

THE EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISE OF THE GERMAN JESUIT MISSION

On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of St. Xavier's, Sir George Lloyd, Governor of Bombay, stated, "the Jesuit system of education is famous chiefly, I think, for its breadth of vision. But what they have given to us in the public school system and introduced into India is, I believe, entirely for the good of India. We need to see our system of education framed here not to turn out the finest article in education, but to turn out the best average man capable of taking a lead, capable of commanding men, capable of quick perception, of being a master of trade as much as a pioneer of art and thought. This is what has been recognized throughout in the Jesuit Fathers' education." (1) That the system of Jesuit education bore remarkable fruit is evident from the well-educated Christian community that now exists in Mumbai and its environs, in Mangalore and elsewhere. To appreciate this transformation, it is necessary to first understand the circumstances of the past.

The State of Affairs

When Bishop Hartmann arrived in Bombay in 1850, he found the community in a state of social and economic degradation. His discerning eye told him that "the complete want of educational institutions for youth" (2) was responsible for this state of affairs. The Franciscan fathers through their parish school had imparted primary education in Portuguese; this enabled the Christian community to read Roman characters and to secure jobs in the British East India Company's domains. Unfortunately the British decided to expel the *Portuguese* Franciscans from Bombay fearing that they might conspire with Portugal to get Bombay back. This expulsion eventually took place in 1720 and was followed by a long period of dissension between the Archbishop of Goa and the Vicar Apostolic of Bombay along with their respective clergies and laities. The Carmelites who took over from the Franciscans paid little attention to the education of their flock. The result was that when Bishop Hartmann arrived in Bombay the community had already fallen into spiritual and intellectual decline.

Three separate and independent testimonies confirm this dismal state of affairs. Dr. Dallas, a prominent barrister and a practicing Catholic, acknowledged this deplorable situation at a meeting in St. Xavier's Hall in 1876:

"When I arrived in Bombay in the early fifties, I found the condition of the Catholics, especially as regards education, so miserable and their social position so low and contemptible, that I felt almost ashamed to profess my religion; compared with the Protestant institutions, ours were the merest corner – schools, or rather, there were no institutions worthy of the name of a school." (3)

A Protestant wrote in the following vein in the *Bombay Miscellany of Western India*, a local publication:

"The Bombay papists have become lukewarm if not absolutely cold in respect of attendance on the ordinances of the Church; and these edifices which were crowded in former days on a Sabbath morning, have now miserable congregation in point of numbers. With two or three isolated exceptions, the respectable portion of the European community and of this creed appear to be ashamed of it and do not even acknowledge it." (4)

Finally Bishop Hartmann himself wrote as follows:

"the European Catholics who began to settle in India, were ashamed to appear as such before the Protestants, so deeply sunk was not only the divine service and ecclesiastical dignity, but spiritual life among the clergy and religious feeling among the laity." (5)

When William Bentinck became Governor- General (1828-1835), he introduced a number of educational reforms with a view to allowing Indians to hold posts in the Public Services. English replaced Persian as the language of the higher courts and of higher education. Financial aid was given to those colleges that imparted education according to the western model. That meant that English was the language that received importance. The Protestant schools, which had already been in existence for several decades, were able to meet the government's requirements, but the Catholic community was woefully inadequate--- it did not even have a single school for the teaching of English. The decline of the Catholic community showed itself in 1829. That year a public petition was made to the government asking that Hindus, Parsis, Mohamedans be allowed to serve as jurors. The Catholics who had earlier been better educated were now not found fit to be even considered for these posts.

Several things about the state of the Catholic community disturbed Bishop Hartmann. The lack of a good secondary education often resulted in many Catholic parents sending their children to Protestant schools. Here their faith received a severe battering. In the first place they received a good dose of Protestant religious ideas; secondly the orphan children of Catholic soldiers were placed in Protestant orphanages. These were not allowed to attend Sunday Mass in nearby Catholic chapels. When Bishop Hartmann protested this restriction, he was told in no uncertain terms that the Byculla school was being run "exclusively on Protestant principles". (6) The government later relented and decided that the Asst. School Master for Roman regiments would be a Roman Catholic. Hartmann saw this only as a partial solution. The real answer lay in a sound Catholic education. For him this was "a task for experts and professionals who enjoy a high reputation and have a sound knowledge of English." (7) And by this he meant the Jesuits.

