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## News and Views

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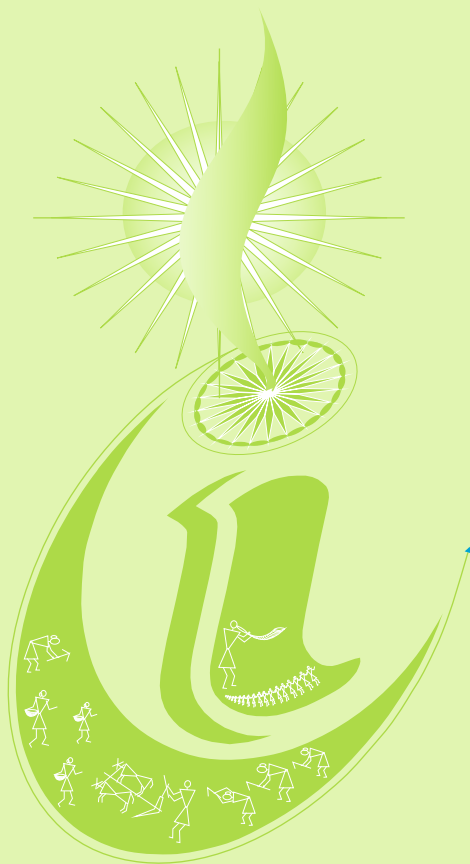
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# **INSTITUTE OF INDIAN CULTURE (IIC)**

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Culture, Religion and Society,  
towards the goal of building a  
just and humane society

## **EDITORIAL**

### **Seeking Wisdom in the Post-Truth & Fake News Society**

**S. M. Michael**

Many analysts and commentators of the contemporary world suggest that today people are living under the influence of “fake news” in a “post-truth” society. Abuse of social media leading to rumours has killed people suspected to be child-lifters. Fake news and misuse of social media for political purposes and for selfish interests have marked a new low in the breakdown of civil society. People are not able to cope with the fast acceleration of economic, social, political and cultural life. The chasm between the demands of society, arising from the revolutionary and disruptive changes and the political dispensation and the existing institutions unable to meet these demands and challenges use every method to keep them in power. This leads to the demise of historical thinking leading to fake news.

There is pessimism that we cannot do much to change the world. This has given rise to a thinking that pursuing the truth hardly seems pertinent because however hard you look, and even if you find it, you cannot expect to change anything anyhow. This thinking has accelerated with the increased use of the internet. The statisticians give the following information with regard to our internet connectivity. The world has a population of 7.6 billion people. Of them, 5.1 billion have subscriptions to mobile phones, 4 billion have access to internet, and 3.1 billion are active users of the social media. In just one internet minute, 4,50,000 tweets are sent, 9,00,000 people log onto Facebook, 1.8 million snaps are created, 3.5 million searches hit Google, 4.1 million You Tube

videos are seen and over 156 million emails are sent. The point: The world must not ignore the consequences of being so tightly networked. In this situation, a large proportion of the population really cannot distinguish reality from fantasy and are not able to fact-check the news of the internet and other digital media.

Political commentators have studied the impact of the 24-hour news cycle which tries to please the emotions and expectations of the viewers instead of reporting factual events and happenings. Post-truth politics is a political culture in which debate is framed largely by appeals to emotion disconnected from the details of policy, and by the repeated assertion of talking points factual rebuttals to which are ignored.

Post-truth differs from traditional contesting and falsifying of truth by rendering it of “secondary” importance. In the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell cast a world in which the state changes historic records daily to fit its propaganda goals of the day. In 2016, “post-truth” was chosen as the Oxford Dictionaries' “Word of the Year” due to its prevalence in the public domain.

Technology experts have pointed out that social network sites created the problem of fake news, not by inventing fake news, but by a) creating a transmission technology that allows super quick spread of dangerous rubbish and b) by taking away business from main-stream media, which generally weeds out ridiculous falsities, but not investing enough in fact checking. It is also important to be aware that studies have shown that correcting and/or debunking a piece of fake news/dangerous rumour online takes an average of 12 hours. In 12 hours, a dangerous rumour can travel online several times around the world. It is also established that online the volume of fact checking content is far less than the

volume of fake news/rumour (see “What's Up With Messaging: WhatsApp and other Platforms are not doing enough to combat fake news, rumours”, by Saubhik Chakrabarti, The Times of India, Mumbai, July 9, 2018, p.12).

The fake news circulated in the digital media like WhatsApp and Facebook has done immense harm in India. If we account the dreadful events which took place due to fake news during the last few months of 2018, we can understand how Indian society is changing from peaceful and compassionate society to intolerant and violent one. In May 2018, in the State of Telangana, a man suspected to be a robber was lynched to death at Jiyepalli. He had gone to meet his relatives. During the same month two persons were bludgeoned to death in Karbi Anglong district of Assam by the villagers who suspected the duo to be child abductors. In Gujarat, a 40 year-old beggar was hacked to death in Ahmedabad in June 2018, having been mistaken for a member of child-lifting gang. In May 2018, a mob beat a homeless man to death and hung him from a bridge, mistaking him for a kidnapper, in Pulicat in Tamil Nadu. Recently on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018 five persons of a nomadic community were lynched in Dhule district of Maharashtra on suspicion of being child-lifters.

The above few incidents during this year point to the society which is emerging in this post-modern, post-truth and fake news world. Various analysis points out that although word of mouth played a key role in spreading the rumours that set off mob violence, it was social media that spread most of the rumours. Rumours and fake news had become a big menace, amid reports that around 20 people had been lynched in different parts of the country in the past one month following child-lifting rumours spread primarily through WhatsApp. Union Minister of State for

Home Kiren Rijiju said, “Rumours and fake news are posing a danger to innocent lives”.

The majority of our print and TV media have given up all pretence of independence. Without much verification and seeking truth, they transmit news pleasing to politicians with half baked, twisted, politicized news. They circumvent established procedures to verify facts.

In the face of the collapsing state of trust in the media and political leaders, people must be wise to discern the truth behind the rumours, fake news and political statements. Today, there is too much information which may be false, half-truth or politically motivated, the wisdom lies in the shifting of information to seek the truth and not to become a victim of post-modern and post-truth society.

A true service to the nation and also for one's own religious belief is to discern the truth in the midst of myths, fiction and fantasies and imagination to seek for truth and justice which will empower the poor, the weak and the marginalized for equality, fraternity and social justice which are enshrined in our Indian Constitution. As we celebrate the 72<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Our Country's Independence, we need to commit ourselves not to be led by fake news, rumours or politically motivated statements of non-truth; but to strengthen ourselves to be watchful and discern to build India of the Founding Fathers.

**S.M. Michael SVD**  
**Director**

# RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE: A GLOBAL PHENOMENON?

**Dr. (Mrs.) Vasundhara Mohan**

**(Paper presented at the Seminar held on 6-7  
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Culture, Mumbai)**

*"A person born in Egypt or Pakistan is very likely to be a Muslim; one born in Burma or Tibet is very likely to be a Buddhist; one born in most parts of India is very likely to be a Hindu; and one born in Britain or the U.S.A. is likely to be a Christian. If God is omnibenevolent and just, he would not put a new-born to a disadvantage. This seems to mean only one thing: All religions give a person the same chance for salvation." (\*)*

This paper is intended to express concern over religious intolerance not only in the Indian society but also across the nations of the world and think of measures that could be taken at least in India to ensure that religious and ethnic tolerance prevails and the country traverses along the road to prosperity for all.

To begin with, India's Constitution declares that India is a secular democracy and guarantees freedom of religion, among other rights. India has a unique brand of secularism which provides for a wide religious accommodation to its religious minorities, including pilgrimage subsidies, autonomy from governmental interference in their respective religious institutions, as well as permits the practice of religion based on personal laws. Some religious minority communities have even been classified as

backward communities, making them eligible from affirmative action programs. (1)

However, allowing religious minorities to lead their lives in accordance with their personal laws may have to come with a rider; that such personal laws do not come into conflict with fundamental rights. The recent case of Supreme Court of India's ruling against triple talaq practiced by the Muslim community is a case in point. Talaq in itself is not bad in Islam. But, triple talaq, which leaves a married Muslim woman in the lurch and the prescription of *halala* if the repentant husband wants to take her back, is inhuman and degrades the woman. Under directions from the Supreme Court, the Government of India has come up with a Bill to ban triple talaq and make it a non-bailable offence, punishable with three years of imprisonment.

