



PRISON VOICE

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NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹ 20/-

WALL-LESS PRISONS





Punjab

**Training Programme for PMI Volunteers
Archdiocese of Pondicherry & Cuddalore**



PMI Volunteers Pondicherry - Unit



**150th Year Gandhi Jayanthi
Sports**



**150th Year Gandhi Jayanthi Celebration
Central Prison - Pondy - Kalapet**



Helping for Released Prisoners Family Development



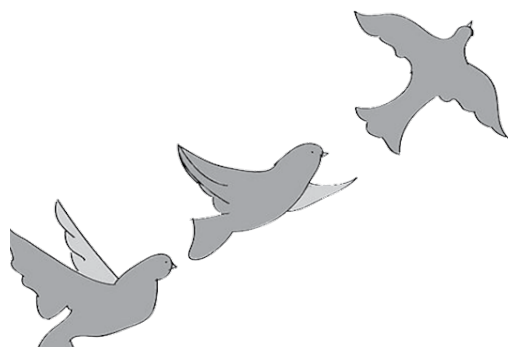
**Handwork materials given to the inside
women prisoners**

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PRISON VOICE NATIONAL MONTHLY

**BIRDS
ARE
NOT
TO BE
CAGED**



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Are you willing?

"Help a Child of a Prisoner

*Prevent a Potential
Criminal"*

*80% of the children of
prisoners are potential
criminals unless somebody
takes care of them. Prison
Ministry India has begun
a scheme to educate 1000
children of prisoners, by
giving*

*Rs. 5,000/- for the education
of the child.*

*Your contribution is a help to
mend a life.*

*Please send your valuable
contribution.*

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“WALLS DO NOT CREATE PRISONS”

PRISON MINISTRY
SUNDAY



11 August 2019



Most Rev Dr Allwyn D'Silva

PASTORAL LETTER

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

On 17 March 1887, Marie Regnault, a prominent Parisian woman was found dead on the floor of her chamber, her throat cut and her body terribly mutilated. Lying near the door was the dead body of Annette, her servant whose throat had also been cut. On her bed was lifeless little Marie, the servant's daughter. The *New York Times* reported that the motive was robbery of jewelry. Within a week police caught Pranzini, the culprit and he was condemned to death for the triple murder.

St Therese of Lisieux

St. Therese of Lisieux was just 14 at the time, but she felt compelled to intervene. In her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul* she wrote that she felt that Pranzini would die impenitent. She wanted at all costs to keep him from falling into hell. She offered to God all the infinite merits of Our Lord and offered Holy Masses and mortifications to redeem Pranzini. On 1st September 1887 Therese read in the paper that when he was about to put his head into the device, he turned, took hold of the crucifix the priest was holding out to him, and kissed the sacred wounds three times! Then his soul went to receive the merciful sentence of him who declares that in heaven there will be more joy over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine who have no need of repentance (Lk 15: 7).

Prison Ministry – Our Responsibility

Like St Therese of Lisieux, we Catholics have a great responsibility to liberate and redeem prisoners from eternal damnation. Have you ever thought of the

plight of prisoners? Their suffering, humiliation, hopelessness, helplessness, frustration, and inhuman situations? Often, prisons are overcrowded, understaffed, unhygienic, and underfunded. Have you ever prayed for them, written a letter to them, and visited them? To remind us of this significant task, every year the Indian Catholic Church dedicates the second Sunday of August for the incarcerated, known as Prison Ministry Sunday. According to the Institute for Criminal Policy Research (ICPR) report on 30 September 2018 there are 10,743,619 prisoners worldwide and 4, 19,623 brethren behind the bars in India. It is our duty to pray for them, visit them, and help them in their process of release, reformation, rehabilitation and redemption. For prisoners are our own brethren created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27).

Prison Ministry India

To guide you in prison ministry, we have Prison Ministry India (PMI), a voluntary organization for the integral development of prisoners, their victims and families working under the Justice, Peace and Development Commission (JPDC) of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI). PMI volunteers visit brethren behind the bars regularly and build relationships with both staff and inmates. Every diocese has its office and a priest is appointed as its director to coordinate the ministry. Most of the major seminaries have prayer groups who organize liturgical ceremonies, cultural programs and extend spiritual, psychological and material assistance to prisoners. PMI has more than 30 rehabilitation centers

in different states where released prisoners who are committed to renewing their lives can come and stay for their reformation and rehabilitation. I am happy to note that many religious communities come forward to take this challenging work of prisoners' release, reformation, rehabilitation and redemption. While I wholeheartedly appreciate them on behalf of the CBCI, I would also like to invite the laity to do prison ministry in association with the PMI volunteers and thereby acquire your ticket to heaven. For Jesus said, "Come, you that are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ... for I was in prison and you visited me (Mt 25: 34-36). "Just as you did to one of the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me" (Mt 25: 40).

Jesus' Mission

Prison is a place where criminals are sent as punishment by the judicial system with the intention to reform them. We may not like prison and prisoners. But Jesus was not like us. He loved prisoners, prostitutes, tax collectors, sinners and criminals in a special way and shed His blood to redeem them. He said, "the tax collectors and prostitutes are going into the Kingdom of God ahead of you" (Mt 21: 31). He visited the tax booth of Mathew, called him and made him His disciple. While He was eating with sinners and tax collectors, Jesus declared that He had come to call not the righteous but sinners for repentance (Lk 5: 32). Jesus proclaimed publicly His commitment to the prisoners in the Synagogue of Nazareth "He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives" (Lk 4:18). He revealed to us that He Himself lives in the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and prisoner (Mt 25: 31-46).

Walls Do Not Make Prisons

The theme of the 2019 Prison Ministry Sunday is *Walls Do Not Create Prisons*. This title is taken from Richard Lovelace's poem entitled "*To Althea, from Prison*." He wrote this poem in 1642 while imprisoned in the Gatehouse Prison adjoining Westminster Abbey and meant that stone walls and iron bars may prevent a person from moving freely in their body, but if they can still love freely, whoever they want and let their thoughts fly free, then in heart, mind and soul, they are free. Incarceration will not lock up one's thoughts, imagination, dreams,

visions, insights, plans, and projects. If you have the right frame of mind - if your mind is innocent and quiet, then what others see as a prison can be a refuge, a hermitage, an ashram where reformations and revolutions can take place. For nothing will be impossible with God (Lk 1:37).

No Friend But the Mountains

Behrouz Boochani, an Iranian Kurd and an asylum seeker who was detained for years on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island, is the best example for someone who lived the theme *Walls do not create Prisons*. From Manus Detention Center he wrote a book *No Friend But the Mountains* by text messaging through WhatsApp to his friend. This book won the 2019 Victorian Prize for Literature, worth A\$100,000, Australia's richest literary prize. In response to winning the award, he said "We are forgotten people thrown on forgotten islands. I write in isolation with 700 other people who are hidden on a remote island in the north of Papua New Guinea. My goal has always been to make people in Australia and around the world clearly aware of the systematic torture of innocent people on the islands of Manus and Nauru for six years".

Liu Xiaobo (1955– 2017)

Liu Xiaobo is another example of someone who lived in prison but beyond its walls. Known as China's Nelson Mandela, he was a writer, literary critic, human rights activist, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate who called for political reforms in China. He was incarcerated as a political prisoner in Jinzhou, Liaoning. During his fourth prison term, Liu was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize for "his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China". He said that freedom of expression is the foundation of human rights, the source of humanity and the mother of truth. Like Mahatma Gandhi he stood for non-violent resistance and taught that even as man is faced with tyranny and suffering, he shall respond to hate with love, prejudice with tolerance, arrogance with humility, humiliation with dignity, and violence with reason.

