



Revolutionary Option for the Poor and Marginalised: George M. Soares-Prabhu's Understanding of the Poor and Marginalised

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Abstract: In this article the author tries to bring out the biblical understanding of the Poor and Marginalised by George M. Soares-Prabhu and how he has hermeneutically interpreted the word of God meaningfully and relevantly for their salvation/liberation in the Indian context. Soares-Prabhu expounds that the thinking, feeling, and acting of Jesus, his radical option and revolutionary mission for the poor and marginalised are all based on his God experience as *Abba* in the first immersion of the river Jordan. That is the foundation of the life and spirituality of Jesus that leads him to the way of the Cross and death at Calvary where he had his second immersion in blood. Every disciple is expected to have these two immersions to follow Jesus in one's own context and bear witness to him by liberating the poor and marginalised. Soares-Prabhu explicates the *Decalogue* (OT), the sermon on the mount and the table fellowship of Jesus (NT), to bring

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equality, justice, peace and revolution, (change of heart and transformation of oppressive and sinful structures) to the poor, marginalised and the most suffering and oppressed Dalit Christians in India, all over Asia and the World.

Keywords: Poor in spirit, Marginalized, God experience, Baptism, *Dalits*, Caste, Oppressive poverty, Discipleship, Table fellowship.

Introduction

It was in the academic year 1990-91, when Fr. Rui de Menezes was the Rector of De Nobili College, Pune, I stayed there doing my Master's in Theology at Jnana Deepa (Pontifical Athenaeum). I think that it was the end of August, I had an appointment with George M. Soares-Prabhu to talk with him on a theme for an M.Th paper and write it under his direction. He accepted my request gladly. I told him that I wanted to write a paper on Indian Caste System and criticize its ill-effects and to promote equality among Indians. He suggested to me to study the story of Rantideva in Bhagavata Purana. When I finished writing the paper, I realised that the story has its social, religious, theological and political relevance for us in India today, especially to the Dalits in India who long and work for equality, justice and human dignity.¹

The day on which I met Soares-Prabhu was also the day of enlightenment to me. Soares-Prabhu did not stop with the theme. He posed to me many other questions: How many papers have you finished writing till now? Who are the professors? How many pages have you written for a paper? I answered him it was 3 months since I had finished writing only one paper with 85 pages. Immediately he told me, 'how long are you planning to stay here? M.Th is only a two year programme, so try to write each paper only about 25 pages under a professor and you have to finish writing all the 7 papers in three semesters and the dissertation in the fourth semester'. Even today I gratefully remember Soares-Prabhu who put me on the right track with right orientation that helped me to finish my M. Th on time. It is

a privilege and honour to me, I think, that this year (2020) being the 25th death anniversary of Soares-Prabhu, to read all the four volumes of the collected writings of his and to write an article on “*his understanding of the poor and marginalised.*”

1. How does Soares-Prabhu understand Biblically the Poor and Marginalised

Who is poor? What is poverty? How God and Jesus are concerned about the poor and marginalised? These are the questions often raised not only by the students of theology but by certain groups of provincials, Father and Mother Generals of congregations today? To them all, Soares gives the following answers from the perspective of the Bible.

Who is Poor?

Soares-Prabhu has thoroughly studied the original Hebrew words (OT) such as ‘*ānī*’ or ‘*ānāw*’ (plural: ‘*anīyyīm*’ or ‘*anāwīm*’ (to be bent, bowed down, afflicted), ‘*ebiôn*’ (a person in need), ‘*dal*’ (to be weak, to be little, to languish), ‘*rāsh*’ (to be in want, to be poor), ‘*miskēn*’ (beggar) and Greek words (NT) such as *penēs* (poor), *ptōchos* (destitute) for the poor. And the enlightenment he comes out with is something marvellous: Of all these words, Soares-Prabhu says that ‘*ānī*’ or ‘*ānāw*’ is the significant word that gives the accurate meaning of the biblical understanding of the poor: “It suggests a person who is afflicted and bent, that is, dehumanized, reduced by oppression to a condition of diminished capacity or worth” (*CWG* 1, 262).