### **Legacy of religious intolerance**

Antagonisms between different religions and sects within the same religion are not of recent origin. The earliest example lies in the poor relations between Brahmins and Buddhists. There was antagonism between Shaivism and Jainism. The construct of tolerant Hinduism seems to be of relatively recent origin and to have first acquired visibility in the Western writings on India. In the 17th century, Francois Bernier (1620-1688), a French Physician who travelled widely in India, spoke of Hindus as tolerant people. In the 18th century the German Philosopher Johann Gottfried Von Herder (1744-1803), referred to the Hindus as “mild” and “tolerant” and as “the gentlest branch of humanity.” Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), another German philosopher, said that they “do not hate the other religions but they believe they are also right”. (2)



Such views find a more prominent place in the writings of Orientalists like William Jones, according to whom, “the Hindus...would readily admit the truth of the Gospel but they contend that it is perfectly consistent with their Sastras.” (3) However, Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883), founder of Arya Samaj, as a champion of the Vedic religion, sharply opposed all other religions. His contemporary Ramakrishna (1836-1886) spoke of the equality of religions, but in his view “the Hindu religion alone is the *Sanatana Dharma*.” His disciple Vivekananda (1863-1904) also laid emphasis on toleration. Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), couched his views in the vocabulary of tolerance and quite often cited Rigvedic passages but, in reality, he espoused militant Hinduism. Even M. S. Golwalkar (1906-1973) spoke of Hindus as the most tolerant people of the world, although he identified Muslims, Christians and Communists as internal threats to the country. Mahatma Gandhi, who lived and died for communal harmony, genuinely found Hinduism to be the most tolerant of all religions. (4)

Many historians and social scientists have also spoken and written about the inclusive character of Hinduism and have produced much literature which highlights its syncretic traditions. Several instances of mutual accommodation among the various Hindu sects have been cited.

### **Violence against religious minorities**

But, something seems to have gone wrong. Despite India's commitment to secularism and constitutional guarantee of religious freedom, instances of clashes between members of Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities on one pretext or the other keep surfacing. In incidents of violence against the two minority communities, the perpetrators are self-styled protectors

of the respective religions. Though no direct hand of the government appears to be involved in such incidents, it is possible that they may have the backing of some political leaders, who feel that by fueling violence between the religions they would be enhancing their popularity and political clout.

Although the Freedom of Religion Law or the Anti-Fraudulent Conversion Laws are in vogue in some of the States, they have hardly been enforced and have not affected the freedom or ability of individuals to convert, and have not been effective in stopping forcible conversions, if any. (5) There have however been a few reported instances of forced religious conversions from Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Kerala, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh etc. Of late, reports of 'love jihad' come from Kerala where non-Muslim girls are lured into marriage with Muslim boys with an ulterior motive. The National Investigation Agency is reported to have informed the Supreme Court in October 2017 that none of the men and women it examined in cases that emerged while investigating the Kerala 'love jihad' case were enticed by monetary benefits to convert to Islam. The agency said there were other methods used to convert them to Islam that included religious propaganda. (6)

However, it is held that the anti-conversion laws work against religious minorities only; reconversion to Hinduism escapes the regulations. This sort of conversion or reconversion (*GharWapsi*) does not find place in the Laws. (7) A good number of Muslim families have been 'reconverted' by Hindu organisations on the plea that their families were converted forcibly in the past. (8) There have also been reports in the recent months of incidents of vigilantes beating up people on the grounds that they were dealing in beef. (9) Such incidents forced Prime Minister Narendra Modi to break his silence and strongly condemn those who took the law into their own hands posing as '*gaurakshaks*.' (Protectors of cows)

By and large India has not had any major clashes motivated by religious intolerance in the past several years. Despite limitations, the Indian judicial system has delivered justice consistently to victims of religiously-motivated crimes and punished perpetrators of such crimes. However, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs, a total of 3,365 communal incidents occurred in the country from 2011 to October, 2015 i.e., an average of 58 incidents a month. Eight states (Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) account for 85% of all the incidents. These states were ruled by various parties at different points in time in these 5 years and not by a single party. Seven states did not report a single such incident in these five years and all of them belong to the North East. (10) Such clashes are not necessarily due to religious differences. They could be due to business rivalry, mischief mongering, inter-religious love affair etc.

Religious fanatics are always on the lookout for some reason or the other to create conditions that may lead to clashes between the adherents of two religions. Recently, the Hindu Jagran Manch is reported to have warned schools in Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh) not to celebrate Christmas on the plea that celebrating Christmas is a step towards religious conversions. (11) The President of the HJM felt that taking toys and gifts to the school will affect the mentality of the students! Similarly, in September 2015, St. Mary's convent school in Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh) punished its girl students for wearing *Mehendi* and *Rakhi*. (12) In February 2015, a Christian convent school in Telangana punished an 11 year old girl for attending school wearing '*tilak*' on her forehead on her birthday. (13) In all the three cases, the incidents did not call for intervention either from the Hindu conservatives or the Christian school

administrations. But, the incidents have the potential for igniting religious passions.

### **Religious Intolerance: Global Phenomenon**

It is no consolation that India is not the only country where religious intolerance is witnessed. There are several European countries that have banned the wearing of *hijab* by Muslim women on the plea that their governments' secular character does not permit display of religious symbols. According to Thomas Reese, Chairman of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, “religious intolerance and persecution of religious minorities can happen in political systems of all kinds, from dictatorships to democracies.” (14) He referred to Burmese Buddhists attacking Rohingya Muslims, and the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi passing discriminatory laws on race and religion.

Other examples of religious intolerance come from the Central African Republic, where Muslims are driven from the country by Christians and Iran, where religious minorities like the Baha'is, Christian converts and Sunni and Sufi Muslims are targeted by the majority Shia population and government. Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, 'not a single non-Muslim house of worship is allowed.' (15) The Middle East and parts of North Africa have been witnessing sectarian violence, in which the religious minorities are the most vulnerable to persecution. In fact, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has named more than two dozen nations as “countries of particular concern” and others nearing that level of documented abuse and discrimination. (16) It is interesting to note that the Commission has ignored incidents of violence within the United States based on racial discrimination. There are a number of other European countries

where religious intolerance continues to be prevalent. (17)

Reverting to the 2016 report of the US Commission mentioned above, it was revealed that two disturbing trends were noticeable; that there was an increasing trend of abuses by independent groups, not governments, and vigilantes, which made reckless charges of blasphemy to inflame violence. Certain non-state actors including terrorist organizations like Daesh (another term for ISIS), al-Qaida, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram etc., were posing a major threat to religious freedom. When looking at all of these countries, one thing is obvious, Reese said: (17)

'In none of these countries are members of religious minorities safe and secure in the practice of their faith. Clearly, religious minorities are facing tremendous pressures across much of the world, from both governments and non-state actors. This should cause concern because the universal human right of religious freedom is being violated here — the right of all human beings to think as they please, believe or not believe in accordance with their conscience, and live out those beliefs in a nonviolent way, without fear or intimidation.'

The chapter on India written by Dr. Iqtidar Karamat Cheema observed for the Annual Report 2017 of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom summarizes: (18)

'In 2016, religious tolerance and religious freedom conditions continued to deteriorate in India. Hindu nationalist groups such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Vishva Hindu

Parishad and their sympathizers perpetrated numerous incidents of intimidation, harassment, and violence against religious minority communities and Hindu Dalits. These violations were most frequent and severe in 10 of India's 29 states. National and state laws that restrict religious conversion, cow slaughter, and the foreign funding of non-governmental organizations and a constitutional provision deeming Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains to be Hindus helped create the conditions enabling these violations. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke publicly about the importance of communal tolerance and religious freedom, members of the ruling party have ties to Hindu nationalist groups implicated in religious freedom violations, used religiously divisive language to inflame tensions, and called for additional laws that would restrict religious freedom. These issues, combined with longstanding problems of police and judicial bias and inadequacies, have created a pervasive climate of impunity in which religious minorities feel increasingly insecure and have no recourse when religiously motivated crimes occur.'

