direction and support".⁵¹

(c) A New Approach to Formation

If the new century which the Salesian Congregation, and especially the Asian Salesian Congregation, is entering into is to make a creative contribution to the Asian Church and Asian peoples, the formation patterns prevailing now will have to undergo substantial modification. Such modification has already taken place at the theoretical level with the new Ratio on formation and studies. But new wine cannot be poured into old wineskins. The new wine will blend with and be lost in the old. The old will continue to give its colour and taste to the new, and the old wineskins will remain as strong as ever.

What is required is a return to the spirit of Valdocco.⁵² The main task of the leaders of the Congregation will be to

recreate the spirit that prevailed in the "Oratory" of Valdocco under Don Bosco: "As we carry out our mission today, the Valdocco experience is still the lasting criterion for discernment and renewal in all our activities and works".⁵³ His educative method, we said, is not a theory, not a system. A system, a theory, can be mastered without a living context. But Don Bosco's method is not easily learnt that way. We have to create the lived context, the proper climate in which it can be breathed in, almost spontaneously. This is what Don Bosco's first disciples and collaborators did.

This is a difficult task before the Salesian Congregation as it enters the second century after the death of Don Bosco. But it is the only way we can keep him alive during this second century. It will call for an extraordinary amount of soul-searching, self, community and congregational discernment, courage and strength on the part of the leaders of the Congregation and a readiness for conversion on the part of all the members.

(d) The Salesian Heritage and Wealth

Don Bosco's Educative Method is a comprehensive approach to the formation of the integral person, whether it be of the uprooted youth of the 20th century, the working classes or the peoples to be "evangelized". It is the greatest treasure the Salesian Congregation has. It is Don Bosco's enduring legacy to us, the Church and the world. It is the most significant expression of the various aspects of the whole personal and apostolic life of Don Bosco. This is so true that Don Caviglia in fact equates the two: Don Bosco's Educative Method is Don Bosco. The formation of the First Salesians consisted precisely in learning to live and practise Don Bosco's Educative Method and this was also the tradition in the formation of succeeding generations. Don Albera draws on this early tradition when he writes: "The preventive system is the magna carta of our Congregation."⁵⁴ It is the content of the last will and testament of Don Bosco as he himself wrote: "Finally, I want to let you know that my health is rapidly deteriorating. I can feel myself

getting weaker, and I foresee that the day on which I shall pay my tribute to death and descend into the grave is not far off. If that should happen soon, and if this be the last letter I write to you, here is my fourth and last recommendation: I recommend to your charity all the works which God has deigned to entrust to me during the course of almost fifty years; I recommend that you be concerned with the Christian education of youth, with vocations to the priesthood and with the foreign missions; but in a very special way I recommend to you the care of poor and abandoned youth, who were always the portion dearest to my heart here below...."⁵⁵

The first centenary of Don Bosco's death is an appropriate occasion to go back in memory to 31st January, 1888 and look upon his countenance now rendered expressionless by the cold-hand of death. But the reason, the religion and the love that characterised his life are still etched forever on his countenance and "mortuus adhuc loquitur". While we contemplate in memory a unique spiritual father and guide, we are gladdened by the thought that his spirit has been breathed forth into our smaller lives and that we can, we desire to and we will go forth with his spirit of reason, religion and love to serve the youth, the working classes and the "unevangelized" peoples of Asia.

As we depart from Don Bosco's coffin, and walk down memory lane and enter the reality of the 21st century Asia we can only pray with the prophet's words: "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit...My father! My father!". (II Kg. 2:9-12). It may not happen individually that each of us will have a double share of Don Bosco's spirit, but perhaps collectively, it could happen. And as the disciples of Elijah and Elisha, who were watching said, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha", so the Church and the peoples of Asia who watch us could say: "The Spirit of Don Bosco is resting on his Sons!"

NOTES

1. Don Bosco's educative method has been called by different names. They all point to one fact, that it is not a system. Thus it is called "a style." It is called "an art of education". Don Bosco himself called it "the so called preventive system".
Cfr. P. Braido, *Il Sistema Preventivo di Don Bosco*, Pas-Verlag, Rome-Zurich, 1964.
—, (ed.) Giovanni (s.) Bosco, "Il Sistema Preventivo nella Educazione della Gioventu", n. 5, *Piccola Biblioteca dell'Istituto Storico Salesiano*, Las-Roma, 1985, p. 88.
—, "Il 'Sistema Preventivo' in un 'Decalogo' per Educatori, Ricerche Storiche Salesiane, IV—N. 1 (6) 1985.
—, *La Lettera di Don Bosco da Roma del 10 maggio 1884*, n. 3, *Piccola Biblioteca dell'Istituto Storico Salesiano*, LAS-Roma, 1984, p. 47ss.
Abraham Panampara, *A Glimpse into Don Bosco's Educational Method in the Light of Modern Guidance Counselling*. Madras, 1977.
2. William Kelly, "Salesians", in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Palatine, 1981, Vol. 12, p. 983.
3. Pietro Braido, *Il sistema preventivo nelle costituzioni di Don Bosco*, in: "Fedelta' e Rinnovamento, Studi sulle costituzioni salesiane" ed. J. Aubry et al., LAS, Roma, 1974, p. 118.
4. E. Vigano, *Il Progetto di Vita Dei Salesiani di Don Bosco*: Guida alla lettura delle costituzioni salesiane, Roma, 1986, p. 331.
5. The Salesian Constitutions, art. 7, 1 Cfr. The Constitutions of the FMA. art. 7, "The Preventive System is the hallmark of our vocation in the Church; and our specific spirituality and method of apostolic action. It is an experience of pastoral charity that has its source in the heart of Christ himself and finds its model in Mary's motherly care."
6. Cfr. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. 3, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Vol. 1.
7. Cfr. Philip P. Wiener (ed.), *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*. New York, 1973, Vol. 2, pp. 71-85.
8. E.F. Fardellone, St John Bosco, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Palatine, 1981, Vol. 2, p. 174.
9. Plan of Regulations of the Oratory, 1854, *Memorie Biografiche* Vol.2, p. 46. *Biographical Memoirs*. St John Bosco, Vol. 2, p. 36.
10. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 39.
11. Cfr. E. Vigano, *Il Progetto di Vita Dei Salesiani di Don Bosco*: Guida alla lettura delle Costituzioni salesiane, Roma, 1986, p. 339.
12. *Ibidem*, p. 333.
13. E. Vigano, *The Salesian Rector*, Rome, 1982, n. 169, p. 215.
14. P. Braido, *Il sistema preventivo nelle Costituzioni di Don Bosco*, in: J. Aubry, et. al. *Fedelta e Rinnovamento: studi sulle costituzioni salesiane*, LAS-Roma, 1974, p. 114.

15. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 39.
16. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 38.
17. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 16.
18. P. Braido, Il sistema preventivo nelle Costituzioni di Don Bosco, in: *Fedelta e Rinnovamento: studi costituzioni salesiane*, by J. Aubry, LAS-Roma, 1974, p. 104.
19. *The Salesian Constituions*, art 38.
20. E. Vigano, *The Salesian Rector*, n. 168, p. 215.
21. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 38.
22. E. Vigano, *The Salesian Rector*, n. 169, p. 215.
23. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 38.
24. E. Vigano, *The Salesian Rector*, n. 169, p. 215.
25. J.A. Froude, *Short Studies*, Vol. 4, pp. 192-3, 199. Cfr. Maise Ward, *Young Mr. Newman*, London, 1948, p. 317.
26. Don Bosco called this kind of love "Amorevelezza" for which there is no adequate English word. It is a combination of love, kindness, concern, interest along with detachment, self-effacement, etc.
27. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 15.
28. *The Salesian Constitutions*, p. 11.
29. *The Salesian Constitutions* p. 248.
30. E. Vigano, *The Salesian Rector*, n. 154, p. 200.
31. Phil. 3:17;2:2.
32. *The Salesian Constitutions*, ar. 20.
33. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 2.
34. E. Vigano, *The Salesian Rector*, n. 156, p. 202.
35. *Ibidem*, n. 156, p. 202.
36. P. Braido, Il sistema preventivo nelle costituzioni di Don Bosco, in: *Fedelta e Rinnovamento: studi costituzioni salesiane*, J. Aubry, et al, LAS-Roma, 1974, p. 104.
37. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 47.
38. *The Salesian Constitutions* art. 6.
39. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 40.
40. Cfr. P. Stella, *Don Bosco, Nella Storia della Religiosita Cattolica*, Roma, Las Verlag, Zurich, Vol. 1, 1968, p. 184.
41. *The Salesian Constitutions*, p. 265; 4-10.
42. *The Salesian constitutions*, art. 30.
43. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 30.
44. E. Vigano, *The Salesian Rector*, n. 159, p. 204.
45. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 7.
46. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 118.
47. E. Vigano, *The Salesian Rector*, n. 159, p. 205.
48. E. Vigano, *The Salesian Rector*, n. 66, p. 98.
49. *Ibidem*, n. 64, p. 96.
50. *The Salesian Constitutions* art. 30.
51. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 48.
52. Cfr. E. Vigano, *Il Progetto di Vita Dei Salesiani di Don Bosco: Guida alla lettura delle Costituzioni salesiane*, Roma, 1986, p. 344.

66 *Don Bosco's Charism and Asian Culture*

53. *The Salesian Constitutions*, art. 40.
54. E. Viganò, *The Salesian Rector*, n. 155, p. 201.
55. *Salesian Bulletin*, 12 (1888), Jan., p. 6, Letter to the Salesian Cooperators.

3

Inculturated Salesian Formation in India: Some Fundamental Requirements

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INTRODUCTION

FORMATION is a much discussed topic today in the wake of the formation directories that various Salesian provinces have drawn up. It is common knowledge that documents or even directories do not bring about any appreciable change until the individuals who are responsible for their implementation are convinced of their need and importance. A formation directory cannot become an effective means of renewal and progress in Salesian religious life until the vast majority of Salesians realize the need for such a document.

Today formation is a much more complex reality than in the past. It encompasses various dimensions which it is difficult to accommodate within the formation programme. The situation is further complicated by the fact that formation has to be contextualized or inculturated. The Salesian constitutions prescribe that each province should determine its method of formation "according to the needs of its own cultural context and in conformity with the directives of the Church and the Congregation."¹ The delicate balance between the needs of the particular cultural context, and faithfulness to the principles of unity of formation laid down by the congregation is difficult to achieve. The usual tendency is to lean one way or the other. Yet, this balance has to be achieved if Indian Salesians are to be truly Indians and Salesians.

Unity and Diversity of Formation

The need for unity of formation in a diversity of expressions arises from the essential unity of the Salesian vocation, regardless of the race or culture to which the individual Salesian belongs.² The unifying elements of this unique Salesian vocation flow from the charism of Don Bosco (DB).³ At the heart of the Salesian experience is the preferential love for the young, especially the poor. The opening article of the Salesian constitutions which resembles a credal formulation, emphatically affirms that the 'Holy Spirit raised up St John Bosco to contribute to the salvation of youth.' True to his calling, he dedicated himself totally and unconditionally to his poor boys. It was for the continuance of this charism in favour of subsequent generations of poor and abandoned youth that, moved again by the Holy Spirit, he founded the Salesian congregation and other apostolic projects. The Salesian, then, is not a mere follower of Don Bosco, but is a sharer in that charism which was given unique expression in his person and activities. To be authentic he needs to share the same concern that Don Bosco had for the salvation of youth, salvation being understood in its total sense of liberation of the whole person in his bodily and spiritual dimensions. The entire life of the Salesian is to be moulded and guided by this charism. This is the unifying element par excellence of the formation programme.

Formation to Salesian life and apostolate presupposes an adequate knowledge and study of Don Bosco, his charism, and the Salesian traditions. Without reference to him and the way he carried out his mission there can be no question of acquiring adequate knowledge of the Salesian charism.

Don Bosco was a man of his times and his activities were conditioned by the needs of the environment in which he lived. His genius lay in rising to the occasion in the spirit of a true apostle and offering solutions to the problems he encountered. The effectiveness of the Salesian apostolate depends very much on the appropriateness of the answers it proposes to the problems of youth in particular situations.

The changed conditions in post-war Italy and Europe in general have substantially altered the Salesians' approach to the apostolate. The spirit, however, of Don Bosco's initiative, and above all, the motive power of the apostolate—the desire to save young people as he did—have remained unchanged. Times and circumstances have changed, but the charism lives on, unaltered and ever relevant.

If in the very country of origin different approaches to the actualization of the charism of Don Bosco have been deemed necessary, it is clear that varied cultural contexts call for fresh efforts to incarnate the charism in them. Consequently, diversity in the formation programme is a must.

Not without reason, therefore, the Congregation has prescribed that every province should have a formation programme of its own,⁴ within the framework of the general formation plan and supplementing it.

The Indian Context

The Salesian society in India can be said to be in a phase of transition. The generation of the early missionary Salesians has disappeared almost totally, and the leadership has been passed on to the Indian confreres. The period of establishing the works of the apostolate is giving way to one of consolidation, while not neglecting the need for expansion. The shape of the apostolate in the coming years will depend on the formation of the younger generation. It is in this context that I propose to consider some of the problems and possibilities of Salesian formation in the Indian cultural context. What are the factors that must be taken into account in the formation of the Indian Salesians of the coming decades?

The fundamental question is whether there is any need for a reorientation or change. Needless to say, some might think that wanting to change is finding fault with the type of formation given so far, or branding it as inadequate. This is not necessarily so. There is no system or method that is valid and effective for all times. The publishing of the "Ratio" and its subsequent updating indicates, if nothing else, the

need for constant updating and reorientation, to cope with the changing circumstances of time and place.

CONCEPT OF FORMATION

The word 'formation' spontaneously evokes the idea of the external action of an agent on what is being formed. The image of the potter fashioning a vessel out of clay is the best example of this. The dictionary meanings of 'formation', by and large, also convey this idea of acting on something or allowing it to be acted on. In this understanding what is being formed is purely passive and the onus of formation falls on the former.⁵ "Does the clay say to him who fashions it, 'what are you making?' or 'your work has no handles?'"⁶

The metaphor of the potter is often used in prophetic literature to describe the relationship between Israel and Yahweh. Israel is the handiwork of Yahweh, the Potter⁷ and he is the sole master of what happens to her.⁸ It should be noted, however, that in using this image the prophets are merely emphasizing the necessity of Israel's complete submission to Yahweh and his commandments for he is the absolute master of her destiny. It is in no way suggested that Yahweh will mould them into the type of people he wants them to become regardless of their response. Just as the prophets preached that it is Yahweh who moulds them into a people, they also pointed out Israel's responsibility to correspond to the providential love of Yahweh. "The more I called them, the more they went from me,"⁹ lamented Hosea, and he exhorted Israel to return to the Lord.¹⁰ The same invitation to return to Yahweh and to be faithful to him is repeated by the other prophets as well.

When applied to human beings, formation is something active rather than passive. Those in formation are neither passive recipients, nor objects of experimentation of the formers. As free beings they themselves are the principal agents of formation. It is growth and as such it is a dynamic reality. It proceeds from within the person and is oriented towards the achievement of the perfect harmonisation of the

various dimensions of one's life within the frame work of one's calling.

A Personal Undertaking

The Salesian in formation is committed to the perfection of his Christian and religious vocation. This is 'Growth in Christ' which is "the fundamental objective of the baptismal vocation and is taken up again and confirmed in religious profession."¹¹ The responsibility for his formation falls primarily on the Salesian himself,¹² because it is by a free act that he takes upon himself the task of attaining perfection according to the way of life traced out in the Salesian constitutions.¹³ In the last analysis formation is docility to the Holy Spirit who dwells in the heart of every individual. The response to the promptings of the Spirit can come only from within each person. Furthermore, the commitment to formation is a life-long process,¹⁴ for perfection or holiness is not achieved in a definite period of time. External helps to facilitate one's response to the promptings of the indwelling Spirit are more numerous during the early years of one's life as a Salesian, and gradually become insignificant as one advances in life, but the commitment to personal formation cannot cease together with the external helps.

The Formative Environment: Role of the Staff

Human growth always takes place in a given ambience. Experimental psychology confirms everyday experience when it asserts that the environment makes the man. As popular wisdom has it, "Tell me who your friends are, and I shall tell you who you are." Though the primary responsibility for formation is incumbent on the individual, the external ambience too has an important role to play. The formative ambience of the Salesian is first and foremost the Salesian community.¹⁵ The atmosphere prevalent in a truly formative community helps the members, especially the younger ones, to achieve the full growth in Christ, to become perfect even as Christ is perfect. It elicits from them right

responses to the promptings of the Spirit and encourages them when the going is rough.

Formation personnel are at one and the same time a part of this environment and its creators. It is difficult to imagine that they are in any sense formers in the way the potter fashions vessels out of clay. Nevertheless they have a crucial role to play in creating the right ambience where young confreres can find the right conditions to grow into mature Salesians. Even as we affirm that they are not the primary agents of formation we must note that they directly or indirectly influence the lives of those entrusted to their care, especially in the initial stages of formation when young people are very impressionable.

The first constituent of the formative environment then is the personal witness and life-style of the formation personnel. Referring to the problems and prospects of seminary formation reform in North India, R. H. Lesser points out that the most important prerequisite for a new man-of-God type of seminarian is staff members who can inspire by the very fact of their being men of God.¹⁶ "By mere words a servant is not disciplined, for though he understands he will not give heed."¹⁷ On the contrary, words accompanied by appropriate deeds, that is, an authentic life, exert a great influence on young people in formation. The Pharisees had arrived at such a point of contradiction between their teaching and their actual life-style that Jesus had to caution his hearers: "The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practise and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practise"¹⁸. Elsewhere he warned them against their teaching as well.¹⁹ It is remarkable that when older people reminisce about their younger days one of their favourite topics is the life-style and deeds of those with whom they spent their youth. Another constituent element of the formative environment is the rapport between those in formation and the formation personnel. Open, sincere and cordial relationships ensure mutual trust and confidence. Only in this climate can those

in formation be guided to reflect on their own personal experience. Such reflection is the nourishment for their growth into mature persons.

In the Indian context a formation house is truly a '*gurukula*' and the guru-shishya relationship is a decisive factor in the type of training imparted to the students. The guru influences the shishya more through his life and example than through mere instruction. Not only the official spiritual directors, but also every member of the staff is to be a spiritual guru if formation is to be achieved through the guru-shishya relationship. "He is expected to possess tranquillity, self-control, compassion and desire to help others. He is well-versed in the scriptures and unattached to enjoyments, selfless in his actions, a knower of God, and established in Him. He is never a transgressor of the Holy Rules and is devoid of ostentation, pride, egotism, cunning, jealousy, jugglery and falsehood. His sole aim is to help others, to lead them to the fullness of God-realization."²⁰ He is, in short, a realized man who communicates true values of life through personal example.

Yet another factor of the formative environment is the cultural and spiritual atmosphere that is created in the community. Whereas the first and the second elements are common and essential to the Salesian formation programme anywhere in the world, the third will vary from country to country and from culture to culture. It is determined by the particular milieu. Its importance is easily appreciated when one considers that through it values are imbibed and basic orientations are acquired, almost imperceptibly. In a community where only rock music is patronised and the identification of the members is with the bourgeois consumerist society, it is impossible for the young to grow up appreciating the traditional values of Indian culture and spirituality.

The responsibility for creating the right external cultural and spiritual atmosphere rests primarily on the formation personnel as it is they who direct the life and activities of the

community. It can be said that they have an indispensable role in providing the orientation and the basic experiences of the young Salesians during their years of early formation. If Indian Salesians of the future are to have a new mentality, it is necessary to have formation personnel who are themselves immersed in this mentality.²¹ They need to have adequate notions about Indian culture and the concept of inculturation, so that they can create the right external ambience in harmony with our cultural heritage, in which young Salesians will be able to develop as patriotic Indians, authentic Christians and religious and dedicated Salesian apostles.

CULTURE AND INCULTURATION

Concept of Culture

Culture is a complex reality and cannot easily be defined. There could be as many definitions of it as there are conceptions of the human reality. In a booklet entitled "Our Culture", C. Rajagopalachari defines it as "the sum total of the way of living built up by groups of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another."²² Simple as it sounds, this definition is quite all-embracing, for the way of living of a particular group of people encompasses every aspect of their life— social, political, economic and religious. In this sense it can be said that this does not define culture. It only vaguely indicates where to look for an answer. Perhaps this is the closest that can be arrived at in defining culture as a concept. FSDB describes culture as follows: 'Culture' is the total complexes (*sic*) of notions, beliefs, arts, usages and all the other kinds of abilities and constant activity which belong to man as a member of society. It is the whole life of a people."²³

The above descriptions of culture presuppose that it is the common patrimony of an entire population in a given region. An integrationist claims that culture is associated with countries rather than religions. This leads him to the categorical assertion that "there is no such thing as Muslim

culture or Christian culture in India. There is only one Indian culture which is common to all Indians."²⁴ As his motivation is more political than cultural, this author would conceive of Indianisation as inculcating a strong sense of nationalism in all Indians.²⁵ Much as he tries to dissociate culture from religion, it is evident that he is speaking from a position of strength, i.e., seeing reality from the majority-point of view which tends to equate Indian culture with Hindu culture.

It cannot be denied that religion is an integral part of the cultural heritage of man. Religious notions influence and form man's attitude to life and its activities. Artistic expressions of any kind whatever draw inspiration from religious beliefs, and vice versa, they reveal man's attitude to religion. In this sense one can and must speak of a Christian or a Muslim or a Hindu culture. In spite of this, the question still remains whether there is a substratum in a culture that goes beyond religious beliefs and practices. We must affirm that such a substratum does exist. The nationalist quoted above is not entirely wrong in his contention that culture is a national trait. Here it is opportune to recall the teaching of Vatican II on culture.

Vatican II on Culture

No.53 of the document on the Church in the Modern World describes culture in general as "all those things which go to the refining and developing of man's diverse mental and physical endowments." This process of refining and developing takes place in determined geographical settings. Man is in constant dialogue with nature as he tries to master it and develop it for his betterment. His attitudes and habits are formed in the course of this undying dialogue. He preserves his experiences and communicates them, thus building up a cultural heritage. It is because of this that there are as many cultures as there are peoples.²⁶ Hence "the word culture often carries with it sociological and ethnological connotations."²⁷

The plurality of cultures is accounted for by the

"different styles of living and different scales of values (that) originate in different ways of using things, of working and self expression, of practising religion...of developing science and the arts and of cultivating beauty."²⁸ We note that in this description the Council considers the practice of religion as but one of the many facets of culture, thus indicating that it has other elements that go beyond religion. In this sense, culture is truly a national heritage.

Inculturation: A Priority

Article 100 of the Salesian Constitutions to which we have already referred is emphatic in stating that formation is "diversified in its concrete expression; it accepts and develops whatever is true, noble and just in the various cultures."²⁹ The basic problem of Salesian formation in India today is the implementation of this prescription of the Constitutions. It is the question of inculturation. Experience shows that when non-Indian Salesians visit India, they find themselves in a situation to which they find it difficult to adjust. On the contrary, the average Indian Salesian who goes to the West has little trouble in accommodating himself to the new conditions. After the initial food problems are tidied over he has little else to worry about. Inculturated in such a short time? Or is it that he was all the while living this culture back in India?³⁰ On the one hand this could point in the direction of an Indian capacity for quick adaptation to any situation, but on the other it could bear witness to a certain Western orientation in the training of Indian Salesians. Hence the need to question ourselves with a view to reorientation.

Ever since Vatican II much has been written and spoken about inculturation. Whereas in the immediate post-conciliar years it was more common to speak about adaptation³¹ today the term 'inculturation' is more in vogue. The concept itself is theologically based on the reality of the incarnation by which the Son of God identified himself with the human race.³²

Strictly considered, inculturation is an apologetic term. It is a frank admission that an individual (or a group) is not at one with a particular culture, or that he is so ill at ease in it, that he needs to insert himself more fully into it in such a way that he can feel at home in it and be considered as part of it by the culture group. The term makes sense when it is applied to the efforts of someone who hails from a particular culture to insert himself into another of his adoption. But it is absurd to speak of the need to be inculturated into the very culture in which one is born. When Indian Christians speak of the need to inculturate themselves into Indian culture, one wonders in what culture they actually live. Such talk originates in the feeling of self-alienation from the main stream of their cultural heritage.

Even after nearly twenty centuries of presence in India, Christianity is considered a foreign religion and Christians as intruders and destroyers of the indigenous culture, as agents of foreign forces. The colonial era contributed substantially to the creation of this image of Christianity. But now that the colonial era is a thing of the past, there is no reason why the Church should continue to contribute to the perpetuation of this idea in the minds of those who objectively evaluate Indian Christianity from the critic's perching point.³³ As the institutionalised Church is largely responsible for the perpetuation of this image, only a change of mentality in the leaders can bring about effective inculturation of the Church in India. The religious have a prominent role to play here because they contribute in no small measure to the image of the Church because of their institutions, many of which are quite out of tune with the culture of this land. It is in this context that inculturation becomes a priority in the formation of young Indian Salesians.

Concept of Inculturation

The use of the term as applied to Indians would be justified only in as much as Indian culture has manifold expressions in various regions of India while retaining a

basic common substratum. An Indian moving from one part of the country to another has to adapt himself to languages and customs different from his own. He needs to go through a process of inculturation. This, however, is not what is normally meant when we speak of inculturation in India. What is meant is the much felt need to get into the mainstream of Indian culture.

Here it is necessary to be more explicit about the type of inculturation we are advocating. There is a common fallacy in equating it with such peripheral notions as adopting particular modes of dressing, patronising classical Indian music or other forms of cultural expression. These are important and should not be neglected, for without external expression there can be no true internal assimilation. But they do not exhaust Indian culture. In fact, they form not even the tip of the iceberg.

What we mean by inculturation is the formation of a typically Indian mentality and the adoption of a way of life that is totally in harmony with the social structure and the spiritual and cultural heritage of India.³⁴

Fr Egidio Vigano singles out the process of inculturation as "one of today's delicate problems."³⁵ It is delicate because cultures are not static or absolute and there is much in every culture that needs to be transformed or bettered.³⁶ When new values are injected into a culture, change takes place mutually. The culture is modified because of the impact with the new values and the values themselves receive new expressions and in the process undergo reformulation. The basic orientations and values of a culture do not easily get lost in the process of confrontation with new values. This process has been in operation in India all through the centuries and in the recent past it has been accelerated. Because of its delicate nature the process of inculturation demands greater attention from Indian Salesians. It requires a clear understanding of what makes us Indians and Salesians.

INCULTURATION AND FORMATION

We shall now consider some of the implications of inculturation for the formation of Indian Salesians. Basically it is a question of creating the right environment where those in formation will be able to live and imbibe Indian cultural and spiritual values, thus developing a truly Indian mentality. This should be so natural and spontaneous that all talk of inculturation will become superfluous. Failing this, inculturation will always be considered as something added to the normal formation programme.

1. *Forming True Men-of-God*

India is a land of god-men. The *Sadhu* or *Sanyasi* who renounces everything and goes in search of the divine is an indispensable feature of Indian culture. These persons show single-mindedness in their quest and that is what accords them recognition as men of God.³⁷ In this ambience, it should be a matter of concern that Christian priests and religious are not considered men and women of God. "In Asian eyes the image of our religious and priests working in Asia is more that of a social worker or educationist than that of a man or woman of God."³⁸ The impression created is that Christians can seek God only through *karma marga* (works or activity in favour of fellow men).³⁹ Priests and religious appear as champions of material progress while espousing it and enjoying it themselves. Interiority and spirituality are relegated to the background or get lost in the flurry of activities.

That this is a distortion of the true Christian spirituality need not be pointed out, for the basis of all Christian spirituality is the two-fold commandment to love God and one's neighbour.⁴⁰ To put the Christian record straight, it is necessary to emphasize the contemplative dimension of Christian life.⁴¹ It is not a question of merely creating the impression of being men-of-God, but of truly being such. People are not slow to distinguish between the genuine and the hypocritical men-of-God. On the other hand, in a

country like India where external observances and appearances are prized very highly, it is not sufficient to be content with a purely interior spirituality with no exterior sign of it, if one is to be a true witness. The man-of-God's approach to life in its various spheres must proclaim exteriorly as well that his life's project is laying up "treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal."⁴²

If the above endeavour is important for all Christians and religious, it is even more vital for the Indian Salesians. The Constitutions describe the true Salesian as a 'contemplative in action'.⁴³ Don Bosco, who has been described as 'union with God', is the model of the Salesian contemplative in action. His holiness consisted in being able to combine action and contemplation harmoniously, so that the one flowed from and was supported by the other. This is indeed the essence of Salesian spirituality.

Incarnating the Salesian charism and spirituality in Indian soil requires that Indian Salesians pay particular attention to the contemplative dimension of their life and apostolate, so that even in the midst of hectic activity they can be recognized as persons who constantly adore their Lord and master present in those whom they serve.⁴⁴ While striving to become contemplatives in action should characterise every Salesian anywhere in the world, it should be the special programme of action of the Indian Salesian, for without it he would fail to testify to the true nature of his religious vocation to be a man-of-God as recognized in this country.

It is prayer that primarily moulds the life of the man-of-God and distinguishes him as such. Formation to prayer acquires great importance throughout the years of formation. Various forms of Indian prayer, particularly repetitive vocal prayer (bhajans, kirtans, nama japa) and contemplative prayer need to be inculcated in the Salesians in formation. For the vast majority of Indians "prayer is first and foremost concentration on God, adoration, praising, implor-

ing his blessing, more than petition."⁴⁵ Essentially this is the same as the psalmist's desire to live constantly in the presence of his God.⁴⁶ Liturgical celebrations that make greater use of the signs and symbols of worship that are commonly used in our country can go a long way to create a new awareness.⁴⁷

The truly spiritual man is the one who has learned to regulate his daily life according to the demands of his life's quest— communion with the Divine. For the Christian, and particularly for the religious, this means concretely that his life's project should be to attain the perfect incorporation into Christ so that he will be able to make his own the words of St Paul, "For me to live is Christ."⁴⁸

There are other traits of the man-of-God, besides prayer and contemplation. Before we consider them we must situate him in the social milieu in which he is to be a witness and an apostle.