The poor are “those who are deprived of the material and social goods needed for an authentically human life ... (and) a study of the two texts, (Lk 4:16:30 and 6:20-26), then that we shall come to know Jesus’ attitude towards poverty and the poor” (*CWG* 2, 260). Further “The ‘poor’ in Jesus’ beatitude it would seem, then, are those who are utterly needy, desperately in want, so that one would be tempted to formulate the Jesus

beatitude as “Blessed are the *destitute*, for theirs is the Kingdom of God” (CWG 2, 260). He explains in addition that the poor are those who are ‘victims of injustice’, ‘socially marginalised’, untouchables (they were impure because of their professions (like tax collectors, tanners, shepherds), lepers (because of some disfiguring illness), possessed (because of some mental disturbance), little ones (because of their ignorance of the law), sinners (because of their violation of accepted ethical or ritual codes). All these are called in the Bible as *anawim* (the afflicted, humbled, deprived), a word which is primarily sociological and not spiritual (CWG 2, 265).

While explaining the situation of the poor in India he makes a thorough study and analysis of Indian society giving us all a list of statistics (CWG 2, 256). Even today the situation has not improved. If we read the global hunger index – 2020, published recently India ranks 94 compared to Nepal 73, Bangladesh 75, and Pakistan 88 among 107 nations where the study is made recently (Malaimalar, 2020). While commenting on the beatitude of Jesus as the beatitude of the oppressed, he thinks of the *Dalits* in India and writes that they are “daily victims of inhuman atrocities and of an utterly dehumanizing discrimination practiced against them (incredibly!) even in allegedly Christian communities (CWG 2, 265).

Reflecting on the question, ‘why are the poor blessed?’ he declares that they “are blessed because they are to be the beneficiaries of *total revolution* ...” (CWG 2, 266). In the history of humankind, how do we look at the poor as subjects or objects? If we look at them as objects, then, we will try to always help them and allow them to continue to be poor. Such an outlook will not propose any structural change on behalf of the poor. But at the same time when we look at them as subjects then they are the ones to change all the oppressive structures to transform society in human history: “... the poor in the Bible are a dynamic group who are not the passive victims of history but those through whom God shapes his history” (CWG 1, 264) and “For the Kingdom is, after all, God’s intervention into history” (CWG 2, 267).

What is Poverty?

What is poverty? There are many definitions depending on our world views (the way in which we look at poverty). However in a straightforward definition (without spiritualising the term poverty) the Asian Bishops mean, “to be deprived of access to a full sharing in human brotherhood” (Rosales and Arévalo, 1992: 143). The mind of Soares-Prabhu reflects almost the same when he defines poverty, “to be deprived of the material and social goods needed for an authentically human life” (CWG 2, 260). He further observes that the poverty in which that the poor (*ptōchos* = ‘*destitute*’) live, “designates one who lacks even the necessities of life and must beg in order to live” (CWG 2, 264). Such a poverty of the destitute is an oppressive poverty (CWG 2, 267), opposed to spiritual poverty (anti consumerism). That “*oppressive poverty*, which is ultimately dehumanizing, is a religious value may be doubted. Jesus certainly never proclaims it as such. Rather, he proclaims the poor ‘blessed’, not because their poverty is a good thing, but precisely because it is an evil which he is about to bring to an end” (CWG 2, 266). Poverty in the teaching and preaching of Jesus is not a natural condition but always the result of oppression (economic destitution or social ostracism). Such a poverty is a violent poverty, and it is imposed on the poor who are oppressed and dehumanised. Thus, “the Jesus beatitude is the beatitude of *the oppressed*” (CWG 1, 265). Moreover, “as a state of economic or social deprivation brought about by exploitation, it is an evil” (CWG 1, 272).

How God and Jesus Are Concerned about the Poor and Marginalised?

