



*Mandala*




# Introduction

I joined the Medical Mission Sisters in 1972 after receiving my degree in education (B.Sc. B.Ed). At that time, using insights from Vatican II, the MMS Society was in the process of looking at the medical mission apostolate in new ways. In 1997 there were drastic changes in MMS Constitution with regard to the apostolate, the structure of the community living and formation. There was a strong move away from institution-centered medical care. We began to explore the possibilities of small groups of sisters going to remote and neglected villages and slums.

I feel like a very lucky person to have joined MMS during that time of change. I got the golden opportunity to participate in all the discussions, reflections, and sharing and I, too became part of the process of change. In 1975 soon after my first commitment, I joined a group of four sisters who had opted to live and work among the fisher-people in Poothura, Anjuthengu a coastal village of Kerala. We had been invited by Fr. Thomas Kocherry when he was working in Poothura parish with a team of Redemptorist Priests. Gradually we began to enter into various aspects of the life of the fishing village, soon becoming part of that community. Their life and struggle became part and parcel of my life, leaving unforgettable experiences and impressions, which, to a great extent, shaped my convictions in life. My involvement in the struggle of the fisher-women was spontaneous and a conscious decision at the same time. My own commitment for the poor in their situation of exploitation made me to jump into the fray. My formation in religious life helped me to make this a conscious choice and commitment to the cause of the poor, as an expression of authenticity in my religious life. The social analysis and awareness building process helped the fisher-women to have a better understanding of the causes of their poverty and exploitation.

In course of time the fisher-people were ready to confront the authorities for their rights to demand justice. When the fisher-people got organized as a trade union in 1978, the MMS in Anjuthengu area automatically became part of their struggles for survival. When the fisher people's union was formed we got involved politically in trade union activities, shouting slogans, participating in Dharnas (sit in), picketing the fisheries offices and hunger strike fighting for the rights of the poor and oppressed. At that time, in 1980s it was very difficult for others to understand sisters getting involved politically. So we had to face many objections, rejections, and criticisms from different sources: religious, priests, our own families and relatives, the church, and even from our own sisters. We were





removed from all the activities in the church and even banned as “Communist - Marxist Sisters”. One thing I must say is our superiors never disowned us because they knew that what we were doing was according to our Society’s Constitution. My life with those fisher people became not a mere ‘immersion experience’ but a continuous process of commitment for almost three decades of my active ministry from 1975-2004.

In the midst of my busy life I found some time to develop my artistic talents in drawing and later it turned into drawing Mandalas. The bringing of my social activities, life, work and prayer into a different setting, in close harmony with the beauty of nature and stillness in the creative Art Ashram of Jyothi Sahe, Bangalore, has awakened a new dimension of art in me - the true art that can emerge from a daily round of activities, life experiences, deriving from my innermost self and relating to the nature around. It happened in 1996 when I attended an Art Retreat under the guidance of Jyothi Sahe. From there I developed an interest in drawing Mandalas. In 2004, I finished my first set of 25 Mandalas - all were connected with my life with the fisher-people and their struggles – can be named as Political and Personal Mandalas. After that I went to Philippines to take my masters in Theology (Feminist Theology) where my Mandalas turned into Theological and Spiritual ones. The symbols just derive from the nature and speak volumes to the one who is interested and involved in the transformation of our world. Real art and meditation on realities of life are mutually related in one’s vision of the world, the beauty of the cosmos, the genuine search for meaning and the struggle towards the kingdom.

My personal interest in creative art to enhance liturgical/Para-liturgical services, was also greatly awakened while I discussed with Jyothi and he guided me to the wide world of Mandalas, which was dormant within me, and I am so grateful for this awakening from within.

I took time to draw the Mandalas as part of my personal prayer, meditation and integration. It is a centering as well as a contemplative process for me which I needed a lot of concentration and silence. Every year I added more pictures to my original collection of Mandalas. So there are almost 46 Mandalas of different categories like political, personal, ecological, theological, biblical, spiritual as well as women empowerment. Each Mandala says a number of things according to the imaginations of everyone in addition to what I mean basically. For me each one consists of a story of Suffering and Hope, a story of Awareness and Consciousness, a story of Growth and Development, a story of Social Commitment and Struggle and finally, a story of God Experience in Everything.



# *History of the Mandala*

Mandalas have been used for centuries as guides for spiritual healing and growth. The word mandala is Sanskrit for the center, circumference, or a magic circle. This definition was written by Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist. He thought that the mandala is a part of the whole being, the Self, the center of our personality. He suggested that the mandala shows the natural urge to live out our potential, to fulfill the pattern of our whole personality.

Mandalas can make the invisible visible, expressing paradoxical situations or mysteries of ultimate reality that can be expressed in no other way. Like the symbolism of a dream, the mandala provides a perspective in which one can understand the unity within one's experience and the greater structure of the cosmos. Like the Word Incarnate, a mandala gives form and expression to spiritual truth.

In general Mandala means circle. Everything is presented in the form of circles. It also means union or 'sangamam'. The origin of mandala is from Jainism. They tried to explain the whole cosmos in circles (mandalas). The mandala is a cosmic diagram uniting the way of heaven with the way of earth. It represents wholeness, enlightenment, human perfection etc. It is a centering technique, an aid to contemplation. Mandala has three basic properties: a center, symmetry and cardinal points. The mandala construct helps us to accept all experiences in relation to the total situation, a union of opposites. It suggests living totally new.

Each human being is a mandala, to be developed and related anew. We must reach our center and unlock the energies contained therein. The mandala is a technique to release energy. It helps us to maintain contact with our center. The mandala symbolizes various levels of awareness within the person as well as the energy that unifies and heals. Making mandala is a self-integrating ritual because it has a healing, meditative and integrative purpose.

# *Creating Mandalas as a Prayer*

The creation of a mandala can give form and expression to the whole of your being. It is a creative way of expressing intuitive insights and awareness. In the drawing of a mandala, any tension caused by the conflicting parts of self can be released and healed.

Suggestions:

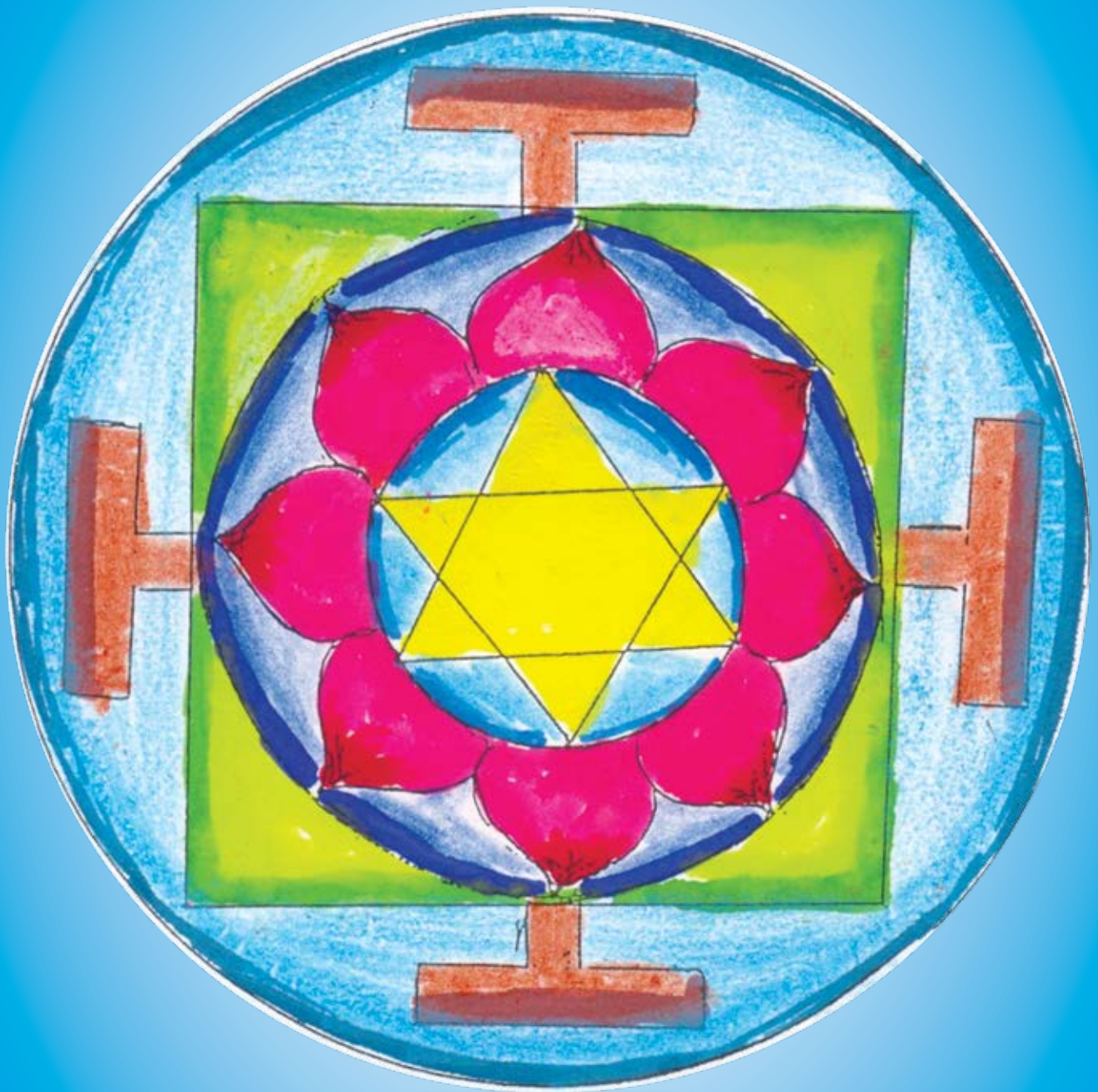
- After selecting your materials, find a quiet place to work.
- Close your eyes and become aware of your breathing, breathing in and out in a slower and softer manner. As you rest in God's presence, consciously become aware of God's presence within.
- Open your eyes and look at the colors before you, choosing a color to begin your Mandala.
- Draw a large circle. You may draw it freehand, or use a paper plate.
- Begin to fill in the circle with color and form, letting the color find its own form.
- When the drawings of your mandala come to a resting place, look at it from different angles and identify with a small "t" what you sense is the top of the drawing.
- Date the mandala for future reference and give it a title.
- View the mandala from at least arm's length, with the "t" at the top.
- Make a list of the shapes and objects in the mandala.
- Write down your personal association with each shape and object: words, feelings, images, or memories that come to mind.
- Remember: whatever comes out is beautiful because it is part of your sacred story.
- Note the colors in the mandala beginning with the predominant color, working through to the least dominant.
- Engage in free association

- Read through the list of associations, noticing any pattern of meaning, any predominant theme or idea. Record these in your journal.

Creating a mandala has the regenerative and curative power to activate the latent powers of the mind. Creating a mandala has a calming and relaxing effect on the mind and body, focusing and strengthening the will to heal. As it contains conflicting parts of our nature, the drawing one creates releases tension. Even drawing the circle itself can be healing. Meditating on one's creation helps focus and open one's heart to the power of God's unconditional love. It can bring joy as it facilitates the healing of a sense of psychological fragmentation.

Mandala is also a trans-personal sacred act, a transmitting agent, a lens focusing the higher energies leading us to contemplation. It points to a way of creative living. Drawing mandala helps the individuals to get in touch with what their body is telling them and to integrate their spiritual and psychological experiences with their somatic selves. It helps them to heal themselves through the integration. Draw your mandala with symbols and images. The mandala with the "Yantra" (Spirit), "Mantra" (Soul) and "Tantra" (psychic) is one of the most effective methods of achieving self-realization.





BASIC MANDALA

## *Basic Mandala*

Consists of eight cardinal points; four main and four sub-points. The center is very important. Mandala is a circle with concentric circles usually with lotus petals enclosed in a square with four gates. It is a mystical diagram. Technically it is a process involving power in a diagrammatic design. It is used as an object of worship in liturgies and as an aid in meditation for the purpose of attaining real spiritual insights.

The preparation of a mandala therefore is an artistic endeavor; at the same time, it is an act of worship. In this form of worship, concepts and forms are created in which the deepest intuitions are crystallized and expressed as spiritual art. The mandalas are meant to open door in the mind that reflect them and so open for it a new and higher level of consciousness. Mandala art has other purpose of uses besides being a meditation device or an object of ritual worship. During festivals, or ceremonies mandalas are made on the ground, on the floor and walls of houses.



