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Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation Chair of Inter-religious & Inter-cultural Dialogue



**Ethics and Society: An International Journal
Religions and Cultures for Peace and Harmony**

Vol. 7

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**Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation Chair for Inter-Religious
And Inter-Cultural Dialogue**

St. Andrew's College, Bandra, Mumbai – 400050

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Therefore, it works through the initiatives that I am going to illustrate [or: that I have illustrated]; valorizing man in his spiritual dimension, hoping that the different expressions of it do not become an occasion for violent conflicts, but rather a loyal and constructive comparison, for reciprocal enrichment and a common search of truth.

Adv. Giuseppe Musumeci
Chair holder

UNESCO
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- Advanced studies and research in Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue
- A space for dialogue so as to foster social harmony and national integration
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Challenges of Family Life in Modern India and the Role of Value Education to Build a Happy and Stable Nation

- Fr. Cajetan D. Menezes

The concept of Family and family values are deeply rooted in the Indian culture. India has for centuries been a place of healthy family life. Many have been and are still poor and may have only the bare minimum to survive; but even such poor people value family life very highly. Family is a precious value in our society. All major religions practised in India hold that marriage is sacred and encourage and support the members to live healthy family life.

For most Indians, family life is noble and they all consider it as a way of life designed for them by God himself and ingrained in the order of society. Therefore, by and large, they accept whatever happens for them in the family as the will of God. Illness, death, and even poverty are accepted to some extent in that spirit. Couples, on the whole, respect and love each other; they mostly stay faithful to each other as adultery is considered very immoral. Marriage vows are observed with due care and respect. Even today the Indian family is stable. Divorce is not sought as the normal remedy for family problems. Parents live for their children and are, generally, prepared to make any sacrifice for them. Elders live at home and generally families care for them in their old age.

In this paper we will analyze the changes that are taking place in the Indian society and the dangers the family is facing in India. There are several factors impacting family life, I will briefly mention a few.

I. Factors impacting Family Life In Modern India

Industrialization and Urbanization

Family life is not the same in India as it used to be years ago. Industrialization and urbanization have influenced every quarter of the family. Fortunes of the economy is rural India fluctuates depending on the monsoon and agricultural income. Inflation is high and expenses are sky-rocketing and very many families find it difficult to make ends meet. Living conditions for migrants to urban centres is inadequate and inhuman.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Substance abuse, particularly the abuse of alcohol, has become widespread in Indian culture in recent years. In fact it was a big poll issue in the recent elections in Punjab. It has taken the lives of so many individuals and destroyed so many families. Many families have already lost or are losing key male member(s) and/or financially wiped out due to the alcoholism of those members.

Increase of Violence in our Homes and society

There is an increase of violence in our society. The recent violence against women has shocked both women and men alike. It's no longer just a women's issue but a human justice issue. Besides, in our homes too, a serious concern is about the status of women and the manner in which they are often unjustly and unequally treated by male family members and society at large. A related concern is that these abusive practices have frequently been, and continue to be, justified in the context of cultural norms, religious beliefs, etc. Perpetrators of violence are getting younger and the problem widespread. Besides enforcement of laws, we need a change of mindsets that detests any form of violence and promotes a culture of love and life.

Sexual Revolution and Pornography

Pre-marital and extra-marital sex seems to be very much on the increase. Sex is not considered as a gift of the Creator and is taken out of the context of marriage and family. It has become a commodity to be used and enjoyed. People have lost their respectful attitude toward sex even within marriage. A spouse is often considered by many as a pleasurable object than as a partner for life. Indians don't want to address the issue of marital rape and incest. Women seem to have lost their identity and may even be ready nowadays to sell their bodies to pleasure seeking individuals; many men do not look at women as dignified persons created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1, 26), but consider them as a commodity for pleasure. The new plague of pornography further degrades the human person and sacredness of our sexuality. Many marriages are impacted by the addiction to pornography, and this is contributing to the sexual violence in our homes.

The sense of respect for the other is slowly vanishing from society. L. Melina (2003) observes: "The search to enjoy the meeting of the other is replaced by the more immediate, superficial search for pleasure."¹ This commercial attitude toward sex has revolutionized sexual morality and ravaged marital relationships. Unfaithfulness among marriage partners, pre-marital sex, teenage pregnancy, use of artificial birth control methods, abortion, prostitution, rape, same sex marriage and divorce have all increased as a result of this new found sexual morality. The availability of pornographic materials within the sanctuary of one's own home and even inside one's bedroom whether it is through Internet or CD, has made sex a cheap commodity and has endangered the stability of the family.

Long Distance Marriages and Single Parent Homes

In recent years more couples live separately than in the past. They are separated and live apart in India or in countries overseas mostly for the sake of jobs. Separation also happens between parents and children. These separations affect the well-being of families and the healthy and even normal development of children. Sometimes they even cause total dissolution of families, when bad behaviours such as extra-marital relations and/or drug or alcohol abuse develop as a result of the separation of couples. Children in such families are often left without proper guidance or role models, creating a great void in their personality development and even subjecting them to mental illness such as depression or paranoia. In India many young couples are forced to live separately immediately after their wedding for the sake of keeping their jobs. This separation during the prime time of their love relationship, often turn out to be very damaging. This also happens very often in the case of new born babies. Mothers leave their babies with a surrogate mother, sometimes even during the early weeks after the delivery. It has been proved that such babies generally lack normal development. Generally separated couples have less family life satisfaction compared to couples living together.

Communication Media and Mobile Technology

Before the seventies, India had only a few sources in multimedia: newspapers, magazines and movies; television was not at the reach of Indians in general. There is a deluge of such media in recent years: from newspapers and other printed materials to television and cinema, and from internet to cyber clinics and smart phones to tablets. Even those

media sources that existed before the seventies did not deviate very much from the traditional social mores in those years. Movies, TV shows and other news media have become part of the Indian panorama and they have become very decisive in shaping up personalities and lives of families. Child rearing practices have changed due to the influence of the media; adolescents and young adults repeat what they see on the screen – be it sex or substances. Multimedia has influenced the structure and lifestyle of the family. In India, the News Media have almost created a new culture which is not agreeable with the traditional family culture. Use of mobile phones and social media have had a negative impact on families.

Globalization

The world has shrunk into a tiny island, thanks to the high tech achievements. Whatever happens in one part of the world is transmitted to the other end immediately. As a result of this sporadic transmission of news, mores and customs, it is difficult for families to keep the members safe from their influences. Western culture is eroding the corridors of Asian cultures. Indiscrete globalization means globalization of everything, ethics included. Import of unethical values is tantamount to taking poisonous drinks. The Indian culture is already tainted. A debased morality and the emanating emancipated culture devoid of right family values will create a chaotic society as it has already done in the West. Due to globalization countries are forced to accept inadvertently any foreign culture and value system.

Gender Discrimination

Equality of sexes is very basic to healthy family relationship. Laws in our country talk about equality of sexes, but it falls by the wayside when a husband doesn't accept his wife as an equal. Inferior-superior mentality of couples among themselves and towards their children leads to master-servant relationship in the family. P. Chempakassery (2004) says, "The man and woman being the images of God are equal to each other and equality is a prerequisite for family life, which is built on interpersonal relationship. The relationship between a master and a slave is not interpersonal and there can be no family built on their relationship."² The negative mentality towards the female gender prevailing in some parts of India runs counter to the equal status given to humans by God the Creator who created

both the male and the female in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1.27). This inequality of sexes and the maltreatment meted out to women in families have severely affected family relations. Generally women are sufferers in the family.³

Changing Family Pattern

The Indian family has been a dominant institution in the life of the individual and in the life of the community⁴. With urbanization and modernization, this face of the Indian family is changing. Younger generations are turning away from the joint family structure. Modified extended family has replaced the traditional joint family. This new system does not demand geographic proximity or occupational involvement and does not have a hierarchical authority structure. Whereas it only encourages frequent visits, financial assistance, aid and support in childcare and household chores, and involvement and participation in life-cycle events such as births, marriages, deaths and other celebrations. The familial and kinship bonds are thus maintained and sustained⁵.

The extended families, the newest version of the joint families of the old differ perhaps particularly in the nature of membership. The seniors including the grandparents live in the extended family; however, it is not a family of families as the joint family used to be. The extended families take care of the seniors as they try to follow the mores of the joint family system. These extended families do not seem to have abandoned or lessened the beliefs and values of the traditional Indian family culture. The seniors are unwelcome in nuclear families and they have to look for other means for their support. Many children opt for the nuclear system of family life as they are not prepared to look after their parents or as they have to move out for other reasons. Although the President of India has given her consent to the 'Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act' which punishes children who abandon parents with a prison term of three months or a fine, future is grim for elders in India⁶.

Decline of Spirituality

Religion should be a way of life leading one to the Creator of the Universe. It should be able to liberate people from attaching themselves to anything straying them from God. It

should help them with the spiritual strength necessary to manage the stresses of this life and to sublimate their present wishes and longings for their union with the Ultimate. It is to help people to attain a spiritual experience, to enjoy through the daily events of ordinary human experiences the presence and strength of God in their lives already here on earth. It is not simply to give any emotional satisfaction of having achieved something here and now. Instead it should rekindle in them the hope for the future and staying always concentrated on the Ultimate.