The poor in the Old Testament are known as the ‘*victims of unjust oppression*, ‘who cry to God for help and liberation (Ex 2:23-3:15). Hearing the cry of the Israelites, God Yahweh liberates them (Ex 6:2-9), sends innumerable prophets to guide, guard and support them and defend them with serious warning to the oppressors (Ezek 22:1-16; Is 10: 1-4; Mic 6:9-15; Am

8:4-12). Yahweh as a warrior and defender of the marginalized Israel was the foundational spiritual experience of Israelites who build their other aspects of human life in and around it. In the context Asia and India where the poor are the majority (80% in Asia, more than 65% in India), who belong to different religions, Soares-Prabhu discovers something unique in ‘the biblical God-Poor relationship’: “No other religious tradition I know gives such importance to the poor or assigns to them so significant a role” (*CWG* 1, 272).

In the New Testament, Soares-Prabhu explains that right from the beginning of his ministry Jesus opts to work for the salvation/liberation of the poor and marginalised. To the poor he gifts God’s Reign first and makes them the blessed and the rich cursed. Whenever he actualises his plan for the poor, he encounters oppositions and blocks from the socio-political and socio-religious power structures (Mk 3:1-6). Many times, his enemies take stones to attack him but Jesus escapes from them. He has confrontation with his foes not for one or two days but throughout his life. Its climax is in the garden of Gethsemane where he is finally arrested and is crucified at Calvary which is the second baptism which he foretells during his ministry (Lk 12:50).

2. The Baptism, God Experience of Jesus and His Option for the Poor and Marginalised

Soares-Prabhu writes that the foundational experience of Jesus in his baptism is his God experience as *Abba*, a unique experience indeed (*CWG* 3, 3). “The Christian tradition begins with Jesus’s experience of God. This is the starting point of the dharma of Jesus understood both as the dharma which he practised (Jesus’s dharma) and the dharma he preached (Christian dharma)” (*CWG* 3, 3). In his reflection, Soares-Prabhu comments that both of them are seen from the perspective of the poor, marginalised and suffering humanity.

While reflecting on the God experience of Jesus, Soares-Prabhu traces it in the baptism of Jesus where Jesus identifies himself in solidarity with the tax-collectors and sinners. The moment he identifies with them is the moment of many revelations (Mk 1:9-11): 1. Jesus reveals his option and mission. 2. God reveals that Jesus is God's beloved Son in whom God is well pleased, and 3. God's will is being fulfilled and Jesus is the God's Reign bearer and God's Reign maker. It is possible for him as he is the bearer and giver of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who makes it possible for every disciple of Jesus to follow Jesus in accepting poverty in one's own personal life and opting to work for the poor and the marginalized who are the centre of God's Reign.

In baptism, Jesus totally identifies himself with the poor, marginalised and outcaste. One can see it throughout the Gospels. It is also seen in the lifestyle of Jesus, the type of persons he chooses as his disciples and the places and villages where he was busy in doing his ministries: "The mission field of Jesus was the Palestine Countryside, with its poor, backward villages and its primitive townships, not the Hellenized (or as we might say today 'westernised') urban centers to which the rich flocked" (*CWG* 2, 260). It is also an observation, and teaching of Jesus that riches are "an insuperable obstacle to the Kingdom, because they make a man godless and heartless" (Mk 10:17-22) (*CWG* 2, 257-59).

The God experience of Jesus enables him to have a clear cut vision and mission. It is the same experience inspires the disciples to have the same vision and mission in one's own context. The vision of Jesus was: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." The Reign of God is established, wherever and whenever God is accepted as a common Parent to all, whenever and wherever Jesus realizes by bringing the option people from the periphery to the centre and slavery to salvation/liberation: "There is here a radical de-sacralisation of the cosmos, a

radical de-hierarchisation of society (that is, a radical affirmation of the equality of humankind) and a radical shift from an ethics of observance (ritual or legal) to an ethics of love (“the heart”)” (*CWG* 3, 6).