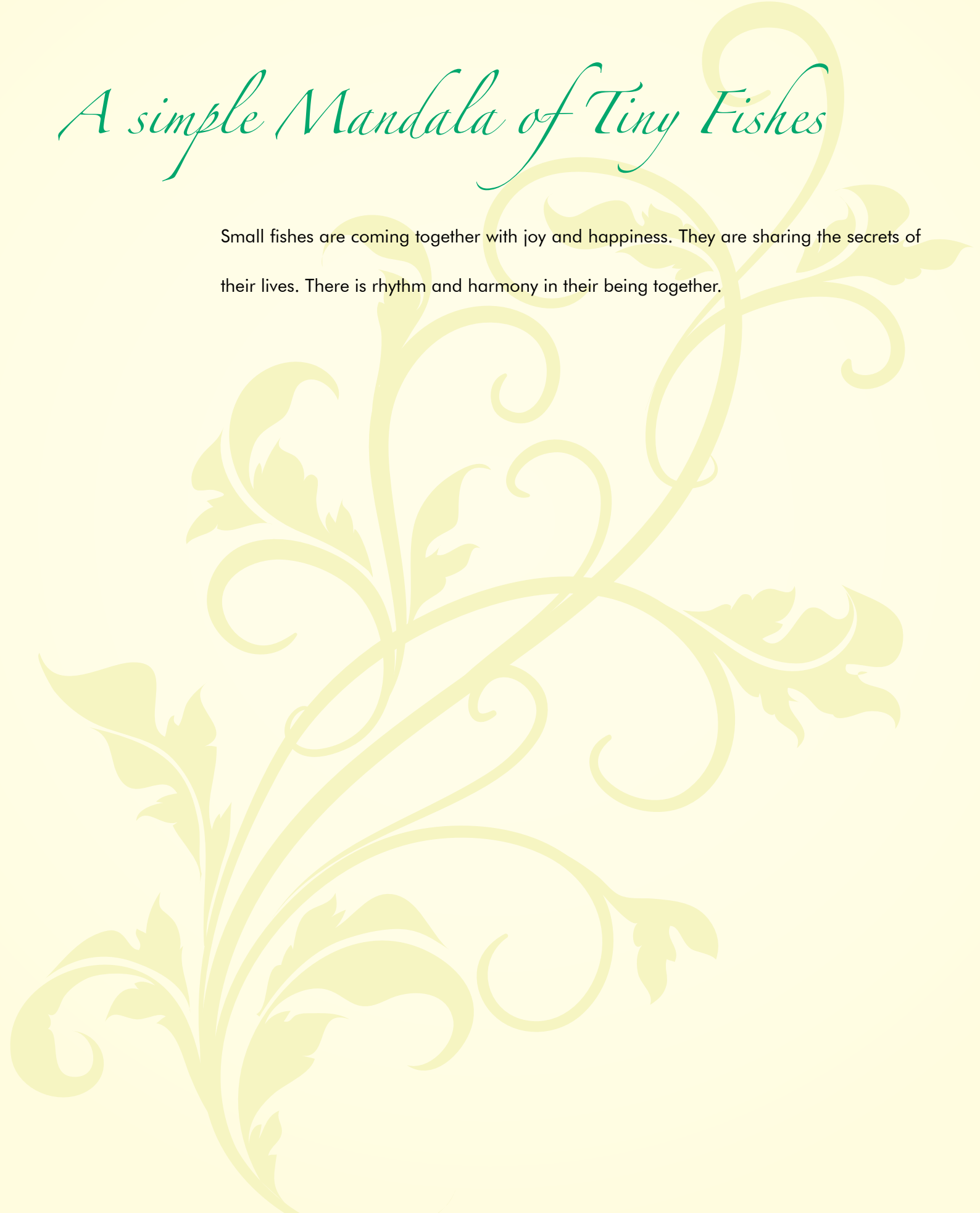


TINY FISHES



# *A simple Mandala of Tiny Fishes*

Small fishes are coming together with joy and happiness. They are sharing the secrets of their lives. There is rhythm and harmony in their being together.





THE DANCING MOTHER EARTH

# *The dancing Mother Earth*

Mother Earth unites the mountains and the sea as well as the upper and lower parts of the earth. She is coming out the sea lifts up and protects the land in her hands. The rivers are flowing from the mountains through her hand and hairs and reach the sea. The free flow of water maintains the sea full of life and always fertile. Her upper part represents the forest and the trees and the lower part represents the sea and the fishes. The fishes are coming out of her womb.

The mother Earth would have been joyfully dancing if the human beings had not interfered with the cosmic harmony and destroyed the Eco-system. It is our duty and responsibility to protect the mother Earth.





CHAAKARA

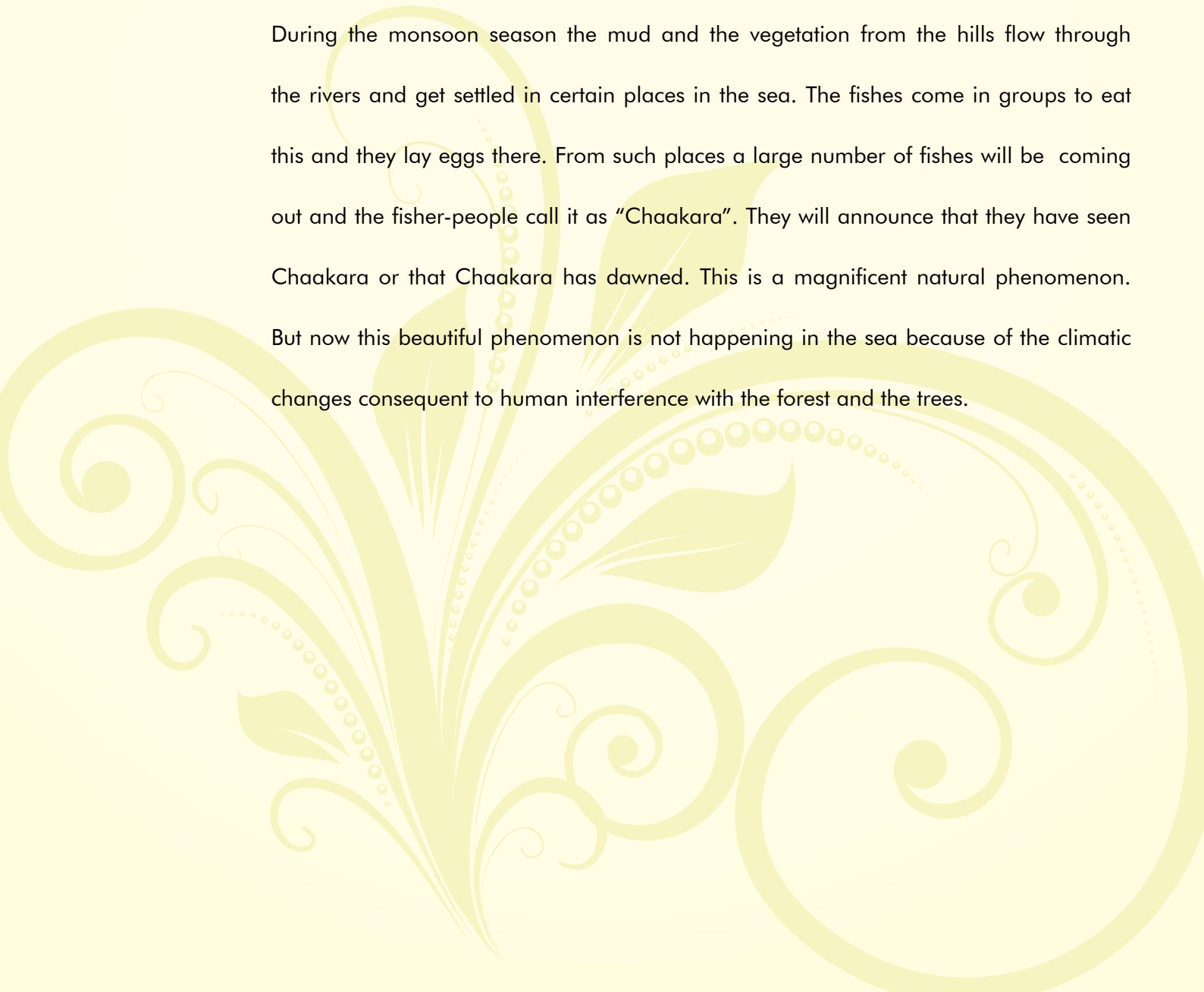
# *The Mother Ocean and 'Chaakara'*

The mother ocean is a never ending vessel (Akshayapatram'), so says an old myth.

There is another old Japanese myth which speaks about four large pots in the bottom of the ocean, which causes the tides and keeps the spring never ending. The mother sea gives birth to the fishes. The small fishes are coming out of the womb of the mother ocean.

During the monsoon season the mud and the vegetation from the hills flow through the rivers and get settled in certain places in the sea. The fishes come in groups to eat this and they lay eggs there. From such places a large number of fishes will be coming out and the fisher-people call it as "Chaakara". They will announce that they have seen Chaakara or that Chaakara has dawned. This is a magnificent natural phenomenon.

But now this beautiful phenomenon is not happening in the sea because of the climatic changes consequent to human interference with the forest and the trees.







THE WEeping MOTHER OCEAN



# *The Weeping Mother Ocean*

Once upon a time the fisher-people believed that the mother ocean is a never ending vessel ('akshayapatram'). But now they are forced to realize by circumstances that it is not true. The greed of the human beings is the cause of the depletion of the resources in the ocean. The trawling boats, besides catching large quantities of fish, are destroying the sea-beds (natural eco-system), thereby killing the small fishes and fish-eggs. The mother ocean is weeping as she sees her fishes being taken away and their habitat being destroyed.



SHANKUVILI

# *The Clarion Call to Responsibility*

The Chinese symbol of 'ying-yang' in the center represents the good and the evil, the light and darkness. There is always the fight between the two, justice and injustice. In the sea there is the fight between the traditional fisher-people, who want to protect the sea and its resources and the owners of the mechanized boats (trawlers), who destroy the ocean and its resources.

Later it was realized that the organizational process is the only solution to this problem. The independent Fisher-people's Union (KSMTF) is making the clarion - call, asking the fisher-people to come together and fight for their rights. It is our duty to protect the sea and its resources (Marine Ecology). The clarion call itself is a sign of hope, a sign of ultimate victory. The future of the people is depicted in the shells which symbolize the clarion call to wake up and join in the struggles of good Vs evil, the boat and the blue flag represents fisher-people's union.





HOPE, LIGHT AND LIFE



# *The Mandala of Unity*

The fisher-people answered the 'Clarion Call'. They got organized and began to fight for their rights. The event of coming together itself is a sign of hope, a new light and life. The fisher-people are coming together under the banner of KSMTF, declaring aloud that they are the owners of the ocean and its resources and they will take the responsibility of protecting the mother ocean.

Here in this Mandala there is sign of new vision, a new seed of hope and new rays of light and life. The eye, the seed, the lamp and the boat represent the new vision, hope, light and life. The fishes are slowly coming into the boat. There are people around the circle holding their hands together as a sign of their unity.



A SPIRITUALITY OF STRUGGLE

# Mandala of my Spirituality

The majority of people in our country are slowly being killed by the unjust structures that are controlled by the corrupt and inhumane power holders. It is always the poor who pay the price for it. The gap between the rich and poor are becoming wider and wider. My spirituality is to be with these majority of struggling people (the crucified people) which means to participate in their joys, happiness, sufferings and pain and be 'the fire and flame' in an overall environment of hopelessness.

From my experience of working with the fisher people for thirty years, I had to rediscover my faith, I had to rediscover my theology, and I had to rediscover my spirituality. For me, personally, my theology and spirituality emerged in the midst of the struggles- that is why I called it "a spirituality of struggle". It had emerged in the midst of the struggle and it sustained me through out the years of being in mission.

It is the spirituality that gave me the courage to go through the ten-day hunger strike in front of the secretariat in Trivandrum in 1984 and ten-day hunger strike in Alleppy in front of the collectorate in 1985 and one week experiences in the central jail with fisher people. When I was mentally tortured and abused by the shouting and bad words of the police in Wayanad police station with the Adivasis, it was an experience of the strength of my own spirituality, the spirituality of struggle. The hunger strike was a real experience of Eucharist for me sharing a little bit of my body and blood with my fellow human beings for a just cause.