Although we see some signs of religious revival in India, it is more of ritualism, individuals and families seem to be more frustrated, more tensed and depressed. They seem to lack the inner strength, founded on deep-rooted faith and trust in the all providing and loving God. Ritualism seems to be on the increase, while true spirituality is declining. The inner spiritual strength being drained out, families and individuals are left without any hope. They are frustrated and consequently take refuge in other resources looking for relief. This decline of genuine spirituality has its toll on family life; more divorces and even more suicides.

These trends weaken the value system and fabric of the family and nation:

To sum up, industrialization, urbanization, and modernization have been instrumental in changing Indian family structures, values and lifestyles. As Ganeswar Mishra describes, middle and upper middle class families have been undergoing a dramatic transformation because the younger generation is questioning power issues, traditional roles, hierarchical relationships, obligations, loyalty, and loyalty to kinsmen and the elderly⁷. With changing times, the Indian family structure, functions, traditional division of labour and authority patterns have also altered; women have emerged to be more independent and self-reliant and children more assertive and free. The Indian family is presently less unified and more fractured. They are not able and sometimes not willing to look after the elders as they used to do in the past.

There has been a decline in the value system of individuals and families resulting in the decline in social and moral conduct of individuals in society. This has resulted in increase in crime in society, lack of peace in families and dissatisfied individuals. Thus dissatisfied individuals and decline in values in families has larger ramifications for the stability of the country.

Value Education to strengthen Families and build the nation

For a strong and ethical nation we need to have effective human formation programmes to support families to teach values to its members. In these challenging times, Value Education is needed for a well ordered society: Schools and colleges must play a proactive role in inculcating value education and help built stable families and good citizens.

The great Nobel Laureate Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” Education gives wisdom. Morality and spirituality are the essential components of wisdom. Values are essential in all fields of education, religion, politics and society. For restructuring of society and nation, value based politics and value based socialization and economic processes are highly essential. But we are living in such a society where politics are floating with inhuman nature without any ethics and science. This results in outcome of meaningless work, characterless education, trade without any honesty, and even worship without sacrifice. The entire socialization process is badly affected by these odd behaviours. For example science has lost its temper for well being of human, politics are done for personal gains and trade becomes a cheating process to exploit the customers. Today education has become a process for acquiring a degree for professional purposes. Sometimes it loses path for making human resource. Religion becomes a tool for personal benefit. All these evil processes lead to destruction of human race. To overcome all these odds we must give stress on value education. About the Indian education system the educationist say that we are providing education only to the mind and not for character. As a result average Indians have little character and no discipline. If they are to build a nation they must learn both.⁸

Families Failing in their Duty to Transmit Values to the next generation For the various reasons discussed in this paper earlier and the family is getting overwhelmed by the rapid changes and unable to transmit values in an effective manner.

What Values do we want to transmit for making a good society as well as nation we should give importance to the following values:

1. **Family and Social values:** It means respect for the institution of marriage and family. Respect for equality of the spouse. Respect for parents and elders in the home. It

means social norms in respect to individual behaviour, conduct, duties and responsibilities towards others. Social values provide stability and uniformity in the society. We should keep up the values such as human dignity, social equality, good manners, patriotism, kindness, social responsibility, dignity for labour, peaceful living, sacrifice and cooperation. These values guide us for making a good society. These values have to be taught and role modelled by members in the family, and teachers and staff in educational institutions.

2. **Cultural values:** Cultural values are those values which can help to conserve and preserve our culture and tradition. In educational institutions cultural values may be developed by providing cultural activities like dance, drama, songs, etc. The feat of these activities can contribute for building the society in a positive perspective.
3. **Spiritual values:** It emerges mainly from moral values such as truthfulness, right conduct, peace, love, non-violence, honesty, trust, prayer etc. Sense of right and wrong is the vital point. Education should be such way so that pupils can acquire spiritual values from their teachers and parents. In this context the Kothari Commission of 1964-66 may be referred which recommended the necessity of developing spiritual values through curricular and co-curricular activities in students.⁹ Family has to inculcate spiritual values and practice rituals for the child to learn from birth. Parents and grandparents should be good role models as values are not taught but caught.

Educational Institutions should engage parents in the Value Education Programme:

The primary responsibility of transmitting values to the child belongs to the parents. Society and Institutions help and assist the parents to transmit values to the next generation. The Educational institutions through the active participation of the P.T.A. (Parent Teacher Association) should involve parents and assist them in their primary task. Giving each other feedback, for effective implementation and follow up of the value Education programme will help build better citizens for the future.

Conclusion

Today value education is specially needed for the young people. Children and Youth can play a pivotal role in nation building. It is said that stable families and well formed youth

and children are the backbone of a nation. Thinking for welfare of others not only makes one brighter but also brings in benefits for the individuals, families and society. Today most people have become self-centred and they always think for their own, resulting in degradation of family and society and ultimately the nation. Unstable families and self-centred individuals cannot help in nation building. We need to have systematic strategy through our religious and educational institutions to support family in inculcating the right values through a comprehensive Value Education Programme to build happy and stable families and a strong and prosperous Nation. Want to conclude with the famous words of St. (Mother) Teresa of Kolkata: "... to build World peace, go home and love your family."

Jai Hind!

Footnotes

- 1 L. Melina. "Anthropological and Moral Implications of *Familiar is Consortio* and Its Effects on Subsequent Thinking", *Indian Journal of Family Studies*. 1/1 (2003) 14.
- 2 Chempakassry, P. "Marriage and family in the Creation Account", *Indian Journal of Family Studies*. 2/3 (2004), 18.
- 3 Hui, C.H. and Triandis, H.C. (1986). "Individualism – Collectivism A study of Cross-Cultural Researchers" *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 17:22-248
- 4 Mullati, I. (1992). "Changing Profile of the Indian Family." In *The Changing Family in Asia: Bangladesh, India, Japan, Philippines and Thailand*, ed. UNESCO, Bangkok; Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
- 5 Nandan, Y. , and Eames, E. (1980). "Typology and Analysis of the Asian-Indian Family." In *The New Ethics: Asian Indians in the United States*, ed. P. Saran and E.Eames, New York: Prager.
- 6 <http://www.indianofficer.com/forums/current-sies/5843-problem-old-age-india.html>
- 7 Mishra, G (1995). "Reflection on the Continuity and Change in the Indian Family System." *Trends in Social Sciences Research* 2:27-30.
- 8 Goswami, Dev Pitambar Dr., Value Education For Nation Building, *an abstract of the foundation day lecture by Dr. Sri Sri PD Goswami at the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute for Youth Development, Sri Perambadur, Tamilnadu during November, 2014*
- 9 Cf. Goswami, D. P. Dr., Value Education For Nation Building, 2014.

Gender Equality should Guide the Process of Reforming Family Laws and not National Integration

- Irfan Engineer

The Supreme Court of India has yet again asked the Union Government to file an affidavit and state whether it intended to bring in a Uniform Civil Code (UCC for brevity). In the Shah Bano Judgment (Shah Bano v. Mohammad Ahmed Khan, 1985) the Supreme Court observed “*It is a matter of regret that Article 44 of the Constitution has remained a dead letter*”. In Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India (1995), similar observations were made. Though the Supreme Court takes on the role of a reformer assuming lack of courage in the political class, it is only the legislature that can bring in the UCC. The repeated observations of the Supreme Court are on the strength of the Article 44 of the Constitution which states “*The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India*”.

Article 44 is included in Part IV of the Constitution which is about Directive Principles of State Policy. Provisions of Part IV are merely guiding principles and cannot be enforced by courts. The Supreme Court has ignored other provisions of the Part IV which include, that the state shall strive to secure a social order in which justice – social, economic and political – shall inform all the institutions of national life; that the state shall strive to minimize inequalities in income; that operation of economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment; etc. These guiding principles are far more important today as the Government of the day is ignoring these provisions. One wishes that the Supreme Court had made the Government to file affidavit and asked what laws and policies did the state want to bring in to give effect to objectives of justice and equality in Part IV of the Constitution.

The Supreme Court wants to do away in one stroke the practices of centuries. Till the passage of *The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937*, (hereinafter, “The Shariat Act” for brevity), Muslims in India were governed by diverse customary and religious laws. From the Sultanate period onwards, Shari’a Law was applied only to noble Muslims. However converts from amongst artisan castes continued to be governed

by their customary practices e.g. Meo from Rajasthan, Pranam Panthis and Pir Panthis in Gujarat, Sat Panthis from MP, Khojas, Bohras & Cutchi Memons. Kazi Mughis-ud-Din of Biyana was offended by the changes in Shari'a made by Allauddin Khalji, the first ruler to establish Sultanate. Khalji replied, "*I am an ignorant man and I am ruling this country in its best interests. I am sure, looking at my ignorance and good intentions, the Almighty will forgive me, when he finds that I have not acted according to Shari'a*".

In NWFP, Hindu customary law in succession and other matters were in vogue till 1939 when Central Legislature abrogated application of Hindu Laws to Muslims of NWFP and applied Shari'a Law to them. Till 1937, in United Provinces, Central Provinces and Bombay, Muslims to a large extent were governed by Hindu Law in matter of succession. *Marumakkathayam* Law applied not only to Hindus but also to Muslims in the North Malabar. *Marumakkathayam* Law is matrilineal practice.

