

## The Historical Analysis of the First Arrival of De La Salle Brothers and their Educational Impact in India.

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### **Abstract**

Lasallian teaching and education is a gift, a passion, a mission, a calling, a vocation. This paper contends that a Lasallian Educational pedagogy and the Lasallian Brothers were in greater demand to bring serious concerns of uplifting the poor and marginalized in few States in India through its enthralled Pedagogy. It explores how Lasallian Brothers have buried themselves completely to establish Lasallian centres in few parts of India and what caused them to quit and brought them back to the Indian soil with a great vigor, that became the torch bearers to dispel the darkness of Ignorance and illiteracy. This paper was made after the careful analytical reading and research of the letters, circulars, inscriptions, souvenirs, Reports of the Major superiors of the Brothers of the Christian school and Church Authorities during both arrivals of the Brothers in India. This brings enormous details for the cause of strengthening the implementation of Lasallian pedagogy in Lasallian mission centres.

**Key Words** : Lasallian Pedagogy, Brothers, Mission, Children

### **INTRODUCTION**

Lasallian pedagogy was unique in the particular combination of teaching strategies. Lasallian pedagogy is practical, meets students where they are, sets the academic bar high, provides scaffolding to help students rise to the level of excellence, incorporates zeal, and it teaches minds, touches hearts and transforms the lives of the children<sup>1</sup>. Started by John Baptist De La Salle in Rheims, France in 1679, the educational system fostered by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The Congregation of the Brothers of the Christian schools, founded by St. John Baptist De La Salle in 1680, flourished in France and Europe for over a century. The French Revolution in 1789, took its toll on this congregation of religious Brothers to propagate the Lasallian pedagogy to the other parts of the world. In 1859, the request of Pope Gregory XVI as well as the Grant-in-Aid policy of the British Government, prompted the Brothers from Malaysia to open schools in India and Burma. Br. Liefroy as well as many other pioneers of Malaysia moved over to India to open schools. Due to many reasons

brothers of the Christian schools left India<sup>2</sup>. The impact made by the Lasallian Pedagogy brought back the Brothers to India again on 1961.

### **Objective of the study**

- The purpose of this paper is to identify and analysis the origin of two arrivals of the initiators of the lasallian pedagogy in India.
- To identify the key components of for the immediate closures of the Lasallian pedagogy centres in India.
- To dig out and validate the reasons for the Invitations by the church hierarchies to the Lasalle Brothers to restart the Lasallian educational centres in India.
- To Identify the pedagogical underpinnings of the Lasallian tradition and to analyse the heights of the social impacts that occurred in the lives of Lasallian children by the Lasallian Pedagogy in Indian states.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

De La Salle Brothers in Ceylon (Part 1,2 &3) by Br. Michael Robert FSC, (2000), De Lasalle Brothers Publications, Srilanka. This work precisely presents the overall history of the arrival of De Lasalle Brothers in Srilanka, India and Pakistan and few Far East countries. Here, the author Brother Michael beautifully elaborates the initiatives of the delasalle Brothers in establishing lasallian educational institutions in above said countries during 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian schools in the Nineteenth Century 1850-1900 by Brother W. J. Battersby PhD (1963), Wadedgrave Publishers, London. This huge volume from the great lasallian author W.J. Battersby strive to bring the crystal clear details of the historical background of the origin of the De LaSalle Brothers' mission in Far East countries in the world during 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

A Brief History of De La Salle Brothers in India (2010), by Brother Antony Arulsamy FSC, Lasallian Publication, Madurai. Brother Arulsamy's work bears the torch on the history of the establishment of Lasallian Educational Institutions in India and author magnifies how this lasallian educational institutions transform the lives of the poor youth in India.

Lasallian Resurrection in India by Br. Lawrence O'Toole (December 1966) Lasallian Publication, India. It provides crystal clear summary of the historical context of the two arrivals of the De Lasalle Brothers and their establishment of Lasallian schools and communities in India at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and second part of 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

**METHODOLOGY**

The proposed study on the historical analysis of the origin of two arrivals of the initiators of the Lasallian Pedagogy and its impact on a few States of India is based on the collection of Primary and secondary datas. Primary sources like letter correspondence of the Hierarchies of the Church and congregation of the Brothers of the Christian schools, Inscriptions, House Histories of first communities, reports of the Council minutes, Circulars of the major Superiors, Souvenirs of tercentenary and sesquicentennial anniversaries, statistics of the Institutes from the Archives of Provincial House in Srilanka. The secondary datas were collected from several journals and books published on Lasallian Pedagogy and Lasallian Charism and on other websites of Lasallian institutions.

**LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH**

Lasallian Pedagogy vibrates successfully its novel implications in eighty countries around the world for last 340 years. And found hard to trace the sources on Lasallians arrival in India. The whole amount of work completely just built on the collections that pooled from Archives of De La Salle Brothers in India and Srilanka and few sources from the desk of authors Brothers W.J. Battersby, Lawrence O' Tool, Arulsamy and Joseph Reid only.

**ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION****Lasallian pedagogy**

Lasallian Pedagogy has been marked by strategic, deliberate pedagogy that is responsive to the socio-political context<sup>3</sup>. His pedagogy is the composure of the works of earlier and contemporary educational innovators. Lasallian schools have traditionally implemented and actuated the pedagogy that carried the burden of teaching the poor, a burden that continues today throughout the Lasallian educational Institutes, even in financially affluent socio-economic areas like India.

Brother William Mann Quotes from Brother Leon's writings about Pedagogy, It is, first of all, a sacred interaction between pupil and teacher. Lasallian teaching and education is, above all, a gift, a passion, a mission, a calling, a vocation. It is something both mystical and magical, something best understood as a "sacred interaction between pupil and teacher," something that is inspired and that inspires, an energy once tapped into that can be channeled and focused, a fire that burns within, one that needs to be fanned to flame and then tended, and that in the best of situations. It is also an innovative response to real human need<sup>4</sup>. A key characteristic of Lasallian pedagogy, highlighted by Brother Léon in the third volume of his study of the Conduct, was that the success of the schools depended on the quality of the teachers; and this required their initial and ongoing formation.

### **Who are these De La Salle Brothers**

Lasallian education began as something eminently practical and far removed from the realm of higher education. The Brothers of the Christian Schools, the creation and life's work of John Baptist de La Salle, began rather modestly as a group of laymen dedicated to educating the poor boys of France<sup>5</sup>. Brother Luke claims in his work "The work is Yours" that De La Salle's contribution was more administrative than curricular: he created "a stable community of religiously motivated laymen to construct a network of schools throughout France that would make practicable and permanent the best elements from the pioneers who had gone before him."<sup>6</sup> Lasallian Pedagogy is the result of thirty-five years of collaboration between the educational guidance of De La Salle and the classroom experience of these teachers, who were called 'Brothers'. La Salle sought to train his Brothers to fill the educational gap without disturbing the parents' rightful position as the primary educators. Now they are 7549 De LaSalle Brothers in 79 countries implementing the Lasallian Pedagogy in Lasallian schools. A commitment to helping poor students of today is very much in keeping with De La Salle's hope for the future of his Brothers, and remains a guiding principle for Lasallian higher education<sup>7</sup>.

### **The Origin of the arrival of the De La Salle Brothers in India**

The origin of the arrival of the initiators of Lasallian Pedagogy in India can be understood in three eras. First era records the first existence of Brothers and their institution from 1859 to 1883. And the second Era documents some requests for Brothers by ecclesiastical superiors and their rejections during the next eighty odd years. The final Era describes the second arrival of Brothers on Indian soil and their progress till today<sup>8</sup>.

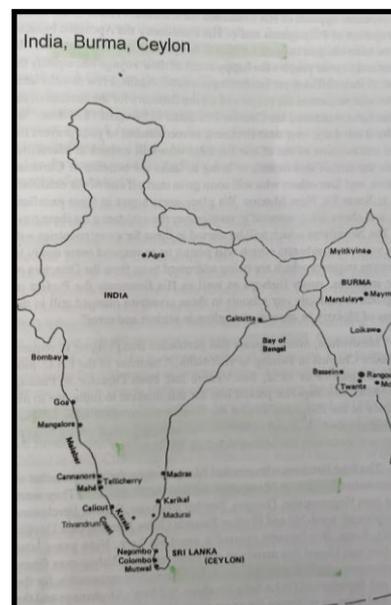
Brother Michael Robert, a well known historian from Srilanka narrates in book that De La Salle Brothers arrived India on two occasions: first arrival in 1859 and second arrival in 1961. The first Lasallian ministry in India lasted for 23 years (1859-1882) while the second mission has blossomed forth to a fragrant, viable sector of the Institute. It was two hundred years after the birth of De La Salle (1651) that the Brothers arrived in the Far East, due to the persistent appeals of Fr. Beurel, the Parish priest of Singapore. The first Six Brothers- three from France and three from North America- arrived in Singapore in 1852. Br. Liefroy Bajon was the director of Singapore, as well as the nominal Visitor of the Brothers.