It is a spirituality of those who are involved in the struggles of the people. When I look back I can see many different steps of growth in my faith as well as my spirituality all through the years. Articulating our spirituality will give us more clarity, it will give us more energy and it will give us more confidence. It will also strengthen our spirituality and it may inspire others too.

Here in the Mandala the Star is the symbol of 'me', being born as an Epiphany child (January 6th) on the day of the 'feast of Star'. Spiral in the center is the symbol of life cycle, Cross is the symbol of the crucified people. Crown of thorns is the symbol of the suffering people. Fire is the symbol of difficulties and pain Flame of the fire is the symbol of active involvements with the people.

I want to hold into my heart what Pope Francis says  
 "Weep not for what you have lost, fight for what you have.  
 Weep not for what is dead, fight for what was born in you.  
 Weep not for the one who abandoned you, fight for who is with you.  
 Weep not for those who hate you, fight for those who want you.  
 Weep not for your past, fight for your present struggle.  
 Weep not for your suffering, fight for your happiness.  
 With things that are happening to us, we begin to learn that  
 Nothing is impossible to solve, just move forward".

It is the spirituality of struggle that gave me the courage to go forward, weeping with my people as well as enjoy with them their joy and happiness. It is this spirituality that enabled me to face the challenges; It is this spirituality that helped me to accept the reality and respond to it with hope and courage.





MMS INVOLVEMENT

# *21 Years of MMS Involvement with the Fisher-people*

- In 1975 - the first seed of our involvement with the fisher-people was sown in Poothura-Anjuthengu
- 1975-1978 - A strong foundation stone was laid within three years time - (Ash colour) where we, learned the situation of the people and their needs. Introduced nurseries, women's group (Mahilasmajams), tuition for the school going children, health programmes etc.
- 1978 - organizational and non-organizational work started.
- 1978-1981 - took part in various activities of the people, especially the struggles. We could experience the acceptance and support from everybody especially from the part of the official Church. In the mandala it is represented by the blue color with KSMTF (Independent fisher-people's) Flag.
- 1982-1992, is the time our historical participation in the people's movements and their struggles as women religious for justice and human rights. Dharnas, picketing, courting arrest and going to jail, hunger-strike etc. become part of our life and ministry. Rejection, isolation, misunderstanding from various groups: Church authorities, friends, and relatives and even from our own Medical Mission Sisters were also experienced. Still we succeeded to hold on and faced the challenges with courage and optimism. It is represented by the red flame still holding the flag.
- 1992-1996 - The first fruits of our involvement and ministry began to sprout: more acceptance, support and understanding from all quarters; lay people began to take more responsibility and leadership; the Church officials began to respond to the social issues; the people began to realize the importance of an independent union to pursue their rights.





THE FRUIT OF 21 YEARS OF MMS SERVICE



# *21 Years of MMS Involvement with the Fisher-people*

The idea of the previous Mandala is expressed here in a different way. The seed sown in 1975 sprouts and brings about rich harvest. In the mandala there are 21 steps which we climbed during the past 21 years - the struggles we faced during this time and the fruits we began to see and experience after a long period of 2 decades.



THE NINE SEEDS

# *The Nine 'Seeds of Life-Story'*

**The number nine** has great significance in Mandala. Eg. The nine planets, the nine emotions, the nine directions of the Earth including the centre. My life-story can be explained through the nine seeds in this mandala; four main points, four sub-points and the central point.

(i) **The center-seed:** The center-seed is the seed of my life, the gift from my parents, and the sign of their love. The star represents my life.

(ii) **The second seed:** This is my childhood. Being the fifth among the eleven children of my loving parents I enjoyed my childhood days.

(iii) **The third seed:** This depicts my schooldays. I don't have many happy memories about my school-life. I was so scared of the sisters who controlled and forced me to be a 'nice little disciplined child'. There are certain painful incidents of being beaten and controlled by the sisters. That spoiled my spontaneity during the school days but I could regain that in my home atmosphere of freedom and love of my parents and siblings and with my neighbourhood companions.

(iv) **The fourth seed:** This depicts my college days (six years). This was rather a happy time. I enjoyed more freedom and the companionship of my cousins when I was studying in St. Joseph's College in Alleppey (PDC & B.Sc). I took my B.Ed degree in St. Thomas College, Palai. It was a real turning point in my life enabling to look at life in a different way. I enjoyed complete freedom in a mixed college that helped me to take a responsible decision in my life. At the end of my B.Ed. Course I decided to become a Medical Mission Sister.

(v) **The fifth seed:** This stands for my religious formation. It was a time where I received a new vision about religious life. I could look at the new possibilities of a committed life drawing inspirations from the Bible, Second Vatican Council and MMS constitutions. I must say that I am a lucky person for having my formation during the time of drastic changes which were happening in the MMS society. So I received the proper training which enabled me to make the correct choice of opting for the new mission in Poothura - Anjuthengu among the fisher-people.

(vi) **The sixth seed:** This stands for my educational activities in Poothura. My first involvement in Poothura started with the tuition programmes and nursery teachers' training. I wanted to start from the root giving them strong basic education. Later new programmes such as Balavedi, alternative and supplementary education were also added for the school going children.

(vii) **The seventh seed:** The seventh seed depicts the cultural activities. I could compose poems and write stories suited to the life and culture of the fisher-people for the use of the children in the nursery and Balavedi (school going children's group). Children's theatre, dance groups, street drama, band set, etc; were organized for the children as well as for the teachers.

(viii) **The eighth seed:** This stands for the organizational activities of KSMTE. This included the participation in the struggles for justice, Dharna (sit-in), picketing, court - arrest and going to the jail, hunger strike, etc. and the readiness to face the consequences.

(ix) **The ninth seed:** This stands for the faith dimensions and the spirituality. Faith-reflections and sharing in groups, Para-liturgical services on special occasions, the Christmas and Holy Week celebrations with like-minded groups and friends helped me in many ways to develop a 'spirituality of struggle' to be with the crucified people and be the Fire and Flame.





SEED OF FAITH

# *The Mandala of my Vocation Story*

The star symbolizes me. The first seed of faith was given to me by my parents and family members. They played a big role in my life to keep it alive and ever growing. That simple faith has grown ever since and is being shaped through new visions (symbol of the eyes) received from different sources such as: the Bible, the MMS constitutions, the Second Vatican Council, the formation I received, the influence and encouragement of the MMS (especially Sr. Sophie Vallavasseril) and the contact with certain people like Fr. Thomas Kocherry (Tom), Fr. Jose Kaleekal, Fr. James Culas and others.

My commitment in different involvements helped me to keep the light of faith burning. The involvements were mostly among the fisher-people (the symbol of fishes). The footprints around the circle remind me that I was not alone, that many people were walking along with me. They are my companions, friends, and supporters who gave me the strength and courage to go forward joyfully.





UNION OF THE OPPOSITES



# *The Mandala of the union of the opposites in me (Psycho-spiritual synthesis)*

There are five strongly opposing character-traits in me.

(i) The bow and the arrow: This depicts contemplation and action. It is the prayer and spirituality that guides and enables me to be fully involved in my activities. Stronger the prayer and spirituality, greater the involvement will be.

(ii) Heart and the square: The curved line of the heart is the symbol of love and intuition. At the same time the straight line of square symbolizes the will, logic and rationality. I have a loving heart to be sensitive to the people and the situations. At the same time I have my own will power to take the decisions logically. i.e. love guided by reason.

(iii) Open and closed eyes: These symbols depict pragmatism and idealism, adventure and prudence, extrovert and introvert. I have these character-traits in me and I act according to the situations. It doesn't mean that I am always correct. I am a combination of all these and at times I fail to maintain the balance between the opposites in me but soon I recognize it.

(iv) Rainbow and people: This stands for spirituality and sexuality (relationships & communion). I have a strong spirituality of my own and I value my personal relationship with God as well as with the people both men and women. I value my friendship and keep it up as precious gift. I am proud of being a woman.

(v) Children and the grown ups: These stand for playfulness and seriousness. I like to be with children, singing, dancing and playing with them being spontaneous and creative. I enjoy the cultural programmes, the rhythm and music, the band set, etc. At the same time I am very serious with the organizational and Trade Union work to fight for justice participating, in all the activities of the fisher-people's struggle.

I enjoy being myself experiencing these opposites in me and realizing the meaning of it. It is nice to become aware of the opposite traits in us otherwise we may be confused and misunderstood by different people.



DETERMINATION

# *The Mandala of Courage and Determination*

The whale and Durga is my emblem of courage and determination. The mouth of the fish represents the boat which is the symbol of hope and salvation. This is the victory over destruction and withdrawal. The boat ploughing through the sea is the emblemation of joy and happiness.

Inspired and motivated by the **power within**, the courageous fisher-women dare to hope for a better future. I too want to be like them.

This Mandala suggests that nothing can prevent a woman from achieving what she has decided in her mind, from reaching her goal and purpose in life.





THE JUBILEE

## *The Jubilee Mandala (i)*

I celebrated my silver jubilee of religious profession in 2004 December 8th - 25 years of sailing with a group of people (MMS and other friends). This had been a journey in the midst of heavy storms and rains with Jesus sleeping in the boat. This had been a journey with a new vision (eye) and a new hope and a strong spirituality (rainbow). This had been also a journey along with the fisher-people with the flag of the Union (KSMTF). In all those involvements God remained the center of everything (the symbol of triangle).





THE JUBILEE



# *The Jubilee Mandala (ii)*

## *(50<sup>th</sup> Birthday)*

Fifty years of learning and wisdom is being carried on in a beautiful boat. The four steps leading to the earth, seen in the Mandala are the four fields of involvement among the fisher-people. The first step is the field of cultural activities and the second step is the field of educational activities. The third step is the field of organizational activities and the final step is the search for a new and meaningful spirituality (which I fulfilled in 2007 with my Masters Degree in feminist theology & Spirituality) I had been sailing with a clear vision and a definite direction (open eyes and the flag with a cross on it). There were struggles and tensions, but also joy, happiness and hope (the fire and the petals of flowers).



THE LIFE CYCLE

# *The Life Cycle*

There is a life cycle for every body's life which is compared to the water sources (sources of life) and it relates to the four landscapes. The narration of my life cycle is depicted in the story of a Bird (which is in the centre). The bird is flying over the four landscapes in a circle with a clear vision (eye symbol at the back ground). The flying bird faces oppositions, at the same time it listens to the clarion call of hope. (The 4 shells - Shankuvili) The pot on the top in the mountain stands for my vocation, the call to religious life. The river (sources of my religious life) started flowing from the pot in 1975. The first landscape, mountain, (one of the wings of the bird) depict the cultural activities (art and creativity). The forest (the green trees and flowers) depicts educational activities with the children and the sea (the other wing of the bird) depicts organizational activities (involvement in the trade union). The wilderness depicts the search for meaningful alternatives, especially in the fields of education and spirituality.

Once upon a time there was a bird, enjoying the real freedom and love in the company of so many other birds. It flew over the hills and valleys singing and dancing. One day as she was flying from one mountain to another, suddenly she noticed a beautiful pot, a mud-pot. She was little afraid to open the pot thinking that it would break. She knew that it was a treasure for her so she called one of her friends for help. She opened the pot with the help of that special friend. As soon as she opened the pot, water began to flow from it and it was flowing continuously. To her surprise it became a river and the bird was so happy to fly along the source of the river and to play in the water. Within a short time the bird and river became thick friends and they got married. The bird was ready to follow the river wherever it was flowing.

The river began to flow through a thick forest. The bird was so happy seeing the forest, its thickness and beauty with different kinds of trees and flowers. The bird became part of the forest, began to make her nest and found new companions. But the river didn't want to stop flowing; it was flowing winding the hills and valleys, gaining force and momentum. At times the bird was so frightened by the strong currents and deep waterfalls. Still she was so proud of the river seeing its enthusiasm, patience and perseverance. The bird could sense that this river had its own aim and direction. The bird was happy about the enriching, company of the river, which enabled her to see new visions and encounter with new rich and varied situations.