Customary practices were too varied to comprehend for the colonial state and therefore more reliance was placed on scriptures. Manusmriti was translated in 1776. Charles Hamilton under directions of Hastings, translated the *Hedaya* (The Guide) from Arabic into English in 1791 but was abandoned halfway. However, after the 1857 rebellion, the Crown declared, that all those in authority under it would "*...abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects*". Thus the Colonial state unified the criminal laws, taxation and commercial law, but by and large refrained from interfering in family laws unless thought politically expedient.

Women leaders of nationalist movement demanded comprehensive code regulating marriage, divorce and inheritance. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Sarojini Naidu, Muthulaxmi Reddy, Begum Shah Nawaz of All Indian Women's Conference supported uniform code during their convention in 1933. With Govt. of India Act, 1935, Hindu and Muslims leaders pressed for law reforms to elevate the position of women. While introducing the Bill – Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937, Dr. G.V. Deshmukh said that the it was necessary to set right the Colonial interpretation of "limited estate" and "reversion" to widows. MHM Abdullah, who introduced "The Application of Shariat Act, 1937" said, "[t]he bill aims at securing uniformity of laws among Muslims in all their social and personal

relations... It also recognizes and does justice to the claims of women for inheriting family property who under customary law are debarred from succeeding to the same”

The UCC debate in the Constituent Assembly:

It is in this background that Article 35 of the draft Constitution (now included as Article 44) was debated. Mohammad Ismail Sahib and Naziruddin Ahmad wanted to amend Article 35 and include that no one would be compelled to give up their personal laws. They argued that right to adhere to one’s personal law was part of their right to religion and way of life. Citizens could not be compelled to give up their personal laws in order to augment harmony (Constituent Assembly, 2003, p. 540). Ahmad argued that Art. 35 was in conflict with Art. 19 of the draft Constitution (now Art. 25) which gave citizens right to profess, practice and propagate their religion. Ahmad wanted the interference by state in matters of religion to be a gradual and slow process. Hindus too were opposed to UCC. K.M. Munshi, an ardent supporter of UCC, said, *“I know there are many among Hindus who do not like a UCC... they feel that personal laws of inheritance, succession etc. are really a part of their religion. If that were so, you can never give, for instance, equality to women.”* Munshi was in favour of UCC on the grounds of gender equality and for unity of the nation. He said, *“whether we are going to consolidate and unify our personal laws in such a way that the way of life of the whole country may in course of time be unified and secular. We want to divorce religion from personal law, from what may be called social relations or from the rights of parties as regards inheritance or succession.”* (p. 547). But then Pocker Sahib Bahadur (p. 545) and Hussain Imam (p. 546) asked which Hindu law would become the basis of UCC given the diverse traditions within Hinduism and differences in educational levels in the country.

Dr. B R Ambedkar said, *“It (Article 35) does not say that after the Code is framed the State shall enforce it upon all citizens merely because they are citizens.”* The future Parliament, Ambedkar opined, could bring in family laws that were applicable to those who voluntarily chose to be bound by it (p. 551). The Special Marriage Act, 1954 is such a voluntary code. Art. 35 was passed by the Constituent Assembly without any amendments that protected the citizens from being compelled to give up their personal laws.

BJP and the UCC

While the debates on inclusion of Art. 35 of the Draft Constitution were to provide for gradual extrication of family laws from religion and march towards the goal of gender justice, the Hindu nationalists advocated UCC in order to use it as a weapon to scare the minorities of impending majoritarian hegemony and to invoke their opposition. This could then be useful to demonstrate the separatist mentality of the minorities. The BJP has been demanding UCC to promote national integration. Union Law Minister D V Sadanand Gowda e.g. said that UCC was necessary for national integration (Express News Service, 2015). This is notwithstanding the fact that BJP's Election Manifesto 2014 mentions promises UCC on the ground of gender justice, "*drawing upon the best traditions and harmonizing them with the modern times*".

However the moot question is, given the mind boggling diversity of traditions within all the religious communities, how painful will be the negotiations to draft such a uniform code? And, will the UCC be in consonance with the diversity? Which of the diverse traditions will form the basis of the UCC?

Regional Diversity

The Dravidian Southern regions follow various practices which are more gender just compared to the North in matters of inheritance of property. There was custom of handing over a piece of land to the daughter at the time of her marriage within Madras Presidency and the income from it was for her exclusive use and devolved on her female heir. Women could remarry if her husband's whereabouts were not known for a long time; and if the first husband returned, the woman could choose to live with either. Matrilineal practices were prevalent in Nayars, Nambudiris and Malabar Muslims. *According to Sambandham* practice, women continued to live in their natal house after marriage and children belonged to their caste and *tarawad*. *Sambandhan* marriages were loose matrimonial alliances which could be easily terminated with consent of both parties. *Tarawad* and *tavazi* were female headed joint family systems with line of descendants through female. These traditions were brought to an end with Hindu Succession Act, 1956. In Lakshadweep Islands inhabited by 99% Muslim population followed the

matrilineal system of *marumakkathayam*. Muslims in Kerala have retained their *marumukkatayam* system and Mappilla *tarawad*.

Mithakshara Joint family system was abolished in Kerala. Kerala abolished Malabar joint families of matrilineal type governed by *Marumukkatayam*, *Aliyasantana*, *Nambudiri* and other matrilineal laws but they are operative in Karnataka, TN and AP. The Christian Succession Acts of Travancore and Cochin are in vogue in Kerala with its practice of Joint family system.

Portuguese Civil Law is still applicable in Goa (Portuguese Decrees on Marriage and Divorce, 1910 and Decree on Canonical Marriages, 1946 in Goa Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli. However the Gentle Hindu Usages Decree, 1880 allows application of some customs. Thus different family laws are applicable to Goan Hindus than in other parts. The Law for Goan Christians and Muslims as well is different from those applicable to their fellow members in rest of the country. The Shariat Act and the Special Marriages Act do not apply in Goa.

Hindus, Christians and Muslims in Puducherry are divided into two groups – *Renoncants* and others. *Renoncants* are still Governed by French Civil Code and to others, other Indian laws are applicable.

The Hindu Marriage Act 1955 was re-enacted by J&K Assembly. J&K has its own Hindu Succession Act, without repealing the Buddhist Succession Act, 1943. Till recently, Muslim Laws were applicable but local customs prevailed in matters of inheritance. The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937 was made applicable only recently in J & K.

Tribal customary law is protected by legislation in Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim. The Khasi, Jaintia and Garo tribes continue matrilineal inheritance even after their conversion to Christianity.

Mitakshara school of Hindu law has four regional variations: Varanasi, Mithilia, Dravida and Maharashtra which governs the succession.

Diversity within Religious communities, caste and Scheduled Tribes

The Hindu Family laws have been extensively amended by the three southern states in India – TN, AP and Kerala. Agricultural land is excluded from the operation of the Shariat Act. The Shariat Act was made applicable to these three Southern states only till 1963.

Marriage among lower castes is less sacramental and more of contractual (with consent of adults marrying) without the rituals of *sapatpadi* and *kandyadan*. The practice of bride price prevails amongst the lower castes (*Kanya shulka*).

Christian Tribals all over the country have been exempted from the Indian Succession Act. The four Hindu legislations are also inapplicable to the Scheduled Tribes

Specific Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh customs running counter to general statutory provisions enjoy full legal protection under the law, including those customs (i) violating statutory rules to sapinda relationship and prohibited degrees in marriage; (ii) customary marriage rites replacing sapatpadi; (iii) Customary divorce and (iv) adopting major and married children.

Amongst Muslims, customs and usage relating to wills, legacies and adoption enjoy statutory protection even under the Shariat Act. Sunni Bohras and Khojas are governed by Hindu customs and usages.

One is afraid that the UCC could be a threat to this rich diversity. The legislations enacted to regulate Hindu Personal Laws have threatened the local customs and traditions, particularly those that were more pro-women. The journey towards “uniformity” is informed by Brahmanical traditions and *smriti* texts ignoring the vast body of traditions of the OBCs, SCs and STs. The Hindu community is sought to be unified around *smriti* texts.

The Muslim Personal Law is also applicable in all diversity evident from the above discussion. That is why the Muslim Personal Law Board dithers from codifying their law and one is afraid that the Wahabi-Hanafi fiqh would dictate codification, not because it is in the best interest of the community, but because they are better organized and networked to influence the process.

What we need is a “Uniform” civil code and not “Common” civil code. Dr. Ambedkar said in the Constituent Assembly, that the UCC need not be enforced on unwilling citizens. We should march towards a uniform regime of gender just family laws but drawing from the diverse traditions and allowing space for diversity. Gender equality alone should be guiding this process and the same could be achieved through gradual reforms of existing family laws.

Family in Nation Building – A Vedic Perspective

- Kapiladeva Dasa

It is true that family is the basic unit upon which society and thereby the nation is built. A loving family generates all round love and if a good number of such families are nurtured in this way, it would naturally lead to good society and thereby a very good nation. Many concrete steps have been taken by the State, by individuals and by NGOs in ever so many ways to see how we can eventually build up such a healthy nation. Yet there is much more left to be done.