2. Awareness of the Socio-Cultural Situation

One of the recommendations of the all-India seminar on 'Inculturation in Seminary Formation' is that stress should be laid on "greater awareness in the staff and in the students of the socio-economic and human situation in the region and their greater involvement in the promotion of social justice, as an essential dimension of evangelization."⁴⁹ This recognizes that our seminaries are far removed from the social realities of India. In spite of all the efforts at eradicating poverty and the periodic publication of statistics proclaiming the lowering of the poverty line, the fact still remains that the majority of Indians belong to the group of the poor and the underprivileged, who eke out a living and are the victims of exploitation. A good many of them live in misery and destitution. Inculturation without involvement in the affairs of these millions of our fellowmen is an illusion. It is not possible to proclaim the good news of salvation to them from the top of the Indian social pyramid.⁶⁰

Such awareness, identification and involvement with the poor of India are essential preconditions for the

authenticity and effectiveness of the Salesian mission in India. The Salesian charism is primarily in favour of poor and abandoned youth. The youth scene in India is becoming more and more complex. The divide between rural and urban youth and between sections of urban youth, according to their education and economic standing, is becoming more sharply defined. Despite the overall progress in the social front, the number of poor and uneducated youth is ever on the increase. The imbalance between education and job opportunities leads to large-scale unemployment among youth. On the spiritual plane, with the passing of years preference for the materialistic culture and disdain for religion and religious values are becoming the order of the day among a vast section of youth of all categories. The conclusion of the research conducted in 1982 among samples of urban, semi-urban and rural youth from Tamil Nadu is quite revealing in this respect: "The finds of this research disclose a certain trend towards materialism in the youth today. They have given economic value first place in their order of values, followed by theoretical, social, political, aesthetic and religious values, in that order."⁵¹

In the context of the above, Salesian identification with the poor and abandoned calls for creativity and initiative in dealing with the problems of vagrant and jobless youth. A new type of imagination is required to propose new approaches to the apostolate and fresh and less conventional solutions so that we can reach out to the endless numbers of poor and abandoned youth in our country.⁵² Among youth who hail materialism and hedonism as the modern messiahs of a successful life, Salesians have to become signposts of the presence of God, leading them to the appreciation of values that can give them lasting peace and joy.

Unless an in-depth conscientization concerning the Indian social reality and youth situation is had during the years of early formation it is futile to hope that Salesians will be committed to the integral development of the poor and abandoned. From formation houses that are cocooned from

the socio-economic reality of this country there can come out only comfort-loving, arm-chair Salesians who will naturally identify with the bourgeoisie and their modern consumerist mentality.⁵³ This conscientization, however, should not be a purely academic exercise. It should be backed up by appropriate experiential exposure to the life of the poor both within and without the community. It should be such as to lead those in formation to a definite option in favour of the poor, in order to bring them to true salvation.

Salvation, however, should not be conceived of as something that can be imposed or added from without. The response of the one to whom it is offered is indispensable, for God has created man a free being. In this sense salvation can take place only from within an individual or a group. For this faith must penetrate the entire life of the individual or group. And life is multifaceted, made up of joys and sorrows, struggles and victories; we need not add that for the poor and abandoned there are more sorrows and struggles than joys and victories. A faith that ignores the struggles and woes of a people cannot be said to be truly inculturated.⁵⁴ Total identification with those for whom he works is necessary if the apostle or missionary is to come to know their struggles and needs in order to offer them the means of salvation. In practical terms this means that a Salesian cannot work effectively for the poor and abandoned by imposing on them his own preconceived solutions or by merely imitating models of projects implemented elsewhere. Apostolic undertakings should be the natural outcome of the felt needs of a people.

3. Simplicity of Life

Awareness of the socio-economic situation should naturally lead to the adoption of a simple life-style. S. Rayan observes that for "many an Indian Christian joining the seminary or a religious group means both entering a westernized or hybrid cultural world and climbing to a higher socio-economic level."⁵⁵ The average Salesian, too, finds himself in a similar situation. In India, "among the most

essential traits of life-style of a sadhu, or a guru, or a religious man, *simplicity of life* seems to be acknowledged as the most evident and the most significant.⁵⁶

Simplicity is recognized as the distinguishing mark of the man-of-God in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions.⁵⁷ The Indian Christian cannot become a true man-of-God without acquiring a deep desire for a simple life-style and showing it effectively in everyday life. In the context of identifying with the poor of India, simplicity of life can mean nothing but leading a life of poverty.⁵⁸

Time and again recommendations have been made by various all-India forums about the need to foster greater simplicity of life as a means of true inculturation. The All-India Seminar on the Church in India Today of 1969 recommended a modest way of life to both the clergy and the faithful. It also observed that the standards of life of seminarians should not be different from those of the common people.⁵⁹ The seminar of seminary rectors on "Inculturation in Seminary Formation", held a decade later, went further and identified the adoption of a simple life style "which demands the formation of small communities and a move towards increasing financial self-reliance, even through working for one's living, at least partially", as an essential requirement of inculturation.⁶⁰

Life style is proportionate to one's income. The easy availability of funds, especially through the generous foreign benefactors has been identified as the reason for the high standards of living in seminaries and religious houses.⁶¹ It is anybody's guess, however, whether the stopping of foreign aid will bring about a lowering of the standard of life to the level of the common man. Once the teething troubles of finding out new sources of income are got over, comfort and ease are bound to return, and that too, with greater force, unless a genuine change of heart is effected and sincere commitment to the ideal of evangelical poverty is had. This should be the outcome of the formation experience, but will not be possible when Salesians engaged in the

apostolate and communities in general adopt lavish living standards.

Just as poverty is not an ideal to be cherished for its own sake, but for the inner freedom it can help bring about, so too, simplicity of life is not an end in itself. While being a sign of the total renunciation that the Salesian makes through his religious profession, it frees him interiorly and disposes him for the total dedication to his mission.⁶²

4. Asceticism

Simplicity of life has other notions that are closely connected with it. According to C. Rajagopalachari, "Indian culture is predominantly self-restraint: sharing your substance with the poor, chastity, the rigour of widowhood, austerity, *sanyas*, all-round religious tolerance—these forms and aspects of restraint make up Indian culture, not our musical forms or Bharata natyam... Refinements foundation is restraint."⁶³ Asceticism is another term for the same notion. The man-of-God is essentially an ascetic. The importance of asceticism for an initiate in the religious life cannot be overemphasized. Rajagopalachari further observes that "civilization in the true sense of the word is the development of restraint."⁶⁴ In the constant tension between the individual and the community, the latter tries to restrain the former in order to ensure the common good. Civilization is built on such restraint. The community life of the religious also requires the practice of asceticism or self-restraint. Individualism which is making more and more inroads into the fabric of Salesian communities⁶⁵ cannot be combated by the yearly game of transfers or the apparently broadminded policy of live and let live. A genuine change of heart in the direction of accepting the demands of true asceticism is required if individuals are to play their roles fraternally and effectively in communities.

A concrete expression of asceticism is *aparigraha* or detachment.⁶⁶ Eastern religious traditions—Hindu, Jain, Buddhist — are convinced that there can be no true spiritual life without *aparigraha*.⁶⁷ Nor is this idea foreign to

Christian spirituality. Jesus demanded from his followers total detachment from anything that could stand in the way of complete attachment to him.⁶⁸ It is therefore doubly significant to recommend the practice of *aparigraha* as a characteristically Indian way of responding to the call of Christ to discipleship. While being in perfect harmony with the demands of gospel spirituality, the deliberate preference for a simpler way of life and the conscious rejection of everything that could stand in the way of its attainment is being consistent with the philosophy and the ethical code of the people of our land.⁶⁹ Training in asceticism and *aparigraha* is an important dimension of our inculturation programme.

Aparigraha, too, is not an end in itself, even in the Hindu tradition. The *sanyasi's* renunciation of everything is only in function of the new type of relationship he would like to establish with God in order to be a visible witness of the transcendence of God.⁷⁰ His ultimate goal is to become a *jivamukta*, the truly liberated human being, one who has achieved perfect harmony within himself and lives in harmony with the whole of creation, living continually in the presence of his God. Effective dedication to the demands of the apostolate and commitment to community life require this perfect detachment— from material goods, the quest for power and the never-ending desire to promote the self at the expense of everyone and everything. An apostolate based on *aparigraha* in this all-comprehensive sense is true *nish-kama karma* (desireless or selfless action).⁷¹ This is nothing else but the total dedication of oneself to the work of the Deity, or as expressed in the profession formula of the Salesian, the total dedication of oneself to God in complete freedom.⁷²

Aparigraha is not possible in an atmosphere of affluence and comfort. As we have already observed, in these days of organized charity and the multiplication of aid-the-third-world programmes, it is easy to come by money, most of it unearned and sometimes even unmerited. In this context

the necessity of hard work and the training for it cannot be emphasized too much.⁷³ The idea of work cannot be reduced to the periodic sessions of manual labour that is customary in formation houses. This is certainly needed as a practical, even if insignificant, way of sharing in the lot of the poor. More basically, it is a question of earning one's livelihood through sincere and dedicated fulfilment of one's assigned duties. Devotion to duty calls for eschewing minimalistic attitudes towards study and work. When studentates and formation houses lack the required seriousness and dedication to study and research, it is time to consider whether its inmates are not living like the rich whose luxury it is to do little or no work while enjoying a well-provided and comfortable life. The responsibility of the staff in this regard is particularly grave, for the students' application to study and research is directly proportionate to their own dedication to the task of teaching and their availability to the students for guidance and follow-up.

Another value that acquires particular importance in the context of inculturation is *mauna* (silence). Without it there can be no true asceticism or seeking the Divine.⁷⁴ According to the Chandogya Upanishad, "what the people call 'the practice of silence' is really the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge, for only by leading such a life does one find the 'atman' and meditate."⁷⁵ Silence is a vanishing value in today's electronic world where sounds and noises of varying degrees of musicality are available at the mere turn of a knob. The rediscovery of the value of silence and the inculcation of it in those in formation could ensure greater inner depth in individuals and harmony in communities, for the sound of silence is often healing and reconciliatory.

5. Language Learning

The commitment to the study of the languages of the people towards whom the apostolate is directed is another area of concern in inculturation. In a talk delivered at the seminar on 'Inculturation and Salesian formation', in Rome,

S. Karotemprel, quoting Indian Church documents pointed out that ignorance of the classical Eastern languages is a great obstacle to effective inculturation.⁷⁶ While there is an element of truth in this, it should be noted that not everyone need be conversant with the classical languages. More important than that is the need for all to learn well the language of those for whom they work, for language is the door to the culture of a people. It is "not just a formal, easily replaceable code, but the expression of the soul of a people and the verbal articulation of its culture."⁷⁷

If language is the door to culture, great emphasis should be placed on the learning of various Indian languages, on a priority basis, because of the essentially missionary nature of the Salesian apostolate in India. Vatican II teaches that "whoever is to go among another people must hold their inheritance, language and way of life in great esteem...They should learn their language so that they can speak it easily and correctly and so be able to enter more easily into the minds and hearts of the people."⁷⁸

The foreign image of the Church in India is partly due to the more than proportionate importance given to English by the leaders of the Church and particularly the religious. Together with the English language the foreign mentality and culture also put their stamp on the Indian Church. Thus unwittingly the Church espouses and perpetuates a pseudoculture which is neither Indian nor Western, and yet is easily identified as Western by the common observer.

The importance and relevance of English in India is not disputed here. It is necessary as a link language both within the country and with the rest of the world. A reasonable degree of proficiency in English is necessary if it is to be a practical medium of instruction and link language between Indians of different languages. Extolling it, however, to the status of anything more than that of a link language is unwarranted and even unpatriotic. A practical implication of this is that the study of English during the years of formation should neither replace nor cripple the study of the

Indian languages of the regions where the trainees are to exercise their apostolate.

As in other spheres of inculturation, here too, the basic requirement is a change of mentality, one that will accord an equal, if not higher status to the Indian languages alongside English. Modern Indian Salesians could take a cue from the practice of the early Salesian missionaries who came to this country. While they learned English they neither accorded it an absolute status nor allowed it to come in the way of keeping in touch with their own languages. In addition, most of them became proficient in the languages of those to whom they were sent, some even to the extent of being able to make valuable literary contributions in those languages. Dedication to the study of the local languages did in no way undermine the unity among the Salesians as the great achievements of these men bear witness. There need be no fear that laying emphasis on the study of Indian languages will in any way destabilize the unity of Salesians in India. On the contrary, the half-hearted and ad hoc approach to the study of the languages of our people, which is the practice of the vast majority of Indian Salesians today, is neither patriotic nor apostolic.

Given the multiplicity of languages in the different regions where Salesians work, one has to think of a certain stream-lining of personnel so that they can devote more time to the mastery of a particular language during a considerable length of time. It is utopian to expect people to apply themselves constantly to learning new languages with every new transfer. Perhaps the present lack of earnest application to learning Indian languages stems from the absence of sufficient motivation and guarantee that one will be able to use a language for a reasonably long period after he has spent time and energy in learning it. The Indian situation demands that such streamlining or personnel planning take place even from the time of early formation.

The new language mentality requires also the adoption of the regional language as the liturgical language and even as the medium of communication in communities. This will

break down the barrier between the Salesians and those for whom they work. In large formation communities composed of Salesians from various provinces, the adoption of regional languages in worship seems difficult and impractical. The solution does not lie in a facile giving up. It may be in the composition of smaller and more homogeneous formation communities where the regional language can get preference over English as the liturgical language. Difficulties should not deter us from evolving an adequate language policy for the years of initial formation—one that will not force young Salesians to start the learning process all over again when they have completed their formation years and are ready to dedicate their youthful energies to the demands of the apostolate.

CONCLUSION

We have not dedicated any space to the promotion of Indian music and other external cultural expressions. Nor have we touched upon the much needed study of Indian thought and culture. Inculturation would be incomplete if these were lacking, but these alone without the formation of a typically Indian mentality and spirituality will make of us Indians, participants in a grand fancy dress, which by nature is meant to provoke laughter and curiosity. Attention to mere externals will turn us into laughing-stocks and our estrangement from our cultural milieu will be even more complete. Contrariwise, together with the new mentality there will spontaneously arise the need for externalisation through Indian forms of cultural expression.

Formation always takes place in a particular environment. Not only formation houses properly so called, but every Salesian community constitutes this ambience. It is the provincial community that 'forms' its members and every Salesian is in the formation staff. India is a land where family ties are very strong. Though the joint family has by and large disappeared, members of large families keep close to each other. Traditions are handed down through the cooperation of all in the family. A Salesian

province too can effectively form its members, particularly the younger ones only if all cooperate to bring about an authentic renewal. Formation cannot be regarded as the job of the staff of formation houses. Lasting attitudes to life are gathered more from contact with Salesians who are active in the apostolate than from knowledge dished out in lectures. No effort should then be spared to usher in this new mentality among all Indian Salesians. The journey is long and fraught with difficulties and obstacles. It calls for a closer study of the road map.

NOTES

Abbreviations:

- C. - Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales, (Rome 1984).
ed (d) - editor (s).
FSDB - Formation of Salesians of Don Bosco (Rome 1985).
GC 21 - XXI General Chapter of the Salesian Society, Chapter Documents (Rome 1978).

Abbreviations of Scripture books are according to the usage of the Revised Standard Version

1. C. 101. cf. also GC21, 261.
2. "Modes of cultural expression are pluriform, but the Salesian plan of life is one." (GC21, 246.)
3. C. 100.
4. C. 100,101.
5. The term 'former' is used here in its verbal sense to refer to the external agent of formation. In traditional Salesian parlance the Italian word 'formatore' is in vogue. Recently the term 'formator' was coined as a transliteration of the Italian. The expression 'formation personnel' is also currently in use to refer to the staff of 'formation houses'. Whatever the term used, it should not be understood as applying only to the staff of formation houses, but also to confreres in other houses. Everyone, whether old or young, is a former while he himself is being formed.
6. Is 45:9.
7. Is 64:8.
8. Jer 18:4-6; Is 29:16.
9. Hos 11:2.
10. Hos 14:1.
11. FSDB 69.
12. C. 99.
13. cf. C. 24.
14. C. 98.
15. C. 99.
16. *Indian Misstological Review*, 4 (1982) 172.
17. Prov 29:19.
18. Mt 23:2-3.
19. Mt 16:11-12.
20. I. Puthiadam, "Inculturation and Spirituality", P. Fernando, (ed), *Inculturation in Seminary Formation* (Pune & Indore 1980) 98.
21. On the question of training of formation personnel, cf. S Karotemprel, "Inculturazione e formazione missionaria", A. Amato

and A. Strus (edd), *Inculturazione e Formazione Salesiana* (Roma 1984) 386. He points out that the training of our formation personnel in Western countries is an obstacle to inculturation. He proposes that they should be exposed to the realities of the local culture (p. 394).

22. C. Rajagopalachari, *Our Culture* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan: Bombay; 1963) 9.
23. *FSDB* 15.
24. Balraj Madhok, *Indianization?* (S. Chand & Co. New Delhi 1970) 15.
25. *Ibid.* 18.
26. cf. *FSDB* 16.
27. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 53.
28. *Ibid.*
29. cf. also *FSDB* 40 which speaks about the need for concrete cultural awareness so that religious life can give credible witness in any situation.
30. An Indian Salesian studying in Rome was once invited to lunch by his benefactress. During the course of the meal the gracious lady who had observed his behaviour very keenly asked: "How is it that you can adapt to our customs and manners so perfectly though you come from a different culture?" The Indian could not but admit that he was behaving just the way he had been taught in India. It is a different matter altogether whether he would have found himself equally at home in a poor village home in India, or at a traditional Indian marriage party!
31. This term came into vogue following the Council's own usage. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* in Nos 37-40 speaks about the need to adapt the liturgy to the concrete situations in various cultures. In the decree on the Church's Missionary Activity the concept is extended to other fields as well (cf. *Ad Gentes*, Nos 10-12; 16; 25-27).
32. It is not possible here to explore the theological basis of inculturation. The reader is referred to the treatment of the various aspects of the problem as presented by different scholars in P. Fernando (ed), *Inculturation in Seminary Formation* (Pune & Indore 1980). References will be made to some of these articles in our subsequent discussion.
33. S. Rayan diagnoses the reason for the foreign image of the Church as follows: "A faith or Church which does not grow from seed or sapling, which does not pass through the risks and pains of growing up, but is ready-made and imported, is likely to remain static and sterile. That precisely is what has happened to many a Church in Asia and in India for full four centuries and more", "(Flesh of India's Flesh", *Jeevadhara* (1976) 263).
34. E. Zeitler's description of inculturation is quite to the point. He describes it as "an optimal synthesis of anthropological, sociological and theological insights of the way a particular people conceives

- and lives their relation among themselves and with mankind as a whole, with the ultimate goal of its history. It means finding a way for faith to reach man's innermost experiences of life, which is possible only within his own culture and value system" ("Mission and Inculturation", P. Fernando, *op. cit.*, 140).
35. *Acts of the General Council* (of the Salesian Society) N. 320 (Jan-March 1987) 14.
 36. *cf. Ibid.*, 14-17.
 37. The increase in the number of frauds and fake men-of-God notwithstanding, the vast majority of the Indian *sanyasis* are still considered men-of-God and venerated as such.
 38. J. Casti, "Inculturation in Asia: Religious and Cultural Aspects", A. Amato and A. Strus, (ed), *op. cit.*, 260.
 39. I. Puthiadam, "Inculturation and Spirituality". *op. cit.*, 93.
 40. Mt 22:37-40.
 41. *cf.* All India Seminar on the Church in India Today, Bangalore 1969, *Workshop Handbooks*, Part I (C.B.C.I. Centre: New Delhi) 37. The seminar recommends a contemplative approach to the whole of life— study, work, recreation, etc., as one of the concrete steps towards achieving a genuine Indian Christian Spirituality.
 42. Mt 6:19-21.
 43. C. 12.
 44. *cf.* Mt 25:34-40.
 45. All India Seminar 1969, Part I, 34.
 46. Ps 23:6.
 47. *cf.* P. Puthanangady, "Inculturation and Liturgy in Seminaries", P. Fernando, *op. cit.*, 74-75.
 48. Phil 1:21; *cf.* Gal 2:20.
 49. P. Fernando, *op. cit.*, 17.
 50. E. Zeitler, "Mission and Inculturation", *op. cit.*, 144. *cf.* also J. Thekkedathu, "Inculturation in the Context of Asian Social Realities", A. Amato and A. Strus (edd), *op. cit.*, 247, 251. S. Rayan, "Flesh of India's Flesh", *Jeevadhara* 33 (1976) 267.
 51. J. Arimpoor, *Indian Youth in Perspective*, (S.H. College; Tirupattur 1982) 208.
 52. This necessarily poses the question whether the perpetuation of the Salesian charism in India is to be sought in the direction of more and more English medium schools in the big cities, catering chiefly to the middle and upper middle classes.
 53. J. Casti observes: "Feelings have been expressed by some formatori that the present settings of formation alienate the students from what should be their living context" (*op. cit.*, 274).
 54. "It is only when the faith enters the struggles of the people, and becomes the power and guiding force behind the struggles of the people, that we can say that the Church has entered deep in a given society and its culture" (T.K. John, "Theology and Inculturation", P. Fernando, *o.p. cit.*, 30).

55. "Flesh of India's Flesh", *op. cit.*, 266 cf. also X. Irudayaraj, "Inculturation and Life-Style in Seminaries" P. Fernando, *op. cit.*, 125.
56. X. Irudayaraj, *Ibid.*, 118.
57. J. Casti, *op. cit.*, 261.
58. cf. J. Thekkedathu, *op. cit.*, 248.
59. cf. *ibid.*, 248.
60. P. Fernando, *op. cit.*, 17.
61. cf. X. Irudayaraj, *op. cit.*, 128.
62. R.H. Lesser's recipe for acquiring greater simplicity of life in seminaries might raise the eyebrows of those who are comfortably settled. Nevertheless they serve as food for thought. He recommends more self-supportive work, having no servants, and the like (cf. Indian Missiological Review 4(1982) 173-175).
63. E. Rajagopalachari *Our Culture*, 26.
64. *Ibid.*, 11.
65. cf. "Message of the Calcutta Provincial Chapter 1986 to the confreres," paragraph 5.
66. This Sanskrit term literally means the state of being without possessions, attendants, etc. This is utter destitution or poverty. It also means conscious non-acceptance or rejection, especially of material goods. Applied to the spiritual realm it refers to the radical detachment from everything so as to be totally free for the task of God-seeking.
67. cf. I. Puthiadam, *op. cit.*, 94.
68. cf. Lk 9:57-62; Mt 10: 17-25.
69. cf. C. Rajagopalachari, *Our Culture*, 23.
70. All India Seminar 1969, Part I, 37.
71. cf. I. Puthiadam, *op. cit.*, 95. J. Casti, *op. cit.*, 261.
72. C. 24.
73. I. Puthiadam, *op. cit.*, 95.
74. cf. All India Seminar 1969, Part I, 36.
75. Chandogya Upanishad VIII. 5.2, quoted in I. Puthiadam, *op. cit.* 96.
76. S. Karotemprel, *op. cit.*, 391.
77. G. Soares Prabhu, "The NT as a Model of Inculturation", *Jeevadhara* 33 (1976) 272.
78. *Ad Gentes* No. 26.

Evangelisation Today and the Challenge It Offers to Youth

Paul Vadakumpadan, SDB

1. INTRODUCTION

THE Salesian Congregation in the Northeast is getting ready to celebrate two momentous events. Together with the rest of the Salesian world, we are preparing for the centenary of Don Bosco's death, and together with the rest of the Church in this region of India, we are preparing for the centenary of the arrival of the first Catholic missionaries who reached Northeast India in 1890. These two events are by no means unconnected. The flame of faith, which the first Catholic missionaries, the Salvatorian Fathers, brought was further carried on by the Sons of Don Bosco, sent here by the Holy See in 1922¹. If today we have two vibrant Salesian Provinces in this region of the country, trying to live the charism of Don Bosco, it is thanks to those first Salesians who arrived here in response to the Church's call to spread the Good News of Christ. And conversely, the phenomenal growth of the Church here has been effected by the Holy Spirit, using the sons of Don Bosco who have been working here according to the Salesian spirit. Pioneer missionaries like Fr Vendrame and Fr Ravalico were also eminent Salesians. Deeply committed to the proclamation of the Gospel as well as to the Salesian charism of youth apostolate, they found no dichotomy in their apostolate. One enriched the other. In carrying out the one, they fulfilled also the other.

Fr Ricceri said once, "the congregation was born and grew up and has always advanced as a missionary

congregation".² Perhaps nowhere is this more true than in Northeast India.

Even as I write these lines, we are celebrating yet another anniversary. Last Year (1986), the Supreme Pontiff, John Paul II, set foot in Shillong to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with an immense assembly of worshippers, the like of which this mountain city had never seen. That was official recognition of the pioneering evangelising activity carried out by the sons of Don Bosco, whom his predecessor Pope Benedict XV had sent to Shillong. The fact that the entire episcopate of the nation, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, numbering over a hundred Bishops, is scheduled to meet here in plenary session in 1988 is an acknowledgement of the emergence of a vigorous local Church in Northeast India.

In this missionary miracle, our youth have played a leading role. In our typical Salesian style we have tried to evangelise the young who in turn became evangelisers. The extraordinary growth of the congregation is in itself the result of the missionary challenge offered to youth in this region, and their generous response has made that challenge even more fruitful. Many other young people too, under the influence of Don Bosco have made a substantial contribution to the spread of the Good News. The appeal of Don Bosco's charism, the challenge of mission and the generosity of workers in the field, including the young, Salesians or not, have all cooperated with God's grace which has produced this miracle. If this cooperation with grace continues, we may yet see greater wonders.

2. UNDERSTANDING EVANGELISATION TODAY

We are witnessing today a lively discussion on the mission of the Church, understood both in its broad sense as well as in the restricted sense of missionary activity. The issue has become very prominent in present day missiology.

In the context of this debate one of the most commonly used terms is "evangelisation". It has found a hearty wel-

come in popular as well as in academic usage. Pastors and professors use it profusely. It appears constantly in Christian literature, ranging from elementary manuals of catechism to works of advanced theological research. The rapidity with which the term has gained popularity is amazing. Some theological dictionaries, published not many years ago, do not even contain an entry on "evangelisation". Along with the increased use of the word, there appears a widening in its signification too. Some use it as the modern counterpart of the old term apostolate³. It is only commonplace today to describe the mission of the Church as evangelisation. Thus what was just a couple of decades ago a term with a very restricted meaning is now used to denote a highly complex reality and has become an "umbrella" concept including under it a variety of notions.

The New Testament understands evangelisation as the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ to those who are ignorant of it. Thus it is synonymous with kerygmatic preaching. It is aimed at arousing faith and at gathering new disciples. This was, indeed, the traditional concept of evangelisation, generally held till Vatican II. However, the term itself was not commonly used for centuries. Instead, the more popular expressions were *praedicatio evangelica*, *missio* and *propagatio fidei*. The second Vatican Council uses the term several times, but not always with the same meaning.⁴ *Ad Gentes* keeps the traditional understanding of evangelisation as missionary preaching.⁵ Elsewhere it is seen as the entire ministry of the Word.

Ambiguity in the use of the term continued after the Council. It was beginning to be used to indicate a much broader reality, almost synonymous with Christianisation itself.

This transformation reached a certain climax at the third general assembly of the Synod of Bishops, held in Rome in 1974.

This synod has been called one of the most notable in the short history of such synods. It was convoked by Pope Paul

VI to study the theme of "evangelisation of the modern world". Participation by bishops from Latin America, Africa and Asia in the celebration of the synod was particularly felt. Thanks to its broad theme, the delegates found in the synod a privileged moment for a profound analysis of the mission of the Church and of how she carries it out in the world today.

Delegates coming from various parts of the world, while describing the state of evangelisation in their respective regions, found themselves using the same word, without however, signifying quite the same reality. While the Fathers from countries predominantly non-Christian expressed the need for evangelisation, understood as missionary preaching, others from traditional Christian lands lamented that owing to large scale dechristianisation, a renewed evangelisation was called for. While some Fathers stressed the role of human promotion in evangelisation, others pointed out the need for inculturating the Gospel so that it might strike root in various cultures.

The understanding that emerged as a synthesis of these various opinions was presented to the universal Church by Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. This Papal document has been considered a most significant one and is, probably, the most important one after the Second Vatican Council. Pastoral and theological at once, it is a remarkable presentation of the way the Church understands and carries out her mission today. If the question were put, "what is the Church for?" *Evangelii Nuntiandi* would be the place to look for a satisfactory answer. Paul VI, the Pope of the Council, the faithful successor to John XXIII, who boldly initiated the transition of the Church to the changed situation of the day, gives many answers in the one expression, evangelisation. The Papal document combines in a splendid manner the wide-spectrum of views expressed in the synod and thus arrives at a global concept of evangelisation. It is presented as a multidimensional, complex and articulated reality, consist-

ing of Christian witness, explicit proclamation of the Good News, celebration of the sacraments as well as total liberation of man. Moreover, in the whole process of evangelisation, attention must be paid to the Gospel-culture encounter and its exigencies.

We see three groups of people to whom the Gospel must be proclaimed: those who are not yet Christians, Christians who need greater help today to preserve their faith because of the difficult religious situation we are living in and those who are no more Christians. Correspondingly we may speak of three types of evangelisation: first evangelisation addressed to those who have not yet heard of Christ, pastoral evangelisation to Christians and renewed evangelisation to those who have virtually abandoned the faith. The three groups are evidently sociological but a territorial element may come in as a matter of fact. Today people of all religions or of no religion, Christians, non-Christians, and "post-Christians" can be found in almost any part of the world. However, the point should not be pressed to far. While statistics do not say everything, they are not to be ignored either. We still have in the world areas (and I mean geographical or territorial ones) where the majority of people have not yet heard of the Gospel of Christ.

Thus, the global concept of evangelisation indicates the very mission of the Church, with the accent, however, constantly on the communication of the Good News. The mission of the Church is to evangelise. She has only one mission given to her by Christ the Lord. It is realised in a variety of ways and among all men, whether they are non-Christians, "post-Christians", believers whose faith needs to be supported, non-believers or the non-practising. Old Churches as well as young Churches face this situation. While the problem of non-practice and even a certain dechristianisation are not absent in young Churches, older Churches, thanks to the presence of numerous non-Christians in their midst, are also challenged to attend to missionary evangelisation within their own borders.

Another aspect of the modern concept of evangelisation is its complex nature. It consists of varied elements and cannot be reduced to any one of them. In a particular situation one element may be preferred to another. Thus in certain Muslim countries where explicit proclamation is virtually forbidden, Christian witness may be the ideal and perhaps the only form of evangelisation. Elsewhere in a situation of stark poverty and cruel oppression, commitment to human promotion will have a certain practical priority. And in highly secularised societies, the need for Christian proclamation is dominant. These choices are influenced largely by circumstances which themselves change. Hence it is up to the local Church to decide what particular element of evangelisation needs to be emphasized in its actual situation.

