



Happy Christmas

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Dear *Gyula & Aji,*

November 26, 2009 is the 60th anniversary of India's Constitution; enshrined in this Constitution are the four inter-related values of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. This Christmas, I would like to share with you some reflections on each of these values.

JUSTICE! should be at the Heart of any civil society. However, for vast sections of our people, it remains a distant dream. In Gujarat alone, we have officially 1.4 million child-labourers (the actual number is several times higher). Millions of children have no access to primary education, basic healthcare, or even clean drinking water. For most of our children, the UN Convention on The Rights of Children (which also completed 20 years of its existence in November) is far from being realized.

LIBERTY! is Spirit - an indispensable aspect of our life, essential for growth. Freedom from want of any kind should be fundamental. We believe that an education, which is qualitative, in some ways helps in creating this freedom. That is why over the years, the ESP has been focusing on the education of thousands of children from the poor and marginalized sections of our society.

EQUALITY! is Soul - another dimension which we have been trying to promote through the ESP. A reminder, that all men and women are created in the image and likeness of God. For too long, people from various sections of our society have remained at the receiving end, discriminated against. Our efforts have always been geared towards the creation of a more equitable society where children learn from an early age that they have to respect the other, simply because, like them, the other is a human being too.

FRATERNITY! is Character - fundamental for the progress of all people. The power that each one of us has, to adjust and to adapt, to search for the common good. The Leaders of our World will soon be meeting at Copenhagen to discuss 'Climatic Change.' However, nothing will change if each one of us does not realize that we are responsible for what is happening to our planet. Cooperation, not competition, is the need of the hour.

Having said this, I need to share with you two other important facets:

GENEROSITY! is something which we have continued to experience. It has been a difficult year for everyone, but we are still touched with numerous people making greater sacrifices in order that they help educate our children. From October 1, 2009 the Catholic Relief Services (USA) had to finally discontinue supporting our Chhatralayas with food commodities. For more than 40 years CRS has been the mainstay for the growth of our children. We wish to place on record our very deep and sincere gratitude for all the help received. Thanks to Anna Maija Nieminen (who is in her twilight years) and the Sinapinsiemen ry, Finland, too. For full 30 years, through the efforts of Anna Maija, Sinapinsiemen has been a great benefactor in the education of our children. It has been a deep bonding, transcending narrow confines of cultures, nationalities and even religion. There are hundreds of others too, who have always been there making simple, yet very meaningful, sacrifices.

DIVERSITY! is what 2010 is all about. The United Nations has declared it The International Year of Biodiversity and also The Year of Rapprochement of Cultures. We have really no choice before us. The only way ahead for us is to integrate Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity in our lives, to be generous and to reach out to others, and to ensure that diversity is a reality in our neighborhoods. Above all we need to communicate these values to others.

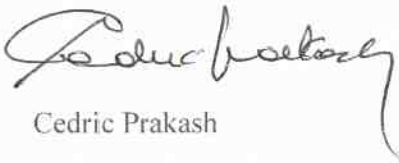
This Christmas letter is being written to you from Milwaukee, USA. I have been here from October 1 in a very privileged position as the Wade Chair Scholar of Marquette University. It has been a deeply enriching period of my life when I have been able to sit back and reflect a bit on important issues and my own response to it; it has been a time to read and to write, and to share with many others the reality of Gujarat. I am very grateful for this opportunity. I will be back in Ahmedabad in the first week of January 2010.

Do keep in touch, we look forward to hearing from you, and we ask you to continue supporting our initiatives in every possible way in the coming year.

Christmas is a time of joy, hope and peace! A time for celebration! A time to remind us that there will be true peace on Earth only when Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity triumph! Thank you for your generosity. Let us celebrate diversity all through 2010 and beyond!

May the blessings of Christmas be with you, your family and your friends, and all those whom you come across in life, during this season and every day of the New Year!

Your brother,



Cedric Prakash

Christmas 2009

Please note : *If you have been sponsoring a child / children through our ' Education Sponsorship Programme', the Annual Progress Report /s is / are enclosed herewith. Thanks once again for your sacrifices and solidarity !*

Donations to the EDUCATION SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME may be made by cheque / draft, payable to :

GUJARAT EDUCATION SOCIETY

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