Bishop Hartmann prepared the ground for the advent of the Jesuits by repeatedly pleading with the Jesuit Superior General for men. His persistence finally paid off when the Jesuit Superior General sent him his dear friend Fr. Walter Steins.

The immediate question before Bishop Hartmann was to find a suitable place to begin future educational work. The Bishop preferred Poona, but Steins opted for Bombay and listed 5 reasons for his preference:

- 1) A college at Poona for wealthy (English) families was out of the question and besides there would also not be a demand for it.
- 2) A college could be started for middle class families and there were many more of them in Bombay than in Poona.
- 3) A day school with a boarding attached to it could be started. Bombay being a bigger and more accessible town was preferable to Poona. In case the venture failed, the teaching staff who would all be Jesuits, could work in parishes.
- 4) Poona had a better climate than Bombay, but since a day school was being planned, climate would be of secondary importance.
- 5) Objections from the Carmelites depended on how Rome handled their work in Bombay

Hartmann fell in line with Steins' reasoning and soon began the work that led to the regeneration of the Catholic community.

FEATURES OF THE GERMAN JESUIT EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISE

The work done by the German Jesuits in the field of education stands out for what it was able to accomplish in a short time. Such work bore certain distinguishing features which are delineated below.

A pioneering spirit marked the educational work of the German Jesuits. The Jesuits opened a number of schools in a short span of time.

In Bombay: St. Stanislaus (1863), St. Mary's (1864), St. Xavier's School (1869) and St. Xavier's College (1869)

In Poona: St. Vincent's (1867), Loyola (1961)

In Karachi: St. Patrick's (1861)

In Sangamner: Dnyanmata Vidyalaya (1947)

In Belgaum: St. Paul's (1856).

In addition there were numerous parochial schools and village primary schools in the vernacular (Gujerati, Marathi, Tamil, Canarese and Hindustani)

A second feature of the educational work was to initiate school work, put it on a solid footing and then hand them over to the diocese should the need arise. This seems to have been the case with the 7 primary schools in the Ahmednagar district (Kendal, Sangamner, Songaon, Haregaon, Rohata, Kolpewadi and Tilak Nagar). One wonders why such a decision was taken by the Poona Jesuit Schools' Society in 1976. It may be surmised that running primary schools was not thought to be a typically Jesuit activity and that nuns were better suited to handling little children. However, G.C. 34 has accepted that primary schools may be considered a part of Jesuit educational activity.

In the Belgaum Vicariate, Sarvodaya Vidyalaya was started as a diocesan apostolic school in 1957 and handed over to the bishop in 1960.

In Goa, the Patriarch created the Vicariate of Bicholim in 1956 and handed it to the Jesuits. After the liberation of Goa, the German Jesuit Mission took over the parish schools at Bicholim and Sanquelim. The latter became a High School in 1974, but was handed back to the diocese in 1979; some years later, the former reverted back to the diocese but for altogether different reasons.

Another feature of the Mission's work was to respond to the request of the local bishop to run schools for the Diocese. This was so in the case of Vidya Mandir High School in the Belgaum Diocese. The Jesuits managed it for more than 20 years. The Bishop of Poona made a similar request. Rosary English School, Ajra, was entrusted to the Jesuits in 1976 and passed over to Jesuit management in the following year.