Missionary activity in the traditional sense of the term is part of the global concept of evangelisation. The Salesian constitutions clearly recognize this. Article 30 says, "People still awaiting the Gospel Message were the special object of Don Bosco's concern and apostolic effort. They continue to stimulate our zeal and keep it alive. We look upon missionary work as an essential feature of our congregation". The article quotes AG 6 where missions are defined as "the special undertakings in which preachers of the gospel, sent by the Church and going into the whole world, carry out the work of preaching the Gospel and implanting the Church among people who do not yet believe in Christ...Such undertakings are accomplished by missionary activity...The special end of this missionary activity is the evangelisation and the implanting of the Church among peoples or groups in which it has not yet taken root."

Thus evangelisation understood as missionary activity in the traditional sense, has by no means been superseded and remains a constant challenge for the Church. Now that particular Churches exist practically all over the world, it is the responsibility of these Churches to undertake the first proclamation of Christ to millions of their fellowmen who

have not heard of Christ, with a view to their conversion. Thus the Church grows numerically too. They will be assisted by other Churches in this task. Particular Churches in traditionally christian countries must be interested in strict missionary activity in various parts of the world. In this sense, there is nothing wrong in retaining terms like "mission country", "missionary diocese", etc.

3. EVANGELISATION IN NORTHEAST INDIA

When we talk about evangelisation in the context of Northeast India, we are referring particularly to first evangelisation (missionary evangelisation). It is hardly a hundred years since the first Catholic missionaries arrived here to carry out the mandate of preaching the Gospel and of 'planting' the Church in this region of India. As the local Church is still quite young and the number of the diocesan clergy far too limited to care for the flock and at the same time to continue the Christian proclamation to those who have not as yet heard it, the Salesian congregation still bears a great missionary responsibility. The recent Provincial Chapters have shown awareness of this. Pioneering work needs to be done among various tribal groups in the region, and it is especially here that the young are offered a great challenge. Our Salesian youth apostolate is tested precisely here. The Christian formation we impart to the young will be proved in the ability and readiness of the young Christian to share his faith with those who do not have it. Living in a context where, on the one hand the Catholic community is numerically quite strong and on the other hand where there is much openness to the faith on the part of non-Christians, the issue has become very real. Unlike elsewhere, the Christian community here, fortunately, has not been institutionalized into a caste-community. Hence, there is abundant scope for genuine missionary evangelisation and for realising the universal appeal of the Good News.

St Paul was the champion of universalism in the New Testament Church. He had to fight to break out of the

narrow confines of Palestine. He saved Christianity from perpetuating itself as a Jewish sect. When the Jews refused to listen, Paul turned to the Gentiles. "From now on I will go to the Gentiles". The experience of the great apostle of the Gentiles has been part of the story of the expansion of Christianity. There were people who easily accepted the gospel just as there were those who staunchly opposed it. Our field of missionary activity, thanks be to God, is a most responsive one. It would appear that the people to whom we preach are blest with, what some missiologists call, a 'predisposition' to Christianity. Their religious beliefs lead them to Christianity. Moreover, the greatest scourge of India, caste system, is unknown here. Thus the Christian message of universal brotherhood and equality is much better grasped and makes Christianity attractive. In consequence, the Church has grown steadily in the region.

The Christian mission during the last few centuries in many parts of the world was connected with colonialism. Many thought that after the collapse of colonialism, mission too, would follow suit. However, the historical forces at work in this region were quite different. The British were primarily interested in commerce and political power. Expansion of Christianity was far from their minds, unlike in the case of the Portuguese or the Spanish. In fact, it was precisely after the British left, that the Church here grew very noticeably. In certain parts of Northeast India it was only several years after the country became independent that the missionaries could enter.

The Gospel of Christ is the Good News of salvation, which frees man from all that hinders his progress, material and spiritual. It makes men aware of their inborn dignity as children of God. It frees them from all forms of fatalism and superstition, and challenges them to take their destiny into their own hands and shape it. Such a message is bound to appeal to the tribal genius. A dramatic improvement in the quality of life, thanks especially to education, naturally

flows from it.⁶ This is only an outward sign of the deep human and religious fulfilment which Christianity brings.

4. DON BOSCO'S MISSIONARY CHALLENGE TO YOUTH

Don Bosco in his method of education constantly instilled into his boys a sense of obligation and of the privilege of being apostles of Christ. Deeply apostolic as he himself was, this spirit naturally overflowed to the boys with whom he was in contact. The missionary challenge he offered them is to be seen in this context, and it emerged as the fairest flower of all his apostolate. It fired his Salesians with such zeal for the gospel that they were ready to go to the utmost limits of the earth to proclaim it. It was also Don Bosco's saintly intuition and genius that enabled him to see that the missionary challenge would be the greatest challenge he could offer the young.

a) *The Missionary Expeditions and their Results*

When he sent his first batch of missionaries to South America on 11 Nov. 1875, Don Bosco called it "the greatest enterprise of the congregation".⁷ The extraordinary courage he showed in sending men to the foreign missions when his congregation counted just 170 members was duly rewarded. The phenomenal growth both of the Salesian missions as well as of the Salesian Congregation was a sign from God that 'missionary adventure' was truly willed by God. The words of our Father at the first departure ceremony in the basilica of Mary Help of Christians were truly prophetic. "We are laying the foundation of a great work. It is not that we have any illusion about being able to convert the whole world in a few days. Not at all. But who can say that this small beginning may not be the seed from which a huge tree is to grow up? Who can say that this may not be like the tiny mustard seed, which grows little by little; that this is not going to bring about a vast amount of good?"⁸ Words which came true not only in South America, but even more strikingly here in Northeast India.

Don Bosco had the joy of sending eleven expeditions of missionaries, and the places of the departing missionaries were immediately taken by young men, also eager to participate in this great adventure. In fact, the growth in the number of Salesians was *pari passu* with the growth in the number of missionaries. At our founder's death when 150 of his sons were in the missions the congregation had already reached the 1000 mark. At the death of Don Bosco's successor, there were nearly 1500 men in the missions and the congregation had already reached the 4000 mark. The irresistible attraction of the young to the missionary ideal was in good measure responsible for such spectacular growth.

The intimate link between the aspirations of youth and the missionary challenge was reflected in Don Bosco himself. As a young man he passionately desired to be a missionary. But equally passionate was his desire to work for youth.⁹ These two apostolic yearnings of his heart had the same root, love of God and zeal for his kingdom. It was this same love of God and desire for the kingdom that he instilled into his boys and it explains the extraordinary flowering of apostolic and missionary zeal among his sons.

Don Bosco's solicitude for vocations, though not only to the missionary and Salesian life, is also to be seen in the context of his zeal for God's kingdom. In fact, work for vocations is one of the specific activities of the congregation.¹⁰ Don Bosco's first helpers were his own boys. Here we see something that very much distinguishes him clearly from other founders, and it reveals again the style of our founder who knew how to turn the evangelised into evangelisers. In his work for youth, he was convinced that his best collaborators would be young people themselves.

Missionary undertakings by no means reduced the congregation's commitment to youth. In the missions they were the first to receive the Salesians' attention. Don Bosco advised his missionaries, "On the mission we must take special care of the young, particularly the poor and

abandoned".¹¹ Thus his style of education became also his missionary method.

b) *In the Footsteps of Don Bosco*

The missionary challenge that Don Bosco offered his Salesians and boys bore astounding results. Today too, as the congregation tries to renew herself and attract more vocations, the style of our father is paradigmatic. The congregation must be presented as a missionary congregation.¹² A renewed commitment to the missions according to the peculiar mission methodology of Don Bosco is the path to renewal. A lack of missionary spirit may explain the recent sad experiences we have gone through.¹³ The council had put it forcefully, "The grace of renewal cannot grow in communities unless each of them expands the range of its charity to the ends of the earth, and has the same concern for those who are far away as it has for its own members".¹⁴ The Salesian special General Chapter has called it the "thermometer of pastoral vitality".¹⁵ The missions, in the mind of our father are not one of the many activities of the congregation. They are the one field where we have unlimited scope for living out our Salesian charism.¹⁶ Fr Ricceri already warns: "If the dynamic missionary spirit of the congregation were to falter, it would cease to be the congregation, the one Don Bosco knew, at any rate".¹⁷

Don Bosco believed that the young were capable of rising to his expectations. He trusted them. He believed that if he offered them a challenge, they would respond generously and magnanimously, which in fact they did. It calls for courage to pave the way for realising the apostolic potentialities of the young. Today it might demand a change of mentality on the part of the Salesians, to realise that even today's youth, despite all superficial appearances to the contrary, are capable of doing great things for God. Having accepted the Gospel, they are capable of sharing it with others, especially their peers, becoming in the process young missionaries sent to the young. "...Young people who

are well trained in faith and prayer must become more and more the apostles of youth. The Church counts greatly on their contribution..."¹⁸

Don Bosco was eminently successful in imparting missionary zeal because he himself was full of it. There was an intimate link between the man and his message. This is too obvious to need comment. The whole educative community is of crucial importance in educating to mission. It is not to be limited to just one member of the staff as though missionary formation could be the responsibility of just one Salesian.

This calls for conversion. Mission is the logical outlet of a heart filled with Christ. The Christian is missionary, not only by virtue of a mandate received from the Lord, but also because the Good News so fills him that he has no option but to share it with others. Today missionary activity, freed from the past colonial hangovers, and deprived of cultural props, thanks to growing secularism and materialism in many countries, is through and through a spiritual activity. Only a man of the Spirit can credibly carry it out. Hence faith and love will mark the Salesian educative community if it is to impart missionary zeal and dynamism to the young for whom it works.¹⁹ Our communities need to be convincing if our message is to find a home in the young.

There is a tendency today in some theological circles to decry first evangelisation. It is particularly strong in certain parts of India. Some see it as out of date. They would imply that missionary activity as defined by the Council is a thing of the past.²⁰ Pope Paul VI was fully aware of this dangerous tendency, hence his repeated emphasis on missionary proclamation. "Let us state this fact with joy at a time when there are not lacking those who think and even say that ardour and the apostolic spirit are exhausted and that the time of the missions is now past".²¹ "Men can gain salvation also in other ways, by God's mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them: but as for us, can we gain salvation if through negligence or fear or shame – what

Saint Paul called, 'blushing for the Gospel' – or as a result of false ideas we fail to preach it?"²²

Fidelity to Don Bosco, in more ways than one, demands that the Salesians come to the defence of something the Church has consistently upheld and which we consider as very much a part of our own charism. The best way we can defend it today is by helping the youth under our guidance to be missionaries. There is also a need for ongoing formation of missionaries so that they may keep abreast of missiological developments and constantly update their missionary methods.

Fortunately for us here in Northeast India, there is still substantial unanimity on the need and the possibility of first evangelization. In fact, the scope is so great that it would be strange for anyone to oppose it. After about sixty years of Salesian presence, when we think in terms of consolidation, it is important to keep in mind that the way of the missions is one of the highways along which we have to travel to be true to our identity.²³ A type of consolidation that makes us concentrate on ourselves will be counter-productive. In the present context of Northeast India our very Salesian mission demands that we give priority to first evangelization. Our mission demands that we turn the evangelized youth into evangelizers who will take the Good News of salvation to their fellow men. That would be the test of our apostolic dedication and effectiveness. At the moment, this aspect is duly stressed in formation. The steady growth of our numbers so far is a sign of God's approval as it was when Don Bosco initiated the saga of Salesian missions. Any departure from this, inspired by a desire to consolidate the Salesian presence and dedicate ourselves fully to the Salesian charism, would be misguided and unenlightened. It would lead to a pseudo-consolidation. If the missions "hold pride of place" for us, how could there be any relaxation in that endeavour in order to realise better our Salesian charism.? ²⁴

5. YOUTH AND EVANGELISATION

A Christian by virtue of his baptismal consecration, whereby he is incorporated into Christ and His mystical body, becomes also Christ's missionary. The sacrament of confirmation makes him a full-fledged apostle. The old expression "soldier of Christ" may sound too militant but the idea underlying it is quite different. Having offered himself to the Master, the Christian finds himself equipped and ready now to share the riches of his vocation with others, who also have a right to it. The Holy Spirit enlightens him and strengthens him and turns him into an apostle. The very first sign of this transformation of course, is an ever more perfect and sincere Christian living. From this authenticity of life, missionary zeal and apostolic dedication follow.

The apostolic dimension of sacramental life must not be lost sight of in catechesis. In fact, Jesus is the primordial sacrament because he communicates God to us and takes us to God. Through the incarnation he becomes the Father's missionary, revealing the Father's salvific will and gathering all men into communion with Him. Every Christian consecrated to God through baptism and confirmation becomes a sacrament of God. He must constantly communicate God and invite men to communion with Him.

a) *The Life of Faith and Christian Witness*

Beneath all talk of sacramental life and apostolic zeal is the profound surrender of oneself to God in faith. Faith is the all pervading quality of the Christian calling. This demands of the Salesian educator that he pay attention to the formation of the man of faith. Unfortunately, the onslaught of modern secularism has had a disastrous effect on the life of faith, especially among the young. However, our situation here in Northeast India is quite different. The type of secularism that has swept many traditionally Christian lands has not made itself felt here. Our young people are still by and large religious. Keeping the momentum of our missionary drive may provide us yet another means of resisting the attack on faith.

In faith formation, the centrality of Jesus Christ must always be stressed. It is he who gives new life to the baptised by incorporating him into his body. This incorporation must grow steadily, especially through sacramental life. Christ dead and risen, is the essence of the message we communicate. It is the resurrection and the constant presence of Christ in the Church today through his Spirit that gives vitality to Christian life.

Moreover, a deep experience of the risen Lord is necessary to sustain the missionary as he tries to communicate Christ. Communion with the Lord, as individuals and as community, makes mission effective. The risen Lord is active in us today. The young need to be helped to treasure more and more this divine presence in them. Thus they will be enabled, not only to proclaim the fact of the resurrection, but also the living reality of the risen Lord's presence in the Christian.

In this context one understands ever better Don Bosco's constant insistence on Confession and Communion. They are the pillars of his system of education. In these two sacraments the young experience in a most touching manner the presence of Christ. Receiving his pardon, they are cleansed from all that militates against growth into Christ. Divinised by the Eucharistic presence, they are progressively transformed into him. As a result they become capable of communicating Christ.

This experience of Christ must be profound and personal. Not every one who met Jesus in his earthly life experienced him. Simon the Pharisee, Pontius Pilate, the rich young man and many others saw Jesus with their physical eyes but not with the eyes of faith. Paul did not see the Lord in the flesh, but he profoundly experienced him in the Spirit, and thus he could witness to Christ. "It is the mission of every Christian to allow the Christ whom he has experienced and accepted in his own life to communicate himself to all who enter into contact with him through the gift of his Spirit".²⁵

The witness of Christian life, not merely as a means of evangelisation but as an element of it has been very evident in the belief and practice of the Church right from the beginning of her existence. In the secular world of today, the question of authenticity becomes crucial. "Either tacitly or aloud— but always forcefully— we are being asked: Do you really believe what you are proclaiming? Do you live what you believe? Do you really live what you preach? The witness of life has become more than ever an essential condition for real effectiveness in preaching. Precisely because of this we are, to a certain extent, responsible for the progress of the Gospel that we proclaim."²⁶ The medium of 'word', spoken or written, is but one means of communicating the Gospel. The communication itself is more comprehensive and is intimately linked with and flowing from a genuine acceptance of the Good News by the communicator. Communication involves the whole life. Coherence and authenticity pertain to the very core of evangelisation. Without authenticity, our message will look merely human and will be rejected by the hearers, or worse still, accepted with the wrong motivation and out of purely human considerations.

We notice today an amazing paradox. While secular humanism and materialism keep spreading there is also a perceptible growth in the search for religious experience. Large numbers of young people from Western Europe are flocking to religious centres in the East, especially to India, looking for something which astounding material progress has not succeeded in giving them.²⁷ This situation challenges the followers of Christ to manifest their genuine Christian experience. The perennial values of Christ's Gospel can and must fill the void that man feels. On seeing these values in an authentic life, modern man cannot but be impressed and be drawn. It stirs up "irresistible questions".²⁸ As a modern author has put it, "Like the communities of Jerusalem and Antioch, all Christian communities should be question marks and exclamation points for others. Their alternative lifestyles should ask questions and give answers!"²⁹

The essential element in this witness is to show that in his Son, God has loved the world and has called every man to the fullness of life. Our witness consists in living to the full the divine sonship Christ has acquired for us. It is the radiation of a supernatural reality, the proclamation that we are children of God. And nothing can testify to it better than an "authentically Christian life" which consists in self-gift to God and man.³⁰ This self-gift involves much more than formal intellectual adherence to a doctrine. The allergy we notice among people today to doctrines is not so much directed at orthodoxy, but is a reaction to a lack of orthopraxis which turns the former into dry logic, devoid of life-giving power.³¹ The God of the biblical revelation is one who is present with his people in their day to day life, transforming the human condition and creating it always anew. Such newness demands conversion and correspondence to the divine designs.

The ultimate test of being evangelised is the capacity and willingness to evangelise. The new life that Christ infuses in us tends by nature to propagate itself. Such propagation is the very test of the new life. Thus it was proper that the apostles started their preaching immediately on receiving the Holy Spirit on Pentecost day. The new life infused by the spirit spontaneously leads to transmission of the same. Paul VI expresses the thought thus: "...the person who has been evangelised goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelisation: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn."³²

Asia presents a particularly attractive missionary field to young evangelisers. On the one hand it is a predominantly non-Christian continent where the gospel is still to be proclaimed. On the other hand, populationwise it is a very young continent. While not all areas may be responsive and a good number even resist the Gospel, there are immense possibilities for the young to evangelise the young. In

schools and colleges, playgrounds and factories, clubs and organisations a vast fraternity of the young is taking shape daily. Often enough these groups cut across religious lines. Here the committed Christian youth is offered a veritable challenge to share his faith with those who have not experienced the Lord. The young today are deeply involved in nation-building and community-building. Therefore a worthwhile contribution they can make to building up society is precisely that of sharing their faith in Jesus Christ.

b) *Explicit Proclamation of the Good News*

Witness of Christian life, though primary, must be complemented by verbal explicitation. We might speak of witness as the incarnate message and open proclamation as the linguistic one. Both are needed for a faithful communication of the Good News. While witness alone may be ineffective, word without witness is hypocritical. In many predominantly non-Christian countries today, the Church is much involved in providing a witness of life through *diakonia* and other means. Such an endeavour, no doubt is profoundly Christian. However, its evangelising power is somewhat crippled, if not accompanied by an explanation of our motivation, which is none other than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church may appear to people merely as a philanthropic association "...Even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified..."³³ Genuine witness, moved by inner dynamism, spontaneously finds expression in words. Witness of life makes proclamation credible, proclamation renders witness intelligible.

The verbal communication consists in a "clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus."³⁴ In so doing the evangeliser gives the reason for the hope that he has (I Pet. 3:15). He is expressing in words what he feels deep down in his heart and what his daily life testifies to. The example of Jesus who went about preaching and that of the apostles is paradigmatic. The Jesus we see in the Gospels is a preacher. His numerous parables and sermons had the

clear aim of communicating a message. Faith which is necessary for salvation comes from hearing which presupposes preaching. Preaching aims to arouse faith and invites genuine conversion.

Explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ, however, appears to be on the wane. Some priests and theologians tend to view it as unnecessary and even unhelpful. On the other side of the spectrum are the propagandist activities of numerous sects which employ salesman techniques trying to sell the Gospel as it were.³⁵ Much of such "roadside evangelism" is carried out by young people. It is to be regretted that while we scoff at it, we have not found an alternative to it, capable of stirring up our young people to the same pitch and of inspiring them to mission. Youth evangelism so popular with non-mainline Christian Churches and sects, seems to be conspicuous by its absence in Catholicism.

Fortunately, in Northeast India, we still have many such missionary activities as Gospel crusades, prayer meetings directed to non-Christians, and manifestations of popular piety, which all contribute to communicating the Good News and offer abundant opportunity to the young to evangelise. These must be preserved and improved at all costs.

Granted that change is, perhaps, the most striking phenomenon of our age, it is only logical that time and attention be devoted to perfecting methods of evangelisation. But verbal proclamation has a certain primacy and can never be considered out of date.

Personal contact is another potent means of evangelisation. A message handed on from person to person has a unique efficacy. It shows individual conviction and has an attractive power difficult to match. Personal approach is a treasured and highly desired value in our age, and as such this means of evangelisation is most relevant. Just as anonymity and alienation tend to spread in the modern world, the more valuable becomes the person to person approach in evangelisation. A renowned missiologist observes that individual witness to individual is the natural

method of Church growth in a non-Christian country. ³⁶This has led to mass movements. This form of evangelisation is possible under all circumstances and is of particular appeal and interest to the young.

Along with these traditional means, the modern technological revolution offers an immense possibility never witnessed before. ³⁷The modern means of social communication must be fully utilised in spreading God's word. It is an obligation to employ such means to reach an ever larger audience in an ever more attractive way. It would be sad that when these avenues are so fruitfully used by others, evangelisers alone should be deprived of them. For the young today, the audio-visual language is their mother tongue. ³⁸Hence they are in a privileged position to use this language in communicating the Good News to their peers.

c) Involvement in Human Promotion

The Gospel message touches life as a whole. It affects every dimension of human life in its individual and social aspects. It has a special relevance to those issues that are strongly felt today. Among them is the question of socio-economic development. This again is a challenge particularly felt by the young today. Their keen sensibility in this regard makes them capable of involving themselves wholeheartedly in all that makes for authentic human development. Such involvement in true Christian fashion provides them an immense opportunity for evangelisation. It is not a question of using it as a ruse for evangelising, but the very involvement, in the Gospel spirit, becomes evangelisation.

Never in the history of the world has there been so great a possibility of providing all men with the means necessary for leading a fully human life with dignity as there is today. But the shocking realisation that despite such a possibility, it is this same world of ours that is marked by the most glaring forms of oppression and monstrous injustice in political, economic, social, cultural, moral and even religious fields puts us to shame. Statistics are staggering. The most evident form of such oppression and injustice, though

not necessarily the most serious is seen in the economic field. Poverty and plenty flourish side by side, not only among nations, but even more glaringly among fellowmen of the same country. Deprived of the basic means of human survival, millions of human beings, created in the image of God, endure a sub-human existence that is a mockery to their divine maker.³⁹ The Good News of Jesus Christ is a message of freedom and joy. In proclaiming this message one cannot be oblivious to the outrageous scandals of our day. Evangelisation in its comprehensive sense then must include liberation.

In a situation of absolute material poverty and misery, faithfulness to the gospel demands that the Church be fully involved in alleviating human need and in creating material conditions of life worthy of the human person. In much of Asia, we see deep religiosity along with distressing poverty. And the temptation is great especially for the younger generations to see in the former the cause of the latter. Organisations and groups committed to the abolition of misery and injustice question what they see as the dubious role of religion in perpetuating the *status quo*. Emphasis only on interior liberation has dampened the struggle for better living conditions where basic human needs are reasonably met. Religion and culture, either by themselves or because of their abuse by vested interests have somehow contributed to creating the present pitiful situation of the masses. The Christian message of integral salvation has a timely contribution to make not only to individuals and groups, but also to cultures and religions. We could also see a vindication of it in the fact that in several places it is to the poorer sections of society rather than to the richer ones that the Gospel is more appealing.

A very substantial contribution the Salesians make to human development in Northeast India is through our vast network of educational institutions and training centres. This activity has already borne abundant fruit. Many of the young people passing out of our centres have become

leaders in different fields. The importance of this type of apostolic activity must be duly stressed. In fact, already in the last century when Don Bosco sent his sons to America, he had insisted on the importance of educational work which would be crucial to evangelisation as well as to human advancement.

6. CONCLUSION

In these reflections, we have tried to point out some of the avenues open to the young in carrying out the mission of evangelisation. Evangelisation itself we have presented in its global sense. However, we have given considerable importance to first or missionary evangelisation, as that has priority in this region of India. But the other elements of this global reality have not been ignored. Moreover, our reflections are mainly, though not exclusively, in the context of Northeast India. Still much of it is relevant elsewhere too.

Youth power in this region reached a symbolic climax some years ago when a political party led by students won a democratic election and was given the responsibility of ruling the state of Assam. The young are increasingly taking up responsibility in every respect. Through our large network of schools we are constantly in touch with these young people who sooner than expected will play their role in society.

Moreover, the young who have accepted the Gospel as a personal choice have here a great opportunity of spreading the Good News among their fellowmen. They can do it through an authentic Christian life, through explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ and through involvement in human promotion. The Rector Major in his strenna for 1987 reminds us that we are missionaries to the young. May these young become in turn missionaries to other young people.

NOTES

1. The new prefecture Apostolic of Assam was entrusted by the Holy See to the Society of the Divine Saviour or Salvatorians on 15th January 1890. Fr Otto Hoffenmuller was appointed Superior. The first group of missionaries consisted of two priests and two brothers.
2. *Acts of the Superior Council* (Henceforth, ASC) 267, P. 13.
3. Cf. D. GRASSO, *Evangelizzazione Senso di un termine*, in M. DHAVAMONY (ed.), *Evangelisation – Documenta Missionalia* 9 (Rome 1975)21-47.
4. Cf. AA 6, 26; GS 44; AG 6, 14,17,23,27,29,30,35,36,38-40, LG 17,35 etc.
5. In this study our emphasis will be on first evangelisation (missionary evangelisation) especially in the context of N.E. India.
6. The following fact is very revealing. In N.E. India, in the State of Mizoram which has a predominantly Christian population the literacy rate is over 60% whereas in the neighbouring State of Arunachal Pradesh where Christian activity is virtually forbidden, the literacy rate is below 5%.
7. ASC 267, P. 15.
8. MB 11, P. 385.
9. Cf ASC 267, p. 14.
10. *Constitutions*, art. 28.
11. ASC 277, p. 22.
12. Cf. ASC 267, p. 38.
13. Cf. ASC 297, p.23.
14. AG 37.
15. SGC 463.
16. Cf. ASC 267, p.19.
17. ASC 277, pp.26-27.
18. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 72. (Henceforth EN).
19. Cf. Const. Arts. 10-21.
20. Nowadays, it is rarely that one comes across anything on first evangelisation in Roman Catholic publications, especially in the English language. But there is no dearth of such material in Protestant publications.
21. EN 53.
22. EN 80.
23. Cf. ASC 267, P. 12.
24. ASC 277, p.5.
25. *Declaration of the International Theological Conference on Evangelisation and Dialogue in India*, in M. DHAVAMONY (ed.), *Evangelisation, Dialogue and Development— Documenta Missionalia* 5 (Rome 1972)11.
26. EN 76.

27. Cf. DINH DUC DAO, *Prayer and Evangelisation*, in AA VV. *My Witness...Missionary Spirituality* (Rome 1982) 97-117.
28. EN 21.
29. W. BUEHLMANN, *God's Chosen Peoples* (New York: 1982) 246.
30. EN 41.
31. Cf. J. ESQUERDA BIFFET, *Teologia della Evangelizzazione* (Rome 1980) 109-120.
32. EN 32.
33. EN 22.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Such propaganda campaigns are common even in big cities. However cheap it may look, the earnestness and zeal of its protagonists, at least on the face of it, are a challenge to evangelism.
36. Cf. S. NEIL et al. (ed.), *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission* (London 1971) 200.
37. Cf. EN. 42, 45.
38. Cf. L. METZINGER, "Audiovisuals and Evangelisation," in *Lumen Vitae* 33 (1978) 146.
39. While this is particularly true of many Third world countries, other forms of oppression are prevalent elsewhere. Thus the communist ideology imposes itself by means of the brute force of the state in several countries, while an overriding materialism and secularism, supported by the powerful mass media give rise to a new form of oppression in the so-called First World, where the new tyrants have an uncontrolled desire for wealth and power and the limitless pursuit of pleasure.

Don Bosco's Idea of Religion in Education and its Similarities in Hinduism

Abraham Panampara, SDB

INTRODUCTION

DON Bosco termed his method of education as the "Preventive System". It was his way of meeting and bringing up the youth as good Christians and honourable citizens, useful to themselves and to society. He based his method on a three-fold foundation—Reason, Religion and Loving Kindness. Don Bosco worked in a completely Catholic setting and his method, therefore, is fully applicable only to a Catholic community.¹ The Salesians the world over continue to follow his method in their work for the welfare of youth. However, in most parts of the world, the greater part of the beneficiaries of his educative method are non-Catholics. The question is: can a Salesian educator make use of Don Bosco's educative method in such a situation?

Of the three elements of Don Bosco's educative method, reason and kindness are universally applicable. But religion poses a problem. Mine is a feeble attempt to find out Don Bosco's idea of religion, especially in relation to his method of education and some parallels in the religions of India, chiefly Hinduism. However, I am not in a position to suggest how similar ideas of religiosity could be applied in each situation. In all probability, the Catholic educator, although he sees similarities, is not in a position to apply the Hindu idea of religion in his dealings with Hindu children. On the contrary, a Hindu teacher who would like to use Don Bosco's

method of education could use these parallels in his approach. For the present I am attempting only to suggest some parallels from the popular knowledge of Hinduism.

SALVATION OF SOULS

The aim of Don Bosco's educational endeavour was 'salvation of souls', especially of the poor and abandoned youth. Don Bosco took for himself a favourite phrase of St Francis of Sales, 'Da mihi animas, cetera tolle' (Give me souls and take away everything else). This motto he kept before his eyes always.² He spelt out the aim of all his works in the rules for the Society he founded for his followers. "The purpose of this Society is to gather together its members, priests, clerics and laymen, in order that they perfect themselves by imitating the virtues of our Divine Saviour, especially His charity towards poor boys.... To this end they perfect themselves and they devote themselves to help their neighbour."³ Don Bosco himself on meeting a boy always concluded his conversations with a thought concerning the salvation of his soul. On one occasion he said that the only scope of the "Oratory" was to save souls.⁴

The four aims of life in Hinduism are *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (pleasure), *Dharma* (virtue) in social life and *Moksha* (salvation). The ultimate aim for man in Hinduism coincides with Don Bosco's aim. Thus salvation in Hinduism consists in escaping from the cycle of rebirth. Three ways of liberation are offered: the way of knowledge (*Jnana Marga*) by which man realises his unity with the absolute, the way of devotion (*Bhakti Marga*) by which man surrenders himself to God with the help of divine grace and works (*Karma Marga*) by which man purifies his activity and reorientates it towards the true goal of human liberation.⁵

For Don Bosco salvation is offered by God the Father, through His Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ and in Holy Spirit who sanctifies and directs man to his final goal. For him this triune God's plan of salvation is realised in the Catholic Church. One reaches God through one's membership in the Church and fidelity to its teachings.

