

Critical Thinking on Contemporary India
An Evaluation Report (2017)
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A course on ‘Critical Thinking on Contemporary India’ was organised by the Centre for Culture and Development (CCD), Vadodara from April 23 to April 30. We were 11 participants, seven Jesuit scholastics from Patna, Hazaribagh, Jamshedpur, Karnataka and Gujarat provinces and three seminarians from Baroda Diocese. The eight days course was meant to provide a critical understanding of perspectives through which the contemporary context of rural and urban India can be understood. The resource persons by their vast knowledge and understanding of the topic enlightened the participants and helped them to have a critical view of the development that is taking place in India.

The whole course was meticulously planned and executed. The schedule and synopsis of speakers’ speeches and some reading materials related to the topic were given in the form of a booklet. The course was interesting and resourceful. It grabbed our attention even though many of us were not Political Science and Sociology students.

The course began with the key-note address of Fr. Francis Parmar, the Provincial of Gujarat province. Provincial Fr. Francis Parmar delivered the inaugural address highlighting the tradition of intellectual apostolate in the Society. Prof. Biswaroop Das, a retired professor at the Centre for Social Studies, Surat and Prof. Priyavadan M. Patel, a retired professor of Political Science were the two speakers who kept us charged and motivated through the sessions which were full of knowledge, sharing and discussions. It was indeed a blessing to have two of these learned professors in order to look at the reality of modern India in different perspectives. Fr.Lancy Lobo, the Director of CCD who by his talks and reflections inspired us and made us to come out of our cocoons to think and reflect on the burning issues of today.

Prof. J.S.Bandukwala, a well-known social activist shared about his struggle in fighting for the rights of the slum-dwellers. We were moved by his honest sharing of his life-threatening incidents that he has

undergone for the cause. Though aged, he seems to be undeterred. 'I am fighting for a cause,' says he proudly. His words and deeds amazed and inspired us.

The most important part of the course was the field trip to Baroda city and a village. We could identify the differences in their way of living conditions by observation and interaction with people. We also had a visit to Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad, not as tourists but as pupils interested in knowing the mode of development and analysis of the same.

The Jesuit community at Sevasi, Vadodara was very hospitable, friendly and generous. We would like to thank Fr. Lancy Lobo and the staff of CCD for organising the course. The accommodation, food and hospitality made our stay in Baroda relaxing and refreshing. We wish that CCD may organize many more courses of this kind which would help the young and budding scholastics to think and reflect critically the reality around. Also, we would like to request the provinces to send their men in order to benefit from such courses.