Gradually the river began to be broader, deeper and slower. It was really majestic and solemn attracting many. It was taking more time to entertain the people coming to the river, accepting the offerings of the people and taking them along. The bird could hear the sounds of waves, becoming louder and louder. The river was preparing for the final union with the sea. The bird, following the river faithfully all along with wonder and excitement, felt that it was a re-union longed for so long. As the river reached the sea, it welcomed her with the applause of the waves. The bird suddenly noticed that she was not alone following the river. There was a group of birds around her so that she got the courage and strength to face the new challenges. The bird began to learn the many secrets of the sea. She came to know more about the fishes, their joys and sorrows. New friendships grew fast. The bird became part and parcel of their life. They stood together to fight for their rights to live freely in the sea with the help and support of a special group of birds. Eventful months and years passed by and new people, new situations, new experiences and new challenges emerged. There were confusions and struggles.

So the bird wanted to take a break to reflect on these eventful years and to learn further. The bird left the sultry air of the sea and proceeded to the desert to breathe the dry air, above all to enjoy its quite solitude and put together the fragmented experiences and events and give shape to a beautiful mosaic - colourful and meaningful. She gathered more energy that she would be able to go up to the mountains and flow with the river again through the beautiful forests winding the hills, and valleys and reach the sea. May be in another place but the life cycle will continue as a journey till the end of life.





NINE POTS

# *Nine Pots: Growing in wisdom and spirituality aiming at a life in fullness*

As we grow older we will also be growing in our wisdom and spirituality through the learning and experiences. This mandala presents the wisdom and learning with the help of nine pots. As I said earlier the number nine has its speciality and sacredness.

The first pot depicts what I received from my parents and family - the values that they implanted within me through their life examples: • The love and concern • The deep faith in God • The commitment and responsibility • The perseverance

The second pot depicts what I received from the learning and experiences of others: • The neighbours • The relatives • Friends and companions • The MMS sisters.

The third pot depicts what I received through my contacts and relationships: • Sharing my life with others • My personal relationship and contact with people • The life and commitment of certain people who inspired me.

The fourth pot depicts what I received through my contact with like-minded groups and people: • Visiting the places of other groups and coming in touch with their activities • Sharing with other groups (the interactions) • Exchange of ideas and views • Net-working with other groups

The fifth pot depicts what I received through seminars, meetings and discussions: • Expanding knowledge • Clarifying concepts and ideas • Social analysis.

The sixth pot depicts what I received from the books: • The Bible • The Documents of Vat II • The MMS Constitutions • Other inspirational books and articles.

The seventh pot depicts what I received through my personal reflections and internalization process: • Retreats • Journal writing • Diary writing • Making mandalas • Writing down my own reflections • Personal and group prayers • Writing my life-history

The eighth pot depicts what I received from my positive life experiences: • Happy and meaningful events in my own life • Situations I faced courageously • The encouragement and the support I received.

The ninth pot depicts what I received from my negative life experiences: • I fully believe that the success of in life depends on the way I face the negative experiences in my life • The struggles I went through with the fisher-people for their rights • The sufferings and pain I experienced because of my commitment to the cause of the poor fisher-people (isolation, rejection, criticisms) • The challenges I faced taught me the real wisdom.





THE DRAGON



# *The Mandala of My Life in Nineties*

In this Mandala the following aspects are depicted:

- The intensity of the struggle and the challenges I was facing
- The sufferings I was overcoming
- The difficult steps I was taking
- The specific situations in Poothura - a life in the midst of all sorts of evils, 'gundatism' and injustices
- It was a life among a group of voiceless people who were denied justice.
- It was a life, in which one cannot count success on the basis of achievements. However it was a consciously chosen way of life, realizing the real meaning of religious life. So I had taken the decision to go forward facing all the difficulties, obstacles and problems. I had the faith and hope and I fully believed in the 'spirituality of struggle' that guided and inspired.
- In this mandala I am struggling hard to plough ahead in a boat surrounded by a dragon. Still there is a desire to go forward since the sun of hope is leading me.



# *The Mandala of the MMS Mission in Trivandrum Area*

The year 2000 is the jubilee year, 25 years of MMS mission in Trivandrum.

The symbol of eyes on both sides (yellow) depicts the vision with which we were moving forward. It was the grace (the symbol of fire) and the power of the Holy Spirit that guided us (the seven graces). There were lots of struggles and difficulties. At the same time there was a group of people to give strength and support to us - our friends and like-minded groups (the footprints around the circle). It was like Scroll opening from 1975 - 1999.

In 1975 - our involvement in Poothura started.

In 1978 - we started Mampally Community.

In 1992 - we started one center in Trivandrum City "Prana".

In 1999 - we started another center 'Trani' in Trivandrum.





HEART WITH EARS AND EYES

# *Mandala of listening with a Loving Heart and seeing with an Open Eye*

It means,

- To learn from the life experiences.
- To read the signs of the times.
- To understand the situation with its structural dimensions.
- To be able to grasp the reality.

This process enables us to be prudent and effective. It helps us to build up our inner strength and face the challenges and obstacles with courage and serenity. There is a great need for listening with a loving heart seeing the reality with an open eye (a heart with ears and eyes) and being effective and fruitful. That will be the sign of inner strength (the symbol of Sakti) Sensitive observation and affectionate listening will cultivate positive thinking and help us to be efficacious (sharp and pointed like the shells) and fruitful (symbol of green leaves and flowers) in our service.





PRUNING



# *The Mandala of Pruning*

## *(September to December 2001)*

He prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it will be clean and bear more fruit” (Jn 15:2).

I am forced to believe that the sickness, the pain, the sufferings, the difficulties and the inconveniences are the ways of pruning by God to cleanse us in order that we bear more fruits.

During the months of September - December 2001, I was suffering from rheumatoid arthritis (RA+ve). I suffered a lot due to the pain in the knee joints, especially on the left knee (my swollen knee can be seen in the mandala inside the strong stem of the tree which is cut) It affected me very much and it was difficult for me to accept the illness. I couldn't walk even a step and was completely dependent on others for everything. The gospel passage (Jn 15:2) helped me to accept the illness as a pruning process, in which God is still close to me. I began to believe that He has a special plan for this which I had to wait and see;

***In the head level ie;*** on the conscious level, attempts were made to accept that there will be a more colourful and more fruitful future in store (the seven colours flower/fruit on the top).

***But in the heart level ie;*** in reality I was suffering much pain, helplessness, anxiety, disappointments, and tension because of the acute pain (the pain of a wounded tree).

***In the gut level*** there were great desires for active involvements like a strongly rooted tree in the picture. Still I had the faith in God and believed in work of the Holy Spirit (the birds from the four sides) and I waited for the healing process - “in His Time - in His Time...”





# *The Mandala of Faltering Steps*

My steps were faltering, I was stumbling and the rhythm of life was being lost in second half of 2001. It is a very personal Mandala because in which I am trying to analyse the reasons and the real facts of my sickness - rheumatoid arthritis - with the help of a Mandala.

In the previous Mandala I was trying to look at my illness from a spiritual point of view and was trying to accept it positively seeing the hand of God in shaping me. Later I realized the need to find out the real cause of my illness in order to accept it and activate the healing process. However on further reflection and self-analysis I could detect deep disturbances and tensions in my psyche that could have caused the illness. Mainly two incidents that happened in the years 1998 and 1999 and some other problems of differences in personalities affected me very deeply so the feelings of helplessness and hurt-feelings and misunderstandings had repercussions on my body as well.

(i) In the context of political rivalry and confrontation one boy was killed in Poothura in the year 1991. Many innocent people were arrested and among them two of our close associates, Lawrence and Peter were included. They were not even present at the site of the incident. However on the basis of false witness they were given life imprisonment along with others. The judgment came in the year 1998 and we were shocked and found it impossible to accept the injustice. It was as if we were penalized because of their close association with us and since they had imbibed the values we stood for and courageous enough to speak out the truth and stood for justice. I lost my faith not only in the judiciary, but also began to question God for permitting that. I found it hard to pray in absence of justice and mercy. Questions were whelming up in my heart: what is the use of our sincere involvement among the fisher-people all these years? How is that we could not help them out? Could we do anything more? Why that is our legal and political power and influence could not be of any help in this case? I was confused, disappointed, disheartened and tensed.

(ii) The incident connected with the celebration of my silver Jubilee of religious life in Poothura Parish. After 25 years of committed life in the same Poothura parish the hostile attitude of the parish priest and his comments deeply hurt me. It was a terrible experience of rejection and discrimination. The parish priest rejected the proposal that Fr. Thomas Kocherry (Tom) be the main celebrant. He insulted us further saying that the cause of all the problems in Poothura is the presence of Fr. Tom and the Medical Mission Sisters. The attitude of the Parish Priest influenced the people in Poothura too. They too were indifferent to the Jubilee celebrations. The presence of many other people from outside Poothura as well as my family members friends and our MMS sisters and their appreciation and gratitude did not diminish my deep down sorrow and pain. I was terribly offended by the behaviour and attitude of the parish priest and my suppressed anger was eating me up. I lost my rhythm in life and ministry.

In the Mandala we can see that the drum (the symbol of harmony and rhythm) is slipped out of my hand (in 1998-1999). A poisonous octopus was creating havoc in Poothura. The four innocent people condemned to life imprisonment were his victims. Some unknown demon was spitting venom and fire (second incident). The octopus as well as the demon is symbolically represented on both sides of the Mandala. My heart and mind was full of anger, fire and thistles. I was hurt and upset very deeply in my mind and heart. Still the year 2000, I was rationalizing and suppressing all the pain and anger and carried out everything in the head level. By the end of 2001 it reached my heart and every limb of my body. First it appeared on my left wrist as pain; then on my shoulders and on my left knee and feet. Yes, afterwards it had taken the form of rheumatoid arthritis (RA+ve). From there onwards I was listed under the name of Rheumatoid Arthritic patient. The questions daunt me for years: where is justice? Where is truth? Where is mercy? Where is forgiveness? Where do I find the strength to continue?



THE PEARL



## *The Pearl*

This Mandala represents all our educational activities, the nurseries, Balavedees (School going children's group) cultural programmes and the teachers group in Anjuthengu area with a new vision and commitment. The shells and the lamps in the outer circle represent our teachers and children. In the process of education as well as the awareness programmes the shells open up and the real light (the Pearl inside the shell which was hidden deeply in the sea) came out. With the support and encouragement (the symbol of two fishes) it was lifted up to be seen, experienced and appreciated by others. The eyeball symbolizes the new approaches, vision and the ideology we held on and spread through the new songs new teaching methods. Let us join hand in hand and work together to bring out the real light of truth, justice, love and peace in the coastal area through the children and the youth.



THE PLAN OF GOD



# *There is a Time for Everything*

"A time to be born, and a time to die, and a time to plant, a time to pluck up what planted" (Ecclesiastics 3:2)

There is a cycle in everybody's life, a cycle which is having mainly four stages; the Mountain Experience (The first Quarter or half moon), the Forest Experience (Full moon), the Ocean Experience (The Third Quarter or Half moon) and the Desert Experience (Dark moon or New Moon). The Half moon experience depicts the moment of excitements, curiosity, and the readiness to jump into anything with hope and enthusiasm. The Full moon experience depicts joy, satisfaction and fulfillment in our life. The third quarter or half moon experience depicts the struggles and difficulties we have to face in our life. And the Dark moon experience depicts the quiet and stillness where we take time to reflect and evaluate. Some times it may be a dry experience of loneliness but it surely leads to another mountain experience of new ideas and inventions. The clock in the center depicts the time and all the other symbols are self explanatory.