For him this God is a provident and caring Father. He cares for all our spiritual and temporal needs. God's loving protection was keenly felt by Don Bosco throughout his life. He wanted his followers to have a personal relationship with this God through His Son, Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate. This God is a loving and forgiving Father. He is a Father who respected the freedom of the prodigal son and let him go, but followed him anxiously with his love and care and when he returned, accepted him without demanding an explanation or a period of probation and prepared a feast which scandalised his faithful elder son. This is a God who prefers the sinners, the prodigal to the upright, the tax-collector to the pharisee, the heretic to the orthodox, the prostitute and adulterer to their judge, the law breaker and the outlaw to the guardian of the law. This God is the shepherd who leaves the 99 and goes in search of the lost sheep and on finding it comes home carrying the sheep on his shoulder, rejoicing.⁶

The Christian Trinity and the Hindu Trimurti have been compared and contrasted by the theologians of both Hinduism and Christianity. For the Hindus God is Creator (Brahma), Preserver (Vishnu) and Destroyer (Siva). As a destroyer he destroys evil by his consuming fire from the third eye and destructive cosmic dance.

In the apparent similarity, we should not forget the fundamental difference between the Christian Trinitarian doctrine and the mythic concept of Trimurti. For Hinduism it is not one God in three Persons, but three gods.⁷

A more perfect theological parallel to the Trinitarian doctrine is to be seen in the philosophical notion of *sat chit ananda* of Vedanta.⁸

The idea of Divine Providence is seen in the tender loving care of Vishnu and Siva for their respective devotees. However, the idea of a loving father as manifested by Jesus Christ is practically absent in Hinduism, though Rigveda refers to God as Father, *Diauspita*,⁹ corresponding to *Deus Pater* of the Romans. However, it is never the Father revealed by Jesus Christ and so much loved by Don Bosco.

FEAR OF GOD

In his educational system Don Bosco made much use of the idea of fear of God and the presence of God. Don Bosco's conversation with Urban Rattazzi, the Prime Minister of Italy, in 1854 brings out this idea clearly. Among the various questions put by Rattazzi to Don Bosco was the one concerning the means he employed to keep order among so many boys who flocked to the oratory.

"Have you not at least two or three guards in uniform or in disguise at your disposal?", asked the minister.

"I have no need of them, Your Excellency".

"Indeed? But these boys of yours are in no way different from those of other people. They are, to say the least, unruly and quarrelsome. How do you reprimand them, how do you punish them to keep them in check and prevent them from being disorderly?"

"The greater number of the boys are lively, it is true, but nevertheless, to prevent disorder no violence or punishment is made use of."

"All this seems to be a mystery; what is the secret of it?"

"Your Excellency is aware that there are two systems of education; one may be called the repressive, the other preventive. The former aims at bringing up a man by force, by the use of restraint and punishment when the law has been transgressed, and a fault committed; the latter seeks to educate him with mildness, and therefore, helps him in a kindly manner to observe the law, and sets before him the means most suitable and most efficacious for that purpose; this is precisely the system in vogue amongst us. Here, care is taken, in the first place, to infuse into the hearts of the boys the holy fear of God, to instil in them a love of virtue and a horror of vice, by means of the teaching of catechism, and of suitable moral instructions. They are directed and maintained in the way of virtue by timely and judicious advice, and especially by the practice of piety and religion. They also receive, as far as possible, friendly assistance in recreation, in school, in their work; they are encouraged by admoni-

tions, and as soon as they show signs of forgetting their duty, they are charitably admonished and recalled to better sentiments. In a word, every means which Christian charity suggests, is made use of to induce them to do what is right and avoid what is wrong, from a motive of conscience enlightened and guided by religion."¹⁰

Don Bosco substituted the "fear" of God for the "fear" of punishment. He called fear of God the beginning of his method of education. For him this "fear" of God is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is not dread of any type of punishment, but a reverential fear which results from love and respect. It inspires a filial reverence towards the majesty of God in such a way that one abstains from sin or offence against God. Don Bosco called it the animating element in an educative family.

The presence of God in the life of the Oratory was felt by all. There existed a spontaneity in obeying the rules and following, common observances willingly and it gave a family atmosphere to the whole house. The first principle of the educative system of Don Bosco is to make sure that the duties are done conscientiously. As Peter Braido remarks: "Either through principle or by force of things, all the proceedings of the house were founded on the reality of the presence of God and in conscience."¹¹

Discipline was a natural result of this system of education. The biographer of Don Bosco illustrates this fact with an example: In 1875, some visitors expressed astonishment at the sight of so many boys in the study hall absolutely silent and intent upon their work. They said to Don Bosco who was accompanying them on a tour of the House:

"You must have a large staff to enforce such discipline."

"No, we are very few."

"You must be very strict."

"Not at all."

"Then how do you explain this?"

"You see, it is not fear of punishment that makes these boys behave well and study hard, but fear of God and the fact that they frequently go to the Sacraments. That works wonders with young people."¹²

Belief in a punishing God is very much in evidence in the Hindu tradition, especially in the non-Aryan type of worship which is connected with the demon worship and sacrifice. They believed in two types of spirits, the good and the evil ones. The good ones they approached for help and the evil ones they warded off by spells, charms, and sacrifices. The simple folk, governed mostly by fear, were more occupied in warding off the evil spirits than in the worship of the benevolent gods.¹³

The presence of God through *Avatara* (incarnation) was a key concept in the later puranic Hinduism. According to this view God manifests Himself, in various forms for three purposes, namely, to protect the good, to destroy the evil and to re-establish the law of *Karma*.¹⁴ Thus, for example Krishna, the manifestation of Vishnu, re-established cosmic order by destroying evil which is systematically illustrated in Mahabharatha War. Here Yudhishtira or Dharma-putra, the embodiment of uprightness and truthfulness, destroyed with Krishna's help his deadly enemy, Duryodhana, the embodiment of wickedness. In *Ramayana* Rama is the model ruler who defeated and destroyed Ravana who is totally wicked.

I would like to digress here and make a comparison between Christ the only incarnation in Christianity, and the incarnations in Hinduism. Christ is a historical person who established his claim to divinity by his death and resurrection. However, Hindu incarnations are mythical, devoid of historical reality. In the above examples both Krishna and Rama are divinised human beings—mortal heroes. Krishna seems to have been a non-Aryan hero who in his warfare against Indra, the Aryan God, defeated him and as a consequence, was divinised by his people. He is represented in *Mahabharatha* as a human warrior, but by the time of the *Bhagavad Gita*, he became divine, accepted by the Aryans and non-Aryans. Rama, the Aryan hero is presented in *Ramayana* as superior to the Dravidian hero Ravana. He was divinised while the vanquished Ravana became a

demon. This epic illustrates the racial conquest and the prejudices of the victorious Aryans.¹⁵

In Hinduism, God is considered to be present everywhere and in fact the whole universe is a manifestation of him. The Upanishads speak about God dwelling in the cave of the heart. "Verily this whole universe is Brahman." The Katha Upanishad declares that Brahma exists in the universe as its inner soul (*Antaratma*).¹⁶

The god Varuna watches over the universe with the sun and the moon as its two eyes. In the XIth Chapter of the Gita, Sri Krishna is depicted in his cosmic form, *Viswarupa*, knowing the past, present and future. "I see thee everywhere, unbounded form, beginning, middle and in all source of Thee infinite God, infinite form I find."¹⁷

In the *Bhagavad purana* we see the boy, Prahlada, proclaiming God's omnipresence, in presence of his wicked father, Hiranya Kasipu. This king asked his son if God were present inside the pillar. The boy replied that God was present even in the pillar. The king split the pillar with a sword. Lord Vishnu came out in the form of Narsimha, half man and half lion and killed Hiranya Kasipu, who refused to believe in God's omnipresence.¹⁸

GOD, GOOD SHEPHERD

A Salesian educator, for Don Bosco, is a good shepherd, imitating the Good Shepherd Jesus Christ who is fully dedicated to the welfare of the sheep entrusted to him. Jesus gave His life for His sheep. So too the Salesian educator should be ready to assist his wards and especially look after the needy and the wayward.¹⁹

Jesus tells us in the Gospel of St John, that he Himself, the good shepherd, looks after the sheep with great care. This care creates a mutual trust and understanding. "I know my own and my own know me". This affectionate care and understanding is the core of assistance in the educative method of Don Bosco. The Salesian educator should be ready for any sacrifice, as the Good Shepherd has done for his sheep, if the educative method of Don Bosco is to bear fruit.²⁰

The idea of a shepherd is Semitic. The analogy here in India is that of a cowherd caring for the cattle. In Saiva philosophy Siva is the protector of mankind and he is called *Pasupati* (one who cares for the cattle), that is, the one who looks after his devotees. In the Puranas Siva is considered as the Lord *Pati*, who protects his creatures, *Pasu*, to free themselves from the cosmic bondage *Pasa*.²¹

SACRAMENTS

The sacraments, for Don Bosco, are so many visible signs established by God to give our souls the graces necessary for salvation. There are seven channels through which heavenly gifts are communicated by God to man.²² However, whenever he spoke of the sacraments, he was mainly interested in two of them – confession and communion which he believed, excelled in efficacy for Christian formation and living. One of Don Bosco's sayings was: there are two wings on which to fly to heaven – they are confession and communion.²³

Don Bosco understood from his experience that the greatest supports of his pupils' spiritual life came from the proper use of the sacraments of confession and communion. Of the sacrament of Confession Don Bosco once said: "If God had told us that He would pardon our sins only through the sacrament of baptism and not those sins, which we would unfortunately commit after baptism, how many Christians would certainly go to hell. But God, knowing our great weakness, established another sacrament in which sins committed after baptism are forgiven and this is the sacrament of Confession."²⁴ His chief concern was to elicit from the persons whom he directed positive acts of repentance for spiritual progress.²⁵

His teaching on the Eucharist which was traditional in the Catholic Church, was also modelled on the thinking and the language inherited from the counter-Reformation. Hence, when he spoke of the Eucharist, he usually meant not the sacrifice of the Mass, but only Holy Communion.²⁶

Don Bosco recommended the frequent use of the sacrament of Holy Communion by saying that if we so frequently give material bread to the body by which we live in this world for only a short while, why should we not give more frequently to the soul the spiritual bread, which is Holy Eucharist. One could grow in holiness, according to Don Bosco, only through confession and communion and his method of education is to help persons to grow in holiness. "Now hear how Jesus Christ invites us to receive holy communion. 'If you', he says, 'do not eat my flesh and do not drink my blood, you will not have eternal life. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I in him. For my flesh is truly food and my blood is truly drink'.²⁷ For the Hindus the sacraments are, as in Christianity, external signs of inner purification and spiritual growth. The *Samskaras*, sacraments, care for the spiritual welfare of the Hindu from conception till death.

The *samskaras* were considered as means to *mukti*, or liberation. The ancient Hindus were far from being world-haters. For them body and matter were not intrinsically evil. So they avoided the two extremes: asceticism and hedonism. Unlike the Jains, the Hindu lawgivers did not disparage the body. It was an instrument of man's sanctification, and liberation. In Hinduism we have the opposite extreme: everything has been sacralized; there is no demarcation between the sacred and the profane. Bathing, temple prostitution, Chakra Puja, and human sacrifice, etc. are religious rites. In fact the Hindus do not believe in a natural order. The Sanskrit language has no term for 'nature'. Hence, Hinduism is supersaturated with sacramentalism. The whole cosmos is God's theophany. The universe is the great cosmic sacrament. Every concept, action, and object is invested with ritualistic symbolism.

The great defect in Hindu sacramental system is its rigidity and fixity. In ancient times the *Samskaras* were flexible. But today, their meaning and symbolism are lost to the common people because of the long lapse of time. There

is no competent authority to update Hindu liturgy. The secular State has the unenviable task of reforming Hindu religious traditions, for which it is not competent. Since Hinduism has no hierarchical structure, there seems to be little hope of making the Hindu sacraments relevant except through state legislation.

In the earliest Hindu speculation God was considered as food. The Vedic rishis considered God as food, because without food life perishes. However, God present in the form of food as in the Eucharist is nowhere to be found in Hinduism. On the contrary, ideas similar to real presence in the Eucharist can be found in Hinduism. The ideas of idols and their consecration are very similar to Eucharistic consecration. The priest consecrates the idol with a number of rites resembling the daily life of a king (as one cares for the king; waking up, bathing, clothing, feeding and putting to sleep). Then with special prayer (*mantras*) he invokes the deity to come and dwell in the idol. The idol does not merely become the abode of the deity, but actually it is transformed into the deity.

I invoke Thee

Calling Thee to come into the image

Come, Lord Siva!

Let the life-soul of Siva animate this.

Let the five senses be omnipresent

Siva dwell here...

Graciously be staying here.²⁸

The idea of sin as a violation of God's law is to be found in the *Rigveda* and in the medieval *Bhaktas*. It is totally absent in the Upanishadic period and in the Vedanta tradition. Vivekananda stands for such tradition and says "It is a sin to call man sinner" because man is identified with God as in the Upanishads and the Advaita Vedanta.²⁹

The *Rigveda* starts with a confession of sins to Varuna the supreme God.³⁰ In the *Rigveda*, at the beginning of a sacrifice, when the husband and wife are to be present, the wife has to confess to the husband. Jains and Buddhist

monks have to confess their sins to the head of the monastery and perform the penance imposed.³¹

According to Manu, sins are forgiven by confession, repentance, austerity and recital of the Vedas and alms giving.³² Bhaktas like Manicka Vachagar, Thukkaram and Kabir are fully aware of their sinful nature.³³ Confession as such is familiar to Hinduism and they believed this to be a means of obtaining pardon from God.

MARIAN DEVOTION

Don Bosco, following the Catholic tradition, placed great emphasis on devotion to Mary. The whole essence of his Marian devotion was to orient his youth to devout practices, filial devotion, and confident supplication to the Holy Virgin. This devotion is pursued first for its theological value and then for its ethical and psychological values. He insisted that devotion to Mary in a special way supported the young.

"Needless to say, devotion to Mary is the support of every faithful Christian. But in a particular way, she is such for the Youth. '*Si quis parvulus, veniat ad me*' (If anyone is little, let him come to me). I will show that Mary loves youth.... She loves the young for these reasons; because she is a mother, and mothers have greater affection for the younger ones, because they are more easily seduced, and thus they are more worthy of compassion, because they resemble her own son who spent his infancy, his boyhood and youth under her supervision."³⁴

Don Bosco's educational method needed a mother figure for the children who were in his institutions. Many of these were also orphans. At such an age, a child needs a mother figure in order to develop a basic sense of trust. Mary played this role in their early life. Don Bosco made this devotion to Mary a deeply personal one.

Another dimension of this deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin was the adolescent need to relate to a parental figure in trying to understand the changes that are taking place in their growing period. A central problem with the youth

during this period is the problem of sex and self control. At puberty, they are puzzled at the rapid psychological and physiological transformation that they undergo. In their desperate search for an identity, they ask the questions "Who am I?" and "What is happening to me?". They search for a model to imitate. Together with this change, there takes place in the adolescent a growing desire to break from the parental care and control and to assert his independence, and yet to depend upon his parents. In this period of uncertainty, confusion and instability, Don Bosco presents Mary to the youth as an exemplar and protector.

The youth is encouraged to look upon Mary as a source of inner strength in his struggle for self control and to look to her as the model of purity. In the youth's search for identity, Mary is presented to him as a mother figure who gives a sense of belonging to counteract a sense of rootlessness and alienation. She is also presented as a model with which he can identify. Mary is also presented as one who cares and as one upon whom the youth can depend in every eventuality.

Don Bosco made much of the devotion to Mary but not indiscriminately. It was a personal devotion tailored to the psychological need of each individual. Well known are the cases of Dominic Savio and Michael Magone. The backgrounds of these youths were different. Dominic Savio had a healthy family life and ideal relationship with his mother. The same could not be said of Michael Magone, for whom a father figure was missing. His mother was burdened with the whole responsibility of the family and could not have an ideal relationship with her young son who was already a little gangster when Don Bosco met him. Don Bosco presented Mary as a loving mother to Dominic Savio, and to Michael Magone as the lady-love for whom Michael was to be the knight, and he was asked to prove his worth. Thus Marian devotion was used differently with regard to the above two youths according to their needs.

In the Aryan society which was patriarchal there was

hardly any room for a mother figure. However, in the Dravidian tradition all the local deities were mother figures, like Mariamma, Ellamma, Kali and Durga in Assam, Bengal and Kerala (Bagwati cult). This presupposes that the Dravidian society was essentially matriarchal.

The female deity was worshipped under two aspects, the purifying aspect and the benevolent aspect. The most powerful goddess in Hinduism was Kali, the consort of Siva. She is the destroyer of wicked spirits. She destroyed Mahisha Asura, the personification of Evil.³⁵

Many of the goddesses are considered maternal and benevolent, e.g.:— Lakshmi, the giver of wealth, Saraswati the goddess of learning, and Durga the giver of power and protection.

As Christianity has patron saints, so Hinduism has a long list of saints who are called *Ishta Devadas*. They also resemble the guardian angels of Christianity and every one is exhorted to approach these gods in moments of difficulties. Ganesha, the elephant God is the remover of obstacles and under this aspect he is called the Vigneswara (the remover of obstacles.)³⁶

MASS, RITUALS AND PRAYERS

The sacrifice of the Mass, rituals and prayers occupied an important place in the life of the Oratory of Don Bosco. He wanted his children to be deeply involved in these as effective means of communicating with God and sharing in his grace.

Don Bosco wanted his wards to practise asceticism and mortification, but according to their state of life and age. The mortifications he recommended were not so much bodily as spiritual. He recommended that they should accept from God the little problems which life presents, the vagaries of weather and the difficulties of living together with others.

He especially recommended the mortification of the eyes and the other senses and made every effort to safeguard the virtue of chastity. His whole system of education was to a

certain extent to assist the child in preserving the virtue of purity.

Sacrifices occupied a central place in Hinduism (especially in Vedic times). In villages, even today, sacrifice occupies a very prominent place; breaking a coconut is an essential and a familiar scene on all important occasions.

Prayer is the soul of the *Bhakti* movement. Silent prayer or meditation is considered as one of the best means of communicating with the deity. *Nama Japa* or the recital of *mantras* is an important Hindu spiritual exercise. These are practices which could be adapted for Christian usage with great advantage.

Brahmacharya or the practice of celibacy is the first stage in the life of a Hindu. Manu gave great importance to the practice of *brahmacharya*. "Let the young men study the vedas in due order without breaking celibacy."³⁷ Bodily mortification such as fasting, pilgrimage, vow of silence, torturing the body, etc., are believed to liberate the soul from the allurements of the world and the flesh. The Hindu monks especially are asked to refrain from the world of amusements and the luxuries of life. Their life style is noted for simplicity.

ETHICAL DIMENSION

The starting point of Don Bosco's activity as an educator was his ethical and religious concept of life, a life of duty, of serious personal commitment, and of moral responsibility. His pedagogy is gospel-based and its function is to help the youth to be on guard against the world of appearance and deception and to live his life joyfully in accordance with Christian morals. Morality, for him, is based on religion and reason, the foundation of his system of education. For him Christian and moral life were intrinsically related. Reason and religion, were the great natural and supernatural bases of morality.

With regard to a practical education for developing a moral conscience and an effective sense of morality, Don Bosco agreed with the traditional rules of asceticism in the

choice of motives, and in the attainment of good habits. Don Bosco frequently spoke of purity and rectitude of intention in one's life. "I don't want you to abstain from evil for fear of being seen or found out by Don Bosco, but because you will be seen by God who on the Day of Judgment, will ask you for an account."³⁸ Here Don Bosco stressed individual responsibility and accountability.

The Hindu moral code is based on sound social and ethical principles. The duty of each individual and each social group is laid down in the *Dharma Sastras* or the book of ethics. Each one is responsible for his salvation by discharging his individual duties and caste obligations. This is called *Svadharmā* (my duty) and *asrama* (obligations). Man's future depends upon his present and past actions. He is the maker of his future. This is the famous Hindu *Karma* theory which is nothing but the application of causality to the field of ethics. Even God does not interfere with an individual's *karma*, although God gives his grace to lead a virtuous life.³⁹

P.V. Kane gives an elaborate account of Hindu theory of duty in his book, *History of Dharma Sastras*.⁴⁰

ASSISTANCE

Don Bosco's effective love for his boys was manifested by his educative presence among them. It was a loving presence that animated them and helped them towards their religious, moral and cultural progress. Don Bosco's personal interest in the welfare of the youth for whom he worked made him participate in the lives and activities of the students.

"Understand that as far as I am concerned, I am all for you day and night, morning and evening and at whatever time. I have no other intention than that of providing for your moral, intellectual, physical and spiritual advantage. But to succeed in this I need your help. If you give it to me, I assure you that the help of the Lord will not be lacking and we will also do great things together."⁴¹

Don Bosco recommended that educators be with the students and help them by their loving presence. He wrote in his Rules that the director must be wholly devoted to his boys and never engage himself with things that might keep him away from his office. Don Bosco gave example by his own life. As Don Lemoyne records, "He was always in the midst of the boys. He roamed here and there, approached one now, then another and without letting them know he asked questions to know their nature and their need. He whispered a confidential word in the ear of this or that boy. He stopped to console or help some sad looking boy to regain confidence and be cheerful. He was himself always happy and smiling."⁴²

Don Bosco's knowledge of human weakness made him see the need to guide his boys, to help them, and to defend them from the dangers of harmful experiences. His psychological intuition made him understand that it is more useful educationally to prevent a growing boy from having a negative experience than helping him later to remove its effects. By means of his loving presence, he succeeded in attaining the goal he set for his method of education:

Nothing of what happened escaped his observation, for he knew well the dangers which could take place by the coming together of students of different ages, condition and conduct. Even when his collaborators were around, he did not cease to be vigilant, as he wished to establish, by his example, the important practice of never leaving the boys by themselves.⁴³

For Don Bosco, the particular way of living in the presence of his students, was an essential characteristic feature of his method of education. Speaking of it, he says in his booklet on "The preventive System":

It consists in making the laws and the regulations of an institute known and then watching carefully so that the pupils may at all times be under the vigilant eye of the Rector and the Assistants, who like loving fathers, can converse with them, can give advice and corrections in a loving manner— in other words, this

system removes from the pupil all possibility of committing faults.⁴⁴

A careful and assiduous supervision will prevent evil and there will not be any need for punishment in an institution. Don Bosco was wont to repeat:

Remember well that boys err more on account of vivacity than on account of their malice, more because they are not well supervised than because of an inclination to evil. It is necessary to be with them, to take part in their games, to assist them attentively without imposing the assistance and to put them in the moral impossibility of sinning.⁴⁵

A question that normally arises in the mind of the reader is whether too much assistance would destroy liberty and whether it is a part of the repressive or preventive system. Supervision, taken in itself, could be either repressive or preventive. As Don Peter Braido remarks, "What makes it a part of the preventive system is the attitude of the educator and the acceptance of the educator's presence by the students."⁴⁶ In education, it is safe to presume that whatever is offered with love by the educator and accepted by students, prevents the possibility of its becoming oppressive or harmful. The three principles of reason, religion and loving kindness enter into supervision to make it a loving offer by the educator and a free acceptance by the pupil. Austin Auffray interpreting the mind of Don Bosco says:

This system calls only for that type of discipline necessary to keep a school as orderly as befits an educational institute, while it closes an eye to all unnecessary trifles. The assistants have to be assiduous, not burdensome; they must not be like the stone wall that does not give the young plant room to grow, but like the gardener who takes care that it gets plenty of air and light as well as the right kind of soil.⁴⁷

Hindu gurus not only gave intellectual education but were the guides of students who closely watched the conduct of their wards, corrected, guided and counselled them

in their spiritual life. This assistance did not end with the completion of the studies in the *Gurukul* but continued in the home by the guru who visited his student even after his marriage, in order to give him spiritual guidance. The guru's example is the most educative, influencing factor in the spiritual formation of the *Sishya*.⁴⁸

In Hindu law and life, grand-parents exercised the duty of assisting the grand-children with great care and love. This is usual in villages and even in urban areas, where parents are the earning members of the family and are out at work. The supervision and early education of the children is entirely entrusted to grand-parents. In some cases, the children are entrusted to servants. Here the education depends upon the quality and the education of the servants themselves.

RELIGION OF SERVICE

Don Bosco, in his method of education, wanted his boys to grow up in charity. He made use of every opportunity to train his boys to serve others. Whenever there was a social calamity such as epidemics, he risked sending his boys to care for the sick and the dying. God's blessings, he said, would keep the boys who served the poor immune from contagion. His great confidence in Mary who obtained many miracles enabled his boys to go out fearlessly to care for the sick during several epidemics. He wanted his wards, who came mostly from the poor and the neglected sections of society to grow up aware of the poor in their society. He made them understand that religion meant looking after the poor and the neglected in society and that Jesus Christ identified himself with the needy and the neglected. In caring for them one is able to follow Christ and fulfil His commandment.

In Hinduism the spirit of service to fellowmen is inculcated in the Gita where Sri Krishna speaks about social welfare. Says Krishna, "Your welfare is my concern." This has been taken as the motto of Life Insurance Corporation of India. Modern Hinduism also gives great importance to social concerns. This is more so when we consider the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and Gandhiji.⁴⁹ However,

in the caste-ridden society of India service often means help to those of the same caste. Hence charity in Hinduism does not necessarily mean help towards the poor and the needy. Gandhiji however, noted this and he tried to direct his attention and the attention of his followers to the service of the poor and the needy, especially those who have no place in a caste-ridden society. His journals *Harijan* and *Young India* tried to inculcate the spirit of service to the downtrodden Harijans.

HEART OF RELIGION

Don Bosco gave much importance to the heart in religion when the tendency in theology was to appeal to the intellect. He knew fully well that in religion no amount of intellectual understanding is automatically going to effect a change of heart. Don Bosco gave great importance to the affective aspect of religion and encouraged solemnity, order and grandeur in liturgical services, celebration of feasts, music and pilgrimages. Don Bosco propagated devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, i.e., a personal contact with Jesus, and devotion to Mary, Help of Christians, as a loving mother. He also propagated devotion to the guardian angel, to St Joseph and the saints. He wanted religion to be something that is beautiful, cheerful and lovable. He made it attractive to the people, especially to the youth. For him a dry and intellectual religion, no matter how sacred the truths presented, would be of no avail.

There have been constant anti-intellectual movements in Hinduism right from the time of the Upanishads. The Buddha was the leader of this movement. He gave great importance to the emotional needs of man. In fact, Buddhism is based on the central theme of compassion (*maitri karuna*). In Hinduism the Bhakti movement was an answer to the gnostic trend in Vedanta. Hence, celebrations of religious festivals and pilgrimages gave ample scope for an expression of the sentiments of the heart. The South Indian Azwars and Nayanmars were great devotees of God whom

they approached with tenderness of heart. The *Nalayira Thivya Prabhantham*⁵⁰. (Four thousand lyrics) of the Vaishnavites and *Devaram* (Divine Garden) of Saivites and Manekavachagar's *Thiruvachagam* contain the emotional outpourings of the heart to God.⁵¹ Even the intellectual Sankara turned the tide of Buddhism by his insistence on devotion, feasts and pilgrimages. He composed a number of devotional hymns in honour of the Mother Goddess.⁵²

CONCLUSION

The term 'Hinduism' defies any definition. It is at best amorphous and includes within its fold theists and atheists, monotheists and polytheists, iconoclasts and idol worshippers. The extent to which Hindu religious tenets can be made to serve the Salesian educational project so as to secure the moral and religious education of the young has not been sufficiently explored. The amorphous character of Hinduism may lend itself to facile comparisons. Serious difficulties that we may encounter while engaging in constructive dialogue with cultural and religious systems should not deter us from our search for authentic ways of applying Don Bosco's educative method to a non-Christian milieu. The relevance of the present study lies in this that it contributes to the efforts of the Indian Salesians to adapt it to Hindu religious and cultural milieu.

NOTES

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Role of Religion in the Educational Philosophy of Don Bosco and Swami Vivekananda

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INTRODUCTION

SWAMI Vivekananda, the saffron clad sanyasi of Calcutta, and Don Bosco, the black soutane clad priest of Turin have much more in common than what meets the eye. Swami Vivekananda and Don Bosco were not only deeply spiritual men but also men intensely committed to the upliftment of their countrymen. Their respective countries had suffered foreign domination and the cultural shock resulting from it. They were men of vision with immense energy at their command. Both men knew that only through a sound educational system could their respective societies hold together and achieve prosperity. The religious orders nurtured by them have kept alive the flame of their ideas and have continued to serve humanity to the present day.

Swami Vivekananda was the foremost disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, the mystic sage of Calcutta. Swami Vivekananda epitomises the happy synthesis of the best in Indian thought and civilization. He is that proud son of India who held aloft the flame of Indian spirituality and culture to the West and aroused in the minds of the Europeans respect and reverence for our nation and its people. The teachings of Swami Vivekananda have profoundly influenced the world. His educational philosophy is of great advantage to our nation at a time when its rich spiritual and cultural heritage is neglected as the nation strives for economic prosperity and technological advancement. The monastic

order founded by Sri Ramakrishna with just eleven youngsters in 1896 took giant strides under the able leadership of Swami Vivekananda and has today over 1,500 monks in its ranks¹. The Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math together run over 1058 educational institutions and have a total student strength of over 1,28,675.²

The present article studies the close similarities that exist between the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and Don Bosco on the role of religion in education. A critique of their respective religious philosophies is outside the scope of this article. The relevance of their teachings especially for contemporary India is brought out. The Salesian educational project which is now firmly established in India, the land of Swami Vivekananda, needs to be renewed in the light of his teachings and the educational needs of contemporary India.

1. MEANING AND AIM OF EDUCATION

Don Bosco and Swami Vivekananda were conscious of the fact that education embraces the whole man: body and soul. Neither of these men could envisage education as merely catering to the intellectual needs of the students. Moral perfection of the person constituted the ultimate aim of their respective educational projects.

a) Aim of education according to Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda defines education as "the manifestation of perfection already in man."³ In the above definition the term "manifestation" is to be understood in the subjective sense of "self-awareness", an unveiling or a process of discovering the hidden ideas.⁴ Being an adherent of Sankara's advaitic philosophy Vivekananda was of the opinion that the empirical or the individual soul is essentially identical with the Supreme Soul or *Brahman*. Because of *avidya* "ignorance" the individual soul becomes enmeshed in matter and does not recognize itself as identical with the Supreme Soul. The expression 'already in man' brings out this belief of Swami Vivekananda. The individual soul, being of the nature of the Supreme Being, is perfect.