TYPES OF SCHOOLS

Education must always be an answer to the needs of the people. Most of the schools were of the traditional type, preparing people for high school examinations run by the various Government instituted Boards. But Dnyanmata Vidyalaya was a unique institution. It had an agricultural bias and in 1958 was recognized as a multi-purpose school – agriculture, carpentry and fitting were taught. By 1980 it developed into an Arts- Commerce Composite Jr. College. Regrettably the agricultural section had to be closed down from 1982 for lack of governmental subsidy. Two technical schools were also started, one in Poona and the other in Shirampur. St. Joseph's Technical Institute was started in Poona to help children of Maharashtrian Catholics. The one at Shirampur was started to assist rural youth with skills for entrepreneurial jobs in the local market. Both these schools were an answer to a need to help school dropouts. Even in some of the regular type of schools, the German Jesuits started a workshop in St. Stanislaus, Bombay, where the boys were taught weaving, carpentry, lithography and watch making, in addition to learning to make rosaries and artificial flowers.

CLIENTELE

The clientele in Jesuit schools has always been a matter of concern. Uppermost in the minds of the German Jesuits was whether the elite classes of society would patronise their schools. The choice

of Bombay over Poona itself reveals a concern to ensure that educational benefits reach those who need it most. The primary purpose of starting schools in Bombay in the 19th century was for the social and economic empowerment of the Catholic community. That was the very reason why the Jesuits were called to Bombay. That is no longer the exclusive purpose. The empowering of the poor is a major preoccupation. The first two schools, St. Stanislaus and St. Mary's had their nucleus in two orphanages, the former for native children and the latter for European children. The students of St. Vincent's, Poona, were drawn from Euro-Asian and middle class families. And in order not to leave out poorer Tamil children of Tamil origin, a school in Tamil was built for them in 1874. A number of primary schools were also started in Ahmednagar district. Most of these were not permanent establishments, but by 1914 a Marathi school for children of converts coming into the city was established. St. Joseph's Night School was established in 1950 to enable poor adults who had dropped out from school to receive schooling. It continues to maintain its objective even today. The Rosary School at Ajra, in spite of being the only English medium school in the taluka, draws its students from the poor of the neighbourhood --- children of small farmers, artisans, and mill-workers. As late as the beginning of the 21st century a school was started in Beed to cater to local needs.

THE KIND OF EDUCATION IMPARTED

The education imparted focused on: (a) integral development; (b) value-based education; (c) excellence.

- a) Integral development: The strength of Jesuit education has always been its integral character. Academics, however important, were never considered to be a major preoccupation. This accounts for the numerous co-curricular activities like sports, elocution, singing, debates, drama, etc. that occupied an important slot in the timetable. This conviction seems to have rubbed onto the staff. They stated their conviction in the following words: "the purpose of education is an all-round development of the child. Education should make him mentally alert, physically fit, emotionally well balanced, spiritually and socially well adjusted. In short ready to face life, when he stands on his feet." (8) This captures all that Jesuit education stands for and provides the *raison d'être* for the school's programme.
- b) Value-Based Education: Values form the warp and woof of Jesuit education and permeate all disciplines. On the occasion of the Prize Day of St. Xavier's School, Bombay, the Rector underscored this conviction when he stated that "the essential element of true and sound education is the tone of a school and the moral atmosphere that pervades it. A beneficial influence is exercised on the boys where high principles of self-respect and duty are held in high honour." (9) Owing to this strong conviction, Jesuit schools always devote a certain part of class time to the faith formation of its Catholic pupils and impart universal moral principles to students of other faiths. They further nurtured the spiritual life of Catholic students through opportunities for making retreats, joining associations like the CLC and the YCS, encouraging reception of the sacraments. Students of other faiths were also given an opportunity to develop their character through membership in such groups as YSM etc.

Today counsellors are a prime need in schools. They are of invaluable help in guiding students to choose the right career as well as handle personality problems and cope with the stresses and strains of life. Even in days when life was simpler and less competitive, Jesuit schools set aside one of their own men to guide catholic students primarily in a choice of a way of life. These Jesuits were also available to advise and guide anyone on questions that perplexed them or about problems with which they were grappling. In fact the booklet of St. Mary's College, Bombay Mazagon 1895 under the heading Moral Training states : "The Fathers recognize as the most urgent and sacred part of their duty to cultivate the head and

form the character of those committed to their charge. They are always ready and glad to see the pupils individually and to afford them such private instruction and advice as may be conducive to their happiness and improvement.” (10)