While the above summary may be true to some extent, we do not totally agree that there is judicial bias against religious minorities in India. For, by and large, judiciary in India still remains free from political pressures. What is true however is that some of the politicians of every colour seem to be least concerned about peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance; they are more concerned about the votes. While canvassing in

minority-dominated constituencies, they are apt to promise anything to win votes. As Aseem Shukla of the Hindu American Foundation observed, “too many politicians are using their bully pulpits to bully those of other faiths.” For the Americans, as Aseem Shukla observes, “Christian faith is a foregone criterion for electability.” (19)

We may recall that a Muslim political leader of Hyderabad incited Muslims to attack and kill Hindus. He also wanted to emerge as the savior of Islam when he made death threats against Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen. There are also some non-political groups which have taken upon themselves the responsibility of protecting the culture of their supporters who keep itching for an opportunity.

Democracy is expected to tame the militancy of religious fervor as part of the enlightenment tradition and on a more practical basis, through a necessary tolerance for compromise. One can talk about their beliefs in public without politicizing religion or polarizing the community or without advocating injury to others. One can disagree passionately about things that matter without surrendering his own principled beliefs and without going for his neighbor's throat. One can also engage with others in serious dialogue about the most deeply felt subjects and truly challenge each other, teach each other, and learn from each other.

Religious liberty is at the heart of the Indian Way. But, one's standing as a citizen, member of the community, or a candidate should not depend on the faith he professes. Indian Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion. In all good faith, policymakers frequently engage in complex efforts to balance competing interests. Unfortunately, some political and religious leaders are quick to portray policy

disagreements as dire threats to religious liberty or even a “war on religion.” Reactions of some Muslim and even non-Muslim political leaders to the proposed law on triple talaq are an example.

How can we create and sustain a civic space that reflects the principles of the Constitution and the values of respectful civic discourse; one that welcomes the participation of people of all faiths? The rules reflect our understanding of the Constitution and the body of federal court cases on religious liberty as well as our judgment on issues beyond the scope of the law. Some things that are legally permissible may still be damaging to religious tolerance and civic discourse, and should be discouraged.

Because government represents all the people, not just those who share the faith of the leaders of a particular government and because the Constitution guarantees equal rights to citizens of all faiths, it is inappropriate for a government policy to be based solely on religious doctrine. At the same time, it does not mean that government officials and other players in policy debates have to abandon their faith as the price for taking part in the political process; or that it is inappropriate to talk about moral or religious values in politics. There are moral dimensions to public policy, and not only on so-called “social issues.” Decisions about taxing and spending reflect a community's priorities and affect people's lives. Laws prohibiting murder and stealing, as well as laws protecting worker safety and the environment, reflect moral judgments. Those judgments may be rooted in specific religious teaching for some people, but they are also shared broadly across religious and secular lines.

Politicians have to keep in mind that all Indian do not share their faith and give a careful consideration to the impact of their own



religious beliefs on their approach to a given issue. For, even Indians who share their faith might well disagree with their political position on any given issue. Public officials are free to talk about their faith, the role it plays in their lives, and how it influences their approach to issues, but must not use the power of their office to proselytize or impose particular religious beliefs or practices on others.

Even the USA, the oldest democracy in the World, is not free from people who assert the supremacy of their faith over the faith of others. Polls consistently show Americans want their political leaders to be religious. We may recall the attitude of late J. F. Kennedy. He called for a robust separation of the Church and the State, and for candidates to be judged on their own merits without regard to their religious identity or beliefs. It is a different matter that unfortunately, some conservative Catholic leaders have repudiated Kennedy's historic stance. But Americans, who cherish religious liberty and respectful pluralism, yearn for elections that do not devolve into religious competitions or name-calling. Donald Trump even got rid of the 1954 Law which prohibited Churches and tax-exempt institutions from endorsing political candidates. (20)

In answering the question 'Why do people of different religions seem to hate each other so much', Laura E. Shulman Adjunct professor of Religion at the Northern Virginia Community College says: (21)

'Perhaps because they are simply ignorant of how much they really have in common; I generally find that intolerance is a result of ignorance, and such ignorance and intolerance is often passed down to the next generation when people in

positions of authority (parents, teachers, etc.) remain ignorant. Ignorance often leads to fear, fear can lead to hate, and hate can lead to violence. Knowledge is the key to avoid going down this path. Conflict between people of different religions may begin with simple ignorance. People who do not really know anything about other religions just assume the others are very different. They are not aware that many religions share the same basic ideas. Thus these people assume that the other religions must be wrong”.

Strong intolerance of other religions will often interfere with overcoming our ignorance as we may actually close our minds to new information that can change our perspective. We tend to see only what we want to see and then we can even take our knowledge and misrepresent it in speaking to others. Passion for one's faith to the ignorance of other faiths prompts one to speak in favour of one's own religion and against those of others. Naturally, people of other religions are just as passionate about their religion and that may lead to serious arguments and even conflicts.

People passionate about their own faith and unaware of anything about other religions, are likely to focus more on the differences than on similarities; the differences often overshadow the similarities. Selective knowledge or selective ignorance leads to intentionally overlooking or ignoring the similarities, leading to serious and unfair bias. Apparently knowledgeable but biased people tend to mislead the more ignorant people by speaking with an air of authority and knowledge. Such perverted "teaching" appears on many websites that pretend to provide information about different religions but in reality they paint the other religions in a bad light.

Intolerance is the unwillingness to accept the beliefs, behaviour or practices of someone belonging to other castes or religions. India, the land that gave birth to four religions and which enshrined both secularism and freedom of speech in its Constitution, has come to be debated whether the world's biggest democracy has become an intolerant nation? Even Raghuram Rajan, former Governor of Reserve Bank of India called for mutual respect and tolerance in public discourse. But, some of the even senior members of the Bharatiya Janata Party have kept the debate raging with a string of bizarre public pronouncements.

## **Conclusion**

In the modern era, many countries that maintain personal law systems are under increasing pressure to abandon these structures and adopt a regime of uniform general rules that apply to all citizens. Globalization and technological revolution have projected the concepts of fundamental human rights and freedom to even the most culturally traditional societies. As a result, countries with personal law systems have started experiencing a clash between two ideological perspectives. Opponents of religiously based separate systems embrace a concept of universal human rights where there is an urgent need for establishing globally shared legal frameworks on cross-cultural foundations. But, those who favour maintaining personal law are suspicious of such (primarily Western-based) concepts as human rights and individualism and challenge their compatibility with valued cultural traditions." (22)

We are witnessing an alarming resurgence of religious intolerance even in the US and Europe, which we thought have outgrown such narrow notions. More than the US, Europe has traditionally emphasized religious homogeneity and assimilation. Religious

panic has affected US thinking after, especially, 9/11, linking Muslims to terrorism. This has resulted in forbidding the building of mosques in many US cities and towns, and vitiating the climate of community, school and workplace relations in communities across the nation. At the other end, as birth rates plummeted among secular Europeans, the large number of immigrants arriving from Muslim countries has started causing concern. Today, in France, there are more Muslims attending mosque on Fridays than Christians going to church on Sundays. One-quarter of the children in school in the Netherlands are Muslim. This situation has led to religious intolerance. Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Front Party who won 18% of the vote in the 2012 French Presidential elections, had promised to ban on the wearing of headscarves, turbans, including the Jewish skull-caps, the kippot, in public. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has resolved to ban male circumcision altogether. In other countries, the kosher slaughtering of animals has been outlawed. (23)

It looks like intolerance is the new trend and a more baneful trend for the world's future can hardly be imagined. How can this trend be stopped? Fear and suspicion are powerful forces which we should combat with clear consistent thinking; specific political/legal principles based on equal respect for human dignity; and sympathetic imagination. We also need specific political and legal principles. India is committed to the idea of equal human dignity, and to the principles of religious liberty and toleration based upon this idea. Such commitment calls for allowing space for free exercise of religion and it must be equal for all; whether majority or minority.