Pope Francis

His Holiness Pope Francis on 25th January 2019, during a penitential liturgy at Las Garzas de Pacora detention center for minors, in Panama, denounced how society

puts up “invisible walls” to marginalize sinners and criminals. In his homily, the Holy Father exhorted, “I invite you not to build walls but bridges to conquer evil with good, offence with forgiveness, and to live in peace with everyone”. Let us join hands with Pope Francis in his attempt to abolish capital punishment worldwide because it is “an attack” on human dignity.

Wall-Less Prison

In this context CBCI would like to appreciate one of the novel steps introduced by the Indian prison administration, the Wall-less prison or the Open Air Camps. Self-responsibility plays a greater role in such system. Eligible convicted prisoners are sent to open air camps with the objective of making them learn self-dependence by lawful means of livelihood and social interaction. These half way homes have changed the scenario of prison discipline as the prisoner becomes more rule abiding and relaxed when living with family. The presence of family avoids many unwanted distractions that a person may otherwise indulge in.

Conclusion

Through the celebration of Prison Ministry Sunday, the

Church wants to affirm to each one of those 4,19,623 prisoners held inside 1401 prisons in India that walls do not make prisons. What matters is our attitude, our perception, our vision, our outlook, our acceptance of the will of God! Dear brothers and sisters in prison, we walk with you, pray for you and support you. God is your stronghold, He will restore your life. Dear brothers and sisters outside the prison, let us hear the cry of prisoners and try our best to respond with our prayer, presence and assistance like St Therese of Lisieux. As the Letter to the Hebrews says, “Remember those who are in prison as though you were in prison with them” (Heb 13:2). Along with my brother Bishops, I express my sincere gratitude for the generous contribution towards this ministry and acknowledge the dedicated service of PMI volunteers in liberating, reforming, rehabilitating and redeeming prisoners. May the patron saint of Prison Ministry India, St. Maximilian Kolbe guide you and may Mary our Blessed Mother be always there to protect you.



Bishop Allwyn D'Silva
Chairman of Prison Ministry India

LITURGY

Entrance Antiphon

Jesus our master identified himself with the people in prison by saying, “I was in prison and you visited me”. You include every one as your sheep. Lord, give us the grace to include all our brothers and sisters whom we have excluded as disposable and worthless.

Penitential Rite

Once a judgment has been passed on a prisoner, for the general public, the matter is closed. But for God it is not a closed chapter. It takes a “renewed mind” to forgive your enemies and do good to those who spitefully use you. It takes a “renewed mind” to visit prisoners especially those living in very deplorable living conditions. It certainly takes a “renewed mind” to provide housing, clothing and food for people who have raped, maimed, robbed, abused and destroyed the lives of other members of society. While

the normal or natural mind would prescribe a punitive response to crime and criminals, a “spiritual mind will prescribe redemptive response without minimizing the pain, horror and negative consequences of the criminal act. Let us sincerely ask ourselves, do we have the same heart as our Master has?

Collect:

Merciful father, you know the secret of all hearts, the just and unjust deeds we have committed. Hear our prayers for those in prison. Give them patience and hope in their sufferings and bless their desire to return home soon. Bless Lord, all the people who are working for their good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

First Reading: Ezekiel 34: 11-15

Response: The lord is compassion and love

My soul, give thanks to the lord, all my beings, bless his holy name. My soul, give thanks to the Lord and never forget all his blessings. **R...**

It is he who forgives all your guilt, who heals every one of your ills, who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with love and compassion. **R...**

The lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy. His wrath will come to an end; he will not be angry forever. **R...**

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so strong is his love for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our sins. **R...**

Second Reading: Hebrew: 13: 1 -8

Acclamation:

Alleluia, Alleluia; I am the Good Shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. Alleluia

Gospel : Lk : 15: 1 – 7

Prayer of the faithful

Cel. Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus shows great compassion towards the sinners and the poor. Let us therefore pray that we will be guided by the Holy Spirit to show our compassion towards others saying,

Response: Lord, Graciously hear our prayer.

- Lord, we pray for the universal Church. May the Pope, bishops, priests and consecrated people be the powerful instruments of your liberating love and be helpful to the brethren behind bars to rejuvenate the image and likeness of you in them. Let us pray to the Lord.
- Lord, you were an innocent prisoner. You had experienced the plight of a prisoner. We bring before you all our brothers and sisters behind the bars with their mental torture and physical discomforts. We

request your blessings upon them and their families. Bless the jail authorities to be kind, gentle and understanding towards the inmates. Let us pray to the Lord.

- Lord, we ask your blessings upon all the volunteers of prison ministry who dedicate their time and energy for the least, lost and last. Jesus our Good Shepherd, we ask your guidance and protection always upon them and in their ministry. Let us pray to the Lord.
- Lord, we pray for all those who are wrongly accused and imprisoned. Lord as you know, there is a lot of agony and bitterness within them. Merciful God, graciously bless them with positive self-realization and legal assistance that they may be released fast. Let us pray to the Lord.

(Pause to pray for personal and community needs)

Concluding Prayer: Loving Father, you are the happiest when we your children reach up to you. Stretch out your healing hands and touch all our brethren behind the bars and help them to lead a renewed life. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord, Amen

Prayer over the Gifts:

We offer you, O Lord, the sacrifice of reconciliation and praise, that, being moved to compassion, you may both pardon our offences and pardon those in prison, and direct our wavering hearts and minds. Through Christ our Lord.

Communion Antiphon:

Remember those who are in prison as though you were in prison with them. (Heb. 13:3)

Prayer after Communion:

Grant us, merciful God, that, receiving in this gift the forgiveness of sins, we may be able by your grace to avoid sinning from now on and to serve you in the least, lost and last of the society. Through Christ our Lord..

Rev Dr Francis Kодиан MCBS, National Co-ordinator, Prison Ministry India

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FREEDOM IS NOTHING ELSE, BUT A CHANCE TO BE A BETTER HUMAN BEING



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
Chief Editor

An open prison is any jail in which the prisoners are trusted to serve their sentences with minimal supervision and perimeter security and are often not locked up in their prison cells. Prisoners may be permitted to take up employment while serving their sentence. The idea of open prisons is to rehabilitate prisoners rather than to punish them. Rajasthan Prison Rules define open jail as, "Prisons without walls, bars and locks." The jail does not confine them completely but requires them to earn their living to support their families, living with them inside the jail. **The inmates in the open prison are those who have been given life sentence but have behaved well and are to be released in one or two years after completion of their term.**

Prisons in India are governed by the Prisons Act 1900, and each state follows their own prison rules and manuals. India has a maximum number of central jails, sub jails, which are controlled jails, and 63 open jails according to the amicus curiae in the case above. Open prisons have relatively less stringent rules as compared to controlled jails. They go by many names, like minimum-security prison, open-air camps or prison without bars. The fundamental rule of an open prison is that the jail has minimum security and functions on the self-discipline of the inmates.

Open jails are minimum security prisons. Only convicted prisoners exhibiting good behaviour and satisfying certain norms prescribed in the prison rules are admitted in open jails. Minimum security is kept in such prisons and prisoners are engaged in

agricultural activities. P. T. Chacko, the then Home Minister of Kerala introduced the first Open Jail in India, Nettukaltheri near Neyyar, Thiruvananthapuram on 28 August 1962. Seventeen states have functioning open jails in their jurisdiction. Rajasthan reports the highest number of open jails.