Today the dwindling number of Jesuits and the heavy burden of other works has meant that fewer Jesuits are available for this vital aspect of Jesuit education. Nevertheless most of the schools have employed professional counsellors to play this role

In recent times Christian schools have been accused of making their institutions a front for conversion. All who know what is going on in Jesuit schools are aware that this is empty political propaganda designed to garner votes. The respectful attitude of Jesuits to those of other faiths is borne out by the testimony of the Aga Khan. In his Memoirs he writes that his family turned to the Jesuits for their education and sought their advice. He writes that “there was never a hint, by the way of their attempting to convert any of our Muslim children to their own creed. They respected Islam and never by open argument, by suggestion or insinuation did they seek to weaken a Muslim’s faith. This is one of the clearest recollections of my childhood; and I have seen the same phenomenon repeated in contemporary Egypt and Pakistan.” (11)

- c) Excellence: The thread that runs through Jesuit education is called MAGIS, MORE, and it is the clarion call to put one’s foot forward in any and every endeavour. Education, for the Jesuits, is a full-time job, a mission. They gave themselves fully to it and expected their staff to do likewise. Prof. Hoshang D Moogat remarked about Fr. Oesch that “after a full day of teaching and guiding students in school, he would be out on the field with them, coaching them in practically all the games till the azure twilight embraced the ground in its glow.” (12)

The Jesuits did not believe in half-hearted measures. Thoroughness was a way of life with them. In fact the Advocate of India on 6-12-1893 made the following remark: “the management of St. Mary’s always does everything it does with great thoroughness and the result is naturally satisfying.” (13) This was also the view of Mr. Prior, the Educational Inspector. After inspecting the school in 1893 he made this remark: “wherever I went in the classrooms, dormitories, playgrounds, refectories and kitchen, there was the same attention to detail which I believe characterizes the educational establishments of the Jesuits all over the world.” (14) So one can understand why Jesuit schools excelled.

The school band was a signal contribution that the German Jesuits made to the education of their pupils. They were the band Masters themselves and did not spare themselves either time or effort to raise it to a high standard of excellence. In fact a former Band boy paid the following tribute to Fr. Riklin: “He would spend his time patiently teaching the rudiments of music and the way to blow an instrument to beginners. He would devote hours, days, months with each one, in the morning before class, again in the lunch recess and in the evening after school hours, teaching scales, exercises and pieces on different instruments, diligently working with a wide assortment of boys.” (15)

Such dedication brought unimaginable results in various sports disciplines, co-curricular activities and even in academics where Jesuit students secured ranks and won prizes. The fledgling Rosary School, Ajra, made history, when in the very first year that it sent up students for the SSC (1977), one of its students secured 81.3 % and stood first in the Ajra centre.

HIGHER EDUCATION

There are only two institutions of Higher learning that are part of the German Jesuit Mission, namely St. Xavier's College in Mumbai and St. Vincent's Evening College of Commerce. The former is a reputable institution even today. St. Xavier's College had strong departments in the following discipline: biology, botany, Indian classical languages and history. The present Blatter herbarium named after Fr. Blatter is a tribute to this great German Jesuit who did pioneering work in the flora of central India and in medicinal plants. The Fathers learnt many of India's languages and studied Hindu and Buddhist philosophies. They were great writers and wrote extensively in their field of interest. They also introduced many reforms in the college. At a time when lectures were the normal way of conducting classes, the Fathers introduced the tutorial and seminar system. This was as early as 1911, something that the University had not yet thought of. In addition to their scholarship, the German Jesuits took keen interest in University affairs. They were members of the Senate, Syndicate, Board of Studies and Academic Council. This enabled them to play an important role in shaping the policies and decisions of the University as well as make plans for several courses

CATHOLIC PRESS:

Prior to the arrival of Bishop Hartmann, events of interest to the Catholic community were communicated through the Bombay Catholic Layman, a paper run by the O'Mealys, both father and son. They were very critical of Church affairs and often attacked Bishop Hartmann after he took over the Vicariate. Instead of being provoked, Bishop Hartmann patronised another periodical 'Examiner' started by a certain Mr. Borges. Eventually the Church took over its management with the consent of its owner. It was first published under the title Bombay Catholic Examiner, but is today known as Examiner and is one of the foremost Catholic weeklies in the country.