Often attaining true equality requires special "accommodation" of the culture, traditions and practices of the minorities. Intolerance

is often caused by fear. One thing we know is that demonization of "the other" is far easier if people know nothing much about this "other," have never been encouraged to think what the world looks like from that different viewpoint. In order to move beyond a climate of fear we need more than good principles: we need the cultivation of sympathy, and therefore we need approaches through education and rhetoric, not just through argument. (24)

Many lives have been lost and much blood has been shed in the name of religion. It is time for the people of all religions to divert their energies for the betterment of the lives of their own communities. As we have said earlier, intolerance arises because of ignorance of each other's religion and traditions and practices. As long as the practice of one's religion does not come in the way of the other's, or affects the fundamental, constitutional and human rights, there is no reason for interference. When living together, it is essential that one ignores certain minor things instead making mountains out of mole hills.

What is needed is a continuous and open-minded interfaith dialogue on contentious issues instead of sticking to one's own understanding. Such dialogue can solve a number of critical issues and make life easier for all communities. On the other hand, berating or insulting a religion or its adherents in writing and speeches should be made a cognizable offence. Every political party should warn its members, especially those in power or holding a public office, to show restraint in their public utterances. The incorrigible should be thrown out of the Party. Similarly, seeking votes in the name of caste and religion should be made a cognisable offence.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi could take a lead on the issue, forging a progressive and forward-thinking path on inclusion and

tolerance. He could set an example for the region and the world. Doing so would not only be good for the country, but is also politically expedient. To start with, Modi could go strong against politicians of his own party and high level government officials making statements that are spiteful to the minorities. Only then the country could move forward, and he can focus on his pet issue: *Sab ka Saath, Sab ka Vikas*. People have also to raise voices against those who take law into their own hands and dispense justice as they find it fit or make speeches and declarations in public that would disturb the equilibrium.

In a first ever conference of Members of Parliament of Indian origin representing 23 countries across the world convened by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in January 2018, Lord Ranbir Singh Suri, Conservative MP in the UK House of Lords said that India's democracy and liberal values are its biggest strengths. "We have been telling Europeans to learn from India how to live in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society peacefully. But the reports of killings here and there though aberrations, create a bad impression." (25)

Indian society is divided on religion and caste lines. However, when religion becomes a marker of ethnic identity in culturally divided societies like India, it is a component of the identity differences that can be manipulated by the leaders of countries, groups, and religions for their own purposes. In the extreme, the resulting tensions may escalate into violence and war. The wars which have ravaged former Yugoslavia, Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia provide examples of this unfortunate phenomenon. (26) But, it should be remembered that the human being and human rights take precedence over religion. As Donald Shriver, President Emeritus of the Union Theological Seminary says, "religions best flourish when human rights are respected;

and human rights flourish best when religion respects them. “(27)

(\*) John Harwood Hick (1922-2012) English Philosopher of Religion and Theologian and an advocate of religious pluralism, Quoted by Vladimir Tomek, Teachings of religious tolerance and intolerance in world religions, in Religious Tolerance, September 23, 2006. <http://www.religioustolerance.org/tomek22.htm>

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1. For instance, among Muslims, the *halalkhors*, *bhangisdhobis*, *Nais* or *hajjams* (barbers), butchers, faqirs etc. belonging to the 'Arzals' are considered to be the 'untouchable converts' to Islam and are included in the OBC list.
2. Jha, D. N. and Mukul Dube, *A brief history of religious intolerance in India*, December 24, 2015, in Scroll.in. (Available at <https://scroll.in//author/3316>)
3. Ibid
4. During his visit to India in February 2015, president Obama said: “Michelle and I returned from India - an incredible, beautiful country, full of magnificent diversity - but a place where, in past years, religious faiths of all types have, on occasion, been targeted by other peoples of faith, simply due to their heritage and their beliefs - acts of intolerance that would have shocked Gandhiji, the person who helped to liberate that nation.” He did not, however, name any particular religion and said that the violence is not unique to one group or one religion. *The Times of India*, February 5, 2015.
5. Seven of India's States have 'anti-conversion' laws viz., Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Arunchal Pradesh and Rajasthan. Despite criticism of India's anti-conversion laws, some human rights bodies have acknowledged that these laws have resulted in few arrests and no convictions. (Tariq Ahmad, Foreign Law Specialist. *State Anti-Conversion Laws in India*, June 2017. The Library of Congress, Available at <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/anti-conversion-laws/india.php>)

6. Singh, Vijaita. No Conversion for Money seen in Love Jihad Cases: NIA, in *the Hindu*, New Delhi, 2 November 2017. To a question is love jihad really happening in India, or is it a hoax? , Farah Tweedie answers: “Actually love jihad in India is not new. It's just that it has gained momentum. Before there was no media and internet access, so people were not aware. Now thanks to social media, news channels, internet access, the world and especially the Indians are getting to know about it. It's not a political agenda by the Hindu political parties to vilify Islam. No sir, it is not! In fact it is on us Muslims to bring as many people as possible to Islam by hook or by crook. (Available at <https://www.quora.com/Is-love-jihad-really-happening-in-India-or-is-it-a-hoax>)
7. Religious Freedom and Religious Persecution Issues In India, *European Centre for Law and Justice Strasbourg, France and others*, February 2008.
8. In April and May 2017, 43 Muslims were reconverted into Hinduism in Ambedkar Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh. In *Scroll.in*, June 27, 2017. (Available at <https://scroll.in/article/838416/bulletins/101/not-just-for-experts-how-videography-is-poised-for-a-disruption>). The converts belonged to Nat caste of Muslims.
9. Interestingly, Sangeet Singh Som, a BJP MLA (from Sardhana in Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh) at the forefront of the anti-beef protests is reported to be a co-founder of one of India's leading halal meat export companies (Al Dua). *The Hindu*, October 18, 2016.
10. Dubbudu, Rakesh. India had 58 communal incidents per month in the last 5 years and 85% of these incidents occurred in just 8 states, in *Factly*, December 1, 2015. Year-wise, there were 580 incidents in 2011; 668 in 2012; 823 in 2013; 644 in 2014. Till October 2015 there were 65. *Factly* is one of the Data Journalism/ Public Information Portals in India. (Available at <https://factly.in/communal-incidents-in-india-statistics-57-communal-incidents-per-month-last-4-years-85-these-incidents-happen-in-8-states/>)
11. Daily News and Analysis (DNA), Mumbai 19 December 2017.
12. JohnleeVerghese. The school authorities have maintained that the



- students were asked to remove mehndi and rakhi as the Catholic institution strictly forbids use of religious symbols in the school. Available at <http://defenceforumindia.com/forum/threads/st-marys-convent-school-girls-punished-for-wearing-rakhi-mehndi.70088/>)
13. Available at <https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/11-year-old-girl-punished-in-school-for-wearing-tilak-on-her-birthday.361828/>)
  14. Quoted in Barbara Crossette, Religious Intolerance Surges Worldwide: US Studies Confirm, in *Huffpost*, August 18, 2017. (Available at [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/barbara-crossette/religious-intolerance-sur\\_1\\_b\\_11570758.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/barbara-crossette/religious-intolerance-sur_1_b_11570758.html)) Also see, *Mid-astern Christian News*, April 25, 2013
  15. Ibid.
  16. Tier-1 in the list of such countries are: Myanmar, Central African Republic, China, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Tier-2 include: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, and Kazakhstan. (The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Available at <http://www.uscirf.gov/all-countries/>)
  17. See, *Religious Intolerance in Europe Today*, Written Testimony for a Hearing Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe by Fr. Drew Christiansen, S. J. Director, Office of International Justice and Peace U. S. Catholic Conference, September 18, 1997. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (Available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/testimony-before-helsinki-commission-on-religious-intolerance-in-europe-1997-09-18.cfm>)
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25. PIO MPs concerned over rising intolerance. DNA, Mumbai, 10 January 2018.
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27. Shriver, Donald W. *Religion and human rights need each other, Religion and Human Rights: The Capacity to "Swear to One's Own Hurt"*, in Protecting the Human Rights of Religious Minorities in Eastern Europe, (Eds.) Peter G. Danchin & Elizabeth A. Cole, New York (2002), Colombia University Press, pp.511, 519