3. God Experience of Jesus is the qualification for discipleship

God experience of Jesus is the qualification for discipleship says, Soares-Prabhu: “What makes a person a Christian is not professing certain beliefs, nor practising particular rituals, nor undergoing an initiation rite, nor belonging to a recognizable social group, nor even confessing the name Jesus, though these are inevitable stages in the evolution of a religious tradition. To be disciple of Jesus means to experience God the way that Jesus experienced God” (*CWG* 3, 4). From the perspective of the exploited world (understood as third World), following Jesus means following him in one’s own context (social, political, economic, cultural and religious, education and health). According to the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences there are 80% of the people in Asia who are poor and they belong to different religions and cultures (Rosales and Arevalo, 1992: 157). Therefore the Christian service to people, in order that the Reign of God may come in Asia, has to have as main goal the salvation/liberation of the 80% Asian poor. To achieve this the Church in Asia has to inculturate in the midst of the poor and their cultures and enter into dialogue with their religions.

4. Radical Option of Jesus to Accept Women as Helpers and Disciples

Soares-Prabhu observes how women were considered and treated as unequal in a patriarchal society (Alangaram, 2001: 103-04). In the time of Jesus, women in the Jewish world were considered as non-persons. Against such socio-cultural situation, he creates counter culture and liberates them. Such new thoughts, feelings and action programs of liberation have their origin in

the *Abba* experience of Jesus. Jesus broke all the oppressive structures against women, talking to a Samaritan woman (Jn 4:5-42), protecting and defending women in public (Lk 7:37-50; Mk 14:3-9; 12, 40; Jn 8:3-11), sharing in their ritual impurity, when he draws attention to the haemorrhaging woman who touched him (Lk 8:43-48) healing women (Mk 1:31), welcoming them (Mk 10, 13) and appreciating and rewarding them (Mk 7-29) (Alangaram, 2001: 103-04). The radical option and attitude of Jesus is both a call and a challenge to all his followers in the world. Soares-Prabhu understands that the radical option of Jesus demands from us to opt for structural change: “Love implies an effective response to the whole spectrum of needs that we observe around us. Because it is increasingly evident that the effective response to many of our most urgent needs is necessarily a structural one, justice understood as a change of structures is an inescapable dimension of love” (CWG 3, 8).

The reflection of Soares-Prabhu on women liberation is contextual and relevant to Asia and India where women are oppressed, ill-treated, dehumanised and “... cry out to the Lord for liberation” (Rosales and Arévalo, 1992: 183). It is in this context of oppression and dehumanization, the Asian Bishops remind us all to pay serious attention on liberating women without which the liberation in Asia is incomplete and impossible. That is why they remind us: “Mary is the Mother of God, that she, a woman, uniquely co-operated with Jesus so that the Reign of the Father may come. It is not just a human necessity but a Gospel imperative that the feminine half of the world’s population be recognised and their dignity restored, and that they be allowed to play their rightful role in the world and in the Church” (Rosales and Arévalo, 1992: 183).

5. Spirituality of Jesus and His Revolutionary Option for the Poor and Marginalised

While reflecting on the spirituality of Jesus, Soares begins with the baptismal experience of Jesus where he understands

God as our Parent and humans are sisters and brothers. Though he has committed no sin (1 Pet 2:22), he identifies himself with the sinners and tax collectors (Mt 3:14-15), the poor and outcaste of his time. Jesus reveals his readiness to be with such people and suffers with them in order to save them. Jesus makes it clear from the beginning of his public life (mission) who are his ministry-people to whom he promises the Reign of God first. His life style is the life style of the marginalised and poor, which he mentions that “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Mt 8: 20).

On the one hand Jesus continues his identity with the poor and marginalised, on the other hand he encounters the growing enmity and hatred of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians. Mark points out already in the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, when he decides to be on the side of a marginalised person and to heal him on the Sabbath day, the Pharisees (religious leaders) join with the Herodians (political leaders) and plotted against Jesus how to destroy him (Mk 1: 1-6). The Gospels present us a continuous confrontation with the establishment or powers of evil. For Jesus, the enemies were local and not international.