## **For every thing there is a time**

A time to be rooted,  
A time to get involved,  
A time to reflect and see

## **For every thing there is a time**

A time to say good-bye to the known,  
A time to get adjusted to the unknown  
A time to let go of what was so precious,  
A time to embrace the uncertainties

## **For every thing there is a time**

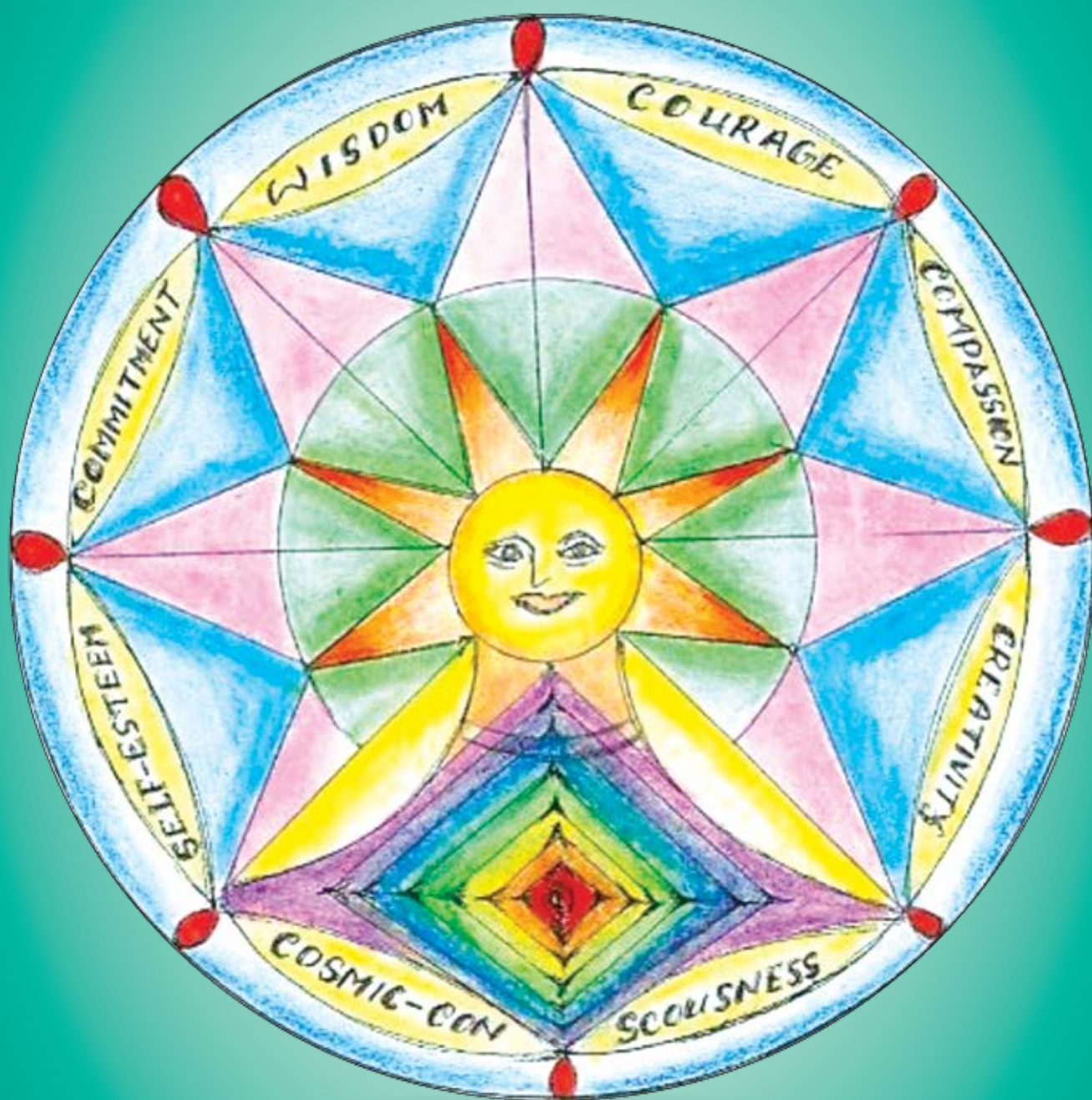
A time to go forward,  
A time to look back  
A time to work hard,  
A time to relax and take care

## **For every thing there is a time**

A time to give always,  
A time to receive from others  
A time to enjoy good health and  
A time to weep for the losses

To go through these stages and to be born again and again like a child is a painful process and needs courage. There is a time for everything in our life according to the plan of God.

(This Mandala I drew when I went to Philippines – after 30 years of involvement with the fisher-people – where I experienced the loneliness and homesickness for some time).



GIFTS OF HOLY SPIRIT



# *Spirit Filled Life (Gifts of Holy Spirit)*

- Wisdom
- Courage
- Compassion
- Creativity
- Cosmic Consciousness
- Self-Esteem
- Commitment

When our life is filled with the Holy Spirit we will become **courageous, compassionate** and it will reflect in our life **commitment**. Mary our blessed mother, who gave birth to a new humanity, a new community is the real Spirit filled person. Only a Spirit filled person, who is having the gift of Holy Spirit, can work **creatively** for a new community of **equality and hope**.

The seven coloured square represents the spirit the spirituality. Spirituality is an innate quality of human life. It is dynamic way of responding to everyday life and it gives meaning and joy to our life. It is God centered, mission oriented, people oriented and life related. Without spirituality life become routine and stagnant.



SERMON ON THE MOUNT



## *Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:3-10)*

1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven". The kingdom of God belongs to those who have nothing as their own possession. The **open hand** is the symbol of openness, transparency and nothingness- the sign of emptying oneself.
2. "Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they shall be comforted." It is not the mourning out of self-pity but out of the feeling for others, their pain and suffering.
3. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth": meek and gentle like the **water**. Those who are lower in position and situation like the children, the discriminated and marginalized, they are actually the owners of the earth.
4. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied". Those who stand for **justice, peace and equality** will achieve it. Those who fight for justice need perseverance, hope and ability to undergo the sufferings and difficulties.
5. "Blessed are the merciful, for they obtain mercy". Kindness, love, compassion, understanding, all these are the qualities of the human beings those who have a merciful heart (**the symbol of heart**).
6. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God". In order to see and experience God we need to have a simple, humble and pure heart like the white **Lilly flower**.
7. "Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called sons of God". The symbol of **dove** stands for peace
8. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account, rejoice and be glad, you your reward is great in heaven". Persecution and cross are part of our life specially when we take a stand with the poor and oppressed for their rights (symbol of **cross and crown**).



WOMEN'S OPPRESSION



# Women's Oppression

1. Yes, she is a woman  
with her own will and power  
But she is subservient in this  
**male dominated**, patriarchal society
2. She is a woman  
with the ability to love and to be loved  
But she is used and **sexually abused**  
for the satisfaction of men
3. She is a woman  
with all her passion and feelings  
But she is a victim  
of all sorts of **violence**
4. She is a woman  
having her own self-worth  
But she is bargained for dowry  
in the marriage market like animals
5. She is a woman  
with equal rights  
But she is overburdened  
with all sorts of **work** like an ass
6. She is a woman  
created in God's image and likeness  
But all the **religion** define her  
As inferior and temptress
7. She is a woman  
with the power to make  
Her own decisions  
But she is **discriminated & marginalized**
8. She is a woman  
with her monthly bloodshed  
which is meant for life  
But she is labeled as unclean & polluted

Women of the world, we are one in our deprivation and discrimination. We are women long to rise. Rise, rise like the Sun, like kite, like Eagle from the dead into the hope, into freedom, into partnership and the **POWER** that fosters life. Let us experience the power of our true spirituality, the true feelings, the power of acclaiming others and enabling them to realize their full potential as human beings.

The feminist spirituality enables us to be conscious of gender oppression. It begins in an appropriated and criticized experience of patriarchy and violence against women. It involves with an alternative vision of non-patriarchal future and commitment to structural change. In short it is a spirituality of commitment and participation in people's struggle - a spirituality of action for full humanity.



EMPOWERMENT OF  
RELIGIOUS WOMEN



# *Empowerment of Religious Women*

The liberation and advancement of women Religious must be understood as an integral and cultural area of social liberation. Women Religious form the most visible aspect of church in India. In fact women Religious could be a tremendous force in the transformation of church and society. Yet they have not assumed any dynamic leadership or taken their prophetic role seriously. The women Religious continue to live and function within the hierarchical and patriarchal church with its powerful legislations made by males and parameters of what and how women Religious ought to be! It is a time for us as women Religious to view ourselves from the feminine perspective and as Indian women. Let us begin now, by transforming our mind set. It is a time for us to move from our "passivity" to "assertiveness", from conformity to take initiatives and recognize our own abilities and potentialities.

In this Mandala in the centre there is the symbol of women with fire and flame on the top of the symbol of the eye for having new hope and new energy. The symbol of Religious women holding hands together with new fruits on top of their head are also there in this Mandala. Their hands unite together in the form of a star in the center as a sign of new light new vision and new spirituality – **the feminist spirituality**



A FEMINIST REFLECTION



# *Eros and Agape*

This Mandala is based on Pope Benedict's first encyclical "Eros and Agape". It is an extended reflection on the nature of Christian love. It is written in a refreshingly clear style. When Pope Benedict moves on to discuss the Song of Songs and mutual love, **he for the other** that is characteristic of both human and divine love. Pope Benedict describes the creation of woman as the man's "companion" rather than as his "helper". Pope also acknowledges the ambiguous history of Christianity's attitude towards the body and also, justifiably, criticizes contemporary attitudes towards the body and sexuality, by which Eros is reduced to pure 'sex'.

In this picture the main symbols are the sun around and the vessel of life overflowing with water. They symbolize the balance between the opposites of **Fire and Water**, which are also two elements of which the universe, including the human beings, is made. Here the **sun** represents **Eros 'The Brightened Love'** and **water** represents **Agape 'The overflowing Love'**. The women's **Hearts** are filled with the overflowing love of Agape while they experience the fullness of Erotic Love in their **Gut Level**. They receive the **Ascending love (Eros)** with their one hand and gives out the **Descending love (Agape)** with the other hand.



FISHER-WOMEN EMBRACING THE CROSS



# *Spirituality of The Cross*

"He will carry me in the wings of an Eagle" (Due 32:11)  
**(Spirituality of the fisher-women / Manakaruth Spirituality)**

**"Manakaruth" Spirituality** is an integral and holistic spirituality. Manakaruth is a composite word in Malayalam (Kerala language) made up of manam (mind) and karuth (strength). Manam is used here more in a sense of the faculty 'will'; it is active in decision-making. Karuth stands for the strength or resoluteness of decision in the face of opposition. Manakaruth spirituality implies collaboration with the Spirit of God hovering over the whole reality to re-create it as a New Heaven and New Earth.

The fisher-women make sense of their sufferings by choosing to embrace the cross. Jesus deliberately chose the road to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51). The readiness of the fisher-women to embrace the cross does not mean a passive acceptance but rather a choice that they make in life to stand for truth and justice in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized. They are also sure that God will carry them in the wings of an Eagle. (It is clearly depicted in the Mandala)

In the process of taking up the cross, the fisher-women distinguish the different types of suffering in their lives, the cross and sufferings of everyday life as well as the cross and sufferings result from the struggle against the dominant exploitative social structures. In short the spirituality of Manakaruth enables the fisher-women to make sense of their suffering to convert these into "fountains of life" for themselves and society.

I was beckoned to become a Medical Mission Sister,  
 Beckoned to capture the experience of being human and compassionate  
 MMS showed the ways and means, and supported me  
 to become human and compassionate  
 to learn from the poor fisher-women  
 (I was beckoned to become.....)

It is they who taught me to be more loving and caring  
 It is they who taught me to be more kind and considerate  
 It is they who taught me to be prophetically religious  
 It is they who put flesh into my initial inspiration  
 to become human and compassionate  
 (I was beckoned o become.....)

It is they who taught me to struggle with hope  
 as a pathway to transformation  
 It is they who taught me transformation as  
 a never-ending process, a sign of growth  
 a way to become human and compassionate  
 (I was beckoned o become.....)

It was exciting, energizing and overwhelming  
 It penetrated my whole being and changed my life  
 It deeply touched and moved me into creative actions  
 My soul expanded, my heart burned with "Fire and Flame"  
 And I became more and more human and compassionate  
 (I was beckoned o become.....)

I was bubbling with awe and respect  
 When I found the power within them  
 The inherited powers from their fore mothers  
 And, my joy found no boundaries  
 When I discovered it as Manakaruth Spirituality  
 (I am beckoned again and again to become a fully human compassionate MMS)



PSYCHO-SYNTHESIS &  
HEALING OF INNER CHILD



# *Inner Child Workshop*

It is a very personal Mandala. During my renewal in 2011, I attended an inner child workshop. There I was asked to undergo a fantasy meditation and try to become aware of the symbols, pictures and people coming to my mind as if they are appearing on a stage with in 30 minutes. There I could note down almost 16 of them both positive and negative. I was asked to draw all of them and give names. Those were all my **sub personalities**.