Freedom is nothing else, but a chance to be a better human being. Every human must be given the chance to become a better person. When a person is given trust, it provides positive energy in his/her life. In open jails, the prisoners are trusted and permitted to take up employment where every prisoner feels that they are looked up to with an emphasis on their good qualities. By providing them with trust, the old criminals can be remoulded as new creations. Nothing is more precious than independence and liberty. Liberty is given to prisoners in open prisons and no one takes the chance to commit mistakes. This, in turn, creates a conducive environment to becoming a new being.

Another point to consider in the case of open prisons is that these are an effective solution to overcrowded prisons. Each state needs to take the initiative in establishing many more open prisons to re-make our brethren as better people for a better society.

Let's feel proud to be a part of our glorious nation and hoist the tricolor high....

Wish you happy Independence Day

International Prisoners' Justice Day



Rev Dr Francis Kodian MCBS
National Coordinator & Secretary to CBCI
for Prison Ministry India

On 17 August 2003, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) announced that a Sunday has been designated as Prison Ministry Sunday to propagate values of love for our brethren behind bars. Henceforth, every year the second Sunday of August is set apart by the Catholic Church in India to remember prisoners, their families, victims and prison staff. Why has the CBCI selected the second Sunday of August for Prison Ministry Sunday? This is due to three reasons: firstly, the feast of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, the patron saint of prison ministry falls on 14 August; secondly, the International Prisoners' Justice Day falls on 10 August; thirdly, the Indian Catholic Church celebrates Justice Sunday on the third Sunday of August. This article briefly illustrates the roots and significance of International Prisoners' Justice Day.

The Death of Edward Nalon

International Prisoners' Justice Day falls on August 10, which marks the anniversary of the death of Eddie Nalon in 1974, a prisoner who bled to death in a solitary confinement unit at Millhaven Maximum Security Prison, Ontario, Canada. He died

because the emergency call button in his cell failed to work. The call button in that unit had been deactivated by the guards. On the first anniversary of Eddie's death, 10 August 1975, prisoners at Millhaven refused to work, went on a one-day hunger strike and held a memorial service, even though it would mean a stint in solitary confinement.

The Death of Robert Landers

On 21 May 1976, Robert Landers died in the segregation unit of Millhaven Prison. He was very active in the struggle for Prisoners' Rights and had been doing his time at the Archambault Maximum Security Prison, near Montreal, Quebec. He was involuntarily transferred to Millhaven just before the strike in January 1976 and thrown into the Hole. On the night before he died, he tried to get medical help, however, the panic buttons in the cells had still not been repaired. He wanted to see the nurse, who could be heard laughing and talking with guards out in the office, at the end of the range. He and three other prisoners all called out for her to come on to the range, but were ignored by both the nurse and the guards. In the morning, they found him dead and a scribbled note on his bed that requested medical aid and described symptoms that indicated a heart

problem. At the inquest into his death, it was determined that he had died from a heart attack and a heart specialist confirmed that he should have been in an intensive care unit, not in solitary confinement.

Prison Justice Day

On 10 August 1976, thousands of prisoners across Canada went on a one-day hunger strike. Prison Justice Day Committees were formed in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia to organize community events to draw attention to the prisoners' concerns. In 1983, prisoners in France refused to eat in recognition of August 10th. By the mid-1990's prisoners in parts of Germany, England and the United States would join this day of peaceful protest.

International Prisoners' Justice Day

Slowly, Prison Justice Day became an international day of solidarity with prisoners. International Prisoners' Justice Day was recognized in 2011 in Trout Lake, Canada, with a rally organized by the Vancouver Prison Justice Day Committee. The goal of this celebration is to commemorate the struggle and oppression in the prison system. There are a great many prisoners who were and still are involved in the struggle for prisoners' rights within the walls. This is to honour those who have died unnatural deaths in prisons and to express solidarity with the millions of people inside prisons who are demanding changes to a criminal justice system that dehumanizes and brutalizes them.

Significance of Prisoners' Justice Day

International Prisoners' Justice Day invites prisoners worldwide to set aside a day to fast in a show of solidarity to remember those who have died unnecessarily - victims of murder, suicide and neglect. On this day, NGOs and organizations hold vigils, worship services and other events in support of prisoners. This day is meant to oppose prison violence, to fight for freedom and equality, to raise public awareness of the economic and social costs of a system of criminal justice which punishes for revenge, to reflect on what it truly means to be incarcerated, to consider how we treat people behind the bars, and to remember the goals of incarceration.

Conclusion

Prison Ministry Sunday and International Prisoners' Justice Day invite our attention to our brethren behind bars who are placed in a situation of powerlessness and dependency, and exposed to possible cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment and even torture. While the deprivation of liberty may be legal, the deprivation of human dignity is not. International prisoner standards recognize that segregation should not be used except in the most justifiable circumstances or else it will only unduly aggravate suffering and harm. The goals of incarceration are to protect society and to rehabilitate offenders to prepare for their reintegration into society.

In order that obedience be supernatural it must not proceed from reason, but from faith.

Festal greetings of St. Maximilian Kolbe

The prison system has come a long way from the concept of jails to modern prisons: a place that metes out all sorts of treatment meant ultimately for the rehabilitation of offenders. The prison system as it operates today in India is a legacy of the British rule. It facilitated the abolition of our old system of barbaric punishments and imprisonment as a chief form of punishment for crimes committed. The emergence of open prisons is the beginning of a new phase in the history of prisons.

Meaning of open prisons

“A place where prisoners have comparative freedom of movement, are under minimum security and conditions, and are places for self-improvement and rehabilitation.” There are four main features of open prisons:

1. Open to prisoners - Inmates can go outside during the day and come back in the evening.
2. Open security - There are no bars. Absence of high security.
3. Open organization - The working of the system is based on inmates' sense of self-responsibility.
4. Open to public - People can go visit the prisons and meet the prisoners.

As per the directions of the Supreme Court, if we establish an open prison for every district, over half of the prison population in India can be lodged in open jails according to norms.

Open prisons can serve as a good location for reform of selected prisoners, by mainstreaming estranged individuals who are in conflict with the law. This has come to form a public life for prisoners. Secondly, the prisoners living in open prisons take up fruitful employment that contributes positively towards economic growth and prevents unemployment.

Issues with open prison in India

- Underutilization - capacity for 25776 presently logged at 2786.
- The prisons in most states are selected by a committee which has no accountability over them. It leads to corruption.

OPEN PRISONS: EXCELLENT MEANS IN PROVIDING REHABILITATIVE JUSTICE



Shri Mallikarjun



Superintendent - Bangalore Open Air Jail

- No measures are taken to include convicts beginning their sentence. At least semi-open prisons should be made open to fresh convicts.
- No provisions of open jails for undertrial prisoners.
- An inadequate number of open prisons in every state.
- Open prisons are the only rehabilitation prisons in India. There is a need for more rehabilitation measures.
- Rules and governing laws are very old and complex.

With the current scenario of overcrowding of jails, it is extremely important to build and utilize the existing open prisons. Open prisons are excellent in providing rehabilitative justice, as it helps the convicts to reintegrate with the world before they complete their sentence in a phased manner. Although existing open prisons are well-managed and have good records in the past, there is still room for improvement in terms of rules and laws. Active measures should be taken to amend these rules to provide access to justice to the prisoners. This system, if properly utilized, will also help in reducing the number of custodial deaths. And, it will help the prisoners to reform and rehabilitate themselves.

Reform needed in the status quo

- Increasing the numbers of open jails and better utilization of existing infrastructure.
- Efforts should be taken to move the subjects of prison to the union list. This will bring



Open Prisons as Solutions

in uniform reforms and every prison will have similar regulations.