## IIC News

- Institute of Indian Culture (IIC) celebrated its Annual Day on Saturday 3, March 2018. Two new books of IIC Academic Faculty, “*Electoral Participation of Muslim Women in India: A Comparative Study*” authored by Dr. Mrs. Vasundhara Mohan and “*The Humanistic Relevance of Anthropology: Further Writings on Anthropology* by J. V. Ferreira” edited by Dr. Bernd Pflug and Dr. Prof. S. M. Michael were released. The occasion was honoured by the presence of Prof. Dr. P. G. Jogdand, the previous Head of the Department of Sociology, University of Mumbai and Rev. Fr. Richard Mathias SVD, the Provincial Superior of SVD India Mumbai Province as the Guests of Honour. There were cultural programmes depicting the richness of Indian culture. Students of Music and Dance Academy of Gyan Ashram presented a cultural programme “**I am the Resurrection and the Life**” composed and choreographed by late Rev. Fr. George Praksch SVD.
- A Two-Day National Seminar on Promoting Religious Harmony in India was held at IIC Conference Hall on March 6 & 7, 2018. This Seminar was sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR- Western Region- Mumbai).
- On June 7, the Institute had the official inauguration of the Academic Year 2018-19 with all its Faculty and Staff Members.
- On July 4, 2018, the Institute observed the First Death Anniversary of Dr. Augustine Kanjamala, the previous Director of IIC.

### **Coming Events:**

The Institute is organizing a Workshop on “Intercultural Competency for Collaborative Team Work” on Saturday, 8th September 2018 at IIC Seminar Hall.

Ms. Laxmi Periyaswamy Vadivoo who been doing her Ph. D. on “An Anthropological Study of Sudalai Madan – A Village Deity in Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu” under the guidance of Dr. S. M. Michael will be defending her thesis on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2018 at the Fort University Campus of Mumbai University.

Three Ph.D. students of Dr. S. M. Michael will be submitting their Ph. D. thesis in the month of August 2018.

The Faculty Members will be involved in their regular lecturer and animation programmes in several Academic Centres in India.

### **Research Projects**

Previously mentioned Research Projects are being continued.

### **IIC Publications/Seminar Participation** **Dr. S. M. Michael SVD**

#### **Articles/Papers Published**

“Analisis socio-politico del aumento del fundamentalismo”, *Interculturalidad EN LA VIDA Y EN LA MISIÓN*, Lazar T. Stanislaus/ Martin Ueffing (Eds.), Espana: Editorial VerboDivino, 2017, pp.299-326.

“Offenbarung und Inkulturation verstehen”, *Inkulturation: Gottes Gegenwart in den Kulturen*, eds. Klaus Kraemer/Klaus Vellguth (Hg.), Freiburg:Herder, 2017, pp. 106-120.

“Post-Modern and Post-Truth Society”, *Missionary Discipleship in Global Contexts*, Lazar T. Stanislaus and van Thanh NGUYEN (eds.) Sankt Augustin: Steyler Missions wissenschaftliches Institut at Sankt Augustin. Studia Instituti Missiologici SVD # 112, 2018, pp. 73-90.

### **Lectures/Workshop and Presentations**

Engaged lectures on “Water and Sustainability in Religions and Cultures” 4 credit course for the UNESCO Post-Graduate Diploma Course jointly organized by College Of social Work: Nirmala Niketan, St. Andrew's College and the Institute of Indian Culture from February-April 2018.

External referee for the Ph.D. Viva Examination of Dominc Leo Th. on the thesis “Land, People, and Territoriality: A Study of Poumai Naga Tribe” at the Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai, on April 28, 2018.

Conducted a workshop on “Intercultural Living in the Global World” for the General Chapter Members of the International Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth.

Conducted a workshop on “Intercultural Competency in Global Leadership” for Marist International Leadership Team in Florence from June 11-14, 2018.

Resource person for the “Overseas Mission Animation” at Ishvani Kendra, Pune from June 25-27, 2018.

External referee for the Ph. D. Viva Examination of Camil Stany Fernandes on the thesis “Church in Dialogue Down the Centuries: Lessons for the Current Mission” at St. Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bengaluru on July 30, 2018.

**Dr. M. T. Joseph**  
Publications  
Book

Chadha, Gita & Joseph, M. T. (Eds.). (2018). *Re-imagining Sociology in India: Feminist Perspectives*. London & New York: Routledge. ISBN 9780429895340

Book Section

Joseph, M. T. (2018). "Subalternity, Language and Projects of Emancipation: An Analysis of Dalit Literature. In *Language, Identity and Symbolic Culture*. David Evans (Ed.). London: Bloomsbury Academic. pp. 161 – 182. ISBN 978-1350023017

Academic Sessions

01 June 2018. Perspectives on Gender and Patriarchy. Session for the orientation programme at Human Resource Development Centre, University of Mumbai. 10.00 to 11.30 a.m.

13 July 2018. Liberalization and Agrarian Distress. Session for students of Xaviers – Berkeley Summer Programme 2018 at St. Xaviers College, Mumbai. 03.30 to 05.30 p.m.

**Dr. (Mrs. Vasundhara Mohan**

1. Participated in a National Seminar organised by the VPM's Centre for International Studies on India's Act East Policy in April 2017 and presented a paper entitled Indian Diaspora in Malaysia.
2. Participated in the 8th International Conference on Sustainable and Human Development Through Spirituality, Peace Economics and Peace Science, organised by Acharya

Bangalore B-School ABBS School of Management, Bangalore in cooperation with SPES Institute, Europe, School of Management, Birmingham on 6-8 June 2018 and presented a paper on Ethnic Conflicts in Sri Lanka.

## **Street Adolescents in Mumbai and their Awareness about Reproductive and Sexual Health Issues**

**D. D. Naik**

### **Introduction:**

India is a second most populated country in the world, having population with an assortment of religions, castes, cultures and races. During the census of India 2001, population of India was more than 1.02 billion with predominantly agriculture and sizable (741.7 million) rural population (Census of India 2001, Paper 1 of 2001). Population of India has increased to 1.21 billion with 17.64 percent growth during last decade (Census of India 2011). Asia, Africa and Latin America are famous for having the largest percentages of street children (including adolescents) in the world. According to the census, India had a child population (i.e. age 0-14 years) of more than 350 million, which accounts for approximately 35 percent of the entire population (Census of India 2001, Paper 1 of 2001). Child population decreased to 337 million during 2001-2011, this accounts for 31.7 percent of entire population (Population of India, 2011). However, there is no reliable data on the exact number of street children including adolescents in India. Agrawal estimated in 1999 that India was home to about 20 million street children/adolescents, approximately 7 percent of child population (Agrawal R, 1999). Recent analysis estimated that there are 1,00,000 street children in New Delhi, 1,25,000 in Kolkata and 1,50,000 in Mumbai (Sandhya K, 2009).



Mumbai is the most fascinating city of India. Seven islands; Mahim, Colaba, Chhota Colaba, Mazgaon, Worli, Parel and Matunga, once inhabited by fisherman are now the one great peninsula that is the metropolis of Mumbai, popularly known as Bombay till 1995. The commercial capital of India, Mumbai is also the most cosmopolitan city in country. It is a city of towering skyscrapers, over-crowded slums and charming homes. It is a city of great industry and great wealth.

The phenomenon of street children has come into existence because of the interplay between a medley of factors such as industrialization, migration from rural to urban areas, poverty, a dearth of opportunities for education, broken families, cruelty and abuse, neglect, natural calamities, etc. All these have led to an escalation in the number of adolescents running away from their homes or being left to fend for themselves.

The street children phenomenon is an increasing problem in most cosmopolitan cities of the world and the number of street children increasing with growth of towns (Ayaya and Esamai, 2001). Rapid urbanization, population growth migration, the external debt, unequal income distribution and poverty in India have led to an increase in the number of street children/adolescents, who live and work on the streets. In many cases parents depend on their children for support, inverting the natural relationship in which children received stability and security from their parents (Bond, 1993).

The term “Street Children” includes a diverse group of inner-city adolescent & youth dislocated to varying extents from family, school and community. Most of these children/adolescents are from rural areas, intent on earning money to send home to their families or to support them. Once on the street, the behaviour of

these children tends to become standardize in response to organization of street life, sex, drugs and crime are the primary economic channels. Given the immediately food and shelter concerns HIV prevention has been given low priority by the street children (Richter L, 1997).