1. A 10 years old dancing girl (I gave the name **Happiness & Joyfulness**)
2. Somebody sitting in a bed with a gloomy face (**Sadness & Withdrawal**)
3. A lady sitting on the top of an Elephant (**Confidence & Courage**)
4. Some vague things inside a net like cage (**Confusion**)
5. Book and pen (**Desire to learn new things**)
6. A group of people carrying baggage and I am in front of them (**Worries and anxieties**)
7. Burning Lamp (**Prayer and Spirituality**)
8. Somebody trying to climb a ladder and wanting to pluck the fruits from a tree but not able to go ahead because of the swollen knee and the baggage (**Helplessness**)
9. Some old boxes with old collections and a few new boxes with new things in a room (**Need for sorting out the old baggage and let go**)
10. Moon and stars in the sky (**Hope and Trust**)
11. A flying bird (**Freedom**)
12. Head of a snake like fish seen in the fresh water (**Anger**)
13. Dancing children (**Spontaneity & playfulness**)
14. Cactus with thorns (**Stubbornness**)
15. Hills and valleys (**Ups and downs in life**)
16. The big "I" becoming small "i" (**Proud**)

Through certain therapy sessions I could go deep into my sub- personalities, which helped me to become a more free and spontaneous person becoming aware of both the positives and negatives in me. I also learned how to make use of the positives in me to overcome the negatives, taking support and strength from it putting Christ at the center of my life.



RENEWAL/RETREAT GOAL



## *Renewal/Retreat Goal*

It is a Mandala of my personal goal for the renewal/retreat in 2011. Through the inner child workshop I became more aware of my own personality with its strength and weakness. The fire in this mandala represents the positives in me and the cactus with thorns represents the negative side of me. The moon is still hiding. It has to come out fully. There are also certain things which need to be brought into light. The light is still covered and the lid has to be lifted up. So with much hope, trust and openness I started my renewal/ retreat to break away the lid which covers the light and inner strength within me.



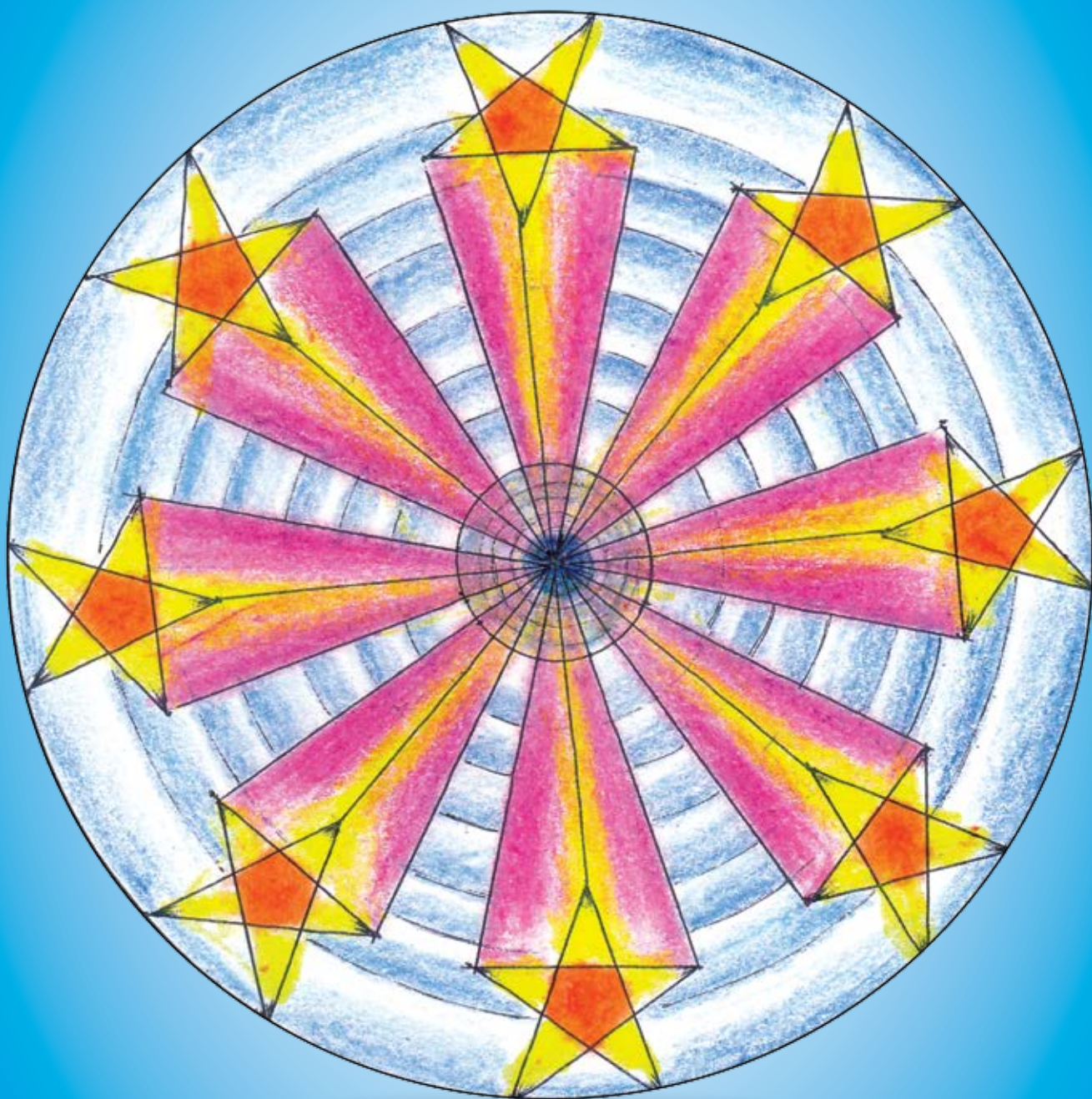
COMING OUT OF THE PUPA STAGE



# *Coming out of the Pupa Stage*

As a whole, the renewal/retreat helped me to achieve my personal goal, enabling me to come out of the pupa stage into a new colorful life. It helped me to understand the meaning of living my life fully alive and to be an integrated person, accepting myself as I am with all my strength and limitations. It was a secret journey into a new life the four coloured wings of the butterfly represent my four main realizations.

- Need to have more ecological awareness
- The mystery of suffering and to live with it is a commitment
- Need to listen to the spirit leading me
- 'Letting go' the past negativesb and relish the positive experiences



INTERIORITY, UNIQUENESS &  
CONNECTEDNESS/COMMUNION



# Three Principles of Earth

"All is Sacred and has its interiority; everything is unique and builds up diversity; all is interrelated and is held in communion" We recognize that the three principles of the universe stamp every part of our life and mission: all is sacred and has its **interiority**; everything is **unique** and builds up diversity; all is interrelated and is held in **communion**. These principles call us forth to examine our life-style, identity and how we can respond from within the realities of our various contexts. These principles have the potential to help us to understand each other accepting the uniqueness and diversity.

- **All is sacred and has its inner truth (interiority)**

We have to grow in the understanding of the uniqueness and sacredness of each individual. We need to constantly encourage each one to grow into his/her authentic self, into their fullest potential. However, God's creation story tells us that we are sisters and brothers with all of creation. All of creation is good and called to have life to the full as part of the mystical body of God. Everything in this universe has its own interiority. This enables us to listen to the cry of the Earth as the cry of the poor, and the cry of the poor as the cry of the Earth and to be present to all in a healing way.

- **Everything is unique and builds up diversity**

We have to grow in accepting and appreciating various kinds of uniformity in our world. In general it seems that it is easier for us to deal with commonalities than with differences. Perhaps there is a tendency to judge differences in a negative way and, therefore, to see them as flaws rather than as complementarities. We are called to grow in right relationship with the Earth in all its cycles and stages of life. Right relationship means willingness to learn the lessons that Earth provides, especially in the death and new life of its many species. It means willingness to trust in the unique personal and communal calls that continually arise from the different potential in all. Within the unknown potential of Earth, there is sacredness, as well as discomfort. But all is for the good of the whole.

- **All is interrelated and held in communion**

The Earth with her diversity of species can teach us how to live in an interconnected and interdependent way. By meeting the "stranger" in ourselves, in the community as well as in the whole web of life, we can grow to trust that all is interrelated in the mystery of life. Our trust in the mystery leads us to enter a new space where the uniqueness and sacredness of all and God within all are recognized. The mystery of life opens us to the vision of communion, of coexisting with others in ways that give witness to this vision: harmony, hospitality, solidarity, and love. Here, in the mystery, **all are sitting around the table** while creation provides sustenance for everyone and everything and teaches us that all must have life to the full.

In this Mandala the star depicts the **uniqueness** and the violet coloured triangle shape going deep into the centre forming a circle represents the **Interiority**. All are connected in a big circle, like a spiral, as the background of the Mandala shows the **interrelatedness and communion**.



WALK THE TALK



# Walk the Talk

**Walk the talk** means back up one's talk with action. In other words 'practice what you preach'. An even more recent term, 'walk and talk' has been coined for a storytelling device . There is a need for us to back up or prove what is said with action or represent words with action and practice what is preached.

Sometimes assertive leaders see the need for other people to change their behavior, but they themselves are immune from the change. The most effective, assertive leaders model the changes they desire in others .

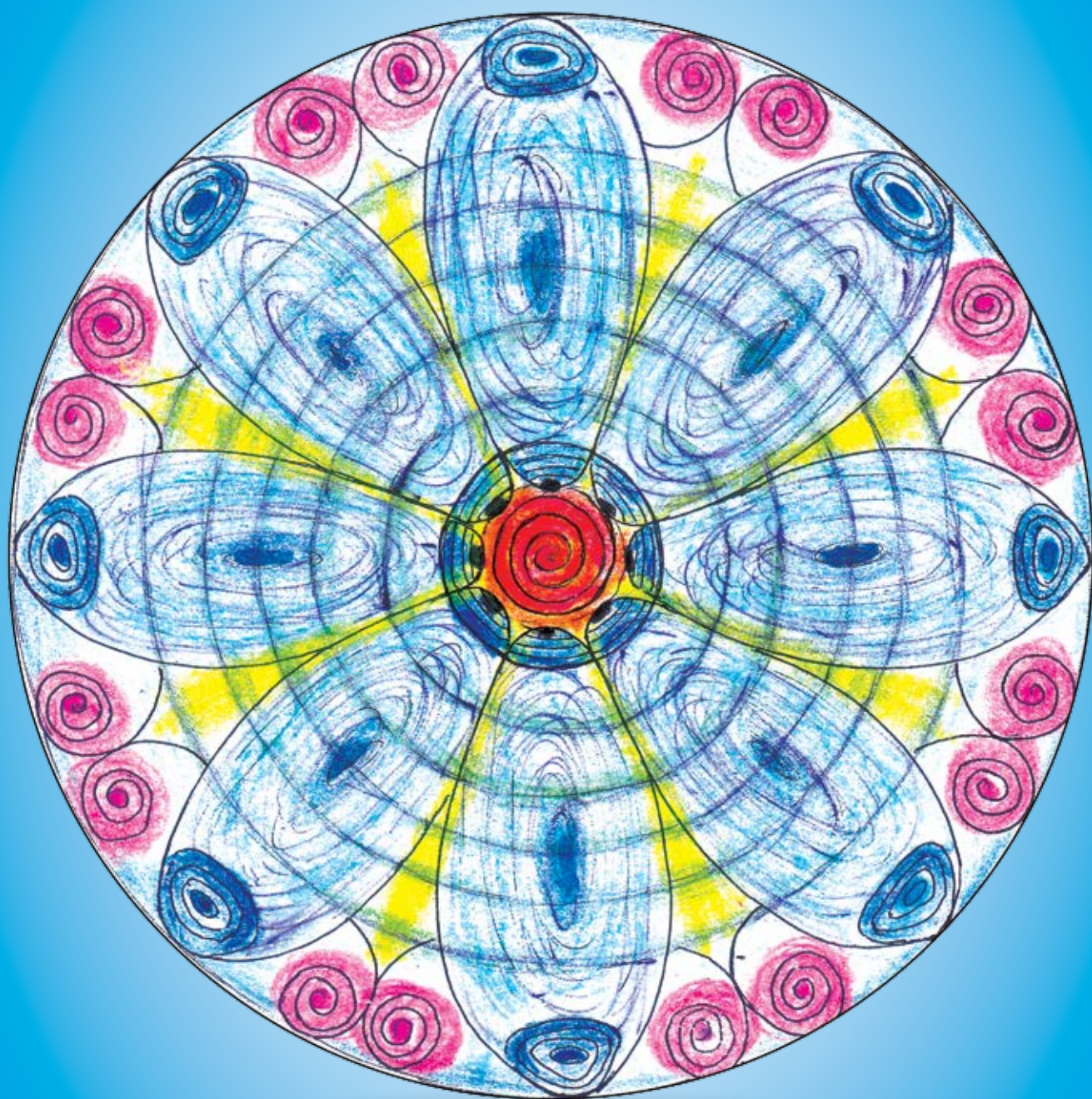
In many cases we say that we want change and continuous improvement but our actions do not match our words. Our exhortations to others ring false when our subsequent actions contradict our words. Start here to learn how to walk our talk. It's the shortest journey to empower change and the work environment we desire.