- In order to bring accountability in the selection procedure, the state committee should be compelled to provide reasons to the chief minister of the concerned state for the selection made. These documents should also be made available within the ambit of RTI, so that the common people may have access to it.
- In order to provide rehabilitation to mentally-disturbed prisoners, semi-open jails should be promoted.

- The Supreme Court or the concerned high courts also should be given jurisdiction to allow prisoners to go directly to open jails.
- Every prisoner, whether in open or closed prison, should be made aware of his/her rights and should be informed about the process of selection to be eligible for an open prison sentence.

Conclusion

The concept of the open prison has existed for almost seven to eight decades in India. However, many states still do not have enough open prisons. Measures should be taken to rectify this.

OUTSIDERS: IN NO WAY SUPERIOR TO PRISONERS

Sr. Maria D'Souza SCC
PMI Volunteer – Aurangabad Unit

When I first entered the jail, I became conscious of what Jesus had said, "I have come not for those who are well but for those who are sick." And there I was standing in the midst of those who were sick; a different kind of sickness which can be cured only by the Divine Physician. Observing their faces, I could feel their longing to be healed, forgiven and saved.

The warden of the jail warned us not to have any personal conversation with any of the inmates. I felt disappointed and useless visiting the prison without any personal touch. Soon after my return home, I visited the chapel, I looked at the cross and there I experienced the pain of the incarcerated women in my heart. Jesus is condemned in these women; He is voiceless, helpless, rejected and ridiculed. He wants, my voice and my heart to accept, love and reconcile them to the Father.

We are all on a journey heading towards the same destination, these incarcerated women missed the path, were caught and

were imprisoned. However, there are others too who took the wrong path but were/are not caught and imprisoned. Just because I am outside the prison, I am in no way superior to them. We are all in need of God's mercy and compassion.

I do not know the crimes of these women; all I know is that our heavenly Father and Jesus loves and accepts everyone unconditionally. This is what I need to convince and convey to the women in prison. Some of them miss their families acutely; they are like the deer on the mountains yearning for the running waters of mercy and compassion.

This ministry offers us an opportunity to reveal God's merciful love to them. It asks us to be intercessors of mercy. Like Abraham and Moses, we are led to stretch out our hands towards heaven and implore God's mercy on them. It makes us connected to the suffering of others. Let us become the channels of God's mercy and compassion through this ministry.

Open-Air Prisons: A Culture of Reform Rather Than a Culture of Punishment

Dominic Braganza
PMI, Pune

"It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones." - Nelson Mandela

He should know, having spent 27 years behind bars, humanity being his only crime. In the years that followed his release, there has been much reform in the affairs of prison life, thanks largely to his personally penned 'Nelson Mandela's Rules', which have been adopted by the United Nations as a model for prison governance worldwide.

Two rules highlight Nelson Mandela's view on the matter of open-air prisons also termed Open Prisons.

Rule 23: 'Every prisoner who is not employed in outdoor work shall have at least one hour of suitable exercise in the open air daily if the weather permits.'

Rule 42 goes on to state that access to open-air comprises the necessary humane living conditions that should apply to 'all prisoners without exception'.

By their very nature, open prisons provide no physical security against escape but rely on the self-discipline of the inmates. Many of the buildings in the open prison at Paithan, Maharashtra, have been constructed by the

inmates themselves, betraying the kind of trust that is only possible in a community of the reformed.

Recently, a formerly incarcerated Bollywood star declared that "Indian jails are a university for grooming criminals". This coincided with the Supreme Court's own push for more open-air prisons in India, leading many to believe that open-air prisons are a new phenomenon in India. However, that is not entirely true.

India's first open-air prison was started in 1905, in what was then called the Bombay Presidency. One could argue that this was a British initiative, but then our own Yerwada Prison in Pune, Maharashtra, opened its first open-air prison barely 8 years after Independence, in 1955.

V. Shantaram's acclaimed prison film *Do Aankhen Barah Haath* aired the issue of open-air prisons, as early as 1957. There is a poignant scene where a jailer, played by V. Shantaram himself, grapples with the prisoner Kishan who's out to kill him. Admirably, despite a 2-minute struggle, he refrains from using his *lathi*, but presses the bell instead, being a proponent of the open-air prison concept himself, which was the key theme of the film.

As film buffs will know, this movie which gave us the immortal "Ae Maalik Tere Bande Hum" was actually based on a real-life open prison built in 1939 by the progressive rulers of the princely state of Aundh in Satara, who carried out prison reforms in consultation with an Irish psychiatrist.

Today, among the 17 Indian states with open-air prisons within their jurisdiction, Maharashtra is second after Rajasthan with 13 open-air prisons, and another 6 planned soon. The home department plans on having one open prison in every district, touting benefits which are hard to argue with.

Open-air prisons have brought about a culture of reform, compared to a culture of punishment, which should never be the point of incarceration, as we serve a God of Mercy and Grace. It is within the realm of God's justice for his earthly authorities to chastise a member of society who has broken the law. But unless it is the case of a hardened criminal who is clearly thumbing his nose at the law of the land and at the Grace of God, the purpose of prison time should never be punishment, but reform. Because everybody deserves a second chance, and some even a third and a fourth, and so on.

Some open prisons rehabilitate their inmates with the skills they will need once they have fully integrated into normal life, such as accounting, technical education, farming and industrial work, or even cooking, as evidenced by the inmates of Paithan Open Jail, who make and sell jaggery, producing 200 kilos a day.

Some open prisons even help inmates regain social skills with psychological therapy, in addition to providing the open-air culture

where inmates are responsible to each other and cater to the common good.

Some such as the Atpadi open prison in Sangli district allow certain inmates' families to live with them within the enclosure of the prison, provided they can earn a living for themselves.

Semi-open and open prisons even allow inmates to work beyond prison premises to earn a livelihood, ensuring that they return by the evening.

It is usually long-termers who make it to the open prisons, with roughly 60 percent occupants serving sentences of 10+ years, and about 85% serving sentences of 5+ years. This helps with the key objectives that began the open prison movement, which were to: (1) reduce overcrowding in jails, (2) reward good behaviour, (3) train inmates in self-reliance, (4) provide dependable permanent labour for public works, (5) give hope to long-termers, (6) prepare inmates for agricultural and industrial employment and (7) examine the viability of open prisons as a gradual reintroduction of convicts into society.

But when you realise that 75% of Maharashtra's 30,000 prisoners are undertrials, you begin to wonder if the proven criminals in open prisons have it better than the innocent among the undertrials languishing in India's closed prisons until their case comes up in court.

Seems we may need another famous incarceration by a Bollywood star, this time an undertrial who goes on to prove to be innocent and thereby prove India's principle of 'guilty until proven innocent' to be an idea that is past its sell-by date.

OPEN AIR PRISONS: BEST MEANS TO RE-SOCIALIZE WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD



Walter Kamble
Nashik Road,
Lay representative,
PMI Central Region

Unlike Lord Macaulay, Mahatma Gandhi believed in meting out humane treatment to prisoners rather than a deterrent one. Right to life and personal liberty is guaranteed to every person under the constitution of India as a fundamental right. The international documents also affirm the principles of personal liberty of a person and it goes on to state that such liberty is provided not only to the common man but also to a prisoner¹. The Nelson Mandela Rules stipulates certain rights of prisoners such as the right of employment and the right to contact with the outside world. The central theme of this article is the concept of the open prison system in India, its origin and relevance. There is a need to further reform the prison system in India, increase the number of open prisons and bring out a common and concrete set of rules through a central enactment in this respect.

