



TRACI
Reflections
 Theological Research And
 Communication Institute



ABREAST OF THE TIMES

Dr. Shantanu Dutta

Broadly speaking, Indian history has been understood in two ways. One sees India as a victim – invaded over the centuries by numerous invaders and their armies, desecrating a sacred land. Another view is that of India as a playground of many civilizational encounters between various peoples and their ideologies, and celebrates the hybridized character of India’s peoples and cultures. According to this view, Indian civilization had the ability to transform invasion into assimilation and the result has been a richer and more inclusive culture and civilization.

However, we are increasingly getting more and more divided on the basis of religion, ideology, class and caste and the lofty human objectives embedded in our Constitution are in danger of being neglected. The idea of India we grew up with, scripted into our constitution, is that of a sovereign, secular, socialist and democratic republic, is now challenged by another idea — India as a overtly Hindu nation, a nation in which minorities have little or even no space. Such voices are only growing louder. All this poses a challenge to those who believe in secular and egalitarian values. Many individuals and groups have risen to meet the challenge. But there are not too many church related groups among them, though many individuals are seen – possibly in their individual capacities.

As in every generation, if not more frequently, the church’s mission of serving society needs to be rethought. We exist in a pluralistic society and rather than confining itself to a closed-in space, we can play a helpful role as one among equals and an agent of prophetic collaboration with the civil society. Christians involvement in larger civil society movements is an imperative today. The days of mission compound and cathedral-based charity is largely gone, though its need and importance can never be negated. However, such an engagement demands a new way of being Christians. The subject of the church as the medium of the sacred confronting the secular is often debated but what it means today is not what it meant yesterday and not what it will mean tomorrow or the day after.

To become the leaven of Christ in society, we have to engage in the media, the IT fields, and the digital world driven by social media. Much of today’s thinking, particularly millennial and post millennial is shaped by what people see and hear on one or the other form of social media. New modes of communication through computers, internet, websites, blogs, friendship networks, podcasts, video-sharing portals, mobile communications, etc., have proliferated. But the impact has not been wholly positive. Real and nurturing relationships are being replaced by virtual relationships and escape is often sought through activities that bring about cyber-sexual addictions, depression, indecisiveness, insomnia and frustration.

Our faith teaches us to believe in a God who created all humans equal and desirous of living a life of fullness and abundance. We believe that God revealed Himself to us in Jesus so that we “may have life and have it in abundance” (John 10:10). Jesus himself spelt out the reason of his coming in the words: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me ... to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18).

Engaging in civil society means that the Church enters into a dialogue with it and planning and executing projects together. The eternal question – “what should the church do?” should be replaced by “What can the church do collaboratively?” That question needs to be framed and the answer deliberated upon.

(Dr. Shantanu Dutta is a Doctor, Blogger, Author. He serves as the Director of ‘Thought Leadership Initiatives’ at IJM. He is based in Delhi and is also the Chairperson of TRACI.)

WELCOME DR. BONNIE MIRIAM JACOB

Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob, our new staff, has been involved with TRACI in various capacities for several years. The major part of her education was from different institutions in Chennai and then she moved to New Delhi in 1994 and completed her doctoral studies from JNU in 1999.



She worked in the development sector for 20 years focusing primarily on research, training, writing and publication. Bonnie has also been involved with various Christian groups in raising awareness on social, political, economic and environmental issues and passionately seeking to help people integrate their faith and contextual concerns as an essential part of their spirituality. Varapasad, her husband teaches in Jawaharlal Nehru University and her college going children Arpith and Daya are pursuing undergraduate degrees in law from Bangalore and design from Mumbai respectively. Bonnie will be Director for Research and Training at TRACI.

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TRACI MISSION : “Facilitating integrated response and transformative engagements through theological reflections on contemporary and relevant issues, by communities of followers of Jesus Christ”.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Mr. Mathew Varughese

Warm New Year Greetings. God's gracious hand is upon us as a movement as we move on with the various challenges especially the challenges of COVID-19. In spite of the challenges that led to the cancellation of some programmes (especially the Internship), and the fact that it affected our in-house income from TRACI House (used for meetings/ retreats and for guest accommodation), God helped us to have different activities online.

The publication of CMS and the book on Public Theology, monthly reflection groups on relevant issues and a conference on COVID 19, were some of the activities we were involved in. The whole hearted support and participation of members and well-wishers has helped us thus far. During this time we had our Board meetings and AGM and we had more participation too. Our Board members joining as staff in spite of our fund crunch has reiterated the relevance of our initiatives as we feel that some have to work full-time to implement all the plans.



Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob, who is a close associate of TRACI as society member, research team member and Governing Body member, joined our staff team. She had earlier voluntarily worked as the editor of the book Public Theology. She now takes up the responsibility as Director of Research and Training from 1st February 2021. We welcome Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob to TRACI as our Research and Training Director.

Dr. Jeremiah Duomai, who worked with TRACI as Research Director full-time for a few months and later continued voluntarily, will be moving to Manipur. We express our gratitude to him for his sincere efforts and wish him all blessings for his new endeavor in Manipur. He will continue to serve TRACI as one of the Governing Body members.

Mr. Raaj Mondol will continue to be involved in various activities of TRACI as part of the Working Group. **Dr. Veio Pou** has taken up the responsibility as Treasurer. **Dr. Joy Pachuau** joined the GB as one of the members.

We value their contribution in the functioning of TRACI. We need ₹ 4,75,000 by March to settle the accounts in the financial year without any deficit. Please do pray and continue to support TRACI. We encourage you to participate in various activities of TRACI to sharpen our thinking and engage in communities for further transformation.

CMS: RECENT PUBLICATION

Edited by Mr. Raaj Mondol, TRACI published the Christian Mind Series after a long gap. This volume has six scholarly articles in three parts. If interested, please do get in touch with us. The CMS series is also placed in the main seminaries in India along with our other publications.

THE PROMISE AND POSSIBILITY OF SOCIAL ROLE VALORIZATION

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Many strategies have been adopted to uplift the lives of people with impairments on account of various social, cultural and economic factors. Often it is difficult to find helpful ways to change individual and societal circumstances. Social Role Valorization (SRV) gives us powerful insight into the experiences of marginalized and oppressed people, and its response framework opens up the possibilities for change. Join for the brief yet helpful overview of the framework of SRV, which is intended to awaken our identification with disabled people and propose simple yet potent ways to move toward diversity in how we might help.

The presentation will focus the application of SRV to people with disabilities and will open discussion regarding four components of SRV: (1) the powerful role of building an inclusive society.

TRACI, Keystone Institute India & The Rural India Supporting Trust collaborate to offer this event as a follow up to the reflection on "Understanding Social Exclusion and Working Through Grief and Sorrow" in an earlier webinar which had applied the social role valorization approach in addressing the issue of caste and gender injustice.

Webinar Participation for this webinar is through personal invite and limited to just 40 participants. Do register at the earliest, to ensure participation. We have kept a fee of ₹4000/-

12th March 2021 (Friday), 9:30-7:30pm
REGISTER: <https://forms.gle/68N8ARUW7K5X37>

TRACI
Keystone Institute India & The Rural India Supporting Trust

LEAD FACULTY
Elizabeth Kerevici
Geeta Mondol

TRACI is organising a workshop on 'Social Role Valorization' on 12th March. This webinar gives powerful insight into the experiences of marginalized and oppressed people. Its response framework opens of the possibilities for change. Please do register. We have limited seats.

TRACI ANNUAL CONFERENCE: COVID-19 PANDEMIC-CAUSES, COMPLEXITIES AND CONSEQUENCES

TRACI organised the 5th Annual conference from February 12th to 13th 2021. Giving the key note address, Dr Santosh Mathew (Training Coordinator & South Asia Regional Secretary International Christian Medical and Dental Association) presented the Key note address with a theological reflection. He encouraged us on the need of 'Looking back and Learning'; reminding us not to forget the legacy we are part of, but celebrate our brothers and sisters who have reached out in courage. He also challenged us to 'Look around and Respond'; to speak the truth in a post truth and post scientific world, be the listening ear, the caring heart, hope giving friend who journeys. In 'Looking ahead and Preparing', he exhorted us to 'understand and reflect & reimagine and re-envision. Among the various responses to the Keynote address, Ps. Ivan Satyavrata, thanked Dr. Santosh Mathew for the comprehensively and brilliant presentation. He said that we would love to see a published version of this webinar!

The Conference had 13 papers presented over the two days, moderated by eminent leaders in their own sphere of influence. The conference brings to the fore different perspectives and the situations that this pandemic took us through. With papers due for revision, it would be published very soon. We thank all those who took time to present these invaluable insights and are indebted to Dr. Jeremiah Duomai for organising this conference.



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FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION ACCOUNT

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