The term “Adolescent” is derived from the Latin word “Adolescere” which literally means, “to grow to maturity”. It is a concept of encompassing physical and emotional stages of transition from childhood to adulthood. World Health Organization (WHO) has defined “adolescents” as persons in the age 10-19 years of age group (WHO, 1989). Specific attributes attached to this phase of life by WHO includes rapid physical growth and development, physical, social and psychological maturity but not all at the same time, sexual maturity and the onset of sexual activity, experimentation, development of adult mental process and adult identity and transition from total socio-economic dependence to relative independence (WHO Technical Series, 1999).

The conditions for street adolescents living in the street appear to be universal. Working children/adolescents under age 14 has grown from 13.59 to 18.17 million during 1981-90 in India. Indeed these figures may be unrealistically low, with actual number of street and working children/adolescents are at risk of exploitation by adults in hazardous or even banned jobs. The children/adolescents recognize that the skills provided by learning centers offer them their only hope of an improved life (Remington F, 1993).

Drug consumption, sexual promiscuity, extreme poverty and low educational level place street children/adolescents at high risk of sexually transmitted diseases (Solorzano E, et al, 1992). It has

been estimated that 100 million children worldwide are without homes such children/adolescents through their early sexual activity are known to be vulnerable to infection by HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (Bond LS, 1993).

Street adolescents have deviance behaviour. Deviation means a departure from that which is considered normal (Frank S. Caprio and Donald R. Berner, 1969). Deviance is a motivated tendency for an actor to behave in contraversion of one or more institutionalized normative pattern (Talcott Parsons, 1972). Street adolescents have different behaviour than other adolescents. Circumstances force them to change from normal behaviour. Gerber and Macionis described deviance as a violation of norms (Gerber and Macionis, 2011). Norms are rules and expectations by which members of society are guided. Street adolescents are forced to violation of norms. They are victim of circumstances.

### **Need of the study**

Street children/adolescents struggle for survival. They involve in number of survival activities that provide them with money. They are at risk when their needs for food, shelter, education, medical care and security are not met. Universally, adolescents have been identified as a group at high risk of HIV infection. Street children being an adolescents group and in need of food, shelter, education, medical care and security at risk of HIV infection too.

Selling sex for both men and women is an easy way to get money on the street. The client usually insisted upon unprotected penetrative oral, and or vaginal sex. Street children/adolescents engaged in survival sex to enlist or mollify powerful others, in exchange for protection, accommodation or other goods or services; have sex with their girlfriends, many of whom also work

as prostitutes and commonly use alcohol or drugs. Once intoxicated, the boys are more likely to have risky sex; their vulnerability to being raped also increases. (Richter LM and Swart-Kruger J, 1995). The risk factors such as inability to obtain condoms, negative attitudes towards condom use, early age at sexual initiation, multiple sex partners and drug abuse is prevalent among street adolescents.

Street children/adolescents suffer from abuse, hunger and exploitation. These children/adolescents have no access to health care and have an inadequate diet. The immediate needs of food and shelter can drive street children/adolescents to steal, beg and exchange sex for money, shelter and other material compensation. Street children/adolescents perceive AIDS as only long-term fatal disease less dangerous than other daily events (Bernier M, Ascensio P, 1995).

Adolescents suffer from inadequate knowledge about sexual and reproductive health. Street adolescents without their parents to provide guidance, get information on sexual health from the mass media, which can negatively affect their knowledge of and attitude towards sexual health. Thus, the challenge is to find ways to counter, if not reverse these problems (UNESCO, 2001). It is therefore, important to have baseline data on their reproductive and sexual health.

An explorative study is undertaken in central and south part of the Mumbai with an objective to investigate socio-economic, demographic and cultural characteristics and awareness about reproductive and sexual health of street adolescents in Mumbai. The sample of this study was purposive. Quantitative data was collected by conducting personal interview with street adolescents, through a pre-designed semi-structured interview

schedule after obtaining informed consent. 315 boys and 332 girls were interviewed during survey.

**Classification of street children (including street adolescents):**

Street children/adolescents comprise the orphans, runaways, refugees, displaced person and displaced and disintegrated families. They usually have no family contact and protection. Among these, most vulnerable comprise of abandoned and neglected children. Street children/adolescents are referred to those who live or work on the streets without reference to the time they spend there or to the reasons for being there. Based on the relationship of the child with its family, the United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF, (UNICEF, 1988) and the World Health Organization (WHO, 1988) distinguished between three categories of street children, namely;

- A) Children on the street:** This category comprises children working on the street but maintaining more or less regular ties with their families. Their focus is home, to which they return at the end of the working day and have a sense of belonging to the local community.
- B) Children of the street:** Children in this category maintain only tenuous relations with their families, visiting them occasionally or never. They see the street as their home where they seek work, shelter, food and companionship.
- C) Abandoned children:** Children in this category are also children of the street but are differentiated from that category (category 'B' above) by the fact that they have cut off all ties with their biological families and are completely on their own.

Keeping all the definitions and categorizations discussed above in

view, Agrawal suggested the definition of street children as;

A street child is one who; lives on street, waste land, public place most of the time, works in the streets on jobs of low status and low income, lives in the exposed conditions of the street, has no or little parental or other social protection and supervision, has either continuous, intermittent or no family contact at all and is vulnerable to the hazards of urbanization and urban living (Agrawal R, 1999).

### **Study Area:**

Area selected for this study is Mumbai city, which covers an area of 438 Sq Km and has population of 16,368,084 persons as per census of India 2001. (Census of India, 2001). Mumbai the capital of Maharashtra is also financial capital of India. As such, the city acts as a magnet for large number of migrants from different parts of India. Sample for this study was collected from south and central part of the Mumbai, where a majority of street adolescents seek work, shelter and food (D'Souza B, et al, 2002). Mumbai has 88 zones and 23 wards. Of this five wards (A, B, C, D, E) belong to south part of Mumbai, which has number 1 to 27 census zones (i.e. 27 zones) and four wards (F-south, F-north, G-south, G-north) belong to central part of Mumbai, which has number 28 to 38 census zones, i.e. 11 zones (Census of India 1991: Series - 14).

### **Subject Interview and Interview Schedule:**

The interview schedule included both the qualitative and quantitative information. It covered information on socio-economic and demographic characteristics of street adolescents, knowledge on human physiology, changes during puberty, knowledge about STIs, HIV/AIDS and contraception, attitudes towards casual sex and sex habits, health problems, health seeking

behaviour, felt needs and unmet needs of the street adolescents. Proper care was taken to prevent the respondents' embarrassment, by explaining the questions and importance while obtaining the information. Male adolescents were interviewed by trained male persons and female adolescents were interviewed by trained female persons. The interviewers had experience of working and rapport with street adolescents. For getting required sample size help of the persons working for street adolescents taken to build up the rapport with other street adolescents, so as to open up for providing the information needed for the study. When they found comfortable to provide the information, then the interviews conducted at their convenient place where they feel comfortable to answer the questions and at their convenient time and with their consent. The subjects were explained the objectives of the study and assured their confidentiality in language they know. SPSS version 19 used for data analysis.

## **Findings:**

### ***Socio-demographic characteristics of street adolescents***

The data was collected during April 2011 to February 2012 from 647 street adolescents, using purposive sampling technique from central and south Mumbai where street children are usually seen more in numbers. The socio-economic and demographic characteristics of street adolescents indicate that of the 647 street adolescents who participated in the study; 315 (48.7%) were boys and 332 (51.3%) were girls.

### **Current Age**

Age distribution of boys was; 163 (51.7%) were between ages 10-14 years (younger adolescents) whereas 152 (48.3%) were between ages 15-18 years (older adolescents). The mean ( $\pm$  SD)

age of boys was 14.25 ( $\pm 2.84$ ). Similarly, age distribution of girls was; 170 (51.2%) were between ages 10-14 years whereas 162 (48.8%) were between ages 15-18 years. The mean ( $\pm$  SD) age of girls was 14.08 ( $\pm 2.76$ ).