Now from the vedic perspective, the basis for looking at such a topic will be the familiar vedic aphorism ‘Vasudaiva Kutumbakam’ which literally translates as ‘All on earth is but one family’. On a simple analysis we see that the vedic understanding of the ‘family’ or the ‘nation’ has a much broader and deeper insight. Here the meaning of ‘family’ is not restricted to just human beings but extends to or includes all animals, plants and the basic earth constituents i.e. nature itself. On the other hand the notion of ‘nation’ extends to the entire earth / universe. Thus for overall goodness and well being, man has to be in harmony not just with other human beings but also with all other living entities, (plants and animals) and our environment. Yet, the onus of maintaining goodness almost always rests on man. Why, because animals and plants do not violate nature’s laws, rather they are at the mercy of man and his actions. Greed, lust and envy drive man to exploit nature and other living entities thereby upsetting the fragile harmonious equilibrium on earth to humans, animals, plants and the environment. Therefore, even from the Vedic angle, the human family unit remains the key starting point in this endeavor for all around goodness. How do we go about training this family unit? In particular how one has to be trained to control lust, greed and envy?

In fact, in the Bhagavad Gita (5.29), Lord Krishna says:

Bhoktaram yajna-tapasam sarva-loka mahesvaram
Suhrdam sarva-bhutanam jnatva mam santim rcchati.

A person in full consciousness of me, knowing me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all creation, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries.

And this is considered the foundational basis for having peace on this planet. The recognition here is that there is a Supreme Lord, The Creator and when we fully surrender to Him accepting to *co-exist* with all living entities and the environment, then and only then peace can be achieved.

Whereas the principle of living in balance with nature seems reasonable and obvious, how morality can be cultivated is not immediately clear. Elsewhere the vedantic philosophy makes it clear that it is impossible to have moral values without accepting a supreme authority. The point being man on his own will not be able to come to a consensus on morals i.e. what is right and what is wrong. Conception will vary from person to person, will depend on time / age, place and circumstance. So, a universal law of morals is impossible to achieve. It can be argued and shown that morality depends on a larger goal whether short term or long term. Like knife cannot be termed good or bad. It depends on how it is utilized. Even the extreme act of killing a person may be condemned under one circumstance and glorified under another. Spiritual knowledge provides this larger context – the goal of human life based on which ‘morality’ comes into force / play. This goal is what a true Religion is expected to present scientifically.

The salient point coming out of this understanding is that we may in a general materialistic way organize our activities or the world in the best of ways possible, however, unless we have inculcated genuine values by accepting the knowledge about God’s creations and its functioning and obeying the authority of the Supreme Lord, we cannot have a peaceful world.

Since the family becomes an independent complete unit, it is at this stage that the family as a whole and the individuals within have to be deeply aware of the many issues that are disturbing mankind today. I am referring here to air, water pollution, misuse of nation’s resources, wanton killings, and uncontrolled industrialization and of course, the more deep-rooted human element involved in all this, i.e. envy, lust and greed that we already discussed.

As Mahatma Gandhi rightly said, “There is enough in this world for everyone’s need, but not for everyone’s greed”. So from a vedic perspective, each member of the family and the family as a whole needs to be educated on these issues, i.e. the limitation of science and technology and the Science of God.

The problem is that science of God is not being presented systematically today in society at large. Most importantly though modern science and technology have given us so many material benefits, it has at the same time created an illusion that all problems in this world including ‘values’ can be resolved through science alone. That science and technology do not have inherent values is not being broadcasted properly.

The second illusion that has been unfortunately propagated is that the knowledge of God whether it is coming from Bhagavad Gita, Bible, Koran or any other genuine spiritual books is not scientific and is based on blind faith. Whereas illusion No.1 may have been exposed due to the resultant negative effects of technology, the 2nd illusion is so subtle that it has missed everyone’s notice.

For all the above it must be demonstrated to one and all that this knowledge of God is a science. It is not based on blind faith as is being commonly understood. This, I will explain in a little more detail.

We tend to think that knowledge we get in school, college and in other higher forms of education is systematic and scientific but knowledge that is presented in Bhagavad Gita, Bible, Koran etc. is not scientific. It is just based on blind faith. Here I would like to point out that all knowledge in school, college and elsewhere is actually based primarily on faith. When we went to pre-primary school we accepted the alphabetic system based on faith. We never questioned why ‘A’ sign is called by the phonetic sound ‘A’ and not by the phonetic sound of ‘B’. Meaning we did not ask for proof but did we lose out in the whole process? No, rather we learnt the English language by having faith in our pre-primary teachers and this faith extended all through our lives. So much so, that if we see a Times of India issue which says that there was an accident in Kanpur, two trains collided, ten people died and 200 were injured and hospitalized etc. we do not say, hey, I do not believe this I am a scientist; unless Times of India takes me to Kanpur to see the accident and I see 10 dead bodies and 200 injured people in the hospital and only then I will

believe. No, we do not do that, we believe it, why, because we have faith in the newspaper. Why, because it is authorized and reputed.

The significant point in the above discussion is that we get most of our knowledge not by having blind faith but by having faith in proper authorities that is, pre-primary teacher, high school teacher, parents, established newspaper and so on and so forth. We use reason and logic to establish a few things here and there but it is always based on large amount of information which we have gathered on faith. Similarly we must put faith on authorized Spiritual literature and study them and act upon them.

So, family as a unit and as individual member needs to be trained in seeing things this way, so that they may similarly educate others. Values come into play when the spiritual process recommended is strictly followed.

One may tend to think that this is a utopian or idealistic aspiration which cannot be achieved in today's circumstances, but than that is only because of one's conditioning. At the very least one should have at least an ideal situation in mind towards which we can all work for?

In the ancient vedic tradition, the king was called Raja rishi which means not only is he the king in modern sense of the word, but he is also a Rishi which means he is well versed with the spiritual goal recommended by the Bhagavad Gita and other scriptures and it is his duty to see that all the citizens are oriented towards this spiritual goal in their respective capacities. Thus the key point here is that to achieve real peace, spirituality or surrender to God is a necessity.

So, from Vedic point of view this education about our dependence on the Supreme Lord must start in the very beginning of one's life. Naturally the family becomes the prime entity in developing this knowledge and thereafter this culture must be reinforced in schools, colleges and beyond. Thus, we can build not only a good nation but also a great world, a great earth. I am sure, this is the essential teaching of all religions.

Unity in Diversity: Nation-building Through the Lens of Inter-religious Families

- Dr. Astrid Lobo Gajiwala

I would like to begin with a quote from Kofi Annan, the Ghanian Nobel Peace Prize winner and 7th UN Secretary General. He says¹:

“The ways in which families are formed, function and evolve vary greatly from country to country, as do perceptions of the family’s role in society. But in any culture, the family provides the natural framework in which individuals — especially children - receive the emotional, financial and material support indispensable to their development. It is within the family that children learn the values that will guide them for the rest of their lives. It is within the family that they form their earliest relationships, learn to communicate with others and interact with the world around them. It is within the family that the notion of human rights becomes a reality lived on a daily basis. If tolerance, respect and equity permeate family life, they will translate into values that shape societies, nations and the world.”

My focus will be that last sentence: *“If tolerance, respect and equity permeate family life, they will translate into values that shape societies, nations and the world,”* and I would like to draw from my experience in my inter-faith family.

I have entitled my presentation: “Unity in Diversity: Nation-building Through the Lens of Inter-religious Families” because over the decades I have come to realize that the inter-religious family is a vehicle for “Unity in diversity”, an essential element for nation building in a country like ours with its rich religious and cultural plurality.

When I mentioned the title of my presentation to my husband Dr. Kalpesh Gajiwala he said, “Why not call it “Diversity in Unity”, and I thought: That’s an interesting take. Start from the premise that we are all one. We are all Indian but we happen to have different cultural and religious identities.

Whether you are building a nation or a family, having unity as a starting point is I think critical. When Kalpesh and I decided to get married we had to struggle with many issues. How would we celebrate the wedding, his rite or mine? How would we bring up our children, his religion or mine? Which festivals would we celebrate, his or mine? How would we pray together? How would we share the same table when he was a vegetarian and I loved my fish and mutton? What would happen when extended family visited? Should they remove their footwear? Should we serve them alcohol or not? What about the calendars on the wall, the one from Don Bosco’s shrine, or the one from the Ram Krishna Mission? I could go on, the differences were so many.

The fact that we are still together after almost 29 years means we obviously found some workable answers! But the truth is we really answered only one fundamental question on which hinged all the other questions: What do we need to do to stay together as a couple?

When we focused on that, everything else just fell into place. I’m not saying it was easy. It was a struggle with much soul searching and letting go and rising above. But knowing we wanted to stay married helped us to listen to each other, to walk in each other’s shoes, to define what was negotiable and what was not, to look for what we shared in common, and to make generous choices for the other.