THE SEMINARY:

The Seminary was the index of the intellectual calibre of the Catholic community. But it had become little more than a kindergarten class. The priests were so poorly equipped that they had to petition Rome for exemption from reading the Breviary. Moreover, many who joined the seminary looked upon it more as a means for economic sustenance than as a way of serving God and God's people. The better off Catholics were not keen to join the seminary. Bishop Hartmann decided to improve the quality of seminary training. Just as he had wanted to call in the Jesuits for educational work, so he also wanted to entrust the formation of the diocesan clergy to them. He said so in his letters to Rome. "I would like to entrust the College and the seminary to the Jesuit Fathers." It took him quite some time to do this. The seminary, too, kept moving from place to place. It was first moved to Surat and later brought to Bombay. From 1855, it was housed in St. Peter's Church Bandra 1855. It was subsequently moved to Parel.

THE MEN WHO BUILT THE GERMAN JESUIT MISSION

It is an accepted fact that the Mission shapes its men; but it is equally true that the men shape the mission. Many Jesuits have given their blood, toil, sweat and tears to build the educational ministry; but it must be acknowledged that some of them stand out in public memory for their significant contribution. This in no way detracts from the selfless service of the other Jesuits but for whom the Mission would not have achieved what it had accomplished.

Riklin: he was a person who built traditions at St. Vincent's, moulded the character of the students and led upfront by role modelling the values and principles by which he stood. Even at an advanced age, he showed remarkable patience whilst conducting the school band and teaching students music. He lived an austere life and was a man with a high sense of duty.

Oesch: Today's youngsters remember him for his passion for sports as well as for his dedication to his teaching and his ready availability to all. To him goes the credit for St. Vincent's unbeaten winning streak of 51 years at inter-school athletics. Two impressions stand out about the man. As Prof. Hoshang D Moogat said: "He taught us to think, to wonder and to dream, to meet triumph and disaster equally and the joy of sharing and discovering the unknown." (16) Two youngsters, Kartik Balasubramaniam and Neel Broker were in high praise for his availability: "when a student needs help, Fr. Oesch is ready to help him out at any hour of the day. In fact, one student actually did ask him for his help at two in the morning and true to his word, Fr. Oesch came to his rescuer at that late hour." (17)

Schoch: was one of the most remarkable figures in Poona. He strode across the educational scene like a colossus. He devoted time and energy into developing at least three schools: Dnyanmata Vidyalaya, Vincent's and Loyola. Such was his contribution to the field of education that he was a member of the Pune University Senate as well as of the academic council of the MSESHE for 14 years and also a member of the M.S. Board of Secondary Education for many years. Dilip Padgaonkar, presently Executive Managing Editor of The Times of India and an alumnus of St. Vincent's paid a fitting tribute to him on learning of his death: "He was the finest teacher who built character and imparted a zest for learning. Fr. Schoch was one of the teachers who shaped my life and taught me Marathi, Mathematics and German." (18)

Blatter: was a legend in his time. He was a botanist par excellence and developed the first herbarium in Bombay in 1906. It was the best herbarium in the whole country after the Calcutta Botanical Gardens. He travelled widely and wrote extensively on the flora of western and central India. His work on medicinal plants is a testimony of his desire to harness science for the well being of India. In recognition of his contribution to Asiatic Botany, the Asiatic Society, Bengal, awarded him the Paul Johannes Bruehl Memorial Medal.

Dreckmann: was an outstanding professor at St. Xavier's College for full 36 years and an active member of several University Boards. In addition he made a special study of snakes of the Bombay Presidency. His accurate observations enriched the scientific work of others.

