



10th July 2021

NEWS FROM THE BHOKAR COMMUNITY¹

A small experience of going beyond the frontiers

Maher means “Mother’s house”. MaHer was founded by Sr. Lucy Kurien in 1997 in Pune, India. This organisation works to provide shelter and support to orphans, the disabled, destitute and mentally ill women, men, children, and the elderly. I had an opportunity to work at MaHer as part of my field work (block placement) for MSW in Counselling.



At MaHer I learnt that social work is neither about providing nor about educating; it is the wholesome mix of both. MaHer provides every need of each person who takes shelter there. According to Maslow’s model, the physiological or the basic needs are the first that need to be satisfied; once this is satisfied the person moves to the next level till he or she reaches to the self fulfillment needs. I feel this is how the needs of each member are provided for at MaHer by giving him/her the opportunity to move on in life.



While at MaHer, I spent most of my days at Vatsalyadham – a home for mentally challenged women. It was my first experience of working with mentally disturbed patients. I have grown in compassion towards these people instead of having fear or other prejudices. I was confirmed in my gifts and talents in the area of counseling, by doing case work and listening to so many

who wanted a listening ear.



It also changed some of my set ideas; for example, so far I had heard “bloom where you are planted.” How is it possible? “Plant me where I can bloom.” So true. Sometimes I had thought “I don’t think people will feel free with me...!” This changed with the opportunity to relate to different types of people: old, young, children, men and women. It was a very rich experience for the people were free with me.



¹ The Bhokar Community comprises two RSCJs, one CCR (Congregation of Carmelite Religious) and one lay volunteer; all the members of the community have contributed to this newsletter.

“*Kripa Foundation*” is an organisation battling addiction and HIV AIDS. It was founded in 1981 by Fr. Joe Pereira at Mt. Carmel Church, Mumbai. This was another organisation where I went for my study purpose, namely for my block placement for the same course of MSW in Counselling. I learnt how addiction is a disease, and the way it can ruin some one’s life. Alcoholic Anonymous is a Spiritual Programme. It contains twelve steps to provide de-addiction treatment and support to addicts and their families. For the families they have a programme called AL-Anon (Family systems Therapy - FST) through this they help the family members to ease their tension and to help the addict. This programme teaches not only the addicts but also a normal human being how to live a disciplined and spiritual life. Respect for one another and family, humility, forgiveness and patience such values are given priority to practice in daily life. I also had the opportunity to conduct sessions and share my knowledge with them on topics like group dynamics and self examination.



This way I had opportunity to enhance my knowledge both at Maher and at Kripa Foundation.

Sr. Deodita Godinho RSCJ

HOPE whisperstry it one more time

What oxygen is to the lungs, such is hope to the meaning of life. - Emil Brunne



worth of good health.

It was my privilege to carry out my block placement for the MSW course at Asha Kendra, Puntamba. It has given me a unique experience of understanding the life of a paralyzed person and it also made me realize that we need to be aware of what our physical body communicates to us. Everybody who enjoys good health often forgets to be grateful to God for it, but when we experience aches and pain we realize the

Asha Kendra is a hospital cum rehabilitation centre spread across 18 acres of land with eco-friendly infrastructure surrounded by a huge number of trees which generate pure air to cure the patients. ‘Asha’ means ‘Hope’ and thereby ‘Asha Kendra’ standing for ‘Centre of Hope’. It is indeed Hope that whispers there. People bring their patients to Asha Kendra with great hope and trust. The patients are from the age range of 3 years onwards. The only hope that the caretakers carry is that the patient should be able to help themselves instead of being dependent. The people come here for the treatment from different parts of India and across the globe. The time period of a course is 10 days; the patients are advised by the doctors to go through at least 3 courses in which they find a difference with regard to their illness.

As I have worked for a month with Asha Kendra, I have seen that they make the unfit fit for the society by providing alternative therapies within the reach of the ‘poor’ and also accessible to the rich. The alternative therapies mainly are acupuncture, panchakarma and physiotherapy. These treatments activate the nerves and bring movement in the affected parts of the body.

I had always believed that the person gets a stroke after a certain age, but according to the life-style of the present day the young and the old are succumbing to this. As per my observation, I have learnt that people are not aware of the uneven rise of blood pressure. The patients come in a completely helpless stage, but when they go back, they go back in a state where they can help themselves and do their chores by themselves. The patient's co-operation with the treatment is the most important factor. Counseling too is provided to the patients, by which they are helped to accept themselves and their situation instead of denying it.

Working with Asha Kendra has given me opportunity to understand the other side of life. The co-operative staff gave me necessary information and helped me in understanding the work that they carry out to bring about a change in society. Thus I can say everybody wants HOPE, whether big or small, rich or poor, man or a woman, theist or an atheist. We as change makers are called to bring hope into the lives of the people. Let us be people of hope, bringing hope to the people around us, which in fact will bring changes for the better. Thus, let us whisper hope.