In 1859, the request of Pope Gregory XVI as well as the Grant-in-Aid policy of the British Government, prompted the Brothers from Malaysia to open schools in India and Burma. Br. Liefroy as well as many other pioneers of Malaysia moved over to India to open schools. Schools were opened, taken over or even re-taken. They were not, buy nay means, large schools, in

comparison to today's institutions. De La Salle Brothers in India conducted schools and orphanages in Eight Cities

### Schools and orphanages in Eight Cities

- 1) Mangalore : 07.03.1859 to 08.04.1868
- 2) Calcutta : 07.08. 1859 to 08.02.1861
- 3) Tellicherry : 01.03. 1861 to 20.12. 1869
- 4) Agra : 01.09. 1861 to 26.08. 1863
- 5) Karikal : .11. 1862 to .....08.1866
- 6) Calicut : 07.01.1863 to .....1863
- 7) Mahe : 20.07.1864 to 03.02.1870
- 8) Cannanore : ..... 1863 to .....1882<sup>9</sup>



**Sources:** Statistiques de l' Institut.

### Mangalore

Br. Philippe the superior General in his circular dated 256 dated August 1859, he asked the Brothers of the institute to pray for the new mission in India. Due to the repeated appeals of His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda and of His Excellency the Apostolic Nuncio, the four brothers (Brs. Jean Nepomucene, Aephaire, Berchmans and Pastoris) reached Mangalore on the western coast of India commenced work at Mangalore school on 1859. Thus, how the Lasallian Pedagogy brought its inevitable Christian values to India. Nine years later Mangalore was closed due mainly to conflicts with the Bishop over financial agreements.

### Calcutta

Br. Venere, who was the director at Penang was asked to take over the management of school and St. Mary's orphanage at Calcutta on the eastern coast on 07.08.1859. The establishment of St. Mary's orphanage with 130 orphans and school with 270 day students prospered under the De La Salle Brothers in 1860. Dissension in the community between French and Irish, intensified by the weakness of Director Venere led to the departure of De La Salle Brothers at Calcutta, just one year six months of ministry<sup>10</sup>.

### Kerala

Down the coast from Mangalore, the Brothers opened or took over houses in the predominantly Catholic state of Kerala: Tellicherry, Calicut, Cannanore and Mahe. Lasallian educational institution lasted in Tellicherry for about 8 years (1861-1869). Brothers under the able

leadership of Br. Liefroy Bajon took over St. Nicholas' School at Calicut on 1863. Due to poor living conditions led the Brothers to withdraw and accept the request of Mgr. Michael Anthony, Bishop of Mangalore to open a Lasallian school at Cannanore on 1863. The Lasallian educational service here lasted bit longer than other mission centres till 1882 in India<sup>11</sup>.

### **French Colonies ( Mahe and Karaikal)**

The French Brothers were anxious to feel homely in the French colonies of India. Practitioners of Lasallian Pedagogy found the opportunity in two colonies; at Mahe on the western coast and at Karaikal on the Easter coast of India<sup>12</sup>. The Civil and Church authorities who invited the Brothers to start a Lasallian school at Mahe on 20<sup>th</sup> 1864. After five years of Lasallian service, the conditions the Brothers were in compelled the Brother superior to withdraw the Brothers from there on 1869. At Karaikal it was the earnest request of the clergy that brought the French Brothers to French colonies but here, too had a short existence till 1866<sup>13</sup>.

### **Agra**

After the closer of Calcutta in 1861, due to the French - Irish Clash, was somewhat conducive for the lasallian pedagogy to be instituted in Agra. In fact, Mgr. Pérsico of Agra had appealed to Br. Superior General for English speaking Brothers to educate the thickly Christian populated area in Agra. But Br. Imier de Jesus regretted the closure of Agra on 1863, together with Mangalore and Calcutta, as prospective catholic centres for recruiting local candidates to the congregation<sup>14</sup>.

## **REASONS FOR CLOSURES**

From their first institution at Mangalore in 1859 to their final stay at Calicut in 1883, De La Salle Brothes conducted schools and orphanages in eight cities. All their institutions were closed down in quick succession. Br. Imier De Jesus, Secretary to Superior General in Rome regretted in his report that the foundations in India had been closed, due to the small number of Brothers, themselves victims of lack of religious and pedagogical formation, added to their immature prudence and poor common sense had given occasion to scandals, quarrels with clergy, desertions and revolts that led to the closure of these houses<sup>15</sup>.

Most of the dissensions arose from the cultural, social, language and ideological differences between the French and Irish Brothers in communities. The assiduous interest of the Hierarchies of the Catholic Church in India were the cause to get the Brothers to the faithful but were not so regular in the payment of dues and construction of residential quarters. And the Brothers' Mission centers were not closely located and that caused no communication among the Brothers. It was regrettable that some young missionaries were below par, not in their Spiritual life and physical health. It is

shocked to hear that the Young Indian Brothers apparently faced a lot of divisions among them in community, that lead them face the disaster<sup>16</sup>.