We learnt first of all that while we had been conditioned by our own families, faith communities and societies along different religious lines, we shared a common humanity and a common quest for the Truth. As our hearts opened up to each other we realized that while each of our religions held values and teachings that were inspirational and life giving and formed the ground of our beings, neither of our religions held the whole Truth because the immensity of God could not be contained in one single religion. And so we claimed as our own the wisdom of the *Rig Veda*: “Let noble thoughts come to us from everywhere” (*aano bhadrah kritawo yantu vishwataha*). Most important we steered

clear of the temptation to claim religious superiority. We recognized, that like children in every family, we heard the voice of our Parent-God differently, and responded differently, but both of us had an equal welcome in God's embrace. This openness to other religions is a foundation stone of inter-religious marriage and I believe it is also a foundation stone in building a nation across religious divides.

Another building block is "encounter". Not the ones that the Indian police are known for (!) but encounters that encourage dialogue and relationship. While explaining "religious pluralism" Diana Eck who has written three books on the sacred geography of India, and is Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard Divinity School says, "*...pluralism is not the sheer fact of ...plurality alone, but is active engagement with plurality. Pluralism and plurality are sometimes used as if they were synonymous. But plurality is just diversity, plain and simple – splendid, colorful, and maybe even threatening. Such diversity does not, however, have to affect me. I can observe diversity. I can even celebrate diversity, as the cliché goes. But I have to participate in pluralism...Pluralism requires the cultivation of public space where we all encounter one another.*"²

One such space of encounter is the inter-religious family. When the couple decides to get married they weave a web that draws in many who were not part of the original decision. As we all know, in India one doesn't just marry an individual, one marries a family - parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins, in-laws and family friends. What holds this tenuous net together is strands of relationship? "In India the natural respect for family ties draws them into an inter-religious dialogue that brings with it an experience of a wider community and a new openness to another's culture. Invitations to a First Holy Communion, to a naming ceremony, or to a special *puja* for instance, are accepted out of respect for the family member. Inadvertently, these serve as occasions for learning and appreciating the culture of another. They also bring certain responsibilities that necessitate moving out of oneself and one's traditional culture. Simple gestures like family visits and the exchange of gifts and sweets during festivals like Diwali, Christmas and Id initiate a reflective process that brings a consciousness of a feast day and its significance. What will we give them to

eat? What greetings do we exchange? What should we take? What do we wear? These seemingly insignificant questions have a tremendous capacity to enrich and expand horizons.”

“The process starts early and is ongoing. At three my Hindu nephew knew already that he had the right to demand an Easter egg from his *kaki*. Come Good Friday and the only one to wish me is my Hindu uncle. Of course I laughed, when it first happened but I also love it. It forces me to reflect on the “goodness” of the day. More, it means that my well-wisher is conscious not only of Good Friday being a significant day for Christians but also that he has a Christian niece. A Christian label has been concretized into a person - “my niece”.”

“Birthday celebrations, marriages, naming ceremonies, deaths and other family get-togethers also serve as constant reminders of our human connectedness that goes beyond religious and cultural divides. They are, after all, rites of passage common to every human journey. At these meetings “called” by nature . . . bonds are forged that automatically stretch into the reaching out that characterizes Indian family life. Across religious boundaries, shared citizenship prompts a discussion of the latest headlines. Even potentially provocative subjects like (the RSS agenda for a Hindu nation, Christian conversions, and demonetization) are broached, the prevailing camaraderie providing a more effective setting for mutual understanding than heated debates between opponents. Gradually, communal prejudice, or at best indifference, gives way to a tolerance that is at least open to another way of life and worship. The labels are still there, but they fade into the background. . . We are family first. I do believe that the goodwill generated in these family encounters cannot be underestimated in the bridge building that is the first step in human solidarity.”³ It has the potential to lead to nation building.

And finally a word about the children of inter-religious families, the next generation who will build where we have left off. Breathing plurality every day and engaging with it as a way of life teaches them to get out of religious and cultural ghettos, to discard labels and respect the person irrespective of caste, creed, class or gender. They learn to appreciate diverse options and to question the given, searching constantly for the evolving Truth because their lives are lived within and beyond boundaries. And they come to give unity central place in a family that is defined by diversity, appreciating and seeking ways to include rather than exclude.

My three children are used to praying Sanskrit *shlokas* and the ‘Our Father’ in one breath, standing before an altar that has always celebrated the many faces of God, even over-riding their personal rebellions against religion out of respect for their parents; they are super conscious that the spoon from the chicken dish must not touch the vegetarian dish and careful to cater to the minority vegetarian in our family when choosing restaurants for an evening out; they are sensitive to the sentiments of culturally different extended family, taking pains to wear appropriate attire at family functions; and they are possessive of their double surnames that proclaim their multiple belonging which defies the census of India. Thus it comes as no surprise that as young adults they now vociferously oppose recent attempts to create a uniform “Hindu Nation” that masquerades as a call for unity in “glorious Hindustan”, which makes for animated dining table discussions, and it strikes me that by “cultivating our personal lives and setting our hearts right”⁴ we have unwittingly ended up doing right by our nation.

Footnotes

- 1 <http://www.betterworld.net/quotes/family-quotes.htm> Accessed February 10, 2017.
- 2 Diana L. Eck, “The challenge of Pluralism,” The Pluralism Project, Harvard university, at: http://pluralism.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/The-Challenge-of-Pluralism_nieman_eck.pdf
- 3 The section in quotes is taken from my article “Weaving the Human Web: Interfaith Families as Basic Human Communities” which was published in “Word & Worship” 2001, a journal of the NBCLC, Bangalore, and reprinted in “In God’s Image” 2006, a journal published by the Asian Women’s Resource Centre for Culture and Theology.

Endnotes

- 1 “*To put the world right in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right.*” Confucius <http://www.betterworld.net/quotes/family-quotes.htm> Accessed February 10, 2017.

Sacrificing the Nation in the Interest of Family as Reflected in *All My Sons*

- Dr. Marie Fernandes

The play, *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller, begins with the economic depression that culminated with the war in Europe. The depression which uncovered the social and political evil of capitalism inspired a drama that celebrated the resistant spirit and presumed that humanity would alter its course and champion solidarity. A similar solidarity had been expected during wartime exigencies. Unfortunately, this was not to be, for after the war, America resumed its material destiny and made consumerism a value and went about its business of conspicuous consumption.¹

Arthur Miller wrote his plays with a frontal assault on the evils of capitalism. He equates big business with gangsters and corruption. Virtue resides in the individual who lends his weight to the cause of the common man. *All My Sons* concerns a manufacturer of aircraft parts, Joe Keller, who under the pressure of wartime production allows a batch of faulty cylinder heads to be supplied to the Air Force, knowing that they may cause calamitous failure and thus endanger life. He does so rather than risk losing the contract and possibly his business, which he wishes to pass on to his sons. In the subsequent court case he denies responsibility, allowing his employee and neighbour, Steve Deever to take the blame. Deever's daughter, Ann, meanwhile, is engaged to Keller's son Larry. Following her father's conviction both she and her brother George, sever all connection with him, refusing to visit him in prison or even write to him. To sustain his own family, Keller, it seems, sacrifices another and, beyond that, a wider family, those who die as a result of his actions.

When Larry, a pilot goes missing in action, his mother, Kate Keller, refuses to acknowledge his death, for to do so would be to accept a connection between her husband's action and her own loss. The play opens as Chris, the other son of Joe and Kate Keller, invites Ann to stay, intending to propose a marriage which will, effectively, signify the public acknowledgement of Larry's death and thus precipitate a crisis for all of them, as past and present are brought into immediate confrontation.²

During his discussion with Ann, about their proposed marriage, he talks about the war and tells her how closely knit his war comrades were.

CHRIS: ...For instance, one time it'd been raining several days and this kid came to me, and gave me his last pair of dry socks. Put them in my pocket. That's only a little thing...but that's the kind of guys I had. They didn't die, they killed themselves for each other

He articulates his frustration on finding that life after the war was the same as it had been before. He begins to realise that those killed in the war had sacrificed themselves in vain. The values of co-operation and mutual responsibility which they had carved out of their actions had been lost, and people behaved as if the war had been something like a 'bus accident'.

After Chris and Ann formally announce their intention of getting married, there is a call from George, Ann's brother, who is a lawyer. The call is from Columbus (Ohio) where their father is serving his sentence in jail. Keller and his wife are visibly disturbed with this news. Keller begins to suspect that his complicity in the crime will soon be exposed, for which his partner is in jail.

George returns to try to break-up the marriage between Chris and Ann. He had visited his father on an impulse, to announce the marriage between Chris and Ann. He recounts the story he has heard from his father. Steve Deever, had noticed the faulty cylinder heads and had informed Keller of this. Keller had instructed him over the phone, 'to weld, cover up the crack in any way he could, and ship them out'. Keller had promised to take responsibility.

Keller had not gone to the factory that day on the pretext that he had a cold. In the court case, his alibi was not believed, but in the appeal it was; so Steve was sentenced and Keller set free. After George returns from visiting his father in prison, he confronts Keller. At first Keller denies but ultimately justifies his criminal conduct and says he did it for his sons.