Open prison, or an open jail, is set up with minimum security measures against escape and with rehabilitative and reformative approach rather than a deterrent one. As compared to a controlled jail, the rules of an open prison are less stringent. In India, the concept of the open prison system can be traced back to 1836 when the first All India Jail Committee was set up. However, the results were not satisfactory and a number of committees were appointed since then, the important one being, the All India Committee on Jail Reforms 1956. The most significant committee which played a major role in the development of the open prison system in India was the Mulla Committee². The Committee mentions open institutions under Chapter XIX of the committee report.

Article 21 of the Constitution of India:

There is no specific right guaranteed under any article of the Constitution of India for prisoners. But, the essence of human rights of prisoners is present under Article 21 of the Constitution. According to Article 21, "no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law." And through various judgements, it is quite clear today that we cannot exclude prisoners under the meaning of the word 'person' under this article. So, they cannot be deprived of their basic rights enshrined under the article. Hence, if a prisoner satisfies certain conditions as laid down under the relevant laws and rules, he can rightfully be sent to open prisons. Therefore, the judiciary, with the passage of time and through various judgements have widened the scope of Article 21 encompassing the rights of a prisoner and giving due recognition to the fact that they also have a right to live with dignity, right of livelihood, right to humane treatment and a healthy environment, and right to enjoy personal liberty. Going with this broader meaning of Article 21, the establishment of open prisons could very well be justified.

"All human beings, whatever their cultural or historical background, suffer when they are intimidated, imprisoned and tortured. We must, therefore, insist on a global consensus, not only on the need to respect human rights worldwide but also on the definition of these rights. For it is the inherent nature of all human beings to yearn for freedom, equality and dignity, and they have an equal right to achieve that"
- 14th Dalai Lama.

The Concept and Working of Open Prison in India

Among other things, the open institution is based on the already recognised fact that not all offenders need to be sent to prisons ³. The UN Congress on the 'Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders at Geneva,' in 1955, described open prison in the following words: "An open prison is characterised by the absence of material or physical precautions against escape (walls, locks, bars, armed or speared security guards) and by a system based on self-discipline and the inmates' sense of responsibility towards the group in which he lives."⁴

The idea is to help a prisoner to re-socialize with the outside world and to rehabilitate and reform himself/herself so as to be ready to absorb the environment of the outside world once his/her term of imprisonment is over. However, a prisoner who has been sentenced to life imprisonment could also be sent to open prison depending upon the fulfilment of certain conditions or rules. The open jails in India involve activities such as farming and animal husbandry.

The prisoners who have completed a substantial amount of their punishment in

a closed prison and who have shown good behaviour throughout that duration are eligible to be sent to open prisons. Prisoners with good behaviour and satisfying certain norms prescribed in the prison rules are admitted to open prisons. Minimum security is maintained in such prisons and prisoners are engaged in agricultural activities.⁵

Advantages:

- Reduction of over-crowding in closed prisons.
- Inmates are allowed to go out and meet their family members.
- Better environment of work.

Limitations:

With better conditions of living and work environment, prisoners may find the jail more comfortable than the outside world and be reluctant to leave the jail even after the completion of tenure of punishment.

Although the concept of an open prison is different from the closed prison in its structure and objective, there is no central statute enacted for the purpose of open prisons to date.

Statistics

Only 17 states have reported about the functioning of open jails in their jurisdiction. Amongst these states, Rajasthan has reported the highest number of 29 open jails followed by Maharashtra (13), Kerala & Tamilnadu (3 each), and Gujarat & West Bengal (2 each). The remaining 11 states - Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya

Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Telangana and Uttarakhand have one open jail each. The highest capacity of inmates in open jails was reported in Maharashtra followed by Rajasthan.⁶

Critical Appreciation

Prison rules come under the jurisdiction of the state. As such, the rules vary from state-to-state and there are no uniform rules. Consequently, there might be a possibility of arbitrary provisions laid down by different state legislatures. Selection of candidates to be sent to open prisons is done by different state committees set up under the relevant state prison rules. This means deserving convicts may be overlooked. Also, there is no justification for why open prisons are not set up for women and undertrials. Moreover, the capacity of open prisons remains underutilized.⁷

The idea of taking correctional measures for reforming a prisoner is appreciated, however the basic facts remain that a prisoner is a criminal in his very nature and there is no assurance as to whether he could actually be reformed and brought back to a decent attitude from a notorious one after the correctional efforts made on him/her by the prison administration.

Conclusion

Despite the minimum security in open prisons, it is an appreciable fact that not a single instance of prison escape has been recorded to date. Therefore, it can be said that the concept of the open prison system is successful in attaining its basic objective. Despite a few criticisms, the

reformatory role of open prisons cannot be overlooked. It has brought a positive change in the prison system. However, not all the states in India have open prisons to date. Also, the central government must ponder upon forming a central statute for better administration of jail premises, and precision and uniformity in rules relating to open prisons, as recommended by the Mulla Committee.

Notes:

The article has been prepared with the help of the following documents found on Google.

1. The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Treatment of Prisoners (The Nelson Mandela Rules), adopted by the General Assembly in December 2015.
2. All India Committee on Jail Reforms, 1983.
3. Manual - Lopez Rey, The First UN Congress on Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders, Volume 47, Criminal Law, Criminology & Police Sci. 526 (1956-57), Page 533.
4. I.C. Vatsa, "Open Peno Correctional Services," Page 42.
5. NCRB report 2015, Chapter 1: Prison Institutions.
6. NCRB report on Prison statistics India - 2015, Table 2.7.
7. Data on open jails in the NCRB report on Prison Statistics India - 2015, Table 2.7.

Open Prisons: The Only Way a Prisoner can Really Change

Fr. Pasala Lahasthaya
AP State Coordinator

On 4 July 2019, we, along with the retired Deputy Superintendents of Prisons (DSPs), Sri M.G.S. Varaprakash (Retired from Open Prison at Anantapur) and Sri N. Raju (worked at Open Prison, Anantapur), visited the Agricultural Colony of Open Air Jail at Anantapur. We were welcomed cordially by Sri K. Chinnarao, Superintendent of Jails, Sri B. Ramakrishna, Deputy Superintendent and staff.

Open Prison system is a remarkable innovation in the realm of Correctional treatment. It provides an offender with greater freedom within natural surroundings and creates less tension which leads to the formation of an atmosphere encouraging reformation within himself/herself and to achieve social, ethical and financial growth in society.

In the year 1965, Open Prison also called as Prisoners' Agricultural Colonies started in Anantapur covering 1,427.57 acres with a capacity for 235 prisoners. But now there are around 70, running short of capacity. The prisoners in the Open Prison have nearly ninety-nine percentage of freedom, but they are responsible for the given work, are duty-minded assuring trust. The prisoners live on 1,500 acres of mostly barren land with no compound walls at the Anantapur open prison.

We came to understand that Freedom is given to all the prisoners who commit themselves towards the good and welfare of society in the Anantapur Open Prison.

As the fierce mid-day sun beats down on the rocky plains that surround the town of Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh, a massive banyan tree offers refuge to a group of men taking a break from their work in the fields. Anantapur's farmers have an unenviable task. One of India's driest districts, drought is the norm rather than an aberration here. This year too, the rains have failed and yields will undoubtedly be less.

But the mood under the banyan tree is relaxed. Easy banter flows as a chaiwallah pours out

cups of lukewarm tea. Unlike most other cultivators in the region, these men will have three meals a day even if their crops fail. All of them, including the man doling out the chai, are convicts serving life sentences for murder at the Prisoners Agricultural Colony in Anantapur.