In apocalyptic thinking, writes Soares, Satan is considered to be ruler of the world and he rules it with the demonic men and women who dehumanize the poor and the marginalized. But the Abba experience of Jesus “cannot tolerate any form of discrimination based on race, religion, community or gender; nor can it remain passive in the face of unjust structures that deprive people of what they need to lead a fully human life, for it is always a brother or sister who is hurt by such discrimination or injustice” (CWG 3, 97). Soares distinguishes between religion and spirituality. Religion he says may lead humans to worship Jesus but spirituality lead us to follow Jesus, siding with the poor and marginalised defending and liberating them as Jesus did.

All the miracles of Jesus according to Soares-Prabhu are not merely actions of compassion to heal the poor but also actions of subversion of a ‘demonic’ power structure that dehumanize

the poor. Thus they explain the vision and mission of Jesus and the struggle he undergoes to establish societal justice, which is the justice of God and God's Reign: "This is formulated with unusual force and clarity in two passages of Luke's Gospel in the inaugural sermon of the synagogue of Nazareth with which Luke prefaces his account of the ministry of Jesus (Lk 4:16-21); and in the series of beatitudes and woes with which he opens his Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6:20-27) (CWG 3, 97).

Jesus's revolutionary option for the poor and marginalised and his continuous confrontation of the rich and the powerful, comes from the foundational experience of baptism in the water that leads finally into another immersion, immersion in the blood at Calvary, which he foretold to the disciples during his ministry of establishing the Reign of God. His revolutionary option for the poor and marginalised demanded a price which was his own life. In the words of Soares-Prabhu: "The Cross is not an arbitrary irruption into the life of Jesus. It is the natural outcome of his spirituality. A spirituality of identification with the poor and of confrontation with the rich and the powerful leads inevitably to the conflict that culminates in the Cross" (CWG 3, 100). Further he points out that "... on the Cross Jesus is wholly poor and totally outcast. ... Here he is one with all the marginalized and all the martyred victims of the earth" (CWG 3, 100-01). The followers of Jesus cannot have any other spirituality except the spirituality of solidarity with the poor and marginalized for their salvation/liberation and confrontation with all evil powers that may be men, women and oppressive-sinful structures to dethrone them and send them away empty.

6. The Enlightenment from the Decalogue for the Liberation of the Dalits

We need to congratulate Soares-Prabhu that he has dealt on an important topic – *Dalit* equality and liberation in the Indian context drawing enlightenment from the Decalogue. Being well aware of the living conditions of the *Dalits*, Soares-Prabhu declares that

‘they are the poorest of the poor’, and they are not treated as human being with respect and dignity. This is because they are ritually polluted and forced to do works that are linked with dirt and death. Further Soares-Prabhu observes that when the *Dalits* become Christians, the oppressions and ill-treatment continues even in the churches, and the authorities in the churches are indifferent to socio-economic and socio-political injustices, as they belong to high castes. Keeping this as the background, Soares-Prabhu advocates that we need a theology that will read the Bible from the perspective of the Dalit’s suffering and liberation and he makes an attempt to do this taking the Decalogue in Ex 20:1-17 (*CWG 1*, 2-8-09).

Soares-Prabhu perceives and analyses first the scope and characteristics of the Decalogue and recognises that it covers all areas of human life (political, social, economic, cultural and religious, health and education) “-relationship to God (vv. 1-11), to human community (vv. 12-16) and to material possessions (v. 17)” (*CWG 1*, 209). For him the Decalogue has its origin in God: “It is wholly universal in its scope, valid always, everywhere and for all” (*CWG 1*, 209). When a *Dalit* reads the Decalogue he/she is happy and joyful as it is applicable to all making everyone equal. Where as in Indian caste context, the laws of Manu are different for different castes, favouring the upper castes, dehumanising the lower castes and totally, mercilessly and inhumanly oppressing the *Dalits* as the outcastes. Therefore Soares-Prabhu points out that the Decalogue is ‘quite unlike’ *Manu* (*CWG 1*, 210). The Decalogue is universally applicable and promotes justice for all, while the *Manu* is partial, hierarchical, oppressive and dehumanising from the perspective of *Dalits*. Further Soares-Prabhu takes cognizance of the Creation story of Genesis (Gen 1:26-27), where all humankind has been created in the image of God. Such biblical revelations are not only juxtaposed with *Manu* but also being questioned on its origin, its authenticity and its relevance from the perspective of *Dalits* who are made poor and oppressed, kept illiterate for centuries in India. Soares-Prabhu concludes: “With its implicit proclamation of the equality of all human be-