In a materialistic society, money is god that people often worship. It is an almost blinkered view of life that obliterates all else. Concern for another and other altruistic virtues that

once bound people to each other are forgotten. Ironically, Joe Keller who was supposed to be supporting the American Air Force by supplying cylinder heads, works against them by allowing damaged parts from his factory to be shipped to them. He probably did not realise that in doing so he would kill twenty-one young men. He allowed his partner to take the blame and be sentenced to prison, convincing himself that everyone believed he was innocent. The truth was, he was incarcerated in the prison he created for himself and none of his neighbours believed he was innocent. Besides, while he maintains that he did it for his family, his sons cannot accept that. They have been in the thick of war and they have come to realise that the family extends beyond the narrow boundaries of familial relations. They have bonded so closely with their companions through the most trying circumstances that they will die for another. They have after all been commissioned to defend their country and lay down their lives, if need be, for the sake of their countrymen. Never, in their wildest dreams would they imagine that the enemy would be the parents of their comrades. That it was not the outside enemy that was to be feared but the enemy within, caused by greed of materialism. Joe Keller's action was act of betrayal and his sons suffer the consequences too. Larry could not bear the thought that his father was responsible for the death of so many young men like him, who were his companions and he kills himself. When Keller is confronted with this letter and the accusations of his younger son, he can no longer pretend to be innocent. The realization soon comes, that while Larry was his son, the other young men were, as the title suggests, "*All My Sons*". Chris in a subtle way drives Joe to kill himself. His very sons, for whom he was building an empire for reject him. His death at the end comes to remind us that we are all intertwined in the web of life and cannot escape our social responsibility.

The family then is a microcosm of the world we live in. Values that we nurture and support are reflected in the bigger macrocosm. It also reflects how the past is not only linked to the present but how inexorably the past invades and shapes the present. Joe Keller was soon to face the 'consequences of his actions'. The war seemed to be over and it was time for peace but there can be little peace for those who do evil. While they pat themselves on the back and think they have done well for themselves, they are soon confronted with their sins and there is no escape. The 'Golden Rule' is to be respected, 'Do unto others what you would have them do unto you'. It is unalterable and each of us reap the consequences

of our actions – both good and bad. It is the law of the universe that follows relentlessly as day follows night.

The questions that one might raise are many. Is the Keller family an example of the typical American family that has lost its reverence for God and neighbour? When Joe Keller's guilt is uncovered and his wife and son Chris, suggest that he go to prison, Keller protests saying, 'Half the goddam country is gotta go if I go'. The implication is that criminal acts of the sort he had committed were quite common during the war, and were done for money. Was this act then by Joe Keller caused by the exigencies of war? Or Would Joe Keller have acted differently if there was no war. We all are aware that the Economic Depression impoverished many and the survival of the fittest was the only way out. Religion had failed to provide succour and the only way out, so it seems, was to think only of oneself, even if it meant destroying the others.

End Notes

- 1 C.W.E. Bigsby, **Modern American Drama 1945-2000** (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000)
- 2 Arthur Miller, **All My Sons** (1947)Introd. Christopher Bigsby (Penguin: New York, 2000)

Family and Nation Building in the Pluri-religious and Multi-cultural India

- Sr. Dr. Teresa Joseph fma

Attention to life in the family helps to make the dynamism of love to reach out to every corner of India spreading harmony, peace, and dialogue among believers of various religions. Pope Francis has expressed it eloquently: “The family is where we are formed as people. Every family is a brick in the building of society.” ‘Please’, ‘thank you’ and ‘sorry’ are simple but three magical words which can translate the silence into joyful moments of mutual understanding.” “The forgiving love of members forms the corner stone of a happy family,” he continued.

I love you in the family

The “I love you” is expressed in a family through million gestures of love and communication. When the partners are aware of their greatest communication strengths and weaknesses, the flow of message is made easier. Late Pope John Paul II has evidenced this in *Ecclesia in Asia*: “The Christian family, like the Church as a whole, should be a place where the truth of the Gospel is the rule of life and the gift which the family members bring to the wider community.”¹

Holiness and elasticity and readiness to move out of prejudices are required to enter in dialogue and to strengthen family ties. To be informed to discern the signs of the times, in the extraordinary complexity the socio-cultural context in which we live is a must today. Efforts have to be made to train children capable of integrating the native values in the values of their belief system. Parents have to become competent in perceiving the positive manifestations in India, in the religious experience of those with whom they are called to dialogue.

Witness to lasting fidelities

In a World that is witnessing rapid changes, marked economic growth and far reaching scientific and technological advancement, the family members are challenged to be a group set apart that witnesses to a set of values and belief systems that are long lasting.

Today, more than ever we need visionary parents who understand life well enough to delve beyond the rules of reason and create a healthy family pattern in which the members can enjoy life and proclaim its beauty and splendor to those around. Experience in one's family is the rock on which lasting fidelities are lived to its full. Relationships are the key to lasting fidelities. "Fidelity" writes Erikson "is the ability to sustain loyalties freely pledged in spite of the inevitable contradictions of value systems."² Sharing love and life in the family reveal the beauty of married life as a covenant relationship.

Openness and renewal in the family

Today is the time for openness and renewal in the family. Family without frontiers is a net work of relationships. It is: re-founding of existing families, formation of young couples, rediscovering of strong motivation for today, formation of children capable of combining strong convictions, zealous ambitions and energetic work. No more as mere spectators but as active participants in a world of religious pluralism. Jim Butcher has expressed it well: "When everything goes to hell, the people who stand by you without flinching-they are your family."

The family is a unit of the large human family. The family is a school of training and formation. Evan Esar affirms: "Family: A social unit where the father is concerned with parking space, the children with outer space, and the mother with closet space." The family is a privileged place for love, friendship and growth. It is worth spending a few seconds over the following quotes³:

Children have more need of models than critics - *French (on parents and children)*

Home is where the heart is - *J.J. McCloskey (1870)*

One father is more than a hundred schoolmasters - *George Herbert (1593-1633)*

What children say, they have heard at home - *Wolof (West African on parenting and children)*

You can do anything with children if only you play with them - *German (on parenting and children)*

It is not flesh and blood but the heart which makes us fathers and sons - *Johann Schiller*

You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them - *Desmond Tutu*

Families are the compass that guides us. They are the inspiration to reach great heights, and our comfort when we occasionally falter - *Brad Henry*

Each day of our lives we make deposits in the memory banks of our children - *Charles R. Swindoll*

Home is where you are loved the most and act the worst - *Marjorie Pay Hinckley*

Feelings of worth can flourish only in an atmosphere where individual differences are appreciated, mistakes are tolerated, communication is open, and rules are flexible — the kind of atmosphere that is found in a nurturing family - *Virginia Satir*

The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother - *Theodore Hesburgh*

The above family quotes truly communicate wisdom. In our work as educators, we had ample opportunities to interact with young people and it is indispensable that parents and educators take time to understand what children between the age group of 11-15 in India are saying today:

- Thank you for providing us whatever we demand from you
- As a girl child I will try to give you the happiness of having a wonderful daughter
- Sorry for our mistakes and sorry if we hurt you
- We all love you and we thank you for all your care and for what you give us
- We want our parents to understand each other and fight less
- We want our parents to be open with us and share everything
- Please give us confidence wherever we are
- Teach us path of truth and share with us everything
- Thank you for saying no to us
- Because of you parents we are here in this beautiful world

- Please trust us we will never give you chance to get disappointed with us
- In our eyes you are the most precious pearl in the world
- Do always give us confidence whenever we are weak
- Always guide us to the right path
- Satisfy your needs and have your equal share of whatever we get
- You should not feel guilty of yourself that you are not fulfilling our needs
- Don't spend the money which you get on us but also on yourself.
- Trust us and don't compare us with others and don't kill your desires for us
- You have given us the precious gift of our life so do not give us any other gift on our birthday
- We want our parents to be united
- We want our parents to take out some time from the busy schedule to spend time with us
- Give us a chance to prove our talent
- As a girl child I am sure I get your wishes at the top of the world
- We want our parents to spend some time with us
- We like to thank our parents for loving us and taking care of us
- Thank you so much for whatever you have done for us
- Please take some time for yourselves because you are always knotted into my wishes
- We want our parents to take care of us as well as of them
- We want our parents to be loving with each other and do not discriminate between first and second child
- Thank you because you always fulfill our needs
- You help us in various activities
- My parents are the precious pearls for me in my life and in front of my eyes my parents are my biggest God
- Our parents should not scold us for little things and they should not only think about us and also should think of themselves.
- Mom and dad always love and trust me

- Don't spend much money on me, I have what I want and I promise you that I will study well
- Don't take stress that I am a girl and what I will do when I will be elder than my brother
- I want my parents to spend time with me and not with the job they do.
- I am glad that you took pain to take me step by step to the journey of life
- Please don't wake up late at night when my exams are going on and don't spoil your health
- We know you expect much from us and we respect your expectation but do not put our studies as burden on us and if you ensure this we promise you that one day we will make you proud
- Give us time
- Not to worry so much about us
- Understand our feelings
- Observe our talents
- Stop comparing us with other siblings
- We want liberty
- Have faith in us
- Scold us not in front of others
- Thank you for giving us birth
- We are satisfied with what we get from our parents
- Sorry for our misbehavior
- To continue to be what you are
- Keep trust in us
- Not to be partial with us and our siblings
- Not to scold us too much, teach us to learn from our mistakes
- Stop pressurizing us
- Keep up the promises
- When we are asked to take care of our younger siblings allow us to scold them

- You work so hard for us and we irritate you and especially during our examinations you leave your own entertainment. We want you to enjoy your life.
- We would like to ask forgiveness from you our parents because sometimes when we get short tempered we do give back answers
- The money our parents earn with so much dedication we don't want them to spend it all on us but also to care for themselves
- Thank you for supporting us through bad and good
- Mom and dad you are God for us
- Parents should know how to say no to their children and thanks for fulfilling all our wishes, we love you parents
- Thank you for guiding us in each and every way and for your encouragement

There is a remarkable change in the expressions of college going youngsters. Parents and educators need to understand that it is part of their growth process:

- Trust
- Interfere less in our lives
- Appreciate more
- Keeping no high expectations
- No assumptions
- Advice but no questions
- Don't over react
- Some freedom
- No Demands
- Listen to our suggestions also and then scold or advice us
- Not to be overprotective
- Should not pose unnecessary restrictions on us
- Every sacrifice you made for us is something we understand

we know that everything we have is because of you and believe us even if we don't say so

- We appreciate every decision you take for us
- All we want is little more of understanding and space for us.