Sr. Gracy Arokiadass CCR

Living the Eucharist

The Eucharist is the centre of the Christian life; just as we need food for our body, Eucharist is the food for our soul. Sunday mass is very important for me; since Corona virus pandemic started I



missed it. Online Mass was not the same; but now I realize that Eucharist is not just worship but a gift given by Jesus to live life fully. It is the gift of God's love and presence in the world. He is present in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Catholic faith; the Eucharist calls us to serve. To say in the words of Pope Francis and adopt this in my life: "I am on a Mission" or simply that "I have a Mission"; to have a permanent mission requires courage, audacity, imagination and the desire to go beyond the frontiers.

Jesus said that no-one lights a lamp only to put it under a tub. The lamp must be in a place where it can give light to take away the darkness. In the same way the Eucharist, that we are so blessed to receive, cannot be hidden away. It needs to show itself in our words and actions.

As days of the pandemic went on and when two members of my community got Covid I felt the real pain of Jesus' suffering and then the joy of resurrection. As I looked after the two sisters who got Covid, I felt strongly that the Mass was not just to be celebrated but to be lived. The Eucharist means love: to care as Jesus did, to make sacrifice as Jesus did, to go through struggle, pain and to die to my own comforts and to serve others with joy. I did my best to serve the sick sisters; I planned a proper diet for them and made sure to give them food on time. I kept myself aware and alert to be available whenever they needed me. I was only thinking of them, how to keep them happy & healthy.

I also experienced God's great kindness towards me that although I looked after the sisters with Covid I did not get the infection. I really felt blessed to serve others, trusting in God and God took

care of me. My faith in God has increased by my serving my sisters. I felt the Eucharistic Christ present with me while I served my sisters.

I really felt that God gave me grace to live the Eucharist in my life by serving others without fear. Now whenever I receive communion it reminds me to live the Eucharist in my day-to-day life by serving and loving others. Eucharist is mission; we are meant not just to attend the Eucharist, but to be and to live the Eucharist. I thank God for giving me this new insight during this pandemic, especially when two of my community members were suffering from Covid.

Ms Rita D'Souza

Be the reason someone smiles today

This year has challenged us with the spread of pandemic and the lockdown. In the month of February 2021, as there was a slight decrease in the number of restrictions, we started the plumbing course training programme. I was happy that two RSCJs (Srs. Anita Nazareth and Josephine Pereira) came for the course.

We worked in the area of livelihood by organizing this plumbing skill training for rural youth thereby providing them a means for employment. There were many admissions for this training, so we conducted two batches of the plumbing course.



The first batch started on 1st March 2021 in the mornings for 30 students; the second batch started from 9th March 2021 in the afternoons for another 30 students. 55 youth completed the plumbing course. For conducting this course Ashankur, Bhokar, collaborated with **Pratham** (Pratham is an innovative learning organization created to improve the quality of education in India). It was a great



help to get a trainer and the training materials and safety kit for students of the plumbing course from Pratham. The youth were very grateful to Ashankur for getting this opportunity for attending this skills training programme. After the plumbing course, many youth got job placements. One of the trainees informed me with joy after getting his 1st salary. It gave me great joy to hear this joy-filled news. Unfortunately, the lockdown due to the second wave of the pandemic began and many could not join their work sites.

The second wave of pandemic Covid-19 hit the villages. Many people and families were infected. The second wave brought in a lot of insecurities and uncertainty in the lives of people. The daily wage workers and those staying in small houses around us have suffered on many levels. Some were hospitalized and many went to the quarantine care centres. Many Covid infected patients did not get beds and medicines in the hospitals. During this time many have lost their jobs. Many people were not able to afford treatment. Due to the lack of treatment many people died in our area.

I was infected by Covid in April 2021 and it was a very hard time for my sisters to make medicines available for me. I am grateful for their love and prayers. Having gone through Covid, I understand those who are suffering from Covid-19. Good nutrition is crucial for health, particularly in times when the immune system needs to fight the virus. So we provided food kits for those who have lost their jobs and for Covid infected families who needed good nutrition to recover. We distributed food kits to around 370 families in Bhokar, Deolali, Ashoknagar, Sutgirni, Malewadi and Shirasgaon. We also distributed food kits to sugarcane-cutter and brick kiln migrant workers.



One day, a young widow with two children approached me with tears in her eyes. There was no smile on her face. I gave her the food kit but she wanted some work to earn her living. Looking at her situation at this moment I thought of helping her by giving her some work in Ashankur. So I called her to work. She was very grateful for getting work at this moment. She is helping out in cleaning the centre and she also works in the farm. She is ready to do any kind of work. When she got her wages, there was a smile on her face. I felt that I should help where I can and give what I can. When she got her first week's wages she smiled and said she would buy food grains. And when she got her wages for the second week she smiled and said she would buy clothes for her children. "Always find opportunities to make someone smile and to offer random acts of kindness in everyday."



It fills me with joy when I look behind and see the joy that I could bring in my own little ways in the lives of the simple people I live with. Indeed it is a blessing to be a reason for someone's smile.

Sr. Prisca Tirkey RSCJ