The open prison system traces its origins back to temporary labour camps set up under the British Raj, which drew their workforce from prisons. However, as the 1983 report submitted by the Justice Mulla Committee (set up to review and improve the open prison system) makes clear, the objectives of these prisons today are radically different. From "extracting hard labour under humiliating conditions" they have changed to providing "prisoners with useful work" in a way that could help restore self-respect and give them a sense of "pride and achievement".

Today, an absence of high walls and large numbers of guards is common to all of them. This Open Prison allows prisoners to stay with their families in one-room residential units, while some of the inmates of the prison, even own vehicles that they use to commute to jobs outside.

Prisoners live a 99% free life now, but if they run away, they would not feel even 1% free.

The Anantapur open prison is conservative and spartan. Prisoners housed here live in modest shared dormitories and are all employed either in the fields growing fruits and vegetables or in two petrol pumps recently set up just outside the facility. Some also work as support staff, doing kitchen, electrical, or plumbing works, and other odd jobs.

Trust is the key

This colony is on a 1,500-acre expanse of mostly barren land as mentioned before. It has no walls apart from a small stretch abutting the highway, which was constructed more to keep encroachments at bay than the prisoners in. Trust is the most important pillar of this

institution. It is impossible to guard such a large open area. A prisoner could go to Bengaluru and come back between roll calls.

And yet, runaways are almost unheard of. The consensus among the prisoners is that one would have to be either extraordinarily desperate or just plain stupid to run away from a prison such as this. When I asked one of the prisoners why since there are no high walls or electrified fence, he replied: "I live a 99% free life now, but if I run away, I won't feel even 1% free."

I greatly appreciated it that the prisoners tend to crops from early morning to late evening at the Anantapur open prison.

No career criminals

Most of the convicts here got the tag due to circumstances rather than due to their character – there are no hardened career criminals here. "There is a very specific set of criteria a prisoner must fulfil in order to be transferred here," explains Sri K. Chinna Rao, Superintendent of Prisons. "They are required to serve a part of their sentence in a regular jail. That gives us a chance to observe them." Convicts with extensive criminal histories do not make the cut; prisoners with family backgrounds, who have shown consistent good behaviour, who have gone home on parole and returned – these are the ones who make it to the open prison. Another trait that helps is a willingness to work hard. "I reach the fields around six in the morning and work till late evening," says another prisoner. "I feel a sense of ownership for the fields. I'm constantly thinking about them even when I'm not working."

In Anantapur's markets, where the convicts sell their harvest directly to customers, their town's prison produce is associated with chemical-free, high-quality fruits and vegetables. Even in the aftermath of demonetization, when cash was hard to come by and shelves were full of unsold stock, prisoners say their produce consistently sold out. "The locals don't treat us like criminals. Because of what we do here, they don't see a criminal as someone to be feared or kept at a distance. They call us *Anna* (brother) instead of *kaidhi* (criminal),"

says another prisoner. But one of the prisoners quickly interjects, "Of course, if we go 20 km away from here, all that changes again."

It is clear that the responsibility and trust placed in these prisoners enhance their sense of self-worth, but it is also at odds with the popular image of convicts. "Back home, people don't believe the kind of life I lead. They think of prisoners as being kept in chains and breaking rocks," says another prisoner.

This has translated into a rather unexpected equation with the idea of parole for many prisoners. "When you've been in jail this long, everyone treats you differently. It's not me who's suffered the most, but my wife and children. They feel the impact every day," says another prisoner. "Wherever they go, everyone knows their husband or father is a convict. So, when I go on parole, I sit at home the whole time even though that's the only time I'm outside jail. Being at home is more like being jailed than being here."

The Anantapur open prison's chemical-free produce is in high demand with the locals.

Along the compound wall, a little way to the left of the Colony's gate is a small corrugated metal shack that stands testament to the kind of oasis that an open prison can come to represent in the mind of a convict. It houses an ironing service rather like the millions of others run on pavements across the country. The only difference is that it is owned by a former convict who served out his sentence at the open prison, but felt so much at home here that he decided to stay on in its shadow. "There should be a lot more open prisons. That's the only way a prisoner can really change," adds another prisoner, who spent close to four years in three other prisons before being transferred here. "Trapped within the four walls of an ordinary prison, you get angry and start hating society and everything around you. Here, I wake up in the morning and walk around the grounds with a toothbrush in my mouth. I can't help but be at peace in an atmosphere like that."

There are more experiences to share, cherished memories to recount and heart-wrenching stories to tell, but due to the constraint of space, I end here.

OPEN PRISONS: WALL-LESS INCARCERATION



Mr. M. D. Vincent
*Former General secretary,
PMI - AP*

Telangana:

Those who have visited the Cherlapalli Central Jail at Hyderabad marvel at how it looks and say, "Wow! This looks like Brindavan Garden." Some applaud it as a "Five-star resort." Credit for this goes to the correctional wing of the Police Department who envisaged an excellent environment as per the International Prison guidelines. Another wonder is the open-air jail, just opposite to this so-called hi-tech jail. Anyone who enters finds a totally natural village setting or country atmosphere with luscious green crops, vegetable fields, mango, guava, Ashoka, neem, tamarind and several other tall trees along with flowers and creepers.

As we entered the open-air jail at Cherlapalli one Sunday morning, 45-year-old Ram came beaming with joy to meet us. Enthusiastically we asked him, "What happened Ram? Have you been released or what? You look so happy!" Ram smilingly said, "No Sir, I have not been released, but much of my tension has been released after spending one day with my wife and children."

Yes, thanks to the concept of Open-Air jails, here prisoners live their life like farmers at their own village. They work in the fields, take care of dairy and poultry and cultivate vegetables and flowers. Above all, they move about freely in the fields. There is no security detail following them like a shadow and no compound walls too. They are also free to meet their family members for any number of time and for any length of time without limitations.

Once again, the prison authorities deserve hearty congratulations for implementing the idea of open-air jail as an apt solution for managing and maintaining the mental health of convicted prisoners.

An 'open prison/jail' is any jail in which the prisoners are trusted to serve their sentences with minimal supervision and limited security, and are often not locked up in their prison cells. Prisoners are permitted to take up employment while serving their sentence. They may be designated as "training prisons" and are only for those prisoners considered to be low-risk to the public.

In Telangana, we have four central jails: Two at Chenchalguda [One for men and another for women], two at Cherlapally [Hytech prison and one open-air jail]. Besides these, there are 7 district jails, 33 sub-jails, a borstal school and 4 special jails. It is worth mentioning here that the Telangana State Prisons Department introduced the video linkage system between prisons and courts for the first time in the country, which enabled the delivery of speedy justice to prisoners under trial.

Andhra Pradesh:

Open prison system is a remarkable innovation in the realm of Correctional treatment, providing an offender with greater freedom with natural surroundings and lesser tension which culminate in creating an atmosphere conducive to reforming him(her)self and to achieve social, moral and economic development in society.

In the year 1965, Open Prisons, also called as Prisoners' Agricultural Colonies started in Anantapur covering 1,427.57 acres with a capacity of 235 prisoners.

Officers in the rank of Superintendent of Jails hold the post of Superintendents in these prisons. Prisoners who are not involved in heinous offences, are healthy and below 60 years of age, and who have good family relationships are selected to work in these prisons. Besides agricultural activities, training in horticulture, poultry farming, dairy farming and sheep rearing is also imparted to the prisoners in these colonies. Prisoners of open prisons are extended liberal facilities in parole and extra remission.