Bochum: he was an expert on the Parsi religion and wrote a number of articles on Zoroastrianism and for this the Parsi community holds him in high esteem.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Having reached a milestone, 150 years, the German Jesuit Mission may now be restricted to what is the present Pune Province. How should educational work proceed from now on, say till the next milestone, 200 years, is crossed? There are 5 areas, I think, that need to be stressed: 1) Ignatian Pedagogy; 2) Partnership; 3) Social Thrust; 4) Dialogue and 5) Alumni.

- 1) Ignatian Pedagogy: Jesuit education made an impact from the earliest days because it flowed from a common vision and mission. The German Jesuits who came to India, like

their confrères in Europe, were trained in the spirit and methods of The Ratio Studiorum. This system they successfully planted in India. That same spirit has been articulated in recent times in The Characteristics of Jesuit Education which as Fr. Kolvenbach said can “give us a common vision and a common sense of purpose; it can be a standard against which we measure ourselves”. (19) In order to incorporate this vision in the teaching-learning process, Ignatian Pedagogy Process was designed in 1993. This pedagogy is intended to bring the dynamics of The Spiritual Exercises, namely EXPERIENCE, REFLECTION AND ACTION, into every day school life. Unless this dynamic is operational in our educational institutions, our schools cannot be called ‘Jesuit’ much less ‘Ignatian’.

Nearly 25 years ago in a talk on Jesuit Secondary Education, Fr. Arrupe said that a Jesuit school might bear marked similarity to other schools – secular, other catholic, other faiths. But our schools will be distinctly Jesuit only “if our operation flows out of the strengths drawn from our own specific charism, if we emphasize our essential characteristics and our basic options – then the education which our students receive should give them a certain ‘*Ignacianidad*’.” (20) This will be the logical consequence as he further says, of living and operating out of our charism.

In and through the dynamics of the Ignatian Pedagogy, we have the wherewithal to transform our students whether we qualify for Outlook’s Top Ten Schools or not. It is by dint of persistent application of the Ignatian Pedagogy that we can get our students to think logically and critically (21) as well as develop the habit of lifelong learning (22) and pursue an excellence that is not merely academic but human. (23)

- 2) Partnership: Today Jesuits no longer constitute the largest segment of the school’s teaching faculty. It becomes imperative, therefore, to promote the personal and professional growth of the staff as well as to entrust them with roles and responsibilities at all levels of school management. Such empowerment will go a long way in helping our lay staff imbibe our vision and mission, become responsible for our policies and programmes and commit themselves to the ideals and purpose that we set before them. Perhaps Jesuits need to do serious introspection and ask whether they are “offering to those lay people who are well-prepared, not just administrative and managerial assignments, but the very highest levels of educational responsibility and to do this with full confidence.” (24) If there is hesitation and reluctance on our part, we must shed such attitudes and prepare a cadre of lay partners who will be our multipliers.
- 3) Social Thrust: Since 1975 there is a new pre-occupation in Jesuit schools --- turning out men and women for others. The rampant consumerism and the crass materialism that is eating up our society has further strengthened this conviction that our education must go beyond academic competence to making our students actively committed to bringing about a new society based on peace and justice. Such an attitude will not come about unless we make social service integral to our education. Mere academic success will not make a new and vibrant India. Our students must learn to live for others, learn to feel the struggles that others have to go through, and learn to act justly and humanely. Fund collections are important and even necessary at times, but they do not touch the heart. For this we must provide students “with opportunities for contact with the poor and for service to them, both in the school and in outside service projects, to learn to love all as brothers and sisters in the human community, and also to come to a better understanding of the causes of poverty.” (25)

Our classrooms must be places where students discuss issues of communalism, human rights violations, causes of poverty, exploitation and a multitude of other issues. Later in life we can expect to see them apply their minds to solving these issues in their own work situation. Mere academic success, however praiseworthy, is nothing to gloat over in a system that encourages tuitions and coaching classes and looks the other way at malpractices in examinations. Our real hope lies first in opening our education to the marginalized sections of society and then in fostering “those values that promote a special concern for those men can women who are without the means to live in human dignity”. (26)