ings, the Decalogue is one way of drawing the broad outlines of this liberative community, towards which all *Dalits* everywhere, aspire” (CWG 3, 210).

7. The Lessons from Jesus for the Liberation of the Dalits in India

We also value and acknowledge the contribution of Soares-Prabhu who draws lessons from Jesus and his table fellowship for the liberation of *Dalit* Christians in India (CWG 1, 223-240). He thought and wrote about the liberation of *Dalit* Christians (in 1992), much before the statement of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India presenting its Policy of Dalit empowerment in the Catholic Church in India, Dec. 8, 2016.

Though the untouchability is removed in the constitution, it exists in every village and town in India. The *Dalits* have rejected the name given to them by Mahatma Gandhi as ‘Harijans’ and they have accepted the word *Dalit* (which means broken and oppressed) first coined by Jyotiba Phule. The *Dalits* are ill-treated, humiliated and dehumanized every day and everywhere in India. The *Dalits* are the most oppressed people: “*Dalits* occupy the very lowest strata in the caste system, which is an intricate, all pervasive and incredibly tenacious structure of institutionalised inequality, unparalleled in the world for the damage it does to people” (CWG 1, 146). Politically they are zero, economically poor, socially outcaste, culturally and religiously they are ostracised, health and education are not available to them. It is in this context, Soares raises two questions which are (both exegetical (1) and hermeneutical (2)) very relevant from the perspective of Dalit liberation/salvation: “(1) what this revolutionary praxis of Jesus (his table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners) meant in the social world in which he lived; and (2) what it has to tell us about our own attitudes towards *Dalit* Christians in the caste-ridden communities we live in” (CWG 1, 223).

The act of table fellowship of Jesus exegetically is one of the counter cultural ways to reveal God’s unfathomable love and

mercy to the least and last in the Jewish society where the society was built hierarchically based on the holy and profane and ritually pure and impure. In the social world of Jesus, his table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners is an "... expression of a radically new (and therefore thoroughly disturbing) theological vision, rooted in a new experience of God, calling for a new kind of society" (*CWG* 1, 226). Further it signifies the intimacy, communion and fellowship, and the shape and destiny of the end time community (The Reign of God in its fullness – Is 25:6; Mt 8:1; Lk 23: 30). It is in contrast to those communities of Pharisees and Essenes of Qumran who considered themselves pure and kept themselves away from the impure (the tax collectors and sinners). So, the separation from all that is socially and ritually unclean. In the community of Jesus, the so-called impure and unclean people (the tax collectors and sinners take the central stage), and the reason is that "the 'mercy code' of Q (Lk 6: 27-36) replaces the 'holiness code' of Leviticus (Lev 19: 17-26)" which is a revolution based on his God experience. God is 'Father' (*Abba*) and all humans are sisters and brothers in the Reign of God, and in this way Jesus eradicates the traditional understanding of holy and profane (*CWG* 1, 227-233).

Secondly, Soares-Prabhu prophetically points his finger straight away to every Christian in India, raising a question about our attitudes towards the *Dalit* Christians in caste-communities. In his hermeneutical explanation, he observes and analyses the existing Christian community and he says that we have missed the point in our understanding of the table-fellowship of Jesus. We the Indian Catholics believe in the Caste system and practise it in our day today life, in celebrations, in churches and during the time of seeking marriage alliances. Thus we are Christians only in name but in practice we are totally Hindus following the caste culture in our thinking, feeling and acting. Already in 1982, Catholic Bishops Conferences of India declared that caste is sin, caste discrimination is inhuman and "it violates the God-given dignity and equality of the human person" (CBCI, 1982: 149).