Hence man does not acquire any perfection. What education secures is the removal of *avidya* which deludes the soul and the final realization of the identity of the individual soul with the Supreme Self. Later authors have been wary of subscribing to this advaitic position of Swami Vivekananda and have tried to soften his stand. Thus Mussaraf Hossain distinguishes between a transcendental and empirical understanding of 'perfection'.⁵ Others say that by 'perfection' Swami Vivekananda means the powers of *prakriti* 'nature'.⁶ Education has a religious intent and Swami Vivekananda's definition of religion as the "manifestation of the divinity already in man"⁷ brings out the intimate relationship between education and religion. True education is essentially religious and has the ultimate end of leading one to self-realization.

Totally averse to bookish knowledge that produced only a nation of dyspeptics, Vivekananda visualized an education that brought about the "advancement of life, development of the highest powers and capacities and the unfolding of the noblest potentialities of the student."⁸ Fascinated by the economic prosperity and the technological advancement of the West and especially of Japan, Vivekananda wanted education to render the same service to the Indians without destroying their religiosity and cultural identity. He was pained to see the sad neglect of our ancient *gurukula-system* of education. The almost demonic urge for things Western to the utter neglect and contempt of things Indian aroused his strong patriotic feelings, and he visualised a nationalistic education that engendered true love and reverence for the cultural heritage of our nation. The hankering after degrees has been the bane of Indian education ever since the introduction of education based on Western models. To reverse this trend Swami Vivekananda insisted that education should be related to the realities of life, enabling the students to build character and a spirit of dedication, social service, devotion, obedience and detachment. Education is not the mere acquisition of information,

but "life building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas."⁹

To avoid the danger of commercialization of education, Vivekananda demanded that education be entrusted to *tyagis* 'men of renunciation' as was the practice in ancient India. Rather than being the monopoly of a privileged class education should be universalized so as to encompass the illiterate masses especially women who have been victims of oppression and discrimination in the name of religion. A true education should enable "the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life."¹⁰ Through education Swami Vivekananda visualizes the integral development of the human person. He regards 'man-making' to be the be all and end all of true education.¹¹

b) Aim of education according to Don Bosco

Don Bosco's educational projects arose as a direct response to the dehumanizing and oppressive life situation of the youth of his day especially around Turin. The rapid growth of industrialization and its consequent need for cheap labour had lured many an adolescent to the city in search of work and shelter. But what they received were long hours of gruelling work, poor and oppressive working conditions. Immorality and delinquency were the net result. Don Bosco responded to this situation with his educational institutions that sought to make of his students "good Christians and honest citizens." The above expression succinctly underscores Don Bosco's desire to turn the young into productive and responsible members of the civil society. He also wanted them to grow as mature Christians responding fully to their spiritual vocation. Thus the education envisaged by Don Bosco strives for the total development of the human person. The responsibility of the young to society and to God is equally emphasized. Don Bosco's commitment to nation building was recognized by the Italian Government. This is borne out by the fact that while many of the religious orders were suppressed in Italy, the

Government offered unconditional support to institutions run by Don Bosco. Don Egidio Vigano, the Rector Major of the Salesian Society, speaks of the formation of "good Christians and upright citizens" as implying "education to life and love, for justice and peace, for playing an active part in society."¹²

Pope Pius XI speaks of the educational method of Don Bosco as aiming not only at the physical development of the person but above all else his spiritual faculties. The moral formation of the student receives primary importance. It aims at the total development of the human person.¹³ In tune with his Christian philosophy of life Don Bosco regarded education as a preparation for life, not only in this world but above all, the life after death.¹⁴ On account of his twin aim of turning out "good Christians and upright citizens" from his educational institutions Don Bosco gave tremendous importance to the religious and moral formation of his students.

2. ROLE OF RELIGION

a) Religion in Swami Vivekananda's educational thought

i) Education has a religious goal

Education as understood by Swami Vivekananda cannot be separated from religion. "I look upon religion," writes Swami Vivekananda, "as the innermost core of education."¹⁵ To Swami Vivekananda religion was a matter of experience rather than one of intellectual knowledge. "Religion," he said, "is not in dogmas nor in intellectual argumentation. It is being and becoming. It is realization."¹⁶ The aim of education is to bring about this God-realization. Hence he insisted on the education of the heart. He was more than aware that intellectual perfection need not take one nearer to God and that "irreligious men have been produced from the most intellectual training."¹⁷ According to him one of the evils of Western civilization is that it neglects the education of the heart. He considered the education of the heart as an essential pre-requisite for a true liberation of the self from

the shackles of selfishness, for "through the heart the Lord speaks."¹⁸

ii) Religion and economic development

Centuries of colonialism had destroyed India's economic vitality. Indians had lost the will to work. Seeing the economic progress of the West and especially of Japan, Swami Vivekananda decided that the answer to the poverty of India was economic development through hard work. Although religion may not offer any direct economic benefits, yet it is religion that gives man "infinite strength, indomitable energy, absolute fearlessness and life eternal."¹⁹ He calls on the Indians to return to the Upanishads which are "the great mine of strength"²⁰ and to be vivified and energised by them. Religion alone can rescue Indians from the grip of fear and weakness which left them incapable of constructive activity for their social betterment.

iii) Religion and social reform

The Indian is not moved by politics, the glamour of wealth, the power of trade and commerce, but he is easily moved by the call of spirituality. "In India," writes Swami Vivekananda "religious life forms the centre, the key note of the whole music of national life."²¹ On account of the deep religiosity of Indians, "social reform has to be preached by showing how much more spiritual a life the new system will bring, and politics has to be preached by showing how much it will improve the one thing that the nation wants - its spirituality."²²

iv) Religion and the teacher

In keeping with the ancient Indian tradition of having the *guru*, 'the spiritual guide', as the teacher even of secular subjects, Vivekananda desired that in modern India, too, education be imparted by deeply committed religious persons. He recognized the danger of commercializing education. An education that has to be bought and sold at a fee is totally alien to the Indian mind. Further still it degrades the person of the *guru* who imparts education at no cost and

with no motive except that of service to humanity by awakening the divine spark hidden in each individual. Swami Vivekananda foresaw that "India will have to carry others' shoes for ever on her head if the charge of imparting knowledge to her sons does not again fall upon the shoulders of *tyagis* (men of renunciation)."²³

The foremost aim of founding the Ramakrishna Mission was education. When asked about the scope of the Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Vivekananda replied, "Educate, educate... than this there is no other way."²⁴ Swami Vivekananda dreamed of having an educational institution in every town headed by a monk where the task of education would be carried out by religious persons. The monopoly of *pandits* over education has only brought the country to the brink of ruin. To recover the long lost glory of India, education needs to be entrusted once again to *tyagis*.²⁵

According to Swami Vivekananda, learning comes much more through hearing than reading. What is of importance is not the books but personal communion with the teacher. "Without the personal life of a teacher," writes Swamiji, "there would be no education."²⁶ Education is not mere acquisition of information but a preparation for life and this demands that from his early youth, a student be in contact with a person whose life "is a living example of the highest teaching," and "whose character is like a blazing fire."²⁷

The educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda recognizes that "in building character, in making for everything that is good and great, in bringing peace to others, and peace to one's own self, religion is the highest motive power."²⁸ Secular education is an anachronism to Swami Vivekananda. It can even be dangerous in as much as it destroys the national ethos. Religion ought always to remain the core of education.

b) Religion in Don Bosco's educational thought

i) Religion: a key to education

Don Bosco was conscious of the fact that a successful

education required religion as its basis. "Religion alone is capable of bringing to a head the work of true education."²⁹ Don Bosco also had the unshakable conviction that in education religion ought to have top priority because religion alone can affect the heart of the student so as to transform him effectively into a true human being, bringing out the finest qualities latent in him. Don Bosco's educational activity was directed more to the heart of the individual than to the intellect. "Remember," Don Bosco told his collaborators, "that education is an affair of the heart and God alone is the master of the heart."³⁰ Religion offers the key to the heart of man. Don Bosco was critical of all educational systems that neglected religion. "I firmly believe," says Don Bosco, "that without religion no good can be done with young people."³¹ Religion alone provides the motive force to guide and direct the life and character of young people. Through kindness we can gain the confidence of the boy and ensure his cooperation in the task of education. Through an appeal to reason we can enlighten his mind and provide it with principles of action but "only religion will furnish the pupil with those motives which are really powerful in moving the will to action."³²

According to Don Bosco, "education is the great art of forming the man,"³³ and Don Bosco regards the well-formed and mature man as one who acknowledges God as the highest object of his cognition, "who puts eternal salvation at the vertex of his human desires and who considers transcendence as the apex of his human consciousness."³⁴ In short, the ultimate end of education is essentially religious.

ii. Religion: a means to obtain discipline

Don Bosco used religion as an effective means of obtaining discipline from his boys. His views on the role of religion in obtaining discipline are best exemplified by his remarks to the British visitors to his Oratory at Valdocco, who were surprised at how he could obtain perfect discipline among five hundred students. "If you cannot use these means given to us by our religion," he told the visitors, "you will need to

have recourse to threats and punishments.”³⁵ When Francis Bodrato, a school teacher, enquired of Don Bosco whether his system excluded punishments, Don Bosco replied: “the whip— that is, a salutary threat of punishment— is nowhere excluded from my method of education. Remember that many and frightful are the punishments which our religion threatens with those who disregard and dare to break God’s commandments.”³⁶

iii. *Religion: a means to social reform*

Don Bosco was keenly aware of the fact that religion alone could cure many of the ills that plagued society. “The disease that spoils the world,” writes Don Bosco, “is lack of good morals, lack of faith, materialism, which seeks to insinuate itself into the hearts of our young people. To stem the inroads of such evil, our young people must be approached, made friends with, and given an education that is truly religious.”³⁷ In fact the whole Salesian educational project arose “to counter a secularistic education and press with one based on religion.”³⁸

iv. *Religion: a means to moral transformation*

Don Bosco was conscious of man’s natural propensity to evil. A true education should enable man to develop his character so as to follow consciously the dictates of right reason. There is no better means to achieve this than religion. “In my system,” says Don Bosco, “religion is the bit in the mouth of the impetuous charger, directing and governing it; whilst reason is the bridle which pulls its head round to the desired direction.”³⁹ In an age, when man was confronted by conflicting truth claims and value systems, when materialism and hedonism nibbled away at man’s capacity for authentic living, Don Bosco “believed that without a solid grounding in their religion and a solid basic moral education, they would find it impossible to live out their lives in an honest and productive way in a society where so many conflicting ideas abound.”⁴⁰

Don Bosco’s educational system is built upon the three

pillars of reason, religion and loving kindness. Paul Avallone is of the opinion that "to explain the family spirit reigning in a Salesian school, to understand how punishments can be reduced to a minimum, to know the secret of the wonderful fruits of the Salesian system of education, one must remember the great insistence that Don Bosco placed on religion, which affords the means of leading a disciplined life spiritually, morally, intellectually, emotionally, and physically."⁴¹ The success of the educational method of Don Bosco rests on religion. "The moral law will keep a youth on the right road to success and achievement; it will make him an upright and honourable citizen for his country."⁴² Thus, take away religion and the educational edifice of the Salesian method of education crumbles.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SALESIAN EDUCATIONAL PROJECT IN INDIA

Swami Vivekananda and Don Bosco believed that man has a spiritual dimension and that education ought to encompass the development of the spiritual sphere. Education should aim at the formation of the whole man. Especially in India the spiritual sphere receives greater attention. A serious challenge to the Salesians in India is whether they give sufficient attention to the development of the religious consciousness of their charges. To Don Bosco religion alone could guarantee an authentic education. Do the Indian Salesians share these sentiments of Don Bosco?

Paul Avallone traces the moral decadence of the American society to the neglect of religious training. He writes that "corruption in high office, disloyalty among government officials, and among our youth juvenile delinquency are on the increase. What is lacking in this school system? Why have the schools failed? One answer is definitely a lack of religious training and the consequent lack of religious practice."⁴³ The above statement is equally true of India. The recent communal flare-ups and accusations of corruption

in high places have undermined the faith of the people in Indian democracy. Corruption has become endemic to our national life. Our educational system has certainly contributed to this unhappy state of affairs. What is emphasized is success, promotion, and money. No respect for values and for the rights of the poor is inculcated. The threat to the integrity of our nation is indeed grave. The Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction, 1959-62 in its report concluded that "many of the ills in the education-world, and in society as a whole today are mainly due to the gradual disappearance of the hold of religion on the people."⁴⁴

Communalism is raising its ugly head all over India. The answer to it is sound religious instruction setting forth the noble ideals of the major religions of India. *The Education Commission of 1964-66* in its report *Education and National Development* already recognised the danger that the ban on religious instruction in schools has had on the nation. It notes that the general ignorance and misunderstanding of religious principles in the younger generation is so widespread that it poses a great threat to the development of democracy."⁴⁵ Unfortunately the *New National Policy on Education, 1986* makes only a passing reference to moral instruction. In the context of the religious pluralism of our country we need to evolve an effective way of imparting religious and moral instruction. It becomes an imperative in the context of the growing religious bigotry and moral degeneration facing our country. We need to cultivate in the minds of the young a deep sense of the supernatural, respect and reverence for the belief systems of others and a spirit of tolerance.

Don Bosco's educational system based as it was on sound religious principles had a radical influence on the Italian society. Senator Peter Fedele, a one-time cabinet minister and professor of history at Rome University, wrote: "Don Bosco's achievements cannot be explained if we exclude the supernatural. They are the visible flowering of his inner virtues. He opposed the materialism that was corrupt-

ing our youth, and he halted the nation in time as it was starting on a down ward plunge to destruction. Certain idealistic philosophers smiled when I proposed a study of Don Bosco's pedagogical system. Today, time has proven me right".⁴⁶

Don Bosco's educational system needs to do the same for the Indian society. Are the Salesians prepared to rise to the occasion?

CONCLUSION

The short comparative study of Swami Vivekananda's and Don Bosco's understanding of the role of religion in education has brought us certain insights that could be of immense help in serving the Indian nation. For the social and moral transformation of the nation, religion is a must and this can be had only through a sound education based on religious principles. The nineteenth century Italian Catholicism could see little of value in other religions and Don Bosco shared this view.⁴⁷ The universalism of Swami Vivekananda is a welcome corrective to this. "I look upon religion," wrote Swami Vivekananda, "as the innermost core of education. Mind, I do not mean my own or anybody else's opinion about religion. The true and eternal principles have to be held before the people."⁴⁸ How apt this message is for an India that is being torn apart by communalism.

Salesians who have inherited Don Bosco's educational method which had its beginning in a religion class need to consider seriously the warning of Swami Vivekananda: "If you attempt to get secular knowledge without religion, I tell you plainly, vain is your attempt in India; it will never have a hold on the people."⁴⁹

Don Bosco and Swami Vivekananda were inheritors of the educational systems of their respective countries and cultures. Don Bosco was an heir to Christian tradition and Swami Vivekananda to *Gurukula* tradition. Yet both these men infused their individual spirits into their respective

systems and transformed them so as to suit the requirements of their times. A similar exercise is called for from the Salesians of India today. They need to absorb the perennial values of the *Gurukula* model especially its insistence on the role of religion as embodied in the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. The Salesian educator should at the same time keep himself abreast of the developments in the field of contemporary educational sciences. It is only then that the Salesian educational method will share the Indian ethos and be capable of adequately serving the educational requirements of India.

NOTES

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3. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol.1, Calcutta, 1971, p.124. Henceforth referred to as C.W.
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5. *Ibid.*, p. 3-6.
6. According to Hindu Metaphysics *prakriti* is the primary source, the stuff of the universe and is not to be confused with the contemporary understanding of matter. Included with *prakriti* is everything from inorganic matter to mind. *Prakriti* is the source of all change and transformation. *Prakriti* along with *Purusha*, 'consciousness', constitutes man.
7. C.W, IV, p. 358.
8. Swami Vivekananda, "Swami Vivekananda on Education" in *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume*, Calcutta, 1963, p.462.
9. C.W., 111, p. 302.
10. C.W., VII, p.147
11. C.W., II, p.15.
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17. C.W., I, p. 412.
18. *Ibid.*, p.415.
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20. C.W., III, p. 238.
21. Swami Vivekananda, "Our Motherland" in *On India and Her Problems*, p. 5.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
23. C.W., V, p.370.
24. C.W., VI, p. 494.
25. C.W., V, p. 309.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 369.
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EAST MEETS WEST

A Comparative Study of the Lives and Charisms of Blessed Chavara Kuriakose Elias & St John Bosco

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INTRODUCTION

CHAVARA Kuriakose and John Bosco were saints of the nineteenth century. Though contemporaries they lived oceans apart, never met and in all probability never even heard of each other. One was born in India and the other in Italy. Their socio-cultural backgrounds were different. Nineteenth century Italy was almost cent per cent Christian and the vast majority Catholic. Again, the country was just beginning to feel the impact of industrial revolution. The India of the same period was hardly Christian and industrialization had not really dawned on the Indian soil. Chavara was born and brought up in the traditions of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church—a small minority—which to a great extent had indianized itself through centuries of growth and development in India. Naturally, the two saints had different spiritualities and different approaches to the problems of life.

In spite of these and other differences, it is interesting and at the same time enlightening to notice the parallels found in their lives and charisms. The present article examines the parallels in the lives of these saints in a descriptive manner. Their charisms are analysed from a critical viewpoint and they could, perhaps, be yet another instance of 'East meeting West'.

1. FAMILY BACKGROUND AND EARLY UPBRINGING

"Truly extraordinary is this day in the history of the Church and of Christianity on Indian soil", declared Pope

John Paul II at Kottayam on February 8, 1986.¹ It was on that day that the Bishop of Rome had the joy of beatifying Chavara Kuriakose Elias.

Kuriakose was born on February 8, 1805 at Kainakary in Kerala state, of a middle class family of farmers. His parents were good Christians, God-fearing and devout and Kuriakose was the Benjamin of the family of four girls and two boys. As providence would have it, the father died soon and it was his mother who had the task of educating the child in sound Catholic doctrine and traditions.

In his religious poem *Athmanuthapam* Chavara narrates the following incident with great joy and esteem for his mother. "My mother when she was still suckling me, laid me at the feet of the Mother of God as her servant praying: "Holy Mother, Virgin of God, I who am an impure handmaid dedicate at your holy feet today, this fruit of my womb so that you may protect him as your servant...."² This holy woman indeed sowed the seeds of his future vocation and sanctity.

"The beatification of Don Bosco", said Pius XI, "will remain memorable in the annals of the Church and of the Salesian society".³ On that glorious Easter morning the same Pope had the joy of declaring John Bosco, the humble shepherd boy of Becchi, a saint; it was on April 1, 1934, at St Peter's, Rome.

John Bosco was born on August 16, 1815 at Becchi, in Piedmont, Italy. He, too, was the youngest of a family of three children, all boys. His parents were poor peasants who had enough means to ward off starvation. Being good Catholics they trusted in providence more than in any material wealth for the Lord himself was their treasure and wealth. John lost his father when he was two and a half years old and it was his mother, a saintly woman, who brought him up in solid Catholic doctrine. In his *Biographical Memoirs* we read: "God gave John Bosco a truly Christian mother who was to mould him according to his plans".⁴ On October 25, 1835, on the occasion of his religious clothing, his mother told him the following: "When you came into the world I consecrated

you to the Blessed Virgin; when you commenced your studies I recommended you to practice devotion to her; now I complete the advice and urge you to give yourself wholly to her".⁵ John Bosco always cherished a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Towards the end of his life he would exclaim: 'It is all her work'.⁶

Chavara, too, was no less a great devotee of Our Lady. He was an ardent promoter of the devotion to the Holy Rosary in Catholic homes. When Kuriakose was of age he was sent to a local school to be trained in the vernacular languages, Malayalam and Tamil. At the age of fifteen he joined a newly opened seminary at Pallipuram. There the young man eagerly studied under a *malpan*, priest-teacher, Fr Thomas Palackal, who took great interest in the formation and growth of the young seminarian. In his own words Chavara records: "Malpan expected learning and at the same time, insisted that the clerics conduct the Church ceremonies solemnly that the people may have interest in them; otherwise the monastery would not have sufficient candidates".⁷ He always esteemed Fr Palackal as his spiritual guide and after his ordination in November, 1829 worked as a seminary assistant to him. They were later to be close associates.

John Bosco, unlike Chavara, had to face great difficulties and trials in acquiring early education. His family could not afford the expense and his step-brother was totally against it. It is paradoxical that one of the world's great educators had a hard time getting an education. He himself says: 'I was at the mercy of others'.⁸ On June 5, 1841 at the end of his seminary studies he was ordained a priest.

In his seminary years and especially at the 'Convitto Ecclesiastico' John Bosco was under the careful guidance of Fr Cafasso. Later on he would write: 'If I have done some good in my life I owe it to this worthy priest into whose hands I entrusted every decision, every deliberation, every plan and every undertaking of mine'.⁹

2. FOUNDERS OF RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

Already at the time of his ordination, it seems, Chavara

was convinced of the need for a religious congregation in his own Syro-Malabar Church. He wanted to reform the Christian life of his people by preaching the word of God; his own fame as an eloquent preacher was a great asset in this task. It was for this all-important purpose that Chavara with the cooperation of his friends envisaged a religious congregation.

In 1832 Chavara, Palackal and a third companion, Fr Thomas Porukara, decided to begin the congregation they had dreamt of. The new congregation drew its inspiration from the Carmelite Order since all three of them had a first-hand knowledge of the Carmelites. The first House was opened on the hill of Mannanam in Kerala. On December 8, 1855 the congregation was officially established under the name of "Servants of Immaculate Mother of Mount Carmel". In 1861 it became known as T.O.C.D, i.e. "Third Order of Carmelites Discalced".¹⁰ Chavara was the Prior General of the congregation until his death in 1871.

He was not content with a congregation for men. His profound sense of mission urged him to start religious Houses also for women. He started a religious institute for women with the help and cooperation of Fr Leopold Seccaro O.C.D. who was his spiritual director after Fr Palackal. It was known as the "Congregation of the Mother of Carmel" (C.M.C.), another Third Order Regular. The first convent was opened at Kunammavu with two candidates, on February 11, 1866.¹¹

The congregations founded by Chavara and his companions did immense good in reviving the Christian life of the people. They made outstanding contributions to the Syro-Malabar Church and to society in general in the educational, social and medical fields. Seminaries, schools, a house for the dying and the destitute, instruction of catechumens and introduction of annual retreats for priests and laity were among the C.M.I. activities under the dynamic leadership of Chavara.¹²

John Bosco did not think of founding a congregation

immediately after his ordination. His main challenge was to take care of 'poor and abandoned boys'— boys who had no one to care for them. He established Oratories— places of prayer and recreation— to realise this end. They were appreciated and lauded even by the anti-clericals.

The friends of John Bosco, especially Frs Cafasso and Borel, urged him to found a religious congregation to ensure the continuity of his mission. Archbishop Fransoni of Turin often said to him, 'What is going to happen when you die? For you must not lose sight of the fact that one day you will die. Is your work, too, to die with you?' Even the anti-clerical minister, Ratazzi expressed the same concern to him. These friendly warnings and those of others, as well as his own experience, convinced him of the need for a congregation.¹³

On December 8, 1859, John Bosco founded a congregation together with his friends and helpers. In his work for the boys he was struck by the meekness and kindness of the Bishop of Savoy— St Francis de Sales— and he called his congregation after him The Society of St Francis de Sales. In 1869 the congregation received its final approbation and John Bosco was elected major superior for life.

John Bosco also founded a congregation for women, to care for girls as the Salesians were doing for boys. In 1855 the sodality of the "Daughters of Mary Immaculate" (D.M.I.) was begun at Mornese under the spiritual guidance of Fr Pestarino. Later, under John Bosco's direction it was established as the congregation of the "Daughters of Mary Help of Christians" (F.M.A).¹⁴ In August 1872 the first members of the congregation pronounced their religious vows. Mary Mazzarello was elected superior general and she remained so until her death in 1881.¹⁵

Besides these, John Bosco also organized the Salesian Cooperators, a lay organization, for the renewal of Christian life. All these institutions and many others established by his spiritual sons later, came to be known as the "Salesian Family". The Salesian Family has rendered great service to the Church at large, in the field of education, youth-work,

catechetics and communication, technical and agricultural training. The Salesian congregation today has a global character working in over seventy countries of the world.

3. GREAT EDUCATORS

The main concern of Chavara was to renew Christian life among the Malabar Christians of Kerala. He has left us some sixty-seven letters of which the first was to his parishioners at Kainakary. It was written in 1868, three years before his death and is a clear exposition of his vision of an ideal Christian family given in practical instructions. In the introduction to the letter Chavara writes: "Praying for God's light and peace I write (this) family rule or order. I request you to accept it as an instruction coming from the mouth of our forefathers and to follow it carefully and make others follow it."¹⁶

Chavara was deeply aware of the all-important and decisive role of the family in the formation of a healthy human society. Thus, the family is the focus of the letter and it deals quite elaborately with the various aspects of a Christian family life—unity in the family, domestic servants, good neighbourliness, economic affairs, etc. It also deals extensively with the education of children. He describes children as a treasure entrusted by Jesus to the parents to be returned to him on the last day. Children are to be carefully brought up in the 'fear and love of God'. He laid down practical directives for the upbringing of children and emphasised the following points: the religious and civil education of children, their training in a chaste way of life, helping them in their choice of a state of life and in the management of economic affairs. He established many schools to help parents to follow these guidelines.¹⁷

Apostolate of the press can be considered the most important contribution of Chavara to the field of education and learning. At the cost of enormous effort he succeeded in setting up a press to produce daily and weekly newspapers, periodicals and catechetical and devotional books. It was

the first Catholic press in Kerala (third in the whole state) and was set up at Mannanam in 1844. It is narrated that Chavara designed the press from memory after visiting a government press.¹⁸

His writings are mainly religious in nature. But he was also a biographer and a historian. He kept a diary for a period of forty-one years, from 1829 to 1870. It is certainly an authoritative historical record of the Church in Malabar, besides being his autobiography with the life-sketches of the co-founders. His other writings include *Song of Repentance* (Athmanuthapam), *A Choral Dirge* (Pana), and the *Meditation Monologues* (Dyana Sallapangal). These reveal the piety and the deep mystical experience of the author.

Fr Chavara's writings promoted liturgical reform as well. His book on the rite of the Mass helped to bring about uniformity in the celebration of the sacred liturgy. He also edited a breviary.¹⁹

John Bosco is considered one of the greatest educators in the Church, especially of the young. He introduced a new approach to Christian education which we may call Don Bosco's Educative Method. It rests on the three pillars of reason, religion and love. In this method the educator is a friend and helper of the educand and education is carried out on a friend-to-friend basis. Such an approach proved to be a great success in the field of Christian education.

In 1853 he began to publish "Catholic Readings". He wrote mainly for common people—peasants and workers. What he strove to give to his readers was simple doctrines, edifying stories and the moral principles of the catholic religion. His other major writings include *The Pocket Book*, *Companion of Youth*, *Key to Paradise*, *History of Italy*, *Church History* and *Life of Dominic Savio*. *The Pocket Book* contained advice concerning the important duties of a Christian, so that each one can attain his own salvation in his own state of life. *The Companion of Youth* was a book of spirituality and prayer for youngsters. *Key to Paradise* consisted of a method of Christian life written for adults. The

Life of Dominic Savio was presented as a model for his boys to imitate. He also published the "Salesian Bulletin", a monthly, to promote understanding and unity among the members of the Salesian Family²⁰. Concern for his boys made him publish numerous leaflets and prayer books to provide them with plenty of good reading material.

In 1862, he established a press at Turin to facilitate many of his publishing activities. Innumerable books, periodicals, magazines, pamphlets and devotional books came out from this press. The press served yet another purpose. It trained and prepared many boys in printing and book binding. Soon after his ordination John Bosco had begun the work of spreading good books among the people. More than a hundred published works stand to his credit. The Church acknowledged this great contribution by declaring John Bosco the patron of the Catholic publishers, on March 25, 1936.²¹

4. ZEAL FOR THE CHURCH AND THE PAPACY

Chavara had an ardent devotion to the Church and the Holy Father. He had a great desire to spread the light of the holy Church in all directions; he was grieved to the point of shedding tears when he heard of the trials and persecutions of the Church. 'It is said that whenever he happened to hear news about the Pope, he was moved to tears either of sorrow or of Joy'.²²

Above all, Chavara is remembered for his steadfast loyalty to the holy Catholic Church. The Chaldean patriarch sent Bishop Thomas Rocos to Malabar to make a report of the state of the Syrian Catholic Church there. But Bishop Rocos soon began to exercise jurisdiction over the Syrian community under the false pretext of having papal authority. As the Syrians were longing to have a Bishop of their own rite they were happy to follow Bishop Rocos. Many parishes followed him. Every effort was made— promises, threats and the offer of a bishopric— to make Chavara join the Rocosian group, but all in vain.

Soon the news of the schism reached Rome. The Vicar Apostolic of Malabar was asked to appoint Chavara as the Vicar General. Under his able leadership many parishes were brought back to the fold. Bishop Rocos was finally forced to return to Baghdad. Pope Pius IX sent an autographed letter of thanks to Chavara in recognition of his meritorious service to the Church.²³ In 1986 John Paul II recalled this great contribution when he said: "But no apostolic cause was dearer to the heart of this great man of faith than that of the unity and harmony within the Church".²⁴

The Church and the Papacy were close to the heart of John Bosco. In 1850 he began to publish the monthly, "Advice for Catholics". It contained the true doctrine of the Catholic faith and aimed at safeguarding Catholics from Waldensian attacks. The magazine was so effective that the Waldensians had to answer it with another publication, "The Evangelical Readings". But it was no match for John Bosco's clear and lucid style. The Waldensians had to have recourse to other means—promises, threats and even physical assaults. They were of no avail and John Bosco continued to publish the monthly. He used to exhort the Christians, 'Yes, dear fellow Catholics, be brave! Let us cling firmly to the Catholic Church founded by Jesus Christ that has been persecuted through the centuries but has always triumphed'.²⁵

He published a 'Church History'. It had a very simple and straight-forward style. The book did much to present the true history of the Church and to correct some of the wrong notions then current. He did not hesitate to point out to a certain Farini (who had written a history book) the historical inaccuracies regarding the temporal powers of the Popes found in his book.²⁶ John Bosco often used to say: 'One who does not have the Church for his mother cannot have God for his father'²⁷.