If the ideas we are promoting are congruent with our core beliefs and values, these actions will come easily, too. So, start with a deep understanding of "why" we want to see the change or improvement and what change or improvement we want to see. Make certain it is congruent with what we deeply believe.

- **Model the behavior we want to see from others.** There is nothing more powerful for others than observing us do the actions or behaviors we are requesting from others. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "Become the change you wish to see in the world." And, it will happen.

- **If we make a rule or design a process, follow it,** until we decide to change it. Why would others follow the rules if the rule makers don't?

This Mandala depicts very clearly the idea of walk the talk - what we talk through our mouth practice it through our feet (actions).



AGEING GRACEFULLY



# *The river of life approaching the ocean of eternity*

Ageing gracefully is a process we have to deal with throughout our life. It cannot happen all on a sudden. The only thing is that we must be conscious of the process and be prepared for that. To adapt to the situations as we are getting old, allowing ourselves to age gracefully practicing 'let go' attitude, is a point of consideration. The attitude of letting go and detachment from what we have, enables us to attain inner freedom. It is important to grow in love, tolerance, and understanding than to achieve something more in life as we get older. It does not mean to escape from the responsibilities. There is a time for everything. (Jn 21: 18; Ecc 3: 2)

No matter whether we are young or old, our graceful life-giving presence is the growth promoting factor. One thing we have to realize is that though our physical and even mental strength deteriorate, our spiritual energy can grow till the end of our life. Gratefulness is the basic attitude of being graceful; our whole life, especially those who come into our lives, is a gift of God to us. If we are life-giving and growth-promoting persons, even in our old age, we can touch and help others with our spiritual energies.

There is nothing exhilarating as living our life in its fullness. It requires rising to challenges that come our way, rather than evading them. To believe that one is in God's hands, and to draw comfort from that belief, is a gift. In all creation especially with human being there is a deep yearning for communion with God. It frees us to be single-hearted in loving God who is within us. Ultimately, in and beyond all this, the restless human heart continues to yearn for the Source, for the intimate meeting with the Beloved, who has created in each of us this Great Desire. Each one's river of life is yearning to approach the ocean of eternity. From our part what we have to do is to be prepared for that each and every day, living our life fully and ageing gracefully. In this Mandala we can see that each individual is living his/ her life fully in a colourful unique way (Oval shaped current of water) and flowing towards the centre to meet the eternity. It is a very pleasant - meditative Mandala giving much fruits for reflection giving positive feelings.

"Our hearts are made for you, Lord,  
Our hearts were made for you,  
They'll never find, never find, never find rest  
Until they find their rest in you"

There is a deep longing in the human heart for enduring love, and because God is love (1 Jn 4:8), this deep longing is really a longing for God. God alone can ultimately fulfill this longing of the human heart because He Himself created us with this innermost desire for Him, although so often we do not consciously realize its true source. No doubt, you and I have heard this truth expressed many times. But, in point of fact, do we really allow ourselves to be caught up into the wonder and power of this reality, which is not crafted by human imagination or ingenuity but which has been inserted into our innermost being by God Himself?



A FOUNDATION OF  
LIFE AND LIGHT



# *Deep down in the heart there is a foundation of life and light*

O Lord, fill now with Thy Spirit  
Hearts that full surrender know;  
That the streams of living water  
From our inner man may flow.

The river of life is flowing,  
Flowing and giving life  
Flowing, giving and growing,  
Flowing and growing to the sea.

Deep down with in me  
I got a life going on  
I got a fire going on  
The life and light.

Part of me wants to,  
Sing about the life  
And part of me wants to  
Sing about the light.

We are one, we are one  
We are one with all creation  
Follow the life within us  
Follow the light within us.

The tree of life is a metaphor describing the relationship of all life on Earth. The tree of life within us represents the spiritual realm. In the book proverbs, the tree of life is associated with wisdom. "Wisdom is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy" (Proverbs 3:18). In 15:4 the tree of life is associated with calmness and gentleness. In the New Testament namely John 1:9 says "The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world" There is something of God in all human beings. Every person is born with the Light and life within him/her. The secret of Light is divine energy.

The inner life and light within the human being are something higher and deeper than the conscience that informs and sometimes corrects certain aspects of human nature. That can be said as the divine guidance or "promptings" or "leadings of the Spirit". It may not be grounded in one's own experience; instead one must be guided by the Inward Teacher, the inner Light. In that sense one must listen for the inner Light of others as well as their own.

Dr. Radhakrishnan said something unique, something absolutely his own "let us not become the victims of either baseless optimism or groundless despair. Take recognition of the reality of the situation. Take account of the inwardness of the human being, of the spirit that dwells in him. That will conquer all the darkness and matter."

This Mandala clearly depicts all the above reflections and aspirations: **Deep down in the heart there is a foundation of life and light.**



DANCING WITH THE NATURE



## *Dancing with the Nature*

The spiral at the middle of the Mandala represents God, who is the center of our being and the entire universe, the source of life and energy. This picture depicts water and fishes around the spiral and the colourful flowers and green plants around it. We need to have the real love for life which is all-embracing, including creation and the whole cosmos.

We must be able to respect and celebrate life with the entire universe. We want to live with a sense of awe and sisterhood in our relation with all creation. 'Ecology' needs to become an integral part of our spirituality; it is a science of relations, relation with oneself, with others, with whole of creation. Interconnecting consciously with others, nourishing our communion and solidarity, let us dance together holding our hands with all creation.

Eco-spirituality is based in a fundamental belief in the sacredness of nature, Earth and the universe. From the Eco-spiritual perspective, Ultimate Reality (God, Spirit, or the Divine), is not just the source of creation it is very much also a part of creation; a part with which we can interact on a daily basis through our senses and from such experiences gain greater insight into the wonder of reality. Furthermore, Eco-spirituality understands the position of human beings to be inextricably related to all other life forms within an interrelated, interconnected web that is part of the Divine's dance of life. One of the goals of Eco-spirituality is to help transform human minds and hearts in the context of all their relationships, so as to bring people into creative harmony with the will of God in all these relationships. We have also come to see the need for a transformed relationship with our own bodies and psyches so that we may have a true appreciation of our own personal humanity in its dignity and beauty as the image of God.



THE DISTANCE BETWEEN  
I AND THOU BECOMING NIL



# *Mysticism/Enlightenment*

Mysticism is a liberating discovery: when awareness of the world and everything in it, including one's own bodily shape and form and the most intimately felt sense of "I" disappears. It doesn't mean we are living in denial of the very real and complex problems we are facing. But the ever-new and always-liberating truth of mystical insight spiritually empowers us so that we won't become discouraged, even on really bad days. And most importantly, in a truly challenged world that needs our whole-hearted participation more than ever, being awake to our own infinite depths empowers us to fight the good fight with all the courage in the world.

Mystic experience is very personal connection with the Source that "ties us back" to our own divinity. Therefore artworks that transmit mystic visionary reality and affirm the most holy transcendental truth are sacred. Usually our minds are enormously complex stew of thoughts, feelings, sensations, wants, pains, drives, daydreams and, of course, consciousness itself more or less aware of it all. To understand consciousness in itself, the obvious thing would be to clear away as much of this internal detritus and noise as possible. The technique that most mystics use is some form of meditation or contemplation. During meditation, one begins to slow down the thinking process, and have fewer or less intense thoughts. Regular and long-term meditation, leads to advanced experiences, known in general as "enlightenment." Spiritual enlightenment is the complete dissolution of one's identity as a separate self with no trace of the 'egoist' mind remaining. That is what we see in this Mandala. There "I" is becoming smaller and smaller and become one with divine, the "I" and "Thou" becoming one. One may use the word enlightenment to point to the state of self-realization beyond the ego.

The concept of enlightenment implies complete understanding of life and the universe, which usually is accompanied by a detachment of all things. St. Augustine was an important proponent of Illuminations, stating that everything we know is taught to us by God as He casts His light over the world. Augustine's version of Illuminations is not that God gives us certain information, but rather gives us insight into the truth of the information we received for ourselves.

Spiritual Enlightenment transcends everything and the highest stage of spiritual enlightenment marks the attainment of unity with God or being one with everything. In Mysticism/Enlightenment our soul begins to merge with Supreme Soul. There we feel that we are not individual ("I") anymore and not separate from anything. We feel that we are in everything and everything is just a part of the Supreme Soul from where we also have emerged.

As it is seen in this Mandala once we reach that stage of enlightenment our mind and body will become at peace like the petals of a flower and true light will come out of it.



GOD HEARS WITH HIS  
BIG EARS AND LOVING HEART



# *God Hears with His Big Ears and Loving Heart*

## Heart of God

The Burning Heart of Jesus in the center of this Mandala symbolizes the love of Christ. He reveals to us His burning and flaming Heart, but it is a fire that does not cease; on the contrary, it's intensity increases the more we are in need of His forgiveness and mercy.

## Ear of God

**(Isaiah 59:1)** "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear".

**(Isaiah 58:9)** "Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I."

He is a God hearing and answering prayer, and is ready to help his people in every time of need, who apply to him in a proper and suitable manner; his eyes are upon them, and his ears are open to their cries. We must have confidence in the Lord's willingness to fellowship with us in prayer, listen to our prayers, and that He wants to speak to us and answer our prayers. **(Matthew 7:7-8)** "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

**(1 John 5:14-15)** This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything

according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. God is waiting to hear from us. (**Psalm 34:15**) reminds us, we must humble ourselves and seek Him.

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers of the people offered in this place. (**II Chronicles 7:14-15**).

In (**I Chronicles 5:20**), we are told that God answered the prayers of the people because they trusted in Him. Believing that God will answer our prayers, trusting in His ability to hear and answer is important.

## Hand of God

(**Isaiah 41:13-14**) For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you." Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the Lord; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

(**Genesis 49:24**) But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness.

## Empty Pot

When we come to awareness of our emptiness, our nothingness, God shows us that He intends us to have victory right in the midst of this apparent spiritual law. But His way is



not to change us into instant spiritual supermen with great powers. No, He has something else in mind.

First we must see our self-defeat as a revelation of our emptiness. But when this realization dawns, don't try to change ourselves. For behind our acceptance of ourselves as "nothing" is the still small voice of the inner Christ showing us that we already have the victory.

This victory is recognition of our emptiness. "They shall be filled." Then nothing can shake them. "I am He that fills you. You live, yet not you - I live. I live in you, I live as you."

Recognition of Him as our life, of Him as the one who fills us, brings victory in defeat.

It means an end to striving and struggling to be filled.

For when we accept ourselves as we are - as the "nothing" of an empty vessel - without condemning ourselves any longer, the promise is that we "shall be filled!" Indeed, we already are - and in His time the manifestation will come forth. This Mandala depicts very clearly what it says '**God hears with His Big Ears and Loving Heart**'.



BE NOT AFRAID, I AM WITH YOU



# *Be Not Afraid, I am with you*

Be not afraid of suffering even death, don't be despair, have faith and courage and hope in resurrection. When I completed reading the book **"Be Not Afraid" Over Coming The Fear of Death** written by Johann Christoph Arnold (which is given to me by Fr. Thomas Kocherry as his last gift, on the previous day of his death) the idea of drawing the following 3 Mandalas came to my mind and I scribbled it on a piece of paper. Afterwards I drew the final one.

Why do people have to die? Why people have to suffer? And why there is so much evil and wickedness in the world? The only answer is that Christ is preparing a place for us, and it is a very real place, not something abstract. And also Jesus' wonderful promise is in the Gospel of Mathew "I am with you always, to the end of the world" Let us trust that the mighty arms of God will receive us and give us the peace and joy they desire. As Psalm 34 put it "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he saves those crushed in spirit, and those who despair."

**(Psalm 71):** A prayer for God's protection.

I run to you, LORD, for protection.

Don't disappoint me.

You do what is right, so come to my rescue.

Listen to my prayer, and keep me safe.

Be my mighty rock, the place.

Where I can always run for protection.

Save me by your command!

You are my mighty rock and my fortress.

.....

.....

The dark center part of this Mandala shows the fear of death, confusion, suffering etc. But the light of Jesus coming in through yellow colour and the green petals and the red cross shows the resurrection with hope and light around.