- All I Need is my parent's love and understanding
- Being a single child I know I am center of attraction for my parents
- I feel they should understand my space and my problems
- I am happy with whatever they provide with
- All I need is their love and understanding
- Appreciate my individuality
- We are your children
- We are your children not the society's
- Our main aim is to satisfy you and see you happy and not the society
- You are perfect to us the way you are...
- There are times and situations when we get angry but that is just frustration coming out of us and we love you and you are perfect to us the way you are...
- Even though we don't express it but we love you very much
- We love you and we will try our best to live up to your expectations
- We may not express our feelings but deep inside we do care and love you from the bottom of our hearts
- There are situations when I may fight with you but I never got the intention of hurting you
- All I want to say is thank you mom and dad for tolerating my moods swings even when you don't have to
- Thank you mom and dad for everything we have received from you
- We will surely make you proud one day
- Parents should trust us and give us responsibilities so that we can discover our capabilities and prove ourselves
- Mom and Dad don't think that we don't love you. It is just because we don't express ... it is XII not a pressure cooker.
- From time to time change your mentality don't follow everything blindly but there are few things which needs to be changed from time to time.
- Understand our view point and don't scold us in front of every one
- Don't scold us but make us understand and don't over react
- We know you will be there to guide us and to tell us what is right

- We know that you care for us but sometimes you interfere a lot.
- We know our responsibilities and we expect you to trust us and have faith in us and in your upbringing.
- If we divert from the right path, we know you will be there to guide us and to tell us what is right.
- Mom and dad, please don't underestimate us
- We know you expect a lot from us but a few failures cannot foretell the future so please support us and do not say discouraging things which only make us feel low.

Re-launch our religious identity in the context of dialogue

Our religious identity is the best gift that we can offer to our people and our nation. Organizations invest large amount of finances to train personnel in order to make them capable of giving their best in achieving the organizational goals. Human resource management processes today are ever on the increase. There is a very close-knit relationship between human resource function and the communication technology. Why not think seriously as a family on re-launching our religious identity in the context of dialogue. Are we just taking for granted that we are in a pluri-religious context? Can we take up concrete steps to bring the members of various religions and especially the members of our families to commit ourselves to build a society where everyone can experience freedom, peace and justice?

Interreligious Dialogue and Social Action

Families can break new grounds in interreligious dialogue and social action. In many cultures of the world, religion and culture are indivisible, thus inter-religious dialogue is integral to intercultural relations. In recent years, we observe a resurgence of interest in diversity of religions and in inter-religious questions in the educational system as well as in social interactions. Thanks to religious pluralism that is part and parcel of India's rich heritage, we had and still have in our country, men and women open and daring. They have reached out irrespective of caste and creed to all. Today we need to be leading in making dialogue our style of life.

Interreligious Consulting and Counselling Service

If not in all families at least in few, we can launch ***Interreligious Consulting and Counselling Service***. Families can offer an expert consulting service to individuals and professional assistance to community organizations, civic and public institutions. The aim is to enable these individuals and organizations to evaluate their needs, clarify their interreligious training objectives, assist in the creation of interreligious programs, help to reach and establish contacts with diverse communities, and provide follow-up to training. A colloquium on Conditions for and Obstacle to Inter-religious Dialogue where people from different religious communities could be invited to speak and engage in a dialogue, a one-day training program on Inter-religious Conflict Resolution is yet another initiative that can be promoted. Why not challenge ourselves to get to know the religion of our brother, sister next door?

Accommodation and love for life

Dialogue will teach us the art of accommodating. Our love for life has to be lived in the context of religious pluralism and multi cultural reality. How much do I know about the religion of my neighbour? What efforts have I made to know more about his/her style of life, prayer, meditation, contemplation etc.? Accommodation is a dynamic and transforming process. How much am I prepared to speak courageously about the core values of my religion? Am I open to share how the divine is shaping my life style and my way of being and doing?

Believers of various religions can play a vital role in upholding the truth of life. As the culture of death is propagated in the modern world, religious traditions as families and communities and as a world human family need to shield and protect all life, especially human life. Religious traditions have to invest time, money and personnel to transmit to younger generations the meaning and significance of life. Attention to the family is a happy expression of the growing openness to human dimensions. *The future of humanity passes by way of the family.*⁴

The commitment of believers to preserve peace, to build up a society worthy of human beings, to live a life based on values, exacts greater openness for dialogue. The challenges families face today cannot be ignored or kept away from such dialogue. The language of our dialogue has to come from our profound experience of the divine. Today, one can no more think of living in isolation. The dynamics of globalization and migration have brought such radical changes that humanity has to bring forth a new style of living. In this context there is an urgent need to *share the richness of one's spiritual heritage as a family*.

Discover committed believers

Conscious of who they are and what their religious beliefs are, different people have made courageous efforts to study, reflect, get to know and voice their opinion regarding other religions. Today, in the spirit of profound respect we shall consider one such person: Buddhadasa Indapanno. Buddhadasa is a great patriarch who brought a lot of renewal within Buddhism, and is one of the Buddhists who have written most on Christ. Buddhadasa was born on 27 May 1906 at Bumrieng, in Thailand. Right from his early age he was in contact with children from Muslim families. This helped him to understand that “committed, virtuous and spiritual persons can be found also outside Buddhism”. Besides a good basic intellectual formation he had experience of work in the family shop especially after the death of his father. The contacts he had with western technicians settled in Thailand offered him possibilities to be open to other parts of the world. He committed himself to a constant discovery of Buddhism. To return to the original message of Buddha, he searched in the sacred texts especially in *tripitaka* without passing through the comments and other books. As a result of all this he decided to create a quiet place in order to “verify and deepen the doctrine” that he had learned. He decided to live a life that is “transparent, extremely independent, to search now on wards purity and truth [...] from now on we will not follow the world [...] we will live in it physically, but, spiritually, we will make it the best possibly independent, to find purity [...] we will do like Buddha.”⁵

Education within the family

From cultivate, bring out and develop the term education is used to refer to a promotional intervention referring to both external and internal aspects. It can be said that the historical use of the word education as synonymous to “development, growth, formation, socialisation,

inculturation, instruction, teaching, training, updating; call forth intervention of particular institutional set-ups such as the family, the school, the churches, groups, associations, movements, but also invest the social responsibility in its complex reality”.⁶

Martin Luther’s vision of Reformation saw the state, family, and school along with the Church as leaders of Reformation. Perhaps Shakespeare says it best of all: “***There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them though we may***”. This means to know the story of our religion, what riches of religious traditions do we have to contribute to the building up of the human family, the nation and the world at large. Various studies and researches have highlighted that most of the youngsters still consider important those values the adult world considers necessary for the realisation of a life worthy of human beings. Where the distance sets in therefore is not in the values but in the hierarchy of values in its personal and subjective dimension. Many of the researches have evidenced that family, love and friendship are the three priorities that youngsters highlight today. Normally these three values are followed by that of work and the use of free time. Is it not true that the greatest crisis we face today is ethical? Learning to care and learning to share is far more important than just learning to raise money. Is it not the family the privileged place to initiate, nurture and sustain the four pillars of education: “***learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be***” that UNESCO is promoting?

A renewed commitment to education within the family

Education is always a timely response to the cultural context. To make this response relevant and appealing, keeping in mind the challenges we face today, there needs to be a renewed commitment to education within the family itself. The large number of students coming to and who go out of our Educational Institutions year after year and the countless number of men, women and children who benefit from our humanitarian services will bear testimony to the unique role of the families in Nation Building hand in hand with other agencies of education and formation.

Teresa Joseph fma is a Salesian Sister of the Bombay Province. She has a Masters' degree in Science of Education with specialization in Catechetics from Auxilium, Rome and a PhD in Missiology with specialization in Inter-religious Studies from the Gregorian University, Rome. She has participated in numerous International Seminars and presented research papers. Teresa has authored several books and has contributed numerous articles for various journals in India and abroad. One of her books *Dream Big! Dream True* is a best seller published by Better Yourself Books and has gone to the 7th print. The 6th one was a revised edition. This book is translated into Marathi: *Paha Mothi Swapna, Khari Swapna!* and is converted also into Braille.