It is also “an outright denial of the Fatherhood of God which, in practice, renders meaningless the brotherhood of man” (*CWG* 1, 223). Keeping the same spirit of CBCI, Soares-Prabhu states convincingly, “Caste discrimination in any form whatever is wholly incompatible with Christianity” (*CWG* 1, 234).

Therefore he calls us all to reflect seriously on the diabolic and inhuman practice of caste discrimination both within the Church and in the society, raising the following questions: How is it that Christians behave exactly like the Hindus? Have they been really baptized and converted at all? How can one be a Christian without accepting the basic principles of Christianity? Have they really become members of the one community called Church where all are brothers and sisters, as the children of the same Father who is in heaven (Mt 7:21)?

Having reflected on the above questions, he himself gives us the various reasons for such a situation in the Indian Church: 1. In the teaching and preaching of the Church, it has totally failed because many Christians look at the *Dalits* with a condescending attitude without accepting their sins. 2. We celebrate Eucharist (a symbol of unity), but at the same time we follow caste system in allotting separate places for the *Dalits* to sit in the Church and separate places in a communion queue, humiliating Jesus in our brothers and sisters. “Christian *Dalit* is (like ‘square circle’) a contradiction in terms” (*CWG* 1, 223). 3. To bring the caste discrimination into the Eucharistic celebration, is truly to “‘despise the Church of God and humiliate those who have nothing’ (1 Cor 11:22), and so ‘sin against the body and the blood of the Lord’ (1 Cor 11: 27)” (*CWG* 1, 223). In the midst of all these, there is soteriological potential in the suffering and humiliation of the *Dalits*: “In the powerlessness and brokenness of Jesus what is hidden is the power and wisdom of God. So too in the powerlessness and brokenness of the *Dalits* will break forth liberation/salvation through the power of the Spirit of the living God. The Spirit of the Lord is upon the *Dalits* to release them from their captivities and to set them at liberty (Lk 4: 18)” (Alangaram, 2019: 41).

Conclusion

When I read the 4 volumes of the *Collected Writings of George M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J*, I understand that these collections are like an ocean and its depth is unfathomable. I wish every professor, and student of theology reads all the 4 volumes that give us right direction and orientation on the method of theologizing in the Indian context today. During his life time, Soares was one of the five well known theologians in the world. His writings reveal the in-depth study of the original works and interpretations of the Bible.

His personal readings and references of the world famous scripture scholars and the renowned theologians like Joachim Jeremias, Karl Rahner, Rudolf Bultmann, Karl Barth, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Walter Brueggemann, Rudolf Bultmann, Raymond E. Brown, Juan Luis Segundo, Gustavo Gutierrez, Edward Schillebeeckx, J. Severino Croatto, Raimundo Panikkar, Paul Ricoeur, Hans-Georg Gadamer, John Dominic Crossan, Aloysius Pieris and others, astound me. He is a model for us the theologians in India, using the Indian sources and referring to the Indian theologians like Michael Amaladoss, S. Kappen, Francis X. D'Sa, M. M. Thomas, Amalorpavadass, Stan Lourdasamy, Mataji Vandana, Mathew Vellanickal, Gorge V. Lobo and many others.

He is a prophet for our times, because he has preached and taught the *Dharma* of Jesus and written many articles not only from the perspective of the poor and marginalised but also from the perspective of *Dalits* who are 65% of the Catholic Church, and also the most oppressed people in India today. If we want to be thankful to Soares-Prabhu, we need to plan, continue to theologize on behalf of the poor, marginalised and the *Dalits* and direct all our ministries towards their salvation/liberation in India, Asia and the whole world.

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Notes

1. In 2011, I reworked the story of Rantideva and published it in the Journal of Indian Theology, Vol. IV, No. 2, May-August, 2011, with the new title: Another India Possible, The Story of Rantideva: It's Socio-Religious, Theological and Political Relevance for us Today.

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