### **Religion and engage in religious activities**

Majority (76.8%) of boys and 83.4 percent of girls were Hindu, followed by 19.4 percent of boys and 14.2 percent of girls were Muslim and 3.8 percent of boys were belongs to Christian, Buddist/Neo Buddist and Sikh religion. Whereas 2.9 percent of girls were belongs to Christian and Buddist/Neo Buddist religion. About 40 percent (N=127) of boys and 41.3 percent (N=137) of girls rarely or never attend to religious activities whereas 59.7 percent of boys and 58.7 percent of girls frequently or occasionally attend to religious activities.

### **Type of resident and place of origin**

Little more than half (50.5%) of the boys and 65.1 percent of girls were staying on footpath, followed by 25.1 percent of boys and 16.9 percent of girls were staying in huts. Regarding place of origin about 63 percent of boys and 91.3 percent of girls were residents of Mumbai, 16.8 percent of boys and 4.8 percent of girls were from western part of India (Maharashtra, Gujrat and Goa), 15.9 percent of boys and 2.1 percent of girls were from Northern part of India (UP, Bihar, MP, Delhi, Punjab and Haryana), 3.2 percent of boys and 1.8 percent of girls were from southern part of India (Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Karnataka) and only 1.6 percent of boys were from Eastern part (West Bengal and Assam). Of the total 118 boys and 29 girls who came to Mumbai from different parts of India; about 22 percent of boys and 7.8 percent of girls were brought to Mumbai by their relatives, 15.9 percent of



boys and 0.9 percent of girls came to Mumbai at their own. About 58.1 percent (N=183) of boys and 92.8 percent (N=308) of girls were staying with their parents, 11.4 percent of boys and 5.7 percent of girls were staying with their relatives (other than parents) and 11.1 percent of boys were staying alone, whereas no girl was staying alone.

### **Education**

Regarding education of street adolescents; majority (62.9%) of boys and 69.6 percent of girls had education up to primary level. About one fourth (25.4%) of boys and 23.5 percent of girls were illiterate. About 47 percent (N=149) of boys and 36.1 percent (N=120) of girls discontinued the school. Of these 47.7 percent of boys and 25 percent of girls discontinued the school as they had no interest in the study, followed by 27.5 percent of boys and 33.3 percent of girls discontinued the school as their economic condition was poor and they wanted to earn money for survival of family, 8.7 percent of boys and 11.7 percent of girls discontinued the school as their parents were not caring and there were disturbances in their families. About 7 percent of boys and 4 percent of girls discontinued the school as they had completed education up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard and their family was not able to afford for their higher education. Less than one third, (30.2%) of boys and 25.9 percent of girls discontinued the school at the age of 11 to 15 years.

### **Occupation**

About 86 percent (N=270) of boys and 91.9 percent (N=305) of girls were working for money. Other 14 percent of boys and 8.1 percent of girls were depending on their parents. Majority (79%) of boys and 78.9 percent of girls were working in central part of

Mumbai. Among working; about 35 percent of boys were working as labour followed by 21.6 percent were self-employed whereas majority (29.2%) of girls were self-employed followed by 16.9 percent of girls reported they were rag picking for earning money. Of the total working boys (N=270) and working girls (N=305); majority (87.8%) of boys and 84.9 percent of girls were working for money for 1-5 years. Mean ( $\pm$ SD) period of working for money for boys in years was 3.20 ( $\pm$ 2.32) with median 3 years and mode 2 years. Whereas mean ( $\pm$ SD) period of working for money for girls in years was 2.96 ( $\pm$ 2.89) with median 2 years and mode 1 year.

### **Income**

Among working boys (N=270) and girls (N=305); 45.2 percent of boys and 64.9 percent of girls were earning Rs. 100-500 per week whereas 54.8 percent of boys and 35.1 percent of girls were earning money between Rs. 501-1000 per week. Mean ( $\pm$ SD) income of boys was Rs. 600.67 ( $\pm$ 139.09) and girls was Rs. 513.28 ( $\pm$ 130.96) per week.

### **Number of years on the street**

About 65 percent of boys and 40 percent of girls were on street for 1-10 years whereas 35.2 percent of boys and 60 percent of girls were on street for more than 10 years. Mean ( $\pm$ SD) number of years on the street for boys in years was 9.28 ( $\pm$ 4.67) with both median and mode 10 years. Whereas mean ( $\pm$ SD) number of years on the street for girls in years was 11.60 ( $\pm$ 4.01) with median 11 years and mode 10 years.

### **Reasons for leaving family**

About 42 percent of boys (N=132) and 7.2 percent of girls (N=24)

left their families (parents) for various reasons. These reasons were; 59.1 percent of boys and 37.5 percent of girls left family because for earning money, poor economic condition or had affection towards Mumbai, 22.7 percent of boys and 41.7 percent of girls left house as there were disturbance in the family or beaten by step mother/father and 18.2 percent of boys and 20.8 percent of girls left house because their parents were expired and uncle/aunt was beating.

### **Behavior of street adolescents and awareness about sexual health issues:**

#### **Pornographic material on sexual matters**

Regarding behavior of street adolescents; 20 percent of boys and 17.5 percent of girls watch programmes (films) on sexual matters, whereas 47.9 percent of boys and 38.3 percent of girls see pornographic material on sexual matters.

#### **Awareness, source of information and experience of night emission**

About 39 percent (N=123) of boys were aware of night emission. All these boys got information from their friends, 31.1 percent of boys experienced night emission. Majority (14.9%) of boys had first experience of night emission at the age of 15 years.

#### **Awareness, source of information and experience of menstruation**

About 73 percent (N=243) of girls were aware of menstruation, 56.8 percent of girls got information about menstruation from their friends whereas 34.2 percent of girls got information from their friends as well as mothers. Nearly half (49.7%) of the girls

had experienced menstruation. About 20 percent of girls had first experience of menstruation at the age of 15 years whereas 14.8 percent of girls had first experience of menstruation at the age of 14 years.

### **Experience of non-coital sexual act**

Regarding non-coital sexual act (i.e. Masturbation, hugging, Kissing and molestation); 144 (45.7%) of boys and 105 (31.6%) of girls experienced at least one kind of these non-coital sexual act.

### **Awareness, source of information and experience of masturbation**

About 58 percent (N=181) of boys and 30.7 percent of girls were aware of masturbation and all of these boys and girls got information about masturbation from their friends. About 42 percent (N=132) of boys experienced masturbation, majority (43.9%) of boys started masturbation at the age of 15 years. About 17 percent (N=56) of girls experienced masturbation, majority (67.9%) of these girls experienced masturbation at the age of 16 years. About 16 percent of boys and 13.9 percent of girls were aware of masturbation but they did not experience it.

### **Awareness of coital sex**

About 77.1 percent (N=243) of boys and 82.8 percent (N=275) of girls were aware of at least one type of coital sex/ sexual intercourse (i.e. vaginal, anal and oral sex). Of the total (i.e. 315 boys and 332 girls), about 75 percent of boys and 82.8 percent of girls were aware of vaginal sex, 16.8 percent of boys whereas 17.5 percent of girls were aware of anal sex and 14 percent of boys and 15.7 percent of girls were aware of oral sex. About 22 percent of

boys and 11.1 percent of girls were aware of more than one coital sexual act whereas 22.9 percent of boys and 17.2 percent of girls had no knowledge of any coital sexual act. About 68 percent of boys and 38.9 percent of girls got information about coital sex from their friends. About 8 percent of boys and 49.8 percent of girls reported that they got this information from friends as well as they have seen the couples enjoying sex. About 25 percent of boys and 10.5 percent of girls reported source of information as pornographic material/ mobile and film.

### **Knowledge of consequences of sexual intercourse**

Regarding knowledge of consequences of sexual intercourse; 34 percent of boys and 67.2 percent of girls said that sexual intercourse causes pregnancy, 23.5 percent of boys and 16.6 percent of girls said it causes HIV/AIDS and only 4.4 percent of boys said it causes STI whereas no girl reported STI as a consequences of sexual intercourse.