It is said that Papacy was a subject John Bosco was never tired of preaching about. Among the three devotions advo-

cated by him is the devotion to the Pope. He did everything to help the Pope and the papacy. He collected money from the oratory boys—most of these boys were very poor—and presented it as an offering to Pius IX.²⁸ The Pope was so moved by such a loving gesture that he sent the boys Rosaries in return. In the 1870s when there was a serious rift between the civil authorities and the Papacy John Bosco gladly acted as a mediator. He advised Pius IX against fleeing from Rome.²⁹ Pius IX was so overwhelmed by John Bosco's love and devotion that he declared: 'I have three unselfish friends, one of them is John Bosco'.³⁰

For John Bosco even a request from the Pope was a command. Towards the autumn of his life Pope Leo XIII requested him to build a basilica dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in Rome. Though he had grave financial difficulties, he still undertook the work and completed it before his death. The basilica stands as a silent witness of his love for the Pope: "No effort should be spared when the Church and the Papacy are at stake".³¹

5. TOWARDS A SYNTHESIS

So far, we have analysed the many parallels found in the lives of Chavara Kuriakose and John Bosco. We have seen that their mothers and spiritual guides had a decisive role in their early upbringing and had left a distinctive mark on the future achievements of their sons and pupils. Both were founders of religious congregations which have made great contributions to the Church at large, especially in the field of education. These congregations do have a vital role in the present day society as well. Both have championed the cause of the Church and the Papacy by their words and deeds. They were both men of God who relied totally on divine providence. As the charism of a person is bound up with his life and works it is only proper to ask: do the parallels in their lives point to a similarity of charisms? No one can overlook the fact that there is a basic difference between the charism of John Bosco and that of Chavara Kuriakose. What accounts for this fact?

John Bosco's charism can be clearly and specifically outlined as a 'predilection for the young', especially the poor and the abandoned. He was a father and friend of youth and he also wanted his Salesians to be the same. In the context of nineteenth century Italy we can understand the urgency of John Bosco's mission. It was a time of rapid industrialization. Many people, especially the young, flocked to cities like Turin, to work in the factories. These boys were far from their homes and often did not have a place of shelter. They were exposed to all sorts of dangers, exploitation and ill-treatment. It was to alleviate the miseries of these youngsters that God sent John Bosco.

In the case of Chavara we can say that he strove to renew the family life of the Christian community around him. Nineteenth century Syro-Malabar Church had to face many problems. There was tension between the Syrian rite and Latin rite, almost leading to a schism. But more than this, the laity lacked education and were ignorant and illiterate. There was an urgent need of able Church leaders from their own community to understand and solve their problems. It was as if in answer to their pleas that God sent Chavara Kuriakose Elias. Indeed, he was a guide for the perplexed people.

We can, therefore, say that John Bosco developed a youth spirituality and Chavara a family spirituality. Yet, it is more correct to say, perhaps, that they differed not in their charism or spirituality, but rather in the means they employed! John Bosco approached society, the Christian society of his time through youngsters. He aimed at forming 'good Christians and honest citizens' who would renew family and society—he relied on children to Christianize family and society. Together with John Paul II we might affirm, IN YOUTH HE BELIEVED. On the other hand, Chavara looked to 'grown ups' to christianize family and society. He instructed and educated them for this purpose. His epistle to the parishioners at Kainakary is a clear evidence of it. It gives practical guidelines for the upbringing

of children. It was Chavara's special concern that children be taken care of and brought up in a truly Christian tradition and he considered it a parental obligation to educate and bring up their children as good Christians.

We can, thus, conclude that both Chavara and John Bosco were ultimately concerned with the Christian and moral life of their people and the society of their time; however, the means they employed to achieve it were different.

NOTES

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2. Kuriakose Elias Vadaketh, "Personality and Mission of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara" *Jeevadhara*, XVI, No.95, (September, 1986), 353-366.
3. *M.B.*, XIX, 151.
4. *B.M.*, I, 31.
5. Anderson, *Don Bosco*, Madras: St Joseph's Technical School, 1929, p. 43.
6. *B.M.*, XII, 424.
7. Kuriakose Elias Vadaketh, *Op. cit.*
8. A. Aubry, *St John Bosco*, Blaisdon: Salesian Publications, 1930, p. 27
9. David J. DE Burgh, *Francis and John*, California: The Benstiger Sisters, 1979, p. 41.
10. E.R. Hambye, "Two Indians, Two Orientals Beatified", *Vidyajyoti*, L, No. 3 (March 1986), 12. Since 1958 the official name is C.M.I., i.e. "Carmelites of Mary Immaculate".
11. — — "The Pope to Beatify Two in India", *L'Osservatore Romano*, (920) No. 3, (January 20, 1986, 12.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Anderson, *Op.cit.*, p.30.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 268.
15. F.M. Alvin, *Saint Mary Mazzarello*, Madras: St Joseph's Technical School, 1955, P. 41
16. George Kariarakath, "Chavara's Vision of a Christian Family According to his First Letter to the Community at Kainakary", *The Examiner*, CXXXVII, No. 21, (May 24, 1986), 494-495.
17. *Ibid.*, No.22 (May 31, 1986), 518-519.
18. Joseph Poonely, "Kuriakose Elias Chavara: Pioneer of Catholic Press", *The Herald*, CXXII, No. 6, (February 7, 1986), 4.
19. Domitian Manickathan, "Literary Contributions of Blessed Kuriakose Chavara", *Jeevadhara*, (September, 1986).
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22. Joseph Poonely, *Op. Cit.*
23. *L'Osservatore Romano*. (January 20, 1986).
24. *Ibid.*, (February 17, 1986).
25. *B.M.*, V, 163
26. *B.M.*, IV, 92.
27. *B.M.*, V, 163.

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28. *B.M.*, III, 358.
29. *B.M.*, IX, 444.
30. *B.M.*, IX, 234.
31. *BM.*, V, 383.

The Salesian Work-Ethic Vis-a-Vis the Bhagavad-Gita

Kenneth Pereira, SDB

The Ambivalence of the Human Condition

EVERY age and every culture seems tacitly to affirm that man is a citizen of two worlds. Jean Mouroux would certainly not be speaking on behalf of the Christian outlook alone when he says,

Man is a kind of limit or horizon between two worlds. He is immersed in the flesh, but constituted by the spirit; occupied with matter, but drawn towards God; growing in time, but already breathing the air of eternity; a being of nature and the world, but also transcending the universe in virtue of his liberty and capacity for union with God.¹

This statement is just as true within the Hindu perspective as it is within the Christian perspective and history has amply validated the fact that whenever the balance tilted one way or the other, individuals or movements arose to restore the balance.

In India, for instance, the antinomy between the excessively this-worldly Brahmanism of plebian interest and the Sramanism of an elite few (initially at least) precipitated the philosophy that we find in the Bhagavad-Gita. Likewise in the Italy of Don Bosco's times, Jansenism and Quietism were turning religion into a dangerously 'angelistic' enterprise, while on the other hand, the industrial revolution and political unrest were threatening to usher in a totally secular culture. Don Bosco's life-project may be seen as one big act of restoring a proper balance on both these fronts, so as to show man his proper place before God and in the world.

Two Opposite Dynamisms

At the very outset we may observe that the Gitakara (i.e., the author of the Gita, anonymous) and Don Bosco were impelled by quiet contrary religious dynamisms. Whereas the Gitakara tried to restore the secular dimension of human life in the face of transcendentalizing forces that were at work, Don Bosco was keen on sharpening the transcendental factor in man's life at a time when the secularizing forces in Italy had reached their zenith. Let me explain:

India at the time of the Gitakara (about the second cent. B.C.) was in a state of Philosophico-religious ferment. Buddhism had been wielding a considerable influence on both the intelligentsia and the common man. The compassionistic values that it stood for were missing in Brahmanism. Moreover, Buddhism turned men's attention towards release from this world. *Nirvana* was the highest goal that it set before man, and in view of its attainment, man was impelled to engage in elaborate ascetical practices. (This factor places Buddhism squarely in the heart of the Sramanic tradition).

The problem with Buddhism, however, is that it was a *nivrtti dharma*, i.e., a religion geared towards cessation of activity and for this reason it came into direct conflict with Brahmanic Hinduism, a *pravrtti dharma*, i.e. a religion geared towards activity. Brahmanism revolved around a set of entirely mundane concerns. Naturally, it was set on a collision course against Buddhism

Against this background, the Gita (written most probably by a Brahmanic Hindu) brings together in healthy tension, the two major concerns on either side: *dharma* from Brahmanic Hinduism, and *moksa* from Sramanism, as the foci of its philosophy. Through his new philosophical vision, the Gitakara tried to show man how there was scope for the noblest Sramanic ideals in the very midst of the mundane practices of the average Hindu.

But now let us move on to the Italy of Don Bosco's time. The industrial revolution had brought about rapid changes in the cities. Social life had begun to assume new patterns. The industrial cities were flooded with strangers who had poured in from rural areas, trying to seek new fortunes. Consequently, the Church too underwent a trauma. As Fr Stella expresses it,

Pastors and their assistants would have to go beyond simply waiting for young people to come to them in church or the sacristy for catechism lessons in the evening, on Sundays or during Lent. In provincial or rural areas, pastors were able to exercise control through the adults whom they influenced. This was becoming impossible in the city, because curates were losing contact with recently arrived families.²

In place of the Church, the state and other secular powers were assuming a much more important role in regulating the lives of the people. Unfortunately, their influence was far from congenial to the flowering of Catholicism. Transcendental values were being eroded and replaced by a humanistic spirit which, whether or not it left a place for God, disparaged the institutional Church at any rate.

It was to such a society that Don Bosco directed his pastoral care and concern. His educational project was geared towards re-awakening among the boys a sensitivity to the divine, a concern for the salvation of their souls and a love for the Church, which all said and done, is the vehicle of both these accomplishments. And yet, Don Bosco knew that all this could not be wrought without also taking into account the social dimension of man's existence. This made his work all the more difficult, for it forced him to contend with unprecedented problems, spawned in the wake of the industrial revolution, plus the rabid anticlericalism of his contemporaries in the political arena. And so, Don Bosco in all his realism saw that as an educator, he would have to

dedicate himself to the dual task of forming "upright citizens and good Christians".

The final syntheses that we find, therefore, in the Gita and in the educational work of Don Bosco, display a basic similarity. Both are marked by a bipolar concern: the promotion of a harmonious society and the salvation of souls yet obviously with different nuances.

The Exigency for an active Life

It is significant that although Bosco and Comollo were very close friends during their seminary days, there was a world of difference in their attitudes towards active life. Comollo on the one hand was so distressed with the world, that he found refuge in religious practices which did not entail social involvement³. Don Bosco instead saw work as a *sine qua non* of a Salesian's identity. His spirituality, Fr Desramaut tells us, was a product of the modern Western world, in a century which worshipped work and efficiency.⁴ His philosophy of life being derived from the Bible, gave a very important place to work. Imbued with a lasting sense of revulsion towards idleness, Don Bosco liked to point out that God instructed Adam to work, even before the Fall...but that there was no painful fatigue in this work. Work is written into man's destiny. Without it, the human race will perish.⁵

"Don Bosco would compare mankind to a beehive in which everyone has to carry out a determined task through the disposition of Divine Providence. Whoever does not do it or neglects it, is a parasite, a veritable disgusting thief."⁶ At the same time, Don Bosco made it clear that in all the work we do, our motivation should not stem from job-satisfaction, or from the immediate returns that our work brings us. In his souvenir to the first missionaries he says, "As we endure fatigue and suffering, let us never forget that we have a great reward prepared for us in heaven"⁷.

All these glimpses into the attitude of Don Bosco regarding work are, interestingly enough, highly reminiscent of the Gita. The Gitakara was equally concerned and worried

about the propensity of people towards idleness and inaction. A few direct quotations from the Gita will make this reasonably clear:⁸

Not by leaving works undone does a man win freedom from the bonds of work, nor by renunciation alone can he win perfection's prize (3.4). Renouncing works, perform them...both lead to the highest goal. But of the two, to engage in works is more excellent than to renounce them (5.2). The man who does the work that is his to do, yet covets not its fruits, he it is who renounces and yet works on; not the man who builds no sacrificial fire and does not work (6.1.). Even these works should be done in a spirit of self-surrender, for all attachment to what you do... must be surrendered. This is my last decisive word (18.6).

The End or Purpose of Work

What was the end towards which Don Bosco geared all his prodigious activity? one may ask. The answer—the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls—is more easily given than appreciated.

Over and above his strictly priestly duties of celebrating Mass and administering the sacraments, Don Bosco conducted oratories, organised healthy entertainment for his boys, published good literature, negotiated with civil authorities on behalf of the Church, sent missionaries to S.America, built basilicas and founded Congregations. In all these activities, his pastoral heart is revealed very clearly.

Not satisfied with providing spiritual nourishment for his boys, he toiled hard to provide for their temporal needs as well: food, clothing, shelter, trade skills, education and a respectable place in society. In this, Don Bosco is clearly seen to be far ahead of his times. His motto, "Give me souls" is highly deceptive, for despite the 'angelistic' tendencies in the spirituality of his day, Don Bosco's saving work reveals a profoundly holistic view of human salvation. But it must be added that this holism of Don Bosco was intuitive rather than theoretically grounded, for we are told that Don

Bosco's anthropology was rather Platonic. Desramaut, making an assemblage of certain telling remarks from Don Bosco's writings says that for him,

The body serves as a casing for the soul, is given to us to cover the soul, and is united with it. But it is a weight on the soul...The soul is that invisible being which we feel within us. It is like the spirit of God, which in the first days of creation was breathed into the body of man. This internal breath is simple, spiritual and immortal.⁹

This problem seems less difficult when we realise that Don Bosco was hardly interested in speculative theology and philosophy. Besides, Don Bosco had his own way of circumventing the problems that might arise in the context of Platonic dualism. He spoke of the 'heart'.¹⁰ In sum, we can reiterate that Don Bosco's salvific work touched the entire person, and that our Salesian activity cannot but be implemented likewise.

Now in addition to the personal dimension of Don Bosco's apostolate, there was also the ecclesial dimension. Don Bosco saw himself and his Salesians as builders of the Body of Christ. It has been pointed out, nevertheless, that Don Bosco's ecclesiology was deficient by today's theological standards. "He had little sense of the particular Church, and referred nearly everything to the Catholic, meaning universal, Church. He interpreted literally the axiom 'Outside the (Catholic) Church there is no salvation' and therefore believed that the missionary must bring the pagan into the Church by means of baptism as soon as possible."¹¹

All these theological shortcomings of Don Bosco may be really condoned, when we look at the concrete service that Salesians have rendered in mission lands, and the various types of people who have benefited from it, for they bear witness to a going beyond the confines of nationality and religious persuasion.

Coming back to our original question, regarding the end of Don Bosco's work, it would be more in keeping with the

breath of its scope, to say that Don Bosco's work was geared towards promoting the 'Kingdom of God'. It is no wonder then, that in returning to the spirit of our founder, our Constitutions tell us that "our mission is a sharing in that of the Church which brings about the saving design of God: the coming of the Kingdom, by bringing to men the message of the Gospel which is closely tied in with the development of the temporal order" (Const. 31).

Here I should like to stress that the Kingdom is neither identical with the Church, nor is it a totally eschatological reality. Rather it is the "reign of God, the acceptance of God's will and saving rule, a network of human relations with God, other people and nature."¹² This shows us that the Kingdom has a 'cosmotheandric' character and is seminally present in the world even today.

Working for the Kingdom, then, can indeed be seen as the sum and substance of the Salesian apostolate.

As regards Don Bosco's disposition in all his work, Desramaut says, "He rose above the vulgar motivations with which the world was content: immediate self-interest and ambition. He looked for higher motivations within the very nature of man, within the corporate social structures, and above all, within the supernatural destiny of a redeemed human race."¹³

Dharma as a Cosmotheandric Concept

Coming to the Bhagavad-Gita I should not be far off the mark in saying that the concept of *dharma* is the closest approximation to the 'Kingdom of God'.

Fr F.X. D'sa explains that this word is derived from the root *dhr* (holding together, grounding) and that what is held together, is the entire universe of contingent beings, Krishna himself being the foundation of this eternal *dharma*.¹⁴ For this reason, D'Sa calls *dharma* a cosmotheandric reality. It involves God, man and cosmos in evoking a sense of harmony, design and purposefulness on the most universal scale.¹⁵

The key word in the one cosmic *dharma* of the Gita is *lokasamgraha* or integration-of-all-people. *dharma* connotes concern for the cosmos as a whole. Man, insofar as he belongs to this world that is held together by *dharma*, is called upon to take delight in 'the weal of all contingent beings' (5.25). Concretely, this entails being committed to *karma* (work), in the most mundane sense of the word. To quote the Gita itself, "If you consider the welfare and coherence of the world (i.e. *lokasamgraha*), then you should work and act " (3.20).

The caste system, with its work proper to each caste is pre-eminently an expression of *dharma*. *Krishna* is himself supposed to have instituted it (4.13) in the interest of *lokasamgraha* or social integration. For this reason, a person should neither seek to abandon his proper type of *karma* (work), nor attempt to perform someone else's caste duty (3.35) for fear of upsetting social equilibrium. In all his work, therefore, the Gita insists that one must remain detached, working not for his own personal satisfaction, but in the larger interest of *lokasamgraha*.

Comparisons and Contrasts

Now, irrespective of the merits or demerits of the caste system, the foregoing considerations highlight some very significant features: 1) a faith in and a commitment to an overarching social harmony; 2) a recognition of God as the foundation, guarantor and promoter of this harmony; 3) the excellence of doing one's proper work; 4) a focus not on job satisfaction, but on the larger interest of all contingent reality.

Interestingly, all these features show up, *mutatis mutandis*, in Don Bosco's active life. Let us be more explicit in making our comparisons.

Firstly, both the Gitakara and Don Bosco had an affective breadth that extended beyond parochial interests and embraced mankind at large. In the case of the Gita, this fact explains why Arjuna was reproached for refusing to fight. Arjuna's surge of compassion at the crucial moment was

only a cover-up, it seems, for the real problem: a fragmentary view of human society, wherein preoccupation with the well-being of a few eclipses the exigency for the good of society at large, which sometimes demands drastic action.

As for Don Bosco, the breadth of his interest can be seen in the very scope of his activities and in his concern for making the Catholic Church truly universal. Today, the temper of our times makes us diffident about speaking of the Catholic Church in chauvinistic terms; nevertheless, every Salesian would readily admit being committed to ushering in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Secondly, both the Gitakara and Don Bosco recognise the centrality of God in this universal social order. *Krishna* in the Gita claims to be the base supporting *dharma*. (14.27). Don Bosco's vision, too, was obviously theocentric. The fact that he gave ultimate importance to the greater glory of God¹⁶ amply substantiates this claim.

Thirdly, the Gitakara's obsession with *lokasamgraha* led him to insist on the performance of one's specific caste duties. On the other hand, Don Bosco's urgency for the Kingdom inspired him to found various societies, each with its own peculiar mission which no one else could usurp: the Salesian Brothers, the Co-operators, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and so on. Even if we extend our consideration to a wider circle, Don Bosco, we are told, would say that everyone can go to heaven by fulfilling the duties that are proper to his state, be it the lay state, the religious life, or the priestly vocation.¹⁷ In any case, Don Bosco would always insist that the road to sanctity did not consist in doing unusual penances but in doing one's ordinary duties in an extraordinary manner.

Fourthly, the Gitakara repeatedly insists in strong terms, that man's proper concern ought to be work, and not the personal fruit derived from it. Don Bosco seems to have a similar attitude when he says that in working for the Kingdom, we must not count the cost. Our reward will be given to us in heaven.¹⁸

This is as far as the similarities go. In sum we may say that in both the Salesian outlook and that of the Gita, there is agreement as regards the exigency for an active life, in the interest of an ultimate universal good.

On the other hand, there are some profound differences which cannot be ignored.

For Don Bosco, the salvation of souls was attained *through* work. For the Gitakara, *moksa* was attained despite it. Don Bosco was convinced that in the difficult times in which they lived, the best way of serving the greater glory of God was through active charity,¹⁹ geared towards the salvation of souls. Let me quote Desramaut at length:

Both groups of persons help us: active Christians and those who benefit us by the sweat of their brows. "Whoever saves a soul saves his own." "Don Bosco saw his communities grow in perfection by virtue of the spiritual works of charity. He would say to all Christians, "An effective but often neglected means of gaining paradise is almsgiving," a term which we have to interpret...in a wider sense. "By almsgiving, I mean any work of mercy exercised towards one's neighbour for the love of God."²⁰

He pointed out that according to Scriptures, "almsgiving obtains pardon for sins..." and from this he deduced the fact that Christian charity 'frees us from eternal death,' 'prevents' souls from falling 'into the darkness of hell' and allows us to obtain 'mercy in the eyes of God.'²¹

Evidently then, in Don Bosco's notion of charity, work and salvation are thoroughly harmonised. On the other hand, the Gitakara stands at the confluence of two traditions which generates a tension between *karma* and *moksa*, a tension which was almost diffused by the Gitakara's remoulding of the concept of *karma*.

Brahmanic Hinduism in its pristine form had no place for the concept of *moksa*. However, as the *nivṛtti dharmas* of the renunciators began to monopolise the forum of religious

reflection, the protagonists of *pravrtti dharma* made a desperate bid to include it within the scope of their religion.²² The induction of *moksa* into the Brahmanic world-view, however, was not without its problems, for the espousal of *moksa* demanded the abandonment of *karma* which stemmed from *kama* (desire) and led to rebirth.

The Gitakara's genius lay in his having been able to present a feasible philosophical solution so as to give man hope for *moksa*, while yet upholding the exigency for *karma*, especially one's caste duty. The crux of the problem lay in presenting Krishna as both: the source and model of all activity. The Gita claims him to be the changeless source of all change (7.13-14) and hence no creature is the absolute author of his own actions. A man's *karma* is not centred on himself but on God. This being the case, there arises the new possibility of working worklessly (4.18) by casting all one's works on Krishna (12.6), simply recognizing him as the author of all works. This is tantamount to *niskama karma* (working without the desire for the fruit of one's work). And so, now that desire is also abnegated, the road is clear for the attainment of *moksa*.

The foregoing exposition gives us some insight into the fact that for Don Bosco, the salvation of souls necessitated some sort of activism, whereas for the Gitakara, *moksa* merely allowed for it...or rather, vice versa: engagement in work allowed for *moksa*.

The ultimate reason for this difference, as far as I can see, is that in the Hindu world view, *dharma* has no particular eschatological connotation. He who attains *moksa* 'steps out of the world', beyond the pale of *dharma*, as it were. On the other hand, the Kingdom of God is primarily eschatological, yet also penetrates into the realm of space and time, in a veiled way. "The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Lk 17: 21). Salvation therefore must envelop man's total existence insofar as it is a realization of the Kingdom of God in the lives of men.

apostolic life. He is ready to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, weariness and disdain whenever God's glory and the salvation of souls require it (Const. 18).

This article is indeed remarkable, as it brings us back to the mode and the motivation of our asceticism. Much has already been said about work, salvation of souls and the seeking of God's glory. Hence for a while, let us dwell only on temperance.

Desramaut tells us that for Don Bosco, 'temperance did not only mean moderation, but austerity.'²³ The austerity that Don Bosco had in mind was primarily a custody of all the senses, abstaining from the satisfaction of the senses.²⁴ In similar vein, Don Bosco urged a 'flight from the world', meaning thereby, primarily avoiding idleness²⁵...and certainly not a withdrawal from social life and activism. It meant a detachment from worldly goods, not a rejection of their use. On the contrary, Don Bosco inculcated the proper use of riches if thereby one was able to save souls. The watchword therefore was 'detachment', not 'privation'.

As far as food, clothing and shelter were concerned, Don Bosco strongly advocated frugality, modesty and simplicity. All things considered, we can best appreciate his sense of realism and balance, by the words of Fr Desramaut:

Don Bosco valued material things and he allowed their possession, even by those who practised the evangelical vows. God's creatures are always lovable. He however wished that all Christians should practise a continual interior detachment, so that their use of necessary goods should be governed by an authentic austerity.²⁶

In all these considerations it must be made clear that Don Bosco's was not a morose and gloomy sort of asceticism. For him cheerful fidelity to one's humdrum duties was more important than corporeal punishment. "The fulfilment of one's duties, the virtue of obedience and of submitting oneself to the demands of life were for Don Bosco, ascetical and purifying virtues."²⁷

Turning now to the ascetical spirituality of the Gita, it can be summed up in one word: *yoga*. Coming as it does from the Sanskrit root *yuj* (to yoke, to harness), *yoga* in its most elemental sense refers to some type of ascetical discipline: yoking our passions, harnessing our senses, so as not to let them get dissipated. *Yoga* as considered specifically under this aspect is more properly called *buddhi yoga*, since it is the *buddhi* (intellect-and-will) that is brought to bear on the *manas* (mind), which in turn controls the senses. To engage in *buddhi yoga* therefore ultimately means to have a custody of the senses, withdrawing them inwards (cfr. 2.8,2.61) so that they may cease to sustain the *ahamkara* (ego) which is, in the final analysis, a pseudo-reality. The crux of the problem is that the *ahamkara* is an impediment to both *moksa* and *lokasamgraha*. He who is *ahamkarta* (egoised) sees only a part of reality towards which he gears his feelings, thinking, understanding and willing, thus absolutizing his jaundiced vision and impeding the cause of *lokasamgraha*.²⁸ Secondly, when the *ahamkara* dominates, a man makes himself the ultimate goal of all his actions and thereby incurs the fruits of his actions thus impeding the cause of his own *moksa*.

Buddhi yoga is essentially *yoga* in the *nivrttic* aspect. At the extreme limit of it, the *buddhi*, into which all the senses have been integrated, stands motionless and still, immovable in ecstasy (2.53). But this is only a prelude to the action that is meant to follow. The effects of being *buddhya-yukta* (integrated through the *buddhi*) show up basically in three areas of a man's life: 1) his way of viewing reality; 2) his work; 3) his relationship with God. Accordingly we can identify a three-fold division of *yoga* into *jnana yoga*, *karma yoga* and *bhakti yoga*.

Jnana yoga consists specifically in the viewing of reality *sub specie aeternitatis*, i.e., from the perspective of the *purus* or *atman* (cfr. 5.7; 6.29; 18.20). The Gitakara, it seems, had discerned that because man fails to look at reality from this perspective but chooses instead to see it

from the myopic perspective of the *ahamkara*, all his scruples arise...especially those concerning morality and *karma* (as in Arjuna's case). *Jnana* is such, that he who attains it attains *samatva*, a sameness and indifference towards all pairs of opposites (cfr. 2.15, 38, 45; 5.3, 20; 6.7, 32; 12.18). Thus, *jnana yoga* engenders desirelessness, so that he who possesses it can work might and main, and still expect *moksa*. Moreover it engenders a unified vision of the cosmos (cfr. 18.20) thus furthering the cause of *loka-samgraha*.

Turning to *karma yoga*, it consists primarily in man's voluntary resolution to dedicate himself to desireless activity or *niskama karma*²⁹ thereby putting away the bondage that is inherent in all works (cfr. 2.39). As he toils on, he reminds himself that he is not the originator of his actions. It is *Krishna* who works through *prakrti* (nature), into which his limited act is thoroughly assimilated (cfr. 18.61; 3.27-28). *Karma yoga* strongly connotes the doing of one's proper duty for its own sake, in recognition of the fact that *Krishna* has so distributed the *gunas* (qualities) as to foster *loka-samgraha*.

As for *bhakti yoga*, it refers to the discipline of *yoga* in regard to one's relationship with God. It is essentially a way of loving devotion to *Krishna*. Because of *bhakti yoga*, the desirelessness of *karma yoga* is not simply the renunciation of the fruit of one's actions, but rather, the casting of all works on *Krishna* (12.6) who is in reality the ultimate agent of every action. Fr. DeSmet explains this very lucidly:

Through *bhakti yoga* the vertical dimension of human work opens up completely.... This offering up of all actions to the Lord appears to be a qualification to be added, as it were, extrinsically to the intrinsic nature of action. From the standpoint of the Gitakara's vertical analysis, it is nothing but a conforming of human action with its true essence as dependent totally on the absolute Agent who stands in everyone as the primordial Inciter, the inner Ruler and innermost *Atman*.³⁰

It thus becomes clear that through *bhakti yoga*, the rigour of *karmaphala sanniyasa* (renunciation of the fruit of action) in the interest of *moksa* becomes spontaneously simple for the devotee. But besides its solicitude for the individual, *bhakti yoga* has a cosmic thrust also. It inculcates a love and active concern for the whole cosmos by prompting one to see *Krishna* as abiding in all beings and all beings as abiding in *Krishna* (6.30-31). This in turn serves to further *lokasamgraha*.

This in sum gives us the ascetical spirituality of the Gita. Right away it is evident that the multi-pronged discipline of *yoga* in the Gita is geared towards enabling a person to work with the proper intellectual, emotional and religious disposition, so as to clear the way for his personal salvation or *moksa*, and also to foster *lokasamgraha*.

Though it is obvious that Gita and Salesian asceticism find their justification against a background of totally different outlooks, we cannot deny that there are also many points of similarity in specific details.

In both cases the exigency for work is keenly felt. Don Bosco and the Gitakara have both described work as something con-natural to man, and therefore unavoidable (18.60).

Secondly, both saw renunciation in work—in the interest of a more sublime goal—as something imperative. For Don Bosco it was the greater glory of God; for the Gitakara it was *lokasamgraha*.

Thirdly, both Don Bosco and the Gitakara held in healthy tension, flight-from-the-world on the one hand, and a concerned, active immersion in it, on the other. In the Gita, the *nivrttic buddhi yoga* is meant to serve as a prelude to the *pravrttic karma yoga*. In Don Bosco, this fundamental tension finds expression in his ardent intention to found a congregation of consecrated religious who nevertheless were full-fledged citizens in the eyes of the state. This tension also surfaces in his insistence on 'poverty' in all our works, while yet insisting that Salesians must be in the

vanguard of progress insofar as this would promote the salvation of souls.

Fourthly, in both cases, devotion to God is of pivotal importance. The Gita even goes so far as to say, "Work and act for Me (*Krishna*), for even if you work only for My sake, you will receive the prize." (12.10).

In this connection, it is worthwhile observing that both the Gitakara and Don Bosco bring God right into the realm of the profane: the Gitakara with his idea of *Krishna*-inspired activity; Don Bosco with his sense of urgency for the Kingdom of God and the greater glory of God.

The Salesian, in imitation of Don Bosco, could not but do the same. Fr Aubry puts it well when he says,

God is ever so close, hidden at the heart of the world. The true Salesian, overcoming appearances, finds him, seeks him, and meets him everywhere and always; in the moments of recollection, of course, but also in the moments of apostolic service. In the silence of the chapel and in the life of the playground. Between his prayer and his work there is no barrier. His life revolves around a single act of love for God.³¹

Needless to say, all this applies just as well to the Gitkara's outlook. A few quotations from the Gita would justify this claim.