In Andhra Pradesh, there are four central jails at Rajahmundry, Nellore, Kadapa and Vishakapatnam. There are 7 district jails, plus 99 sub-jails, a women's jail and one well-established open-air jail at Anantapur, with a huge landscape of 1,427.57 acres amidst a beautiful forest-cum-hilly location.

Normally, inmates in open-air jails are very cheerful and active because of less pressure amidst the beautiful natural surroundings and the relative freedom that they enjoy in the open atmosphere. They gather regularly in the community hall for their daily yoga, meditation as well as Sunday prayers and worship. They have access to musical instruments that they play themselves for entertainment and bhajans. The prisoners in open-air jails appear to be well-composed, calmer and peaceful compared to other prisoners in regular jails.

Do they not escape from open-air jail?

One may ask, "Don't they escape from the open-air jail when so much freedom is given?" Well, the answer, in general, is 'No'! While there could be one or two instances of escape, on an average these would be no more than 1%. There are five reasons that hold them there:

1. They are selected from other regular prisons to be in the open-air jail because of their honesty, trustworthiness and good conduct. A person is sent to prison as a punishment

and not for punishment. If the prisoners are given certain freedom and liberty, they would respond favourably and would not betray the confidence displayed in them.

2. They are immersed in work and are happy to work with nature. They feel satisfied and feel good at heart as they are surrounded by greenery and a joyful atmosphere.
3. They meet their families and relatives regularly with no limit on time or frequency.
4. They are happy that their hard work in prison help them to walk out relatively financially well-off when released. The prison authorities save their earnings and incentives from their labour while in prison. An account is opened in their name. If they spent, for example, 10 years in prison, they walk out with a fat pay packet of around Rs. 12 lakhs with cheque book, passbook and a debit card too.
5. As per the open-air manual, if in case they escape, let us say, after three years of their total ten years of imprisonment, then they have to repeat the punishment from year one as those three years get nullified.

Conclusion:

Besides greeting them with encouraging words, prayers and advice which are well-received by the inmates, our volunteers are more than happy to purchase the fresh vegetables and fruits produced from their gardens, most of them being organic. Thus, open-air jail helps the prisoners to be productive. Open-air prisons are the best solution to overcrowded prisons. They are easily maintainable with minimal personnel and officers, and thus, cost-effective. Psychologists also say that open-air prisons help the prisoners to manage their pain and bring down their stress levels.

Hence the Supreme Court has pushed for more *open-air jails* and **more humane treatment of prisoners, mostly undertrials** languishing there. As Denise Hildreth Jones said, "*Some things just couldn't be protected from storms. Some things simply needed to be broken off... Once old things were broken off; amazingly beautiful things could grow in their place.*"

New Ventures - Mizoram

Mr. Francis Thantluanga
State Secretary, Mizoram

Visit to Central Jail, Aizawl: 4 & 20 June
 and 2 & 16 July

Visit to District Jail, Aizawl: 13 & 27 June
 and 11 & 25 July

Numbers of inmates during June & July, 2019:

District Jail, Aizawl: 60 - 75

Central Jail, Aizawl: 530 - 650

5 - 8 PMI volunteers went on every visit. On each visit, the local catechists are invited to preach the gospel. Sometimes local radio artistes are invited to sing gospel hymns. Sweets, TT bats & balls, guitar strings, old magazines, soaps etc. are distributed during the visits.

Rehabilitation Centre:

PMI Mizoram, with the help of Mr Francis Zaithanga, runs the centre under the name of **Horeb Retreat Centre**, Bethlehem Veng, Aizawl, Mizoram. The building was reconstructed with the funds raised

by PMI in 2018. At present there are 8 inmates - some are drug addicts, while some are alcoholics. Most of them do not have a proper home of their own to stay at. In the centre, they are taught to make brooms (they themselves collect the materials from the jungle with the help of the centre director).

The centre is looking after a boy and a girl. The mother of these children died soon after they left the centre and the whereabouts of their father is not known. Now, they are under the care of the centre with permission from the State Social Welfare Department.

The PMI state secretary visited the centre on 28.07.2019 and distributed edible items to the inmates and donated ₹ 10,000/- from his personal fund. He also shared some of his experiences which will be beneficial for them.





WOMAN; THE FULL CIRCLE

Mr Abhishek Benjamin
PMI Volunteer Punjab

In social media and newspapers, we are used to reading about rape, kidnapping, murder and domestic violence against women. According to RTI, there are 3.3 crore cases which are pending to date. These problems affect prisoners and their family members. There are six central jails in Punjab and approximately 300-350 women prisoners are inmates of these jails. We, the Prison Ministry Punjab, in collaboration with Navjeevan Charitable Society Jalandhar, Punjab have taken up the initiative of setting up a tailoring centre for 40 female prisoners in the Central Jail Hoshiarpur, Punjab on 2 August 2019. I (Mr Abhishek Benjamin) got the opportunity to meet the newly appointed Superintendent, Mr Lalit Kholi PPS on 17 July 2019. When I discussed with him about the setting up of the tailoring centre in prison, he was glad and appreciated our efforts to help society and the prisoners. He granted

us permission to start the centre. A total of 12 female prisoners showed an interest in being part of this new initiative.

The date for the inauguration of the tailoring centre was finalized as 2 August 2019. Mr Abhishek Benjamin, PMI Volunteer Punjab organized the event under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Sijith John, PMI State Coordinator Punjab. Mrs Sucheta Ashish Dev, Chief Judicial Magistrate and Secretary of Legal Cell, Hoshiarpur district was the Chief Guest, who cut the ribbon and motivated the inmates to take part actively in the training which would be beneficial for them and wished them all the best for their future. On this occasion, Sr. Sheela CHF, Sr. Mary Abraham Adores and Mr Stephen Teji, Asst. Program Manager from Navjeevan Charitable Society were present along with the Superintendent and the Deputy Superintendent. A total of 6 sewing machines have been handed over to the lady warden along with the raw materials. It will be a 3-months course and after completion of the course, proper certificates will be provided to them. The inmates can apply for a job or apply for a loan for starting a dress boutique for their livelihood after release from the prison.

The PMI Punjab family is greatly indebted to Rev. Fr. Sijith John whose commitment to Prison Ministry is inspiring. Like the Good Shepherd, he left behind the 99 and sought after the one, who was lost and entangled in thorny bushes. All the PMI Punjab volunteers and I wish him God's abundant blessings and great success in his entrusted God-assigned tasks.

Lastly, I would like to conclude on the note that we have taken the necessary steps in making the PMI relevant in Punjab and the name of PMI reverberate within the prison walls of Punjab and that we wish to see all our inmates outside the prison living a decent life.

Plantation of Pmi Sapling in the Archdiocese of Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Fr. Dominic

Gandhinagar Unit Coordinator - PMI

The Archdiocese of Gandhinagar, Gujarat witnessed a historical event on 8 August 2019. The volunteers of Prison Ministry India in the Archdiocese of Gandhinagar came together for the first time to begin this ministry in the archdiocese. The volunteers arrived at 9:00 am and after their registration, Fr. Kingslin helped all the 30 volunteers to get to know each other through ice breakers.

After the Tea break, Fr Francis Kodyan, the National Coordinator spoke to them about the origin and growth of PMI. People were so touched with the way it had taken shape. Thereafter, we had the Holy Eucharist celebrated by Archbishop Thomas Macwan, the archbishop of Gandhinagar, who in his homily shared his own experience of working for the prisoners. He encouraged the volunteers and appreciated them for their willingness to take up this challenging task in the Archdiocese of Gandhinagar.