Footnotes

- 1 John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 1999, 46.
- 2 Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*, 125.
- 3 <http://www.wiseoldsayings.com/family-quotes/>(accessed on 24/12/2017).
- 4 John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*,86.
- 5 It is said that for all his life, he tried his best to conform himself to this programme which he described in one of his letters to his brother (*Un Buddista parla del ristianesimo ai Buddisti* (traduzione di Francesco Caponi), Milano, Paoline, 1990, 10-11).
- 6 Nanni C., *Educazione* in *Dizionario di Scienze dell' Educazione* (a.c. di Josè Manuel Prellezo (coord.) Carlo Nanni, Guglielmo Malizia), ELLE DI CI, Torino 1997, 340.
- 7 <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/networks/global-networks/aspnet/about-us/strategy/the-four-pillars-of-learning/> (accessed on 12/01/2018).

About the Editors

Our Editors

1. **Archbishop Felix Machado:** He has a Licentiate in Catholic Theology from the Catholic Theological Faculty, Lyon, France (1974-76). He has an M.A. in Theology (with specialization in Catholic Missiology) from the Maryknoll School of Theology, New York, USA (1980). He holds a Doctorate (Ph.D.) in Catholic Dogmatic Theology from the Fordham University, New York, USA. He has been Professor of Catholic Dogmatic Theology, Missiology and formator of future priests at St. Pius X College, Mumbai from 1984 to 1993. From April 1993, he had been called to Rome in order to work in the Roman Curia (Holy See, Vatican) at the Asia Desk of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. On 1 October 1999, he was nominated Under-Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican, by Pope John Paul II and confirmed by Pope Benedict XVI.

He has been visiting Professor of Catholic Dogmatic Theology and Missiology at: Pontifical Institute, 'Regina Mundi' in Rome; Pontifical Institute of the Sciences of Education, 'Auxilium' in Rome; Rome Centre of the Loyola University in Chicago, USA., and at the Pontifical Urban University, Rome.

He has published three books: *Jnaneshvari, Path to Liberation; Journeying Together* (in English, French and Italian), a Marathi translation and short commentary on the Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium*. He has also published over a hundred articles in various international academic journals of theology. On 16 Jan. 2008, Pope Benedict XVI has appointed as Bishop of Nashik with personal title Archbishop. He is now Archbishop of Vasai Diocese.

2. **Rev. Dr. Stephen Fernandes** is resident Professor of Ethics and Moral Theology at St. Pius X College, Mumbai. He has a Doctorate in Moral Theology from the Academia Alfonsiana, Rome, Italy. He also holds a Master of Commerce (M.Com.) and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree from the University of Bombay. For two terms he was the Secretary of the Bombay Priests Council. From the year 2008, he is the Executive Director of the F.I.A.M.C. Bio-Medical Ethics Centre, Mumbai.

From the year 2000, he is Theological Consultor, C.C.B.I. Commission for Doctrine and Theological Consultant, Catholic Medical Guild of St. Luke, Mumbai. He is also a Life Member of the National Catholic Bioethics Centre (NCBC), Philadelphia, USA. He is a Member and Consultant, International Association of Catholic Bioethicists (IACB), Toronto. He is the Secretary, Permanent Diaconate Programme, Archdiocese of Bombay. He has presented research papers on Ethics and Justice issues at local, national and international conferences. He has to his credit published articles in various journals on Ethical issues and issues of justice and peace.

In May 2006, he received the Pope John XXI International Award “Premium Deontologiae” for research on the occasion of the XXII World Congress of the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations (FIAMC) in Barcelona, Spain. In January 2008, he received “The Iustitia et Pax Medallion” from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Vatican City in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the promotion of Justice and Peace.

- 3. Dr. Sr. Teresa Joseph fma** is a Salesian Sister of the Bombay Province who holds a Masters’ degree in Science of Education with specialization in Catechetics from Auxilium, Rome and a PhD in Missiology with specialization in Inter-religious Studies from the Gregorian University, Rome. Teresa has authored several books and has contributed numerous articles for various journals in India and abroad. One of her books *Dream Big! Dream True* is a best seller published by Better Yourself Books and has just gone for the 7th print.

Note on the Contributors

1. **Fr. Cajetan D. Menezes** is the Director, Family Apostolate (Archdiocese of Bombay) and Director & Managing Trustee of Snehalaya Family Service Centre, Mumbai since 2003. He is the Coordinator for the Family Ministry for the Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Arabia since 2010, and Trustee and Governing board member of Kripa Foundation (India's largest NGO for Addiction & HIV/AIDS) since 2014.

A trainer and counselling psychologist who has presented several research papers at conferences in India and abroad. He has four published books to his credit. He has co-authored the best seller book "Creative Love" and authored "Family Pages – The Church Teaching on Family, "Family Perspective" and "Joyful Family - Learning from Pope Francis and *Amoris Laetitia*." He is an alumni of the John Paul II Pontifical Institute for Marriage and Family Studies. Besides a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from the Mumbai University, he has Master's in Marriage and Family studies from the Lateran University, Rome and post-graduate studies in counselling psychology from Xaviers College, Mumbai. He is currently guiding several family ministry teams in India and in countries overseas that includes the Vicariates of Northern and Southern Arabia [Middle-East Asia] and Sri Lanka. In October 2014 Pope Francis invited him to participate in the III Extraordinary Synod of Bishops' on Family in Rome. He is also a Core Team member and Resource person for the CCBI (Episcopal Conference) Family Commission in India.

2. **Irfan Engineer** is Director from 1995 till date, Centre For Study of Society and Secularism, **Editor**, *Indian Journal of Secularism since 1996*, **Editor**, *Secular Perspective a fortnightly*. He holds a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc), University of Mumbai, May 1983 and L.L.B. University of Mumbai, May 1986. **Associations with social organizations / trusts / Institutions: General Secretary**, *Centre for Development Research and Action* and **Trustee**, Parvaaz, Ahmedabad. Irfan Engineer is Awardee: Peace Ambassador by Universal Peace Foundation. He has three books: Surat Riots, *Centre for Study of Society and Secularism* (1997), Bangladeshi Immigrants in Mumbai (Co-authored with Prof. Shama Dalwai) and *Issues of Communal Violence: Causes and Responses*, published by Institute for Peace Studies

and Conflict Resolution, Mumbai, 2013. He also has 18 articles published in Indian journals.

3. **KapiladevaDasa** joined ISKCON as a full time volunteer in 1984. He has been primarily associated with the Bhaktivedanta Institute (BI), Mumbai, the science, academic and research wing of ISKCON. The BI runs an M.S. /Ph.D. program in Consciousness Studies in collaboration with the Birla Institute of Technology & Science (BITS) Pilani. At present he is the Rector of the Bhaktivedanta Swami Mission School, Lokhandwala, Andheri. Here he oversees the project of incorporating vedic values into the current education system. He is also a Vice President at ISKCON Juhu, Mumbai.

Prior to joining ISKCON KapiladevaDasa did his B.E. (Hons.) in Chemical Engineering from BITS, Pilani. He then worked as a Project Engineer with Batliboi & Co. in their Air Pollution Control Division at Mumbai till 1984, after which he joined ISKCON.

4. **Dr. Astrid Lobo Gajiwala** is a medical scientist and bioethicist who established India's first Tissue Bank at the Tata Memorial Hospital in 1987 at a time when few in the country knew what a Tissue Bank was. She pioneered the use of radiation for the sterilization of biological tissues, and in 2004 gave India its first ISO certified Tissue Bank which has a place in the Limca Book of Records.

Dr. Astrid was the first woman President of the Asia Pacific Association of Surgical Tissue Banks (APASTB) breaking a glass ceiling that had been in place for 19 years, and in 2006 she organized India's first International Tissue Banking conference. She also served as National Project Co-ordinator for Tissue Banking for an Inter-regional Project of the UN that covered the Asia-Pacific, Latin America, Africa and Europe.

In 2010 she was invited by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, to make recommendations for amendments to the law governing the donation and transplantation of human tissues, and subsequently contributed to the development of Rules for the amended law.

Alongside her professional career Dr. Astrid is passionately engaged in the struggle for women's rights in the Catholic Church and is a founder member of *Satyashodhak* a Mumbai based feminist collective that has contributed significantly to the empowerment of women in the Indian Church for the past three decades. She is also a founder member of the *Indian Women's Theological Forum* (IWTF) and a member of the *Indian Theological Association* (ITA) and *Ecclesia of Women in Asia*, a group of Asian women theologians.

Currently Dr. Astrid is serving on the advisory bodies of a few *International Reform Groups* as well as the *Jesuit Conference of South Asia* (JCSA) engaged in the restructuring of their Assistancy and the *Jesuit Faculties' Forum for South Asia* (JFFSA) set up to re-orient Jesuit institutes of Philosophy and Theology.

She is in interfaith marriage with a Hindu for over 25 years and is a mother of 3 children.

5. **Dr. Marie Fernandes** is Principal of St. Andrew's College, Mumbai. She was also a member of the Board of Studies in English at the University of Mumbai and is a recognized Research Guide. The title of her PhD thesis was "*The Animal Fable in Modern Literature*". This was subsequently published in 1996. She has to her credit a number of research articles published in journals both in India and abroad. She was awarded the prestigious – 'International Visitor's Leadership Award', funded by the US. State Department.