Whatever you do, whatever you eat...whatever penance you may perform, offer it up to Me (9.27). On Me your mind, on Me your loving service, for Me your sacrifice, to Me be your prostrations: now that you have thus integrated self, your strivings bent on Me, to Me will you surely come (9.34).

Fifthly, both Don Bosco and the Gitakara advocate some sort of 'contemplation in action'. In both cases, this means more than simply interspersing our actions with quick ejaculatory prayers (as if the two activities are only extrinsically related). It means turning our work itself into prayer, by infusing it with the constant awareness of God for whose sake we do it.

It is significant that the three *yogas* dealt with in the Gita are not alternatives offered to people of different temperaments, or different dispositions. The three *yogas* constitute a single way wherein they reinforce one another. *Bhakti yoga* cannot and must not be practised to the detriment of *jnana yoga* or *karma yoga*. The same can be said of *karma yoga*. Work can be sanctified only if infused with the proper intellectual and affective disposition. (cfr. 6.46-47; 9.34). Thus in the final count, it is *bhakti yoga* that turns work into prayer. Robert Minor perspectively remarks that *bhakti* is what raises *karma yoga* and *jnana yoga* to the highest plane. *Niskama karma* (desireless work) now becomes a 'casting of all actions of *Krishna*' and *jnana* becomes a continual attention to *Krishna*³² ...literally an act of contemplation.

Something similar could be said of the Salesian spirit. Fr Aubry remarks, "Contemplation in action means...offering ourselves entirely to God the Father, giving Him glory and joy, and contributing to the salvation of the world. It has to do with...celebrating in the monotony of everyday, the great liturgy of life."³³

The Salesian must be wary of the presumption that all work is automatically prayer. As in the case of the Gita, work requires to be turned into prayer by infusing it with "the right intention of doing all for God, with the aim of pleasing Him, with the heart and mind fixed on Him, with frequent ejaculatory prayers (Cronistoria II, 46)".³⁴

CONCLUSION

Our spiritual journey through the work ethic of Don Bosco and the Gitakara will have made it fairly clear that there are many points of convergence between the two. 'How significant are these convergences?' one may ask. For instance can a Salesian hope to inspire a Hindu whose thoughts are shaped by Gita *weltanschauung*? Or can a Salesian use the Gita for inspiration in his work?

Before I state my answer, let me voice my apprehensions. Truths are never truths except within a context. Wittgen-

- cher und Christlicher Religion*, ed. Gerhard Oberhammer (Vienna: Sounderdruk, 1978) pp. 44-48.
29. R.V. DeSmet, "A Copernican Reversal: The Gitakara's Reformulation of karma," in *Philosophy East and West* vol XXVII. 1 (January 1977) p. 60.
 30. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
 31. *Aubry*, p. 165.
 32. Robert M. Minor, "The Gita's Way as the Only Way", *Philosophy East and West* Vol. XXX. 3 (July 1980) p. 345.
 33. *Aubry*, p. 158.
 34. As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 159.

The Salesian Rector as Kalyanamitra

Mathai Kottarathil, SDB

INTRODUCTION

IN recent years, the Salesian Congregation has been making sustained efforts to inculcate the Salesian charism to local cultures.¹ One of the significant areas where renewal is called for is with regard to our understanding of the person of the Salesian rector. The present day crisis in the practice of spiritual direction, the strong antipathy to every form of authority, the devaluation of the concept of 'fatherhood' have called for reflection on the part of the Congregation regarding the manner of exercise of the ministry of the rector. The Congregation acknowledges the need for such changes while not abandoning the model left us by Don Bosco. If it is indeed true that the Salesians "do not grow spiritually *in spite of* their own culture and environment, but *within and with it*"² the Salesian rector of the East needs to be a heir to its rich cultural and spiritual heritage. The figure of the Kalyanamitra, 'the loving friend', of Theravada Buddhism would be a helpful model to the Salesian rectors of the East. The present article seeks to bring out the close similarities that exist between the Kalyanamitra and the Salesian rector especially in the realm of spiritual guidance. While not overlooking certain significant differences, the present comparative study points to certain helpful insights that could be beneficial to the Salesian rector in his attempt to serve the Salesians of the East.

KALYANAMITRA³: A PARADIGM FOR THE SALESIAN RECTORa. *Spiritual Direction*

The dominant view of most Indian religious systems is that the attainment of salvation is a matter of individual effort. Nonetheless all systems recognize the need of a spiritual guide who has himself attained the highest religious ideal. This is especially true of Buddhism which regards spiritual progress as a matter of one's own personal effort and the guidance of the *sangha*, 'Buddhist religious community'. Theravada Buddhism regards the Kalyanamitra as an *arahant*⁴ and sees in him "a highly significant and potent religious force"⁵ in man's quest for perfection. The need of a Kalyanamitra is not just a matter of convenience or choice but an absolute necessity to attain *nirvana*, as the *Sutta Pitaka* so forcefully points out:

The monk who has a lovely friend (Kalyanamitra), who pays/Deference and reverence to him, who does/What friends advise, — if mindful and composed, such in due course shall win all fetter's end.⁶

The ideal of the Kalyanamitra is modelled on that of the Buddha. Like the Buddha, he should be *upaya-kausala* 'skilful in choice and usage of means'. He should be capable of discerning the personality traits and character of those who approach him for guidance.⁷ As a spiritual guide the Kalyanamitra is:

Lovable, reverant and reverable,
A counsellor, a patient listener,
A speaker of deep discourses, and one
who would not lead to a useless end.⁸

The Buddhists offer an original conception of the spiritual guide and it could be a helpful model in our search for an Asian expression of the Salesian rector as a spiritual guide.

The importance of spiritual direction in the Salesian Congregation is derived from a fundamental human need, the constant practice of the Church and the outstanding characteristic of the spirituality of Don Bosco.⁹ According to

Christian understanding, man is not divinity hidden in matter. He is an incarnate being. Man has to mature and achieve perfection both at the physical and the spiritual levels. It is a gradual process, and man requires the assistance of his fellow human beings in this process. In the present time under the pretext of 'self-realization' and 'self-actualization' one notices a hostile attitude to spiritual direction.

Authentic forms of spiritual direction seem to be replaced more and more today by "self-guidance, group-guidance, soul-baring sessions, revision of life, etc."¹⁰ Neglect of spiritual guidance on the part of religious and priests has had its tragic results like abandonment of one's vocation, slackening of religious fervour and difficulty in relating with one another. These devious trends have had their effect on the Salesian Congregation as well. Taking stock of the serious harm that could befall the Salesian Congregation as a result of neglecting spiritual direction, the Congregation has called for renewed fidelity to the practice of spiritual direction.

In the Salesian Congregation there is both community and individual spiritual direction.¹¹ In the local community the rector bears the primary responsibility for both the community and individual spiritual direction. At the community level he fulfils this task "through conferences, 'good nights', public and private exhortations, talks and the exercise of paternal authority."¹² Spiritual direction at the individual level is carried out especially through frequent 'friendly talk' with the rector.¹³ *Formation of Salesian of Don Bosco*, a document which lays down comprehensive norms for the formation of Salesians, lists the following tasks with regard to spiritual direction as belonging to the rector: to lead one to discern one's vocation, to educate one to a maturity of life in the Spirit, to guide one to deep communion with God through personal prayer, and to attain purity of intention in all that pertains to one's life and

mission.¹⁴ In a Salesian community the primary responsibility for the work of formation is held by the rector.¹⁵

Don Rua, the first successor of Don Bosco spoke of the rector as "a teacher of virtue and perfection to others."¹⁶ The ascent to holiness is indeed a strenuous task and few would venture on this journey were it not for the support and encouragement of a spiritual guide who offers to lead the initiate with gentleness and charity. The three images that Don Bosco used in order to describe the Salesian rector, namely, 'friend', 'brother' and 'father'¹⁷ recall to us the person and the qualities of the Kalyanamitra. In Theravada Buddhism the relationship between the teacher and the disciple is 'that of a father to the son'.¹⁸ Like the Kalyanamitra, the rector needs to be a man of deep spiritual discernment, capable of understanding the needs of those who come to him for direction.

b) A Teacher of Prayer

In Buddhism, the Kalyanamitra constantly guides the prayer life of his charges, especially in meditational practices. The practice of meditation is not an absolute must for the attainment of *nirvana*¹⁹ but it is certainly an invaluable aid.²⁰ The practice of meditation calls for an intimate knowledge of the personality of the initiate. The subject of meditation is chosen by the initiate in consultation with the Kalyanamitra. The initiate is expected to stay with the Kalyanamitra in order to be guided in the practice of meditation.²¹ The Kalyanamitra remains a model of prayer and spiritual perfection beckoning the initiate to follow him in the path to *nirvana*.

One of the foremost responsibilities of the rector of a Salesian community is to guide its members in prayer. Through his conferences, private discussions and above all through his personal example he rouses in his confreres a yearning and a taste for prayer.²² Spiritual direction offers a wonderful opportunity to lead initiates into a life of prayer that seeks to lead to summits of holiness.²³ The rector is not expected to be a 'workaholic' or a 'thinking recluse', but he

is certainly expected to be "a contemplative, a man of prayer."²⁴ The rector seeks to present himself as a living example of that happy synthesis of 'praying and living'²⁵ that characterized the whole life and activity of Don Bosco. Like the Kalyanamitra, the life of prayer ought to become a second nature to the Salesians.

The Kalyanamitra engages in meditational practices as a natural expression of his inner perfection. It in no way implies that he is in need of further training.²⁶ The Salesian rector on the other hand realizes that prayer is a living reality and that it calls for continuous growth. It is not "something completed and rounded off."²⁷

c) *Transmitter of Tradition*

By the time of the Buddha, the *guru-shishya*²⁸ relationship had become popular and was recognized as one of the most important channels for the transmission of India's sacred heritage and wisdom. A *guru* is regarded as the embodiment of the living word, a "perfect mediator between the disciple and the ultimate."²⁹ He is a living bond between the past and the present, and personifies the continuity of a directly communicable oral tradition.³⁰ Although the Buddha encouraged his disciples to work out their own salvation relying on their own resources, yet the early Buddhist communities in tune with the spirit of Hinduism of the times subscribed to the view that for the attainment of spiritual perfection one ought to seek the guidance of the Kalyanamitra.³¹

One of the chief duties of the Kalyanamitra is the teaching of the *Dhamma*, in imitation of the Buddha. Just as the Buddha sought to pass on his teachings to the unenlightened multitudes out of compassion so also "the Kalyanamitra seeks to witness, attest to, and then pass on the unique experience proclaimed by the Buddha."³²

Like the Kalyanamitra, the Salesian rector also shares a fundamental responsibility for the transmission of authentic Salesian tradition. Don Rua, the first successor of Don Bosco, speaks of the rectors as "the guardians of the spirit

of Don Bosco, the competent interpreters of the mind of the superiors, and the representatives of their authority.³³ This requires of the rector that he be well acquainted with the Salesian traditions. Just as the Kalyanamitra embodied the Buddha-experience so too the Salesian rector is expected to reflect the true charism of Don Bosco. The transmission of authentic Salesian tradition is regarded as "of decisive importance in enabling the confreres to understand their Salesian identity, the vitality of the Congregation and the value of their work as a response to the questions and challenges posed by today's youth."³⁴ The rector thus becomes a focal point of unity in the local community.

d) *A Credible Model*

An *arahant* is one who has attained to the highest ideal of human perfection according to Theravada Buddhism. Hence he could be said to equal the stature of Buddha himself in the attainment of spiritual perfection. We could even postulate the identity of the Buddha and an *arahant*.³⁵ The Kalyanamitra being an *arahant* is certainly a credible witness of the Buddha-experience. The disciple encounters in him the living embodiment of the Buddhist heritage. The Kalyanamitra remains a proto-type of the final destiny of every man.

The early Salesians modelled their lives on that of Don Bosco and in the present times, too, the same effort continues.³⁶ Although any Salesian would feel himself small when confronted by the colossal figure of Don Bosco yet the Salesian rector finds comfort in the fact that Don Bosco is not just a memory of the past, but the founder, exemplar and a living active presence reaching out to the future.³⁷ Don Albera, the second successor of Don Bosco, in his *Manual for Rectors* urges the rector to be in the eyes of the members of his community, a living rule, the personification of virtue and moral living.³⁸ The Congregation sees its renewal and spiritual rebirth as dependent on the rectors who embody the spirit and charism of Don Bosco in their personal lives.³⁹

CONCLUSION

The above study of the Kalyanamitra and the Salesian rector has brought to light a number of close similarities that exist between the two. At the same time we cannot wish away certain fundamental differences. The Kalyanamitra being an *arahant* is one who has achieved the highest level of human perfection. He is free from all lust and has attained *nirvana*.⁴⁰ The Salesian rector on the other hand is conscious of his human weakness and like his brother Salesians stands in need of constant purification. He cannot claim to be at prayer like the Kalyanamitra but he is prepared to place at the service of his brother Salesians whatever gains he had made in his march towards spiritual perfection. Hence the Kalyanamitra can serve at best as a paradigm to the Salesian rector.

The Kalyanamitra is essentially a spiritual guide and does not necessarily share responsibility for the temporal administration of the *sangha*. The Salesian rector on the other hand is the leader of the local community and has the ultimate responsibility for the spiritual animation as well as the temporal administration of the local community.

The Kalyanamitra is not appointed as a spiritual guide. A novice freely chooses a Kalyanamitra. While recognizing the right of Salesians to choose their own spiritual guides, following the tradition and example of Don Bosco, the rector is proposed as the spiritual director of the Salesians.⁴¹ The rector is made the leader of the local community through canonical appointment.⁴²

The Kalyanamitra remains a significant model of the Eastern conception of a spiritual guide. The East expects of a spiritual guide not only proficiency in doctrine but also religious experience. He is expected to be a man of prayer and contemplation and not one given to feverish activity; a man of self-mastery and not one given to violent and proud disposition. He assumes leadership not on account of canonical appointment but on the basis of his spiritual aptitudes.

The rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the East places on the Salesians the serious responsibility of making a lasting and significant contribution to the renewal and revitalization of Salesian life. Encounter with the socio-cultural milieu of the East need not necessarily impoverish the charism of Don Bosco which the Salesians hold dear. On the contrary such an encounter can shed new light on the manner in which it is lived out in a particular context.

The richness of any charism consists in its inherent capacity to grow and serve the needs of a people for which it is intended. To attempt such a task is an act of fidelity to that charism and not a betrayal of it. By viewing the role and function of the Salesian rector through the mirror of the Kalyanamitra nothing need be lost that should not be lost. As James Merrill expresses so beautifully in his poem, "Lost in Translation":

Lost, is it, buried? One more missing piece?
But nothing's lost. Or else: all is translation
And every bit of us is lost in it.⁴³

Could not the Kalyanamitra be the Eastern translation of the Salesian rector?

NOTES

1. Some of the significant documents in this regard are *Inculturazione e Formazione Salesiana*, ed., Angelo Amato and Andrezcj Strus, Roma: Editrice SDB, 1984; *Acts of the General Council* (of the Salesian Society) no. 320; *Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco*: Principles and Norms, Rome: Editrice SDB, 1981, esp. no. 468.
2. *The Salesian Rector: A Ministry for the Animation and Governing of the Local Community*, Rome: Editrice SDB, 1982, no. 24. Henceforth referred to as *The Salesian Rector*.
3. The term *Kalyanamitra* is used to describe the Buddhist *guru* especially an *arahant* in the Theravada tradition. Edgerton defines the term as 'good friend, regularly said to be one—not as a rule a Buddha—who helps in conversion or religious practice. cf. Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, Vol.2, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977, p. 174. The *Pali English Dictionary* gives two meanings for the term *Kalyanamitra*, namely, a 'virtuous friend' and 'a spiritual guide'. cf. T.W. Rhys-Davids and William Stede, ed: *Pali English Dictionary*, London: Pali Text Society, 1921-25, pp.199-200, cited in Nathan Katz, *Buddhist Images of Human Perfection*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. 1982, p. 189.
4. The word *arahant* is derived from the Pali root *arh* which means 'to deserve', 'to be worthy', 'to be fit' and is used to refer to a Buddhist monk of the Theravada sect. cf. W.G. Weeraratne, "Arahant" in Malalasekara, ed., *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Colombo: The Government of Ceylon Press, 1966, p. 41. Like the Buddha he has attained to *nirvana* but continues to serve the masses out of compassion.
5. Nathan Katz, *op. cit.*: p. 191.
6. Cited in Nathan Katz, *op.cit.*, p. 189.
7. R.V. DeSmet, "The Priest as Kalyanamitra" in *The Clergy Monthly* Vol. 36. (August, 1972), p. 300.
8. *Vsuddhimagga* 1, 98, quoted in DeSmet, *op.cit.*, p. 299.
9. *Acts of the Superior Council*, no. 281, pp. 17-22. Henceforth referred to as ASC.
10. *Ibid.* p. 16.
11. *Special General Chapter of the Salesian Society*, Rome, 1971, no. 678. Henceforth referred to as SGC
12. *Ibid.*
13. *The Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales*, Rome: Editrice SDB, 1984, art. 70.
14. *Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, Rome: Editrice SDB, 1981, no. 161.
15. SGC no. 678.
16. Don Rua, "The Circular Letter of August 24, 1894" cited in Aubry, *The Salesian Rector*, Madras: SIGA, 1977, P. 140.

17. Cfr. Aubry, *op. cit.*; P. 54.
18. *Mahavagga*, Ch. 1, P. 60. cited in Rabindra Bijay Barua, *The Theravada Sangha*, Dacca: The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1978, P. 169.
19. Nathan Katz, *Op. cit.*, P. 56
20. *Ibid.*, P. 57
21. Rabindra Bijay Barua, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
22. SGC, no 526.
23. *Ibid.*, no. 552.
24. ASC no. 306, p. 16
25. *Constitutions* art 86.
26. Nathan Katz, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
27. SGC, no. 554.
28. *Guru-Shyshya* relationship expresses the rapport that exists between the teacher and the student in the Indian tradition. This relationship is akin to that of a father and a son. Some even render to the Guru the reverence that is due to God.
29. Purusottama Bilimoria, "The Spiritual guide and the disciple in the Indian tradition", in *Journal of Dharma*, Vol. V, 3 (July-September, 1980), p. 277.
30. Frank R. Podgorski, "Kalyanamitra: The Buddhist Spiritual Guru," in *Journal of Dharma*, Vol. XI, 1 (January-March, 1986), p. 30.
31. Nathan Katz *op.cit.*, p. 189.
32. Frank R. Podgorski, *op. cit.*, p. 30
33. Lettere Circolari, 1965, p. 286, cited in Aubry, *The Salesian Rector*, p. 26.
34. *The Salesian Rector*, no 94; cf. also ASC no. 306, pp.16-19.
35. Nathan Katz, *op. cit.*, p. 145.
36. *Constitutions*, art, 97.
37. *The Salesian Rector*, no. 8
38. Don Albera, *Manuale del Directore*, no 29, cited in *The Salesian Rector*, no 97.
39. *The Salesian Rector*, no 97.
40. Nathan Katz, *op. cit.*, p. 202.
41. SGC, no. 678.
42. *Constitutions*, art. 177.
43. Cited in "Chartress and Ryoanji" by John D. Esuden, *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. XVIII, 2 (Autumn, 1985), p. 13.

Brahmacharya (Celibacy, Chastity) in the Thinking of Mahatma Gandhi and Don Bosco

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1. INTRODUCTION

MOHANDAS Karamchand Gandhi or Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)¹ and John Melchior Bosco or Don Bosco (1815-1888) are two eminently outstanding personalities who have come to be read with increasing interest and keenly studied by many in contemporary times. The activities of Gandhi dominated the tempestuous political scene of India during the first half of the twentieth century, and he is today hailed world wide as a saint who strayed into politics. Don Bosco was a Catholic priest-educator-saint of the nineteenth century Italy, who has worthily won the appellation of father and friend of the young.

This article is an attempt to analyse the concept of *brahmacharya*, (celibacy, chastity) found sporadically in the thinking of Gandhi and Don Bosco. It will consist of an examination of the meaning of *brahmacharya* according to Gandhi and Don Bosco, their manner of approach towards the concept, the means suggested by them to preserve and foster the virtue, the purpose of a life of *brahmacharya*, and finally, the relevance of our study for Salesian life, especially in the Indian context.

2. MEANING OF THE CONCEPT BRAHMACHARYA

2.1, Gandhi: A way of Life of Self-discipline and Freedom in the Pursuit of Satya (Truth)

The orthodox Hindu tradition divides a man's life-span

into four *ashramas* (life-stages): *brahmacharya* (the stage of the celibate), *grahastha* (the stage of the householder), *vanaprastha* (the stage of retired forest life) and *sanyasa* (the stage of the ascetic). During the first phase, a brahmachari (celibate) has to study assiduously the *Vedas* (the sacred scripture of the Hindus) without violating celibacy.² Sexual continence also forms an essential characteristic of the *sanyasa* stage. However, Hinduism provides for *naisthika brahmacharya* (life-long celibacy), as an easy course for ultimate self-realization.³

Gandhi emphatically asserted that most of his conceptions on *brahmacharya* were evolved from his own personal experiences and experiments. We may maintain that despite this bold claim he came under the powerful influence of several other factors as well in shaping his views on *brahmacharya*. For instance, Gandhi undoubtedly came under the sway of the traditional Hindu views on celibacy, chastity, sexual continence, the life of the celibate Buddhist *bhikkus* (mendicants who live on alms), the *vratas* (vows) of the Jaina monks which included *brahmacharya*, his Christian contacts, etc.

Brahmacharya is a complex concept which is difficult to define. Etymologically, the Sanskrit term *brahmacharya* means "practice of *Brahman*," or a "course of conduct adopted for the realization of *Brahman*, the ultimate Reality".⁴ In the popular parlance the term *brahmacharya* means "celibacy", "chastity", "purity", "a life of sexual continence", etc.

Gandhi described *Brahmacharya* negatively as control over one's thoughts, words and actions, of all senses, at all times and in all places.⁵ But he also transcended this limited notion of the concept and postulated *brahmacharya* in sublime terms as, "that conduct which puts one in touch with God,"⁶ "the way of life which leads us to Brahma (God)"⁷.

A *brahmachari* is therefore, a seeker after God, one who conducts himself in such a way as to bring himself closest to God in the least possible time.⁸

Brahmacharya understood as a way of life that leads one to God necessitates a brief examination of the concept "God". Gandhi declared with no unrivalled eloquence that for him God and *Satya* (Truth) are synonymous. Initially with the simplicity of a theist he conceived *Satya* as one of the attributes of God. But later, in 1931, with the remarkable refinement of a mature thinker he deified *Satya* and called it God,⁹ because according to him, *Satya* is the supreme value in ethics, religion, politics, social relationships and economic enterprises. It is the absolute, universal, underlying reality which has no ambivalence whatsoever, and everyone, even the atheists, acknowledges *Satya* or Truth.

Gandhi advocated eleven *vratas* (vows) as means that easily equip one for the possession of *Satya*, and one of the most important among them, according to him, was the cardinal virtue of *brahmacharya*.¹⁰ *Brahmacharya* is that way of life, which imposes a discipline on a person's body, mind and soul and purifies and liberates him so that he can practise *ahimsa* (non-violence) towards all beings, which is a necessary pre-requisite for the attainment of *Satya*. In other words, *brahmacharya* emancipates a person through self-discipline in order to practise *ahimsa* and thereby attain the highest reality—*Satya* (Truth, God). In short according to the mind of Gandhi one "cannot pursue *Satya* and practise *Ahimsa* as a means thereto without *Brahmacharya*."¹¹

For Gandhi, therefore, *brahmacharya* was not identical with celibacy or chastity or sexual continence for its own sake, but a way of discipline that enables a person to renounce the "body" in order to emancipate the *atman* (spirit, soul), so that separated from the earthly prison—which is the "body"—one's spirit can realize the divine.¹² This is undoubtedly a very positive and sublime manner of conceiving *brahmacharya*. So in as much as *brahmacharya* liberates one to practise perfect *ahimsa* which when positively considered is "charity" towards all beings, we could maintain that *brahmacharya* is "a way of life of love".

Nevertheless, it is difficult to attribute to Gandhi the Christian concept of charity or love, because a true love relationship is possible only among persons. The Christian perspective is that God is a person who is the father of all human kind. This makes every person a child of God and brother/sister to others. Consequently there is a foundation for love between them. Gandhi's understanding of love is based on the Upanisadic concept of the oneness of all life.¹³ *Brahman* which is *purna Satyam* (fullness of Truth) is indwelling in every particle of one's being *Tatvamasi*, Thou art That, you are *Brahman*. This makes one consider the other in reality as one's own self which is *Brahman* itself. But *Brahman* is not a personal God. Therefore there is no ground for an intersubjectivity based on genuine love. However, when we depart from the abstruse upanisadic notion of love and consider it from an empirical perspective, *brahmacharya* can still be called "a way of life of love", in so far as it emancipates and disciplines a votary of Truth for a more perfect practice of *ahimsa* (non-violence) than others. Gandhi never hesitated to describe *ahimsa* as love or charity in the purest sense of the term.

2.2. *Don Bosco: A Way of Life of undivided Love of God and Fellowmen.*

Don Bosco, we find, used such terms as celibacy, chastity, purity, etc. to mean what we commonly understand by *brahmacharya*. He considered love as one of the concrete expressions of *brahmacharya*. For him love had primacy among the attributes of God. Following the Christian tradition, he defined God as love, and *brahmacharya* as an expression of one's undivided love for God and fellowmen. A *brahmachari* or celibate is one who generously dedicates his entire self to God and for his fellowmen.

Don Bosco's concept of *brahmacharya* might be spoken of as having come under the influence of several factors: the life of Jesus Christ who lived a life of celibacy to fulfil His mission of establishing the Kingdom of God, the teaching on celibacy as enshrined in Christian Scriptures, the example

of the life of virginity of Mary the Mother of Jesus Christ, the apostles who left their entire families to follow Christ, the long tradition in the history of the Church of consecrated celibacy and chastity in religious congregations of men and women, the demands of Catholic priesthood, Don Bosco's own upbringing in a truly Christian atmosphere and the like. All these factors enabled Don Bosco to visualize *brahmacharya* primarily as a way of loving God and one's fellowmen, especially youth, with resolute realism and extraordinary practical sense. In the Salesian Constitutions we find it expressed thus: "Don Bosco lived chastity as love of God and for the young, which had no limits."¹⁴

2.3. Point of Convergence: A Way of Life to God

If we diligently inquire into the thinking of Gandhi and Don Bosco we would discover that they transcended the negative and commonplace understanding of the concept of *brahmacharya*. For them it was a way of life of love. But it was not as an end in itself, rather a way of life of love which in the last analysis, leads one to the highest reality, namely, God. It is true that Gandhi perceived God primarily from an intellectual point of view, as an abstract being, namely *Satya*, (Truth). He said that Truth is God and God is Truth. But Don Bosco perceived the same reality more from a volitional standpoint. For him God is love. So he is a person with whom an interpersonal relationship is possible. However, the point of convergence of Gandhi and Don Bosco appears to be that *brahmacharya* leads one ultimately to the one and the same reality namely God. In other words, God is the final cause of *brahmacharya* which is first in the intention of both Gandhi and Don Bosco. This leads us to the logical conclusion that *brahmacharya* is a way of life that leads one to God, and that this meaning of *brahmacharya* is shared by both Gandhi and Don Bosco. G.M. Dhalla in her scholarly article entitled "Brahmacharya and Christian Virginity" in *Jeevadhara: A Journal of Christian Interpretation* corroborates our standpoint: "The Hindu concept of Brahmacharya in its most perfect form is no

different from Christian understanding of celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, for both mean making God the centre and Lover of one's life."¹⁵

3. MANNER OF APPROACH TOWARDS BRAHMACHARYA

3.1. *Gandhi: Primarily the Fruit of Human Effort*

Gandhi envisaged *brahmacharya* with the tenacity and temperament of a truth-seeker. In July 1906 he took the momentous step of taking the vow of *brahmacharya*.¹⁶ When he established *ashrams*, (special communities for his close followers) the vow of *brahmacharya* was a requisite for every *ashramite*.¹⁷

An in depth analysis of Gandhi's life and thought induces us to believe that he had a "human" approach towards *brahmacharya*. The reason for such a mentality is to be sought in the general philosophical framework of Hinduism, which considers attaining *mukti* (liberation) essentially as an intensely personal endeavour.

As a married man, Gandhi experienced the various vicissitudes of marital life. The idea of *brahmacharya* dawned upon him at later stage in his life, when he tried to live a life of sexual continence. But he could live it only with intermittent failures. Hence in the year 1906 he decided to take the vow of *brahmacharya*, convinced that the nature and the seriousness of a *vrata* (vow) would be a bulwark against his weakness in self-control,¹⁸ which he believed was the greatest obstacle in his effort to attain *Satya*. Gandhi said: "I vow to flee from the serpent which I know will bite me. I do not simply make an effort to flee from him. I know that mere effort may mean certain death".¹⁹

Gandhi carried out elaborate "experiments" with *brahmacharya* almost with the pragmatic sense of a "scientist" in order to discover the best form of living out the vow. His own relentless effort to explore the recesses of his human nature with a view to preserve his vow of *brahmacharya* may be summed up in the frank confession he once made: "I have gone through deep self-introspection,

searched myself through and through, and examined and analysed every psychological situation."²⁰

In the light of what has been said above we may affirm that Gandhi viewed *brahmacharya* primarily from a human plane. In living the life of *brahmacharya* there was hardly anything that could be called gratuitous. He merely believed that the very seriousness and commitment required for living the vow of *brahmacharya* would help him overcome his weak, carnal, vacillating human nature. His unerring moral instinct urged him constantly to look upon his vow as a personal commitment which demands unswerving loyalty. Gandhi would, nevertheless, speak of the need for prayer and spiritual exercises in preserving and fostering *brahmacharya*. But for him these supernatural means came only second to the human efforts.

3.2. Don Bosco: Primarily a Gratuitous Gift of God

While Gandhi approached *brahmacharya* essentially from a human plane, Don Bosco's attitude towards *brahmacharya* was to understand it as a gratuitous gift of God to some, to which they respond freely. Don Bosco frequently alluded to the gratuitous nature of *brahmacharya*. For him *brahmacharya* is a gift of God, not a fruit of human effort. He said: "Let us earnestly implore the Lord for it because if He grants us chastity, we shall not need anything else".²¹ Again, "All, and I mean all of you must ask her (the Virgin Mary) to help you to preserve the lovely virtue of purity....where there is purity, there is everything else."²² Don Bosco was always convinced that no amount of human effort could enable one to acquire it. It is always an undeserved and unmerited gift of God to man.