After a short felicitation program of the members, the archbishop distributed pictures of St. Maximilian Kolbe to each parish representative. He also thanked Fr Hemant for translating the liturgy for Prison ministry Sunday into the Gujarati language. After lunch, the volunteers were enthused to hear from Fr Francis Kodyan the importance of witness value and prayer before beginning the ministry. The participants were taken up with the way PMI functions, especially when he said that it was completely dependent on the providence of God, the sacrifice of volunteers, and their willingness to embrace the inconveniences that came with it.

Sr Fulmani, the State coordinator of PMI also shared with them the activities that she had been doing in Gujarat. At the end, we elected the core team, the teams at Deanery level and the parish team that would work under the guidance of the parish priest at the parish level. The core team, along with Fr. Dominic, the coordinator for the diocese will visit each parish and organize similar seminars. This task will be completed before Christmas. Thus, the sapling of PMI was planted on this day. The PMI archdiocese of Gandhinagar thanks Sr. Fulmani, Fr. Kodyan and Archbishop Thomas for making themselves available to make this new beginning possible in the mission diocese of Gandhinagar.

Mr. David
South Region Secretary

SOUTHERN REGION EXECUTIVE MEETING

Prison Ministry India – Southern India Regional Body & Executive Meeting under TCBC was held at the Social Service Centre, Gunadala, Vijayawada on 19 July 2019 by Rev. Fr. Pasala Lahastraya, AP State Coordinator, under the chairmanship of Most Rev. Dr. Anthony Poola, Bishop of Kurnool, under the guidance of Mr. David Chaco, Southern India Regional Secretary and with the cooperation and collaboration of Rev. Fr. Pasala Thomas, Director of Social Service Centre and Diocesan Coordinator of Prison Ministry India, Vijayawada diocese.

Fr. Anthonyswamy, Southern Regional and Tamilnadu State Coordinator, in his presidential address asked the Prison Ministry to reform and rehabilitate prisoners that they become a source of humanity in society.

Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC, National Secretary of Prison Ministry India presented a PowerPoint of the brief history of Prison Ministry, a brief introduction to Prison Ministry and its functioning in India. This PowerPoint impressed and inspired the participants tremendously.

Mr K. Ashok Kumar, National Executive Member, presented a PowerPoint on the Prison Ministry, its role and functioning in the Andhra church circles, particularly the Vijayawada diocese.

Rev. Fr. Francis Kodiyan MCBS, National Coordinator, after listening to the experiences of each state coordinator from the Southern India Regional Committee spoke about his initiative of the foundation of Prison Ministry and the continuation of the Prison Ministry. In his address, he expressed the need for activities and programmes for the good of released prisoners, like the initiative of the establishment of the Rehabilitation Centre in the Telugu states by the TCBC.

Most Rev. Dr T. Joseph Raja Rao SMM, Bishop of Vijayawada expressed joy at being able to conduct the meeting at his diocese and explained the on-going ministry and his readiness to continue the ministry in the diocese.

The AP diocesan coordinators, parish coordinators, nuns, priests and volunteers from the Vijayawada diocese participated actively in this meeting. Our chairman, Most Rev. Dr Anthony Poola, Bishop of Kurnool, in his address to the participants shared his personal experience of Prison Ministry, his vision and gave insights into the establishment of the Rehabilitation centre in Vijayawada with the collaboration of Most Rev. Dr T. Joseph Raja Rao, Bishop of Vijayawada.

In the afternoon, various southern Indian state personnel presented and submitted their annual reports in the executive meeting. This reporting session allowed for sharing of initiatives, challenges, experiences, and results of each state which motivated everyone.

In the elaborate discussion, the AP diocesan directors, religious members, animators, volunteers, and well-wishers participated vibrantly and the new AP State Executive Committee-cum-office-bearers were elected from among those present for effective and efficient ministry in the AP state.

It is an open and known fact that entry into prisons is not easy for us in the Ministry. There are so many conditions that need to be met to gain entry throughout India.

Prison Ministry India depends on the providence of God and follows the principle of begging as our lifestyle. We depend on local contributions from kind-hearted bishops, priests, nuns and laity. We are like birds of the air and lilies in the field... we depend on our Lord for the prisoners....to become salt of the earth and light of the world.

Hats off to the organizing team, to all the executives of the southern region, the volunteers of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states who made the day memorable.

Dear Editor,

In the last issue, I had mentioned about the low percentage of recidivism (the tendency of a criminal to re-offend) in the Dominican Republic. What makes this even more astonishing is that the Dominican Republic is not a so-called developed country. The socio-economic conditions are not great - there are high poverty and crime rates, a poor education system and large numbers of unemployed people.

The country has two prison systems. The older and traditional model is run by the police and the military. The guards in the new model of the prison system are trained in a new academy set up for the same. The personnel are trained to respect human rights, with a zero-tolerance policy for violations, particularly the guards. Guards with previous experience with either the police or the military are not hired.

Some of the salient points of the new prison system are as follows:

1. Basic education is compulsory. There are inmates doing basic education, middle school education and university education
2. The inmates are kept busy with a regimented timetable for education, work, art, sports and prayers services.
3. The strict regimen starts at 6 in the morning and the very structured nature of the life here means that the very wealthy, the crime lords, and the very poor do not want to be sent to these prisons.
4. There is a wider variety of jobs on offer for the prisoners. They work in farms, greenhouses, textile industry, handicrafts, metal-mechanical industry, leather and fur industry, shoe production. etc. In fact, the bunk beds used in the cells are put together by the inmates.
5. These prisons have trained personnel. From the security guards to psychologists, doctors, social workers and educationalists, the inmates are provided all the facilities for successful reintegration into society.
6. The cost of running these prisons is more than that of the traditional system. However, the reduced recidivism (less than 10%, while it is 50% in traditional Dominican prisons) more than makes up for the financial cost.
7. Cell phones are allowed, but controlled by the facility and computer time is given for educational purposes.
8. The main difference is that here justice is not vengeful, but restorative.

While India does have open prison systems, I feel that we can learn more from the Dominican Republic model prisons. The Dominican Republic political and social milieu is a lot like that of India. Hence, it becomes much more difficult to say that it will not work here, unlike the Swiss prison system, which is another touted model prison system.

Sincerely yours,
Ms Teena Antony



Letters

Dear Chief Editor of *Prison Voice*,

I'm glad to notice the varieties of topics published in PV, penned by a variety of writers. Thanks for making the PV interesting with useful essays.

Mrs. Brighth,
Principal and Correspondent,
Christopher High School,
Hyderabad
(Asst. State Coordinator for
Telangana Unit Of PMI)

Dear Sr Lini,

Hearty congratulations on your excellent effort in bringing out *Prison Voice* with relevant articles and issues.

Regina L.L.B, L.L.M
Secretary of PMI Telangana
Unit

2ND DEATH ANNIVERSERY



THOMAS PALAYOOR

DIED ON 12-08-2017

DOB : 09-05-1944

FUNERAL - 14-08-2017, 11 am

"Death is the last chapter in time,
but the first chapter in eternity"

You have definitely left an indelible
impact. Though our words can do little,
We hope our thoughts and prayers are
assured for you.

PMI Family

Son Suraj Thomas & Family



Celebration of
St Maximillian
Kolbe Feast
at Bangalore
Central Prison with
brethren behind the
bars by National
Team on
August 14, 2019



Gujarath State Meeting



South Regional Executive Meeting



South Region Meeting

**25 YEARS OF GOD'S BLESSINGS TO NATIONAL OFFICE
1994-2019**



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