### **Awareness and source of information of abortion**

One third (N=104) of boys and 185 (55.7%) girls were aware of abortion. About 97 percent of boys as well as girls rightly reported that “abortion means termination of pregnancy”. Only 3.2 percent of boys and 9 percent of girls were aware that “abortion can be performed during first twelve weeks of pregnancy”. About 85.6 percent of boys and 36.2 percent of girls got information about abortion from their friends whereas another 45.4 percent of girls got information from their relatives as well as friends.

### **Awareness and source of information of family planning methods**

About 52 percent (N=163) of boys and 56.9 percent (N=189) of

girls were aware of at least one method of family planning, 27.9 percent of boys and 25 percent of girls were aware that consistent use of condom can prevent pregnancy. Regarding source of information of Family Planning methods; majority 88.3 percent of boys and 59.2 percent of girls got information from friends, 2.5 percent of boys and 11.1 percent of girls got information from relatives and 2.5 percent of boys and 25.9 percent of girls got information from friends as well as relatives.

### **Awareness, source of information and experience of symptoms of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)**

About 35 percent (N=109) of boys and 31 percent (N=103) of girls were aware of sexually transmitted infection (STI) that transfers through sexual intercourse. 11.4 percent (N=36) of boys and 8.1 percent (N=27) of girls experienced at least one STI symptoms. No younger adolescents (11-14 Yrs) had experienced any symptoms of STI. Among those who were aware of STI symptoms majority (86.2%) of boys and 92.2 of girls got information from their friends.

Boys who had STI (N=36); majority (80.5%) of them had taken treatment from government hospital whereas 11.1 percent of them had not taken any treatment. Among girls who had STI (N=27), 44.4 percent had taken treatment from government hospital whereas majority (51.9%) of girls took treatment from private hospital and remaining 3.7 took treatment from both government as well as private hospital. All the girls who had reported about experienced STI symptoms were treated for the same.

### **Awareness and source of information of HIV**

Regarding knowledge of HIV; 65 percent (N=205) of boys and 231 (69.6%) of girls were aware of proper route of HIV

transmission. Another 6 boys and 7 girls had heard of HIV but they were not aware of proper route of HIV transmission. About 64 percent of boys and 69.6 percent of girls were aware of HIV can transmits through sexual contacts, 15.6 percent of boys and 6.3 percent of girls were aware that regular use of condom reduce risk of getting HIV infection through sexual contact. Regarding source of information of HIV; majority 50.7 percent of boys and 63.4 percent of girls got information from friends, about 32 percent of boys and 29 percent of girls got information through posters in exhibitions and 11.8 percent of boys and 5.9 percent of girls got information from friends as well as poster.

### **Discussion and Conclusions:**

This study is an exploration of sexuality among street adolescents with a view to understand the socioeconomic, demographic and cultural contexts with in which they explore sexuality. Place of stay is an important factor in influencing the attitude of an individual towards sex. This study indicates that more than half of the boys and girls were staying on footpath. Footpath is an open place. Street adolescents staying on footpath are at the risk of physical and sexual abuse. They adopt street culture very fast. It has been theorized that autonomy of adolescents from parental control is positively related to sexuality permissive attitudes and behaviour. Miller et al (1986) examined that influence of parental control on sexual attitudes and behaviours among teenagers. In this study it is observed that about one fourth of the street adolescents are not staying with their parents. One out of ten boys stays alone. About 7 percent of girls were not staying with their parents.

Little less than half of the boys and little more than one thirds of the girls discontinued school as no interest. More than quarter of

boys and one thirds of girls discontinued school because of poor economic condition which forced them to work for money. Parents were not caring was one of the reasons given by 9 percent of boys and 12 percent of girls. About 45 adolescents could not continue school as their parents were not able to afford for the same. Majority of boys (86%) and girls (91.9%) were working for money. About two thirds of the boys were working as labours and one out of six girls was doing rag picking work. Poor economic condition as well as affection towards Mumbai forced majority of boys and girls to leave families for earning money. Disturbance in the family and parents expired were other major reasons for leaving the family. About 40 percent of street adolescents' fathers were labour and 23 percent mothers were maid servants.

One out of five boys and girls watch programmes on sexual matters, whereas half of the boys and two out of five girls see pornographic material. Little less than half of the boys and one thirds of girls experienced at least one kind of non-coital sex. More than half of the boys and one thirds of the girls were aware of masturbation. The source of information among these boys and girls was friend. The results suggest that these children need more protection so as to protect them from anti-social elements and risk of STIs and HIV/AIDS. Major source of information for all sexual activities was friend. Therefore peer educator can play better role in passing information to other street adolescents. A sociological study of HIV/AIDS prevention conducted by Kuriakose (Kuriakose AK: 2010) suggests that about 80 percent of teachers expressed willingness to be proactive agents in preventing HIV at community level. Programme manager can think in this direction to utilize services of teachers in creating awareness among street adolescents.



Street adolescents are neglected by the family for various reasons and parents may not be able to provide time to them. There is less influence of religious customs on street adolescents. They adopt culture of people on the street. This put them at risk. Forcing street adolescents is not ethical but the policy makers, programme managers and non-governmental organizations can plan programmes such a way that these adolescents can take part in spiritual activities.

The street adolescents in the absence of systematic and correct information on matters related to sex and sexuality are facing a dilemma between tradition and Indian norms and western patterns of expression. Lack of knowledge about sexuality, contraceptive use and STDs/HIV/AIDS seems to be associated with liberal attitudes and behaviour towards premarital sex. Knowledge on reproductive and sexual health is usually been defined as knowledge relating to areas on male and female reproductive system, abortion, family planning, virginity, masturbation, reproductive tract infections (RTI), Sexually transmitted Diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. All though the definition of knowledge of sexual and reproductive health vary from one researcher to another, the scope of all these studies have been implement appropriate educational and awareness programmes for young people in order to prevent them from unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and diseases (Cernada et al, 1986).

In this study more than half of the boys as well as girls were aware of at least one method of contraception. Major sources of information of contraceptives were friends and relatives. About one thirds of boys as well as girls were aware of sexually transmitted infections. Majority of them got information from their friends. About 11 percent of boys and 8 percent of girls

experienced at least one kind of STI symptom. It is observed that no younger adolescents (age 11-14 Years) experienced STI symptoms. Two thirds of adolescents were aware of proper routes of HIV transmission. More than half of the boys and girls got this information from their friends. Therefore, it is essential to have behavioural change communication (BCC) programmes on STIs/HIV along with awareness programmes to prevent STIs/HIV infection among this adolescent group. What is urgently required for both adolescent boys and girls are programmes which help them to understand and deal with issues of sexuality.

The study provides new knowledge and information about reproductive and sexual behaviour among street adolescents. It would also tell us about reproductive and sexual needs of street adolescents in Mumbai, India. There are no similar kinds of studies on sexual and reproductive health behaviour on street adolescents in India. It is reported by Agarwal et al (Agarwal AK and Kumar R 1996) that the existence of lack of knowledge on HIV/AIDS among non-school going children/adolescents. Existing literature on sexual and reproductive health of street adolescents in India is very few. There are very few studies; restricted only on HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, general health problems, drug abuse, child labour and policy implications. This study will help in the intervention and evaluation of programmes intended for a most elusive population at extreme risk for various abuses and its adverse consequences.

It is less expensive to meet the current needs of the street adolescents than incur the long-term cost of harboring millions of ignorant street adolescents. Current study provides in depth knowledge about; reproductive and sexual behaviour among

street adolescents as well as their reproductive and sexual health need. Study also provides knowledge about health seeking behaviour of street adolescents towards general as well as sexual and reproductive health. This would help government to suggest policy makers and educators to develop appropriate strategies and materials.

### **Implication of the study:**

This is an exploratory study, which provides new knowledge about sexual and reproductive health behaviour of street children. Findings of the study would benefit non-government organizations (NGOs), policy makers and educators to develop appropriate strategy and materials which would help to increase the knowledge of street adolescents and hence to positive change in their sexual behaviour. These positive changes would help community to prevent the addition burden of sexual and reproductive health morbidity and mortality. The study can be implemented in other similar kind of setting in India to know the Reproductive and Sexual Health behaviour of street adolescents in India

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**This paper is dedicated to my guide Late Dr. Augustin Kanjamala.**

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