3.3 Gandhi and Don Bosco complement each other.

Although Gandhi and Don Bosco, hailed from two distinct cultural and religious backgrounds, and envisaged *brahmacharya* from two different standpoints, their views complement each other. *Brahmacharya* in reality, is both a gratuitous gift and a fruit of human endeavour. Man is a citizen of two worlds: the spiritual and the material.

Just as in all the activities of every human being divine and human, spiritual and material elements are present, so also in the living of *brahmacharya* these two aspects are indispensable. We cannot conceive *brahmacharya* purely as something "supernatural" totally devoid of anything "human", and vice versa. Obviously, *brahmacharya* is a gratuitous gift of God. But at once we must also affirm that it is a fruit of human acceptance in freedom. The gift of God cannot be fruitful in man unless he freely co-operates with the divine gift. At the same time, mere human effort alone does not guarantee a life of *brahmacharya*. Gandhi and Don Bosco are primarily representatives of the human and divine aspects that underlie the concrete life of *brahmacharya* respectively. The former tells us to harness all the human means at our disposal. The latter teaches us not to rely only on self but also on the divine and the supernatural. In reality they complement each other. Their conceptions do not exclude each other.

4. MEANS TO PRESERVE AND FOSTER BRAHMACHARYA.

It would be no exaggeration to say that Gandhi and Don Bosco showed profound resemblance in their views on the means for preserving and fostering *brahmacharya*. Both were eminently practical and pragmatic persons endowed with a keen sense of "preventive consciousness", a fact clearly reflected in the sundry means that they suggested in order to live and persevere in the life of *brahmacharya*.

4.1. *Shunning Bad Companions and Occasions of Sin*

Gandhi learned from his own personal experience how bad companions and occasions to do evil can lead one into sin against the virtue of *brahmacharya*. When Gandhi was young, his own mother, elder brother, and wife admonished him about bad company.²³ He himself admitted with blunt honesty that it was by yielding to the importunities of a friend that he learned to smoke and eat meat, which were forbidden for a strict Vaishnavite Hindu like him. On five occasions he was tempted to commit sin against the virtue

of *brahmacharya*.²⁴ Prior to his sailing for England to study law, he had to make a vow in the presence of his mother that he would avoid three things: wine, women, meat.²⁵ When Gandhi established *ashrams* his "preventive vigilance" prompted him to make a separation between those with the vow of *brahmacharya* and those without it, and to avoid all occasions of exclusive intimacies among the inmates.²⁶

Don Bosco unceasingly admonished those under his care to avoid bad company and all occasions of sin as a plague. He was reasonable in his demand, especially because, most of the boys whom he cared for were from the emarginated strata of society where they had had many occasions to indulge in sin. Don Bosco, therefore, insisted on "Salesian preventive presence" among the educands in order to eliminate all occasions of committing sins, especially sentimental friendships, bad companions, persons who indulge in obscene conversations, idleness, bad books, etc.²⁷ His own keen insight into the problems and dangers which the young people of his day encountered enabled him to have a special predilection for those who had become victims of sins against the virtue of *brahmacharya*.

4.2. Control of Senses and Thoughts

Within the purview of the "preventive consciousness" of Gandhi came control of the senses and thoughts as another indispensable means for preserving and fostering the virtue of *brahmacharya*. He maintained that many aspirants of *brahmacharya* break the vow because of lack of vigilance in the use of their senses and thoughts. Gandhi was of the conviction that a *brahmachari* must use his sight not to see the frivolity around him, but the glories of God, his ears not for feasting upon obscene conversations but to hear the praises of God.²⁸

Not to have control over one's senses, he said, is like sailing in a rudderless ship which is bound to break up into pieces on coming in contact with the very first rock,²⁹ or like a fool who plays with fire not expecting to get burnt.³⁰ Great care and vigorous self-control, opined Gandhi, are required

in today's society to preserve the virtue of *brahmacharya*. Holidays and social enjoyments are so arranged as to allow the greatest latitude for a sensuous life. Gandhi further maintained that modern advertisements and literature almost teach that indulgence in sin is a duty and total abstinence is sin.³¹ In no uncertain terms Gandhi affirmed the need for waging a relentless war against the present day social situation, if one wants to preserve *brahmacharya*.

Don Bosco's views on the need to control one's senses and thoughts ran parallel to that of Gandhi. Don Bosco used to say: "Keep the senses under control".³² It was his constant slogan as an effective means to preserve chastity and purity. During one of his sermons he quoted Holy Scripture in order to establish the need to control one's senses: "I made a covenant with my eyes that I would not so much as think upon a virgin" (Job: 31: 1). He insisted with his boys that one should not cause harm to others by unguarded words or pollute one's ears by listening to foul talk.³³

Don Bosco's whole demeanour was such that cardinal Cagliero who grew up under the guidance of Don Bosco, once testified about him: "The moral virtues, particularly chastity, so adorned and sanctified his exterior life that he seemed not only a saint but an angel".³⁴ Don Bosco's biographer John Baptist Lemoyne, once remarked that, sometimes Don Bosco's co-workers took pains to scrutinize his exterior life. But his words, gestures, his whole manner, effused such candour and virginal innocence as to charm and edify all who approached him, even reprobates. He never uttered a word that would be considered less than becoming. His writings too were veritable models of extreme delicacy.³⁵

4.3. *Temperance in Eating and Drinking*

Gandhi advocated control of the palate as one of the most effective means for preserving the vow of *brahmacharya*. It is especially evident from his constant dietetic experiments. The effect of food on human mind and physical urges was an

ancient Indian belief, which Gandhi tried to verify by himself. So dietetic experiments became a habit with him.³⁶ He preferred simple vegetarian food, spiceless and if possible uncooked, and excluded some food altogether. His maxim was that man should eat in order to live and not vice versa. He spoke of the need to avoid tobacco, alcohol, coffee, tea and such other pleasurable things. Gandhi had also high esteem for fasting from food in order to preserve *brahmacharya*. He saw it as an age-old institution found in all the major religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Gandhi also spoke of "fasting of the mind" from all evil thoughts.³⁷ According to him, *brahmacharya* is a spiritual condition, and if one lets his mind turn wild and become attached to sensuality, a life of *brahmacharya* will be difficult.

Don Bosco was no less emphatic in speaking about the need for temperance in eating and drinking. He used to say that, temperance is what we need, and wine and chastity cannot go together.³⁸ He abstained from strong drinks, too spicy and tasty food. According to his biographer, the reason for it was seemingly out of consideration for morality and to safeguard chastity.³⁹ Don Bosco appears to have believed that people who were sparing in the use of meat and avoided spicy or hard to digest food were much susceptible to the promptings of concupiscence.⁴⁰

Don Bosco did not openly practise prolonged fasts or such other forms of asceticism. The kind of fast he advocated was a positive one: fast from idleness, intemperance and uncontrolled thoughts. He insisted with his boys on the need to avoid over-eating, eating between meals. Don Bosco himself was frugal with his food habits because he, like Gandhi, believed in the relationship between mental efficiency and regulated food habits. Once Don Bosco was asked why he lived on a meagre diet. His reply was that, with all his work, especially the mental work, he would never have lasted that long had he done otherwise.⁴¹

The views of Gandhi and Don Bosco on temperance in food and drink may seem exaggerated and rather outdated.

However, it cannot be denied that temperance has a vital role to play as an effective way of achieving spiritual strength which is essential to live a life of *brahmacharya*.

4. 4. *Sex Education*

Gandhi maintained that sex education which consists of instructions in the nature, nobility and function of human sexuality, given at the proper time, can enable one to have a realistic attitude towards the virtue of *brahmacharya*. If young people are left to themselves to acquire knowledge about human sexuality anyhow, it will mislead them into abusive practices.⁴² *Brahmacharya* is a distinguishing mark between man and brute. People often commit blunders out of ignorance of the value of a life of *brahmacharya*. Human development and lasting joy are a natural corollary of a regulated sexual life. It is Gandhi's teaching that sex education must be imparted only by those who have attained self-mastery.

In the numerous admonitions which Don Bosco gave to his boys with the intention of making them good Christians and honest citizens, one cannot but notice the emphasis he gave to a balanced attitude towards human sexuality. He transcended the sphere of problems and possible mistakes against the virtue of purity to emphasize its advantage and beauty. He often used such imageries as "spotless lily", "precious rose," "pearl beyond price", etc.⁴³ to refer to purity.

Don Bosco believed that the holistic formation of the educand is possible, only if one acquires a correct knowledge and appreciation of the nature, nobility and purpose of human sexuality. His approach to those under his care with regard to sexual matters was very personalistic, each according to his needs. Besides this, he always demanded from his collaborators a well balanced attitude towards human sexuality.⁴⁴ In the Constitutions of the Salesian Society of 1875 we read: "Anyone devoting his life to destitute youth should certainly strive to enrich himself with every virtue, but the virtue he should specially cultivate is chastity."⁴⁵ This exhortation was probably because Don

Bosco believed more in the educative influence of the educator on the educand through an exemplary life of *brahmacharya* than in formal lessons on human sexuality imparted in a class room setting.

4.5. Community Life

Gandhi advocated community living as one of the golden means in living a life of *brahmacharya*. One of the principal aims of Gandhi's *ashrams* was to provide a suitable ambience to the inmates to live the life of *brahmacharya* as perfectly as possible. All the inmates of the *ashram* were hence expected to take the vow of *brahmacharya*. The *ashramites* lived a life of service and work, especially spinning and weaving, and ate from the common kitchen. They also had fixed time for community prayers. A separation was established between those with the vow and those without it.

Don Bosco too grasped with clearness of insight the relevance of community life as one of the effective means for preserving and fostering *brahmacharya*. His concept of community, however, seems to be wider than that of Gandhi. For Don Bosco, communities are above all families, whose members are called together by God to live a fraternal life of charity embodying the Trinitarian dimension of divine existence.⁴⁶ In this sense, we are inclined to maintain that the concept of community envisaged by Don Bosco transcended the *ashram* notion of Gandhi. Nevertheless, one can clearly see the importance which Gandhi attached to common life.

4.6. Prayer and other Spiritual Exercises

In the foregoing we have shown that in Gandhi's concept of *brahmacharya* we encounter the human dimension outweighing the supernatural dimension. But there seems to have come a time when he had to reverse his position. It appears that he began to rely more on supernatural means and less on human means, only after he discovered the limitations of his own human efforts. In his autobiography

we read: "I realized that such *brahmacharya* was impossible to attain by mere human effort. Until then I had been labouring under the delusion that fruit diet alone would enable me to eradicate all passions, and I have flattered myself with the belief that I had nothing more to do."⁴⁷

Since Gandhi understood that *brahmacharya* is essentially a way of life that leads one to *Satya* which for him is God, he advocated absolute surrender to God in prayer. Once a man wrote to Gandhi asking his advice as to how to keep his passions controlled. Among other things, he suggested the usefulness of prayer: "Give up lewd literature, cinemas and lewd pictures...walk with your eyes fixed on the earth; and while you do so, pray to God within, that he may cleanse your heart."⁴⁸

Gandhi constantly prayed. He read sacred Scriptures, especially the *Bhagavadgita*. He had fixed time for prayer and meditation. He could do and had often done without food for days on end, but he could not do without prayer even for a single day.⁴⁹ When the assassin's bullet pierced his body in the morning of January 30, 1948 Gandhi was in the place of morning prayer together with others. He died pronouncing the name of God—*hey Ram*.

The insistence of Don Bosco on the need to seek supernatural help for a life of *brahmacharya* is almost axiomatic. His sermons, "good night" talks, writings and conversations on the topic bear ample testimony to this fact. He inculcated in his pupils the necessity of prayer, frequent reception of the sacraments, especially the sacrament of reconciliation and Holy Eucharist and a filial devotion to Mary Immaculate. In one of his dreams he was asked to give the following message to his boys: "Purity is a heavenly virtue. Whoever wishes to safeguard it must raise himself heavenward. Prayer is your salvation."⁵⁰ To his Salesians he wrote that, together with the exact observance of the vows, the practices of piety are also a faithful guardian of chastity.⁵¹

5. PURPOSE OF BRAHMACHARYA

5.1. Perfect Human Development

According to Gandhi, *brahmacharya* is part of the law of nature and it distinguishes man from brute. He advocated that it is to be observed by all according to their state of life. Gandhi opined that, Manu, the greatest lawgiver of the Hindus extolled *brahmacharya* as the ideal state of life, and enjoined that even the married couples should practise it relatively,⁵² because it enhances one's personal integrity, liberty, honour and human development. Therefore, according to one's state of life a life of *brahmacharya* is highly desirable for every one.⁵³

Don Bosco's entire educational and pastoral plan was oriented towards the holistic development of the human person. He realized that licentiousness in matters of chastity would stifle proper human maturity and growth. This awareness urged Don Bosco to take great care in presenting purity as a resplendent virtue essential for the integral development of the educand.

5.2. Effective Service

Perhaps one of the most admirable and externally seen purpose of *brahmacharya* is that it frees a person for an effective service of one's fellowmen. He opined that two commitments, one to one's family and the other to humanity are incompatible. Gandhi, as a married person with wife and children knew it from his own personal experience. So he took the vow of *brahmacharya* for the sake of better dedication to the service of the country. "I took the vow of *brahmacharya* in 1906, and that for the sake of better dedication to the service of the country. From that day I began an open life."⁵⁴ The motive for this attitude was his realization that great causes like the practice of *ahimsa* and disinterested service of one's fellowmen and country could not be achieved by intellectual endeavour alone, but by spiritual force which comes through God's grace. God's grace we know, he says, would never be bestowed on one

who is a slave to his own passions. This made Gandhi advocate that a real votary of *ahimsa* should never marry for the fulfilment of *ahimsa* is impossible without complete selflessness.⁵⁵

For Don Bosco and his Salesians, the effectiveness of their apostolic enterprises are bound up with the consecrated life of *brahmacharya*. It liberates them to be at the service of youth with single-minded devotion. Father Peter Stella, a scholar on Don Bosco, captures this idea succinctly when he says that those who chose to go out and make personal contact with poverty, misery and want and do not succumb to compromises, will be drawn irresistably to give their all—their time, possessions and even their whole lives.⁵⁶ This was true of Don Bosco. He came in contact with poor and abandoned youth and gave himself to them without reserve. In one of his moving encounters with his boys he declared: "For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give up my life".⁵⁷ Don Bosco was able to accomplish this in his life because he had no commitments other than the welfare of his boys.

5.3. *A Way to Regulate Birth*

For many decades the population explosion has been a menacing problem for India. Gandhi as a true patriot was deeply concerned about the interests of his motherland. He propounded a way to solve the problem, namely a life of *brahmacharya*. He argued that *brahmacharya* is the highly ethical and profoundly natural means to check population growth. He detested all artificial means of birth control such as contraception, sterilization and abortion as ways that make men and women restless, reckless, nervous and frustrated. It was Gandhi's conviction that such means of birth control are diametrically opposed to the principle of *ahimsa* and therefore crimes against human nature itself. If contraception is resorted to, asserted Gandhi, men and women would become soft-brained, unhinged, mental and moral wrecks.⁵⁸ Self-control and a life of *brahmacharya* are the purest forms of birth regulation which are in keeping

with the nature of man. Gandhi even advocated that the marital act should be solely for the purpose of procreation, because he believed in the value of "seminal continence" for heightening spiritual powers. If we offer a criticism, we have to maintain that Gandhi was rather one-sided and puritanic in his way of conceiving married life.

The use of artificial means of birth control was not as widespread in the time of Don Bosco as today. With reasonable ground, we can presume that Don Bosco would have held a view similar to that of Gandhi in many respects had there been such a problem as over-population and the need for controlling it, in his day. So we may hold that, if Don Bosco were to be living today, as a true son of the Catholic Church, in his pastoral and educative activities he would have instructed his pupils on the importance of responsible parenthood and the immorality of the use of artificial means of birth control. We believe it is only a question of interpreting Don Bosco according to the signs of the times.

5.4. *Spiritual Progress*

India is remarkably a land of many religions, saints and sages and men in quest of spiritual advancement and ultimate liberation. Keeping in line with this tradition, Gandhi saw *brahmacharya* as a *sine qua non* condition for spiritual progress and *mukti* (liberation, salvation). *Brahmacharya* provides man with the necessary asceticism, self-control and freedom of mind and heart, so that, the *atman* (soul, spirit) can aspire to the highest reality—God. In other words, no spiritual enterprise or final liberation from *samsara* (transmigratory existence) is possible without a life of *brahmacharya*. This was Gandhi's deepest conviction. This realization led Gandhi to value *brahmacharya* among the eternal things. According to him, today the world is in a mad rush after things of transitory value. But when one thinks a little deeper, he says, it becomes clear that it is things of eternal value that count in the end, and *brahmacharya* is one such thing.⁵⁹ Therefore, without a life of *brahmacharya*, spiritual progress is impossible to attain.

Don Bosco's constant thoughts, words, the whole range of his activities, the purpose of the institutes he founded, all had one end in view, namely, the salvation of souls. Nothing short of this aim persuaded Don Bosco to venture into his numerous undertakings. Father Michael Rua, the closest collaborator and the first successor of Don Bosco, testified to this when he said that Don Bosco took no step, uttered no word, undertook no task that was not directed to the salvation of the young.⁶⁰

Don Bosco advised every one to preserve the virtue of chastity even if it involved the greatest of sacrifices, because he was convinced that there was no better path to spiritual progress and one's own salvation than an authentic life of *brahmacharya*.

6. BRAHMACHARYA AND SALESIAN LIFE

6.1. *Brahmacharya and Salesian Religious Credibility*

Mahathma Gandhi who highly esteemed *brahmacharya*, was the voice of the typical Indian mind which has the tradition of upholding *brahmacharya* as a genuine mark of religiosity. G.M. Dhalla remarks that from ancient times onwards, one of the principal characteristics that distinguished an ascetic in India was *brahmacharya*. Self-realization was as an experience of *Brahman* through knowledge and *brahmacharya*.⁶¹ Svetaketu of the *Upanisads* (the final and the most important section of the Vedas which deals with *Brahman*) was one of the earliest *naisthika brahmacharis* (life-long celibates). Besides him, there were the *Risis* known as *Sramanas* (those 'endeavouring' ones), the *Tapasas*⁶² ('ascetics') and the *Yatis* ('controlled' ones).⁶³ *Puranic* literature and popular Hinduism have ascribed to several personalities the title *naisthika brahmacharis*. Illustrious philosophers of India like Sankaracharya and Madhavacharya were *naisthika brahmacharis*.⁶⁴

There were also *brahmacharinis* (women-celibates) in the Indian tradition. For instance, Gargi Vacaknavi of the *Upanisads* who was philosophically oriented is believed to

have been a celibate.⁶⁵ Women figure in the libations related to the Brahmajajna like *Vadava Pratitheyi*, *Sandili* (*Svayamprabha* which means self-resplendent) of the *Puranic* literature, may as well have been celibates.⁶⁶ Thus from ancient times onwards the life of *brahmacharya* was part of the Indian cultural heritage, and Mahatma Gandhi was but a part of this glorious tradition.

In spite of the rapid changes that are taking place in the Indian society, *brahmacharya* is still highly esteemed as a heroic virtue associated with great sages, philosophers, founders of religions and of all those in earnest pursuit of self-realization which guarantees one *mukti* from *samsara*. Great religions born in the soil of India, like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, demand *brahmacharya* from everyone, each according to his state of life, and absolute *brahmacharya* as the most sublime ideal. It is because of the high regard which the Indians in general have for *brahmacharya* that any breach of this vow by any ascetic or 'religious' is considered as a serious violation of their commitment. Sometimes, even the slightest suspicion of infringement by a public figure, is sufficient to tarnish his or her reputation and credibility. This is exemplified in Gandhi's own life: for instance, there were disturbing rumours about his experiments with *brahmacharya* which even today remain as a "slur" on his public image and personal integrity,⁶⁷ although one cannot doubt Gandhi's unerring moral life and sense of truthfulness.

Salesians vowed to a life of *brahmacharya*, need to be conscious of the Indian mentality which holds *brahmacharya* in high regard. This will help them to strive hard to preserve and protect their credibility as men of God and educators. It will also enable them to be one with the long line of illustrious *brahmacharis* of the Indian tradition.

6.2. *Brhamacharya: A message to the Youth of Today*

The primary task of Salesians is to care for the holistic education of youth, especially the poor and abandoned. The concept "poor" is to be taken in a comprehensive sense, to

include the economic, social, moral, psychological, affective and spiritual poverty of youth. With the so-called advancement of India towards an industrial and urbanised way of life, we discover, especially in the cities and towns, that the young are slowly losing many of the time-honoured values and moral convictions under the demoralising influence of frivolous literature that is surreptitiously sold on street corners, the easy access to cheap movies and video films, the ease with which contraceptives and abortives are produced and marketed. These are symptomatic of an emerging materialistic, hedonistic and utilitarian attitude towards human life and human sexuality. This, as Gandhi said, could be an instance of a slave taking pride in his fetters.⁶⁸

While this is the situation in the growing cities and towns the life in the villages is quite different. The villages, where the vast majority of the people of India live, are still very much under the bondage of ignorance in matters of human sexuality. A sense of mystery, and awe coupled with superstitions and taboos still plague the people. As a consequence, the youth in India seem to be caught up in the extreme of permissiveness on the one hand and of prudery on the other.

The Salesians have the special duty of presenting *brahmacharya* as an answer to the aspirations of the young. Youth must be shown *brahmacharya* as a value which is demanded of everyone, according to one's state of life, for normal human development, personal maturity, authentic joy in life, spiritual progress, etc. Absolute *brahmacharya* must be presented to them as a path that leads easily to the realities beyond—to *mukti* (liberation), according to the Hindu tradition, and salvation and beatific vision, according to Christian tradition. Father Subash Anand has aptly expressed this all important aspect of consecrated *brahmacharya* in these words: "Celibacy or *brahmacharya* is possible and meaningful only when man has an existential awareness or faith in life after death."⁶⁹

7. CONCLUSION

In the thinking of Gandhi and Don Bosco on the concept of *brahmacharya*, they were never recondite, speculative philosophers but persons who envisaged it from the bare-faced domain of their life-experiences. First of all, we find that both Gandhi and Don Bosco agree with remarkable consistency that *brahmacharya* is not an end in itself but a way of life that ultimately leads one to God, and we can hardly contest the veracity of this conception.

Secondly, while Gandhi maintained that a life of *brahmacharya* is primarily an outcome of one's human efforts—in his case as he claims a product of his personal experiences and experiments—and Don Bosco viewed it essentially as a gratuitous gift of God where man relies more on inspiration and intuition than on human effort, we may say that both are speaking half-truths. However, when their ideas are taken together they do complement each other, and complete the truth.

Thirdly, Gandhi and Don Bosco seem to provide a "moral code" to every person, when they emphatically assert that *brahmacharya* is demanded of every person, each according to his state of life, because *brahmacharya* constitutes significantly an integral development of the person and leads to ultimate liberation (*mukti*, liberation, salvation). Although many of our contemporaries may judge this view utopian, those who think a little deeper would declare the "moral code", propounded by Gandhi and Don Bosco an antidote to many of the "moral maladies" of the contemporary world.

Finally, an authentic commitment to a life of *brahmacharya* is a crucial test of the credibility of a man of God. In the Indian context it is well in keeping with their ancient religious tradition. It is a credit to acknowledge here that the Salesians of India do possess a considerable awareness of this truth. However, it needs to be examined better in the centenary year of Don Bosco's death, how eloquently they have succeeded in proclaiming *brahmacharya* as an important and urgent message to the youth of today, in their educational and pastoral undertakings.

NOTES

1. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, at Porbandar in Gujarat, India. He is acknowledged by the world as the greatest freedom fighter of India. He is also renowned for his numerous humanitarian undertakings especially in South Africa and India. He died a martyr's death on January 30, 1948.
2. R. Antonie, "Hindu Ethics: 2 Special Ethics (Caste, Ashramas, etc)". DeSmet and Neuner (eds.) *Religious Hinduism. A Presentation and Appraisal* (Allahabad: St Paul Publications, 1964), P. 116.
3. G.M. Dhalla, "Brahmacharya and Christian Virginity", *Jeevadhara A Journal of Christian Interpretation*, III (November-December, 1973), 492.
4. Surendra Verma, *Metaphysical Foundations of Mahatma Gandhi's Thought* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1970), P.60.
5. M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* trs. Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1981), P. 158. (Henceforth referred to as *Autobiography*).
6. M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, June 13, 1936. The *Harijan* was a weekly journal edited by M. K. Gandhi and others occasionally, from 1933 onwards.
7. *Ibid.*, June 8, 1947.
8. M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, September 8, 1927, as cited in Joseph V. Miranda, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Evolution of the Moral Doctrine According to the Cardinal Virtues* (Rome: Pontifica Universitas Gregoriana, 1951), P.15. *Young India* was a weekly journal edited by M. K. Gandhi from 1919 to 1932. (Henceforth reference to Miranda's work will be; *Mahatma Gandhi: An Evolution of the Moral Doctrine*).
9. M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, December 31, 1931, as cited in, G. Soares, "Mahatma Gandhi", DeSmet and Neuner (eds.), *Religious Hinduism*, P. 296.
10. M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, June 8, 1947.
11. M. A. Amaladoss, "Gandhian Spirituality", *The Clergy Monthly*, XXXIII (May, 1969), 202.
12. Joseph V. Miranda, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Evolution of the Moral Doctrine*, P. 21.
13. G. Soares, "Mahatma Gandhi", 298.
14. *Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales* (Rome: December 8, 1984), art. 81. (Henceforth referred as *Constitutions*, 1984).
15. G. M. Dhalla, "Brahmacharya and Christian Virginity", 484.
16. M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, P. 239.
17. G. Soares, "Mahatma Gandhi", 300.
18. M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, PP. 156-158.
19. *Ibid.*, P. 155.
20. *Ibid.*, P.x.
21. Eugenio Ceria, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, Vol. XII (New Rochelle: Salesian Publishers, 1980), PP. 162-163. (Henceforth referred to as *Biographical Memoirs*).

22. *Ibid.*, Vol. XI (New Rochelle: Salesian Publishers, 1964), P. 222.
23. M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, PP. 16-17.
24. *Ibid.*, P. 28.
25. *Ibid.*, P. 13.
26. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. LV (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1973), P. 403. See also M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, July 15, 1950.
27. John Bosco, "The Preventive System in the Education of the Young", as cited in *Constitutions*, 1984, PP. 247, 250.
28. M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, P. 158.
29. M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, October 3, 1936.
30. *Ibid.*, September 5, 1948.
31. *Ibid.*, March 21, 1936.
32. John Bosco, "To the Salesian Confreres", as cited in *Constitutions* 1984, P. 234.
33. Angelo Amadei, *Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. X (New Rochelle: Salesian Publishers, 1977), P. 480.
34. *Ibid.* P. 29.
35. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. V (New Rochelle: Salesian Publishers, 1969), P. 102.
36. M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, P. 157.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Eugenio Ceria, *Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. XII, P.10.
39. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. IV (New Rochelle: Salesian Publishers, 1967), P. 133.
40. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. XIII (New Rochelle: Salesian Publishers, 1983), P. 64.
41. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. IV, P. 133.
42. M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, November 21, 1936.
43. John Bosco, "To the Salesian Confreres", as cited in *Constitutions*, 1984, P.233.
44. This is especially evident from his desire that chastity must be the distinctive mark of the Salesian society, just as poverty and obedience are the outstanding characteristics of the Franciscans and the Jesuits respectively. See Angelo Amadei, *Biographical Memoirs* Vol. X, P. 29.
45. *Constitutions*, 1875, V, 1, as cited in *Constitutions*, 1984, art. 81.
46. *Constitutions*, 1984, art 40.
47. M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, P. 158.
48. M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, February 3, 1940.
49. D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, Vol. VI (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1969), P. 307.
50. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. VIII (New Rochelle: Salesian Publishers, 1973), P. 21.
51. John Bosco, "To The Salesian Confreres", as cited in *Constitutions* 1984, PP. 234-235.
52. Manu, *Dharma Shastras*, Book II, VI, Monier- Williams, P. 205, as

- cited in Joseph V. Miranda, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Evolution of the Moral Doctrine*, P. 2.
53. M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, May 30, 1936.
 54. *Ibid.*, November, 21, 1936.
 55. G. M. Dhalla, "Brahmacharya and Christian Virginity", 485.
 56. Peter Stella, *Don Bosco: Life and Works*, trs. John Drury (New Rochelle: Don Bosco Publications, 2nd edition, 1985), P. 113.
 57. Don Rufino, Cronaca dell' Oratorio, ASC 110, quaderno 5, P. 10, as cited in *Constitutions*, 1984, art. 14.
 58. R. K. Prabhu and U.R. Rao, *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1967), P. 289.
 59. M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, June 8, 1947.
 60. Don Rua, 24th August 1894, as cited in *Constitutions*, 1984, art. 21.
 61. G. M. Dhalla, "Brahmacharya and Christian Virginity", 491.
 62. *Taittiriya Aranyaka*, li, 7; *Brihadaranyaka IV*, 3:22 as cited in G. M. Dhalla, "Brahmacharya and Christian Virginity", 492.
 63. G. M. Dhalla, "Brahmacharya and Christian Virginity", 492.
 64. *Ibid.*, 493.
 65. *Brihadaranyaka*, III, 6:1; 8:1, as cited in G.M. Dhalla "Brahmacharya and Christian Virginity", 493.
 66. G. M. Dhalla, "Brahmacharya and Christian Virginity", 493.
 67. See for instance, Nirmal Kumar Bose, *My Days with Gandhi* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1974) especially chapter XVIII entitled "An Excursion in Psychology", PP. 163-178. See also Gandhi's replies to some of the controversies that arose in connection with his attitudes and views on brahmacharya, M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, September 21, 1935; November 4, 1939.
 68. M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, November 21, 1936.
 69. Subash Anand, "Human Sexuality: Some Theological Reflections", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, XLVII (February-March, 1983), 82.

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If charism has its origin in heaven above, its finality is meant to reach out to a culture. *Don Bosco's Charism and Asian Culture* amply brings out the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of divine gift given to Don Bosco. And yet, it is explicated not quite generally but with special reference to the Eastern culture in such vital areas of human predicament as prayer and piety, sin and reconciliation, philosophy and religious pluralism, celibacy and work-ethics, evangelisation and, above all, education and spiritual guidance of youth, dear to the heart of Don Bosco. This book is of immense value for anyone who wants to incarnate his charism in concrete action.

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SALESIAN COLLEGE PUBLICATIONS
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