Hisotoire de l'Institut elaborates that the Imprudence and management inefficiency, Internal divisive misunderstanding in the houses of India and French origin Brothers couldn't survive successfully with English speaking Irish Brothers. Invitation from Mgr. Sillani, Bishop of Ceylon also diverted Brothers' attention to establish mission centers, that also served as reasons for winding up the Lasallian establishments in India<sup>17</sup>.

### **REQUEST FOR BROTHERS AND THEIR REJECTIONS (1883-1960)**

The second Era of the De La Salle Brothers highlights the nostalgia of the impact of Lasallian Pedagogy created in the lives of the children and list out the Invitations to the Brothers to revamp the Lasallian educational institutions in Indian states. The abrupt departure caused many irreparable havoc in the lives of the youth. The ramification of the absence of De La Salle educational institutions in India stirred the hierarchies of the Catholic Church to invite the De LaSalle Brothers to cater the Catholic youth through Lasallian Pedagogy in their mission premises. The flowing datas will illustrate the offers and rejections of initiators of Lasallian Pedagogy in India after their departure. Though the Brothers were no more in residence on Indian Soil from 1880s, there were frequent requests for Brothers to manage schools from Bishops, Vicars and Priests in India<sup>18</sup>.

Brother Superiors have made a several visits to India to do clear study of the offers of the Church authorities for the Brothers to start they Lasallian schools. And the following passages detail where and how the offers were discerned.

- In 1897, Mgr. Ganda, Archbishop of Pondicherry, together with the Principal of the school Rev. Fr. Bored, requested the Brothers of the Christian schools to send 5 or 6 Brothers to implement the Lasallian Pedagogy in French Colonial College at Pondicherry.
- In 1928, wiring on behalf of Bishop of Coimbatore, Rev. L. Bechu requested the Brothers of Colombo District to manage St. Anthony's Secondary school, Coonoor. Bro. Camillus FSC, Provincial visitor of Ceylon replied to a request manage a school at Coonoor, Nilgiris, that His superiors will be glad to re open the Lasallian schools in India, if they come up with a good offer.
- In 1928, Dr. D. Dispara, Bishop of Hyderabad, appealed to Br. Camillus, Provincial Brothers to take over All Saints school and St. Mary's school at Hyderabad together with the Anglo -Indian St. Patrick' High school and the attached small Tamil school at Secunderabad. But Brothers couldn't accept this grand offer due to their past bitter experiences and number of catholic students were very fewer than the non Christians<sup>19</sup>.
- In 1931, writing on behalf of Bishop of Trivandrum, Rev. Fr. Patrick invited the Lasallian Brothers to inculcate the Lasallian charism at St. Joseph's English medium school at Trivandrum, the capital

city of the state; a section of India with the most number of Catholics, Priestly and Religious vocation<sup>20</sup>. But Brother Camillus FSC, Provincial visitor couldn't consider this wonderful opportunity due to lack of required qualified personnels to be engaged as a teachers in the Indian school context, and the past history about the mismanagement of schools, lack of competent Directors and lack of local Indian Brothers<sup>21</sup>.

- After knowing the history of the performance of the De La Salle Brothers in Agra, In June 26, 1965, Dr. Angelo Fernandes, Archbishop of Delhi invited the Brothers of the Christian schools to open a lasallian Educational institution in Delhi<sup>22</sup>.
- In 1964, Rev. Jerome Fernandez, Bishop of Quilon invited the De LaSalle Brothers to imbibe they Lasallian pedagogy in Infant Jesus Anglo Indian High school , Tangasseri, Quilon<sup>23</sup>. Brother Visitor reflected in his letter to Bishop of Quilon that Language incompetency to handle orphanages, Requests for European English -speaking Brothers in preference to local Brothers, and hesitancy of Superiors to send qualified Brothers to India where their pensions were at stake were the reasons for not able to consider the great offer to institute the Lasallian institutions in Diocese of Quilon, India<sup>24</sup>.

## **SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This paper makes an earnest effort to encourage the readers to analysis the historical background of the origin of the first arrival of the Lasallians, and to trace out the historical findings for the second arrival of De La Salle Brothers in India. The scope of this study is to create an opportunity to see how the arrival of Lasallian Brothers created an impact on the social, economic and educational conditional of the life of the children and their culture.

## **CONCLUSION**

Though the first arrival of De LaSalle Brothers lasted only for a few years, but made clear establishments that printed marks in the lives of the people of India. Letters traced from the archives of De Lasalle Brothers in Srilanka astounds that lasallians arrival nurtured the belief in the living presence of God, engaged in a concerted effort to respect the dignity of all persons, called its students and associates to an awareness of the poor and victims of injustice and responds to their needs, it provided an education that prepares students not only for higher studies but also for life, served as united community where diversity is respected, where no one is left out, and where everyone finds a place. De La Salle Brothers' irreplaceable educational service to the poor lead the Brothers to transform the lives of their children again through their second arrival in 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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