4. Dialogue

A new thrust that is needed in our schools springs from the exigencies of our times. Our schools are cosmopolitan to the core. Practically every religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic group in the country can be found studying in them. It provides us with an opportunity to engage them and their parents in dialogue. This cosmopolitan character may be due today to the changing character of the school neighbourhood; however, it seems to have been so from the very beginning. As early as 1909, Sir George Clarke remarked about St. Xavier’s High School that “it is a hopeful sign in this High School where boys of several races and of different religions intermingle, cordial relations exist. A school is a nation in microcosm and it is only bringing down of prejudices and the assimilation of ideas that India can attain to the nationhood which all her true friends must desire.” (27)

Politicians, for narrow ends, drive a wedge between people; we must weld them into one. The present Pope has, on three clear occasions, asked Jesuits to give priority in their work to inter-religious dialogue. This becomes an urgent necessity in a pluralistic society like ours where the venom of hate has been sown in recent years, generating fear, suspicion and hatred. G.C. 34 explicitly says that “our educational institutions will conscientise their students on the value of inter-religious collaboration and instill in them a basic understanding for the faith vision of the members of the diverse local religious communities, while deepening their own faith response to it.” (28)

So the road ahead has been mapped out for us. It is not only information that we must impart – school textbooks already do that -- but attitudes that we must promote. One of the important contributions that we could make is to help students discover and appreciate the religious beliefs and spiritual treasures of different faiths, especially when their festivals come around. Secondly, students must be led to deepen their knowledge of their own faith as well as their commitment to it. And thirdly, snide remarks, biases and prejudices must never be countenanced.

A very practical way of breaking down barriers is to get both students and parents to come together on a common platform – to fight social and civic issues that affect all of them. At a deeper level we could encourage a sharing of faith – what their own scriptures tell them about service, forgiveness, prayer, etc.; how they themselves pray and how God has been active in their lives. Such measures will go a long way in creating a student body where respect and appreciation for one another as human beings and for one another’s spiritual traditions become the bedrock of our education.

5. ALUMNI

A final area that needs to be promoted vigorously is work among alumni/ae. Much is being left to the whims and fancies of individual Principals. This is no longer acceptable, given the repeated insistence by our Superiors General that Alumni form an important element of our educational service. And where alumni associations exist, they do little more than hold annual social gatherings. A vibrant alumni association must get involved in the social issues of the day so that our students make a difference to today's society.

Is there a programme that we can place before our alumni/ae? I believe that there is. At the World Alumni congress in Kolkata in January 2003, Fr. Kolvenbach reminded them of the pluralistic Jesuit institutions in which they studied and which helped them build ties across human borders. And he went on to say that "this experience should now urge you to take up projects that would build bridges among the various communities, to promote inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, to work for communal harmony and peace. In our world where warring ideologies, ethnic conflicts, religious fundamentalism and intolerance have been causing so much suffering and oppression, I see a special role for Jesuit alumni/ae." (29)

Fr. General has thrown down the gauntlet and it is for us to pick it up. Helping one's own school students may be a good way to begin, but it cannot end there. There is a whole world outside waiting to hear the voices of Jesuit alumni/ae raised against violation of human rights, corruption, environmental degradation, child abuse and exploitation in every form. The country is waiting for the services of our doctors, lawyers, journalists, businessmen etc. Can we fail them?

Conclusion:

Fr. E.R. Hull, S.J., the Englishman who lived and worked with German Jesuits in India and who wrote in defence of them said of their work: "I may say without hesitation that the advent of the Jesuits in 1854-58 was nothing short of an epoch-making event which changed the face of history altogether." (30)

The German Jesuit Mission accomplished within the span of fifty years to bring about the spiritual and intellectual transformation of the Christian community. Thanks to their selfless service, the Church in many parts of India, especially, western India, now has a Catholic community that is second to none in many spheres of life. World War I was really a hiatus. It resulted in the internment of German Jesuits. They took it in their stride and when they were later allowed to work in Belgaum, Goa and Poona districts, they brought a similar dedication and zest to their work as though there had been no interruption at all. We salute these great men who left home and country to serve a people of another language, culture and religion and who did so with a spirit that would have made Ignatius of Loyola proud of them.

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