ACCEPTANCE OF CONFUSION,  
SUFFERING AND CROSS BRINGS NEW LIGHT



# *Acceptance of confusion, Suffering and Cross Brings New Light*

Fear of course brings **confusion**, fear of an uncertain future, fear of change, and perhaps most importantly, fear of facing one's life squarely and coming up empty-handed.

**Suffering**, speaking of blessings, perhaps one of the greatest is the ability to find meaning in what appears to be meaningless suffering. In the riddle of suffering, and began to make peace with the fact that whether or not we understand it, it still exist. And with this acceptance comes a **new insight**. If we allow it, pain can be an occasion for redemption - a crucible of sorts that may refine and renew us.

**The cross** in our life involves the entire tangled spectrum of human emotions connected with different life experiences and leads to despair. Despair is one of our greatest enemies. It means the loss of joy, all hope, all confidence - sometimes the will to live

Without courage none of us can overcome the fears, **Confusion, Suffering and Cross** and found peace. We must nurture it from day to day. No matter how it arises, every act of courage has the power to give birth to new ones, whether through the chain reaction of inspiration, or more directly. And if we cannot find it in ourselves, we need only look around us.

The pain of all confusions, suffering and cross must precede the triumph of new life. In finding this faith, we gradually overcome our fear of everything including death and find new light. Here also the center part shows the intensity of confusion, suffering and cross, like a dark well with thorns around. From that the new lights are coming out with new vision (symbol of eyes).



SURRENDERING TO THE WILL OF GOD



# *Surrendering Brings New Meaning to Life*

Mary, mother of JESUS, surrendered herself to the will of GOD. When Mary surrendered to the will of God there were lots of questions in her mind and heart as it shows in the center of this Mandala. But once she made up her mind to say 'Yes' to God she became peaceful like the water and could bring out new life like the trees around the water as well as new ways of colourful, meaningful life.

She was certainly not following her own agenda or doing her own will or building her own kingdom when she said 'YES' to the angel to become the mother of Jesus; "Behold, I am the hand maid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1: 38). Mary shows us how to be a follower of Jesus, making a loving surrender into the hands of God who loves us.

Surrendering to God helps us to let go of whatever has been holding us back from God's best for our lives. By surrendering to God, we let go of whatever has kept us from wanting God's ways first. God has a plan for our lives, and surrendering to Him means we set aside our own plans and eagerly seek His. The good news is that God's plan for us is always in our best interest (Jeremiah 29:11), unlike our own plans that often lead to destruction (Proverbs 14:12). Our Lord is a wise and beneficent victor; He conquers us to bless us.

Romans 6:13 says that God demands that we surrender the totality of ourselves. He wants the whole, not a part: "Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness." Jesus said that His followers must deny themselves (Mark 8:34) - another call to surrender.



FASTING, PRAYER & GIVING –  
LEADS TO THE EASTER JOY



# *The Wheel of Lent*

**Prayer, fasting and alms giving** are the three wheels of the Lent. I have added one more the Easter joy to make it into four wheels. The central part of this Mandala represents the wheel which divides the whole circle into four parts, the essentials of the Lenten season. Giving alms is an important practice especially during the Lenten time. We need to share with others what we have, not from our abundance but from the little we have. We have to do it joyfully, **a free flow of things from our hands to the plates of others** as it is shown in the picture.

Jesus presented alms giving as a necessary part of Christian life: "When you give alms, sound no trumpets before you, as the hypocrites do... But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Mt 6:2-3). The first Christians knew this. "There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them... and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need" (Acts 4:34-35). Giving also includes when we daily make the choice to give our time, our attention, our affirming smile and give generously. We need to dig deeply and give much where much is needed. But, whenever possible, our charity should also involve personal acts, not just automatic withdrawals from our bank account. Pope John Paul asked us to see, and to be seen by, "the human face of poverty".

**Fasting** is another practice of the Lenten season. The Bible has a great deal to say about both fasting and praying, including commands to fast and pray. The Bible also gives us

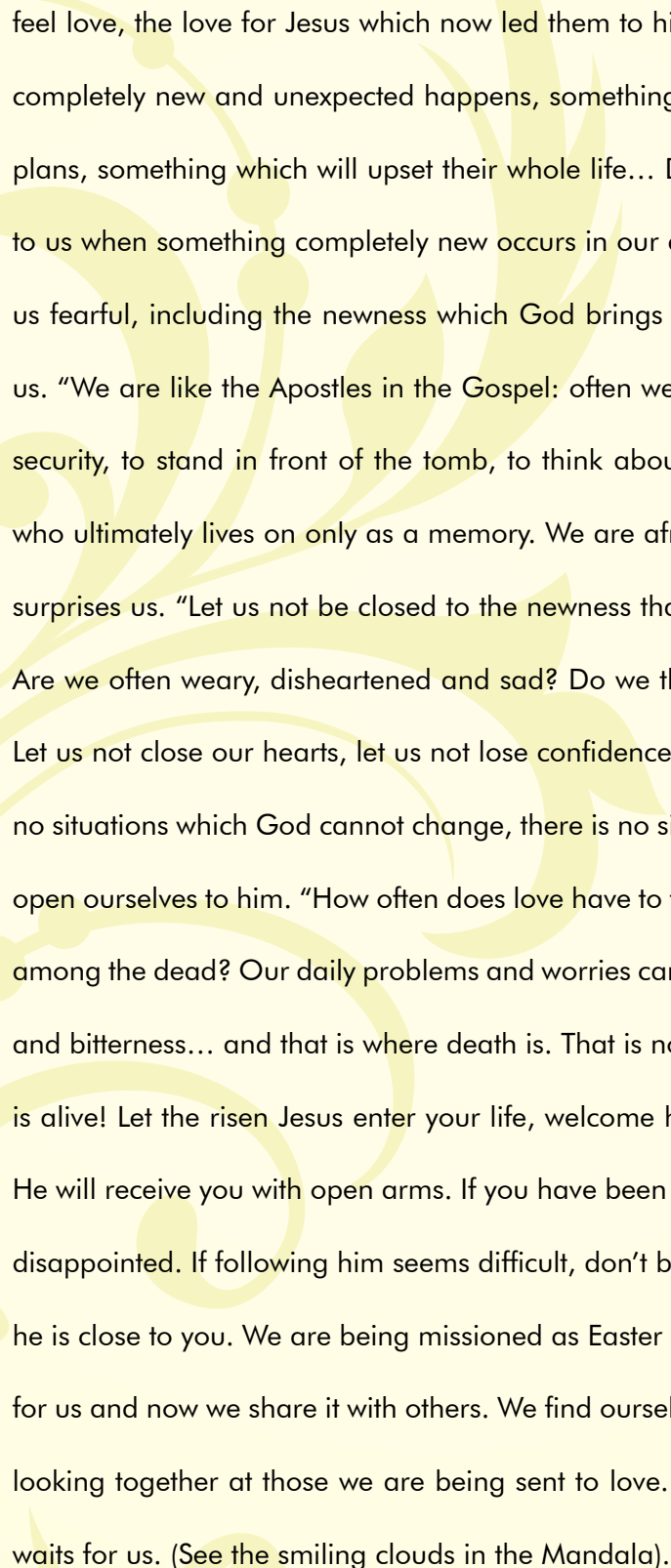
examples of people who fasted and prayed, using different types of fasts for different reasons, all of which are very positive results. Jesus fasted and prayed. Jesus' disciples fasted and prayed after the Resurrection. At the same time I feel, there is a need to have a different approach of fasting other than avoiding certain food or not watching the TV. What is more needed is to fast from our own negative attitudes, thoughts and behaviours. For example: fasting from our own anger, hatredness, fasting from our own way of judging others, negative talks about others, fast from complaining, discouragement, resentment, bitterness, laziness etc. which is more difficult than the other way of fasting. In this Mandala I have depicted all these in the form of **different creature's heads which are not so appealing.**

**Prayer:** In prayer one is in constant communication with God. Some people pray throughout all that is happening during the day and seek guidance as the day progresses. During Lenten season it is also nice to pray with the creation. I am giving much importance for that since Jesus also spent more time in prayer with the nature. Every creature, every plant every rock and grain of sand proclaims the glory of its Creator. Nature around us speaks of His greatness - the vast expanse of the sky, the mountains, trees, lakes and streams speak of His great design. Ask God for this particular grace: for deep wonder and awe at creation as well as for a heartfelt knowledge and experience of God's unconditional love for us. Ask God to reveal something by **CONTEMPLATING CREATION!** (It is well depicted in the Mandala - **praying with creation**).

**Easter Joy: Let us listen to Pope Francis**

"The women (who go to the tomb of Jesus with spices to anoint Jesus' body) continued to





feel love, the love for Jesus which now led them to his tomb. But at this point, something completely new and unexpected happens, something which upsets their hearts and their plans, something which will upset their whole life... Doesn't the same thing also happen to us when something completely new occurs in our everyday life? Newness often makes us fearful, including the newness which God brings us, the newness which God asks of us. "We are like the Apostles in the Gospel: often we would prefer to hold onto our own security, to stand in front of the tomb, to think about someone who has died someone who ultimately lives on only as a memory. We are afraid of God's surprises... He always surprises us. "Let us not be closed to the newness that God wants to bring into our lives! Are we often weary, disheartened and sad? Do we think that we won't be able to cope? Let us not close our hearts, let us not lose confidence, and let us never give up: there are no situations which God cannot change, there is no sin which he cannot forgive if only we open ourselves to him. "How often does love have to tell us: why do you look for the living among the dead? Our daily problems and worries can wrap us up in ourselves, in sadness and bitterness... and that is where death is. That is not the place to look for the One who is alive! Let the risen Jesus enter your life, welcome him as a friend, with trust: he is life. He will receive you with open arms. If you have been indifferent, take a risk: you won't be disappointed. If following him seems difficult, don't be afraid, trust him, be confident that he is close to you. We are being missioned as Easter People. We find peace in Jesus' love for us and now we share it with others. We find ourselves standing side by side with Jesus, looking together at those we are being sent to love. That is where the real joy of Easter waits for us. (See the smiling clouds in the Mandala).



HAPPINESS AND JOY OF  
THE CONSECRATED LIFE



# *Happiness and Joy of the Consecrated Life*

Having purpose and meaning in life increases well-being and life satisfaction, improves mental and physical health, enhances resiliency, builds self-esteem and decreases the chances of depression. People whose lives have high levels of meaning often actively seek out meaning even when they know it will come at the expense of happiness. Another thing people who have meaning in their lives, in the form of clearly defined purpose, rated their satisfaction with life higher-even when they were feeling bad than those who did not have a clearly defined purpose.

The religious are called to know and show that God is able to fill our hearts to the brim with **happiness**; that we need not seek our happiness elsewhere; that the authentic fraternity found in our communities increases our joy; and that our total self-giving in service to the church, to families and young people, to the elderly and the poor, brings us lifelong personal fulfillment. Like everyone else we have our troubles, our dark nights of the soul, our disappointments and infirmities, our experience of slowing down as we grow older. But in all these things we should be able to discover “perfect joy”, the real happiness.

In a world of distrust, discouragement and depression, in a culture in which men and women are enveloped by fragility and weakness, individuality and self-interest, we are asked to introduce belief in the possibility of true happiness, in the feasibility of hope that does not depend solely on talent, superiority or knowledge, but on God. All are given the possibility of encountering him, if they only seek him with a sincere heart.

“Sadness and fear must give way to joy: Rejoice... be glad... rejoice with her in joy, says the prophet (Is 66:10). It is a great invitation to joy. Every Christian, and especially the consecrated, who are called to be bearers of this message of hope giving serenity and joy, God’s consolation, his tenderness towards all. In this Mandala we can see a **dancing happy person** in the center radiating the happiness around her extending the colourful wings of joy.





# *Vision, Mission, Joy and Pioneering*

**Vision** provides the needed power for us to function. It is a Visual perception, the sense of sight an experience in which a personage, thing, or event appears vividly or credibly to the mind, often under the influence of a divine or other agency. In simple words, it is a spiritual experience in which the experience can be seen and hence it is called a vision.

Vision, however, is connected to human subjectivity and it is the inward experience of the soul, the work of Holy Spirit. Our communion/fellowship with God, our intimacy with Him makes us visionaries. The visionaries have a definite goal in view, filling an unfulfilled need. It will demand a lot from one, preparing oneself for adventurous steps. More over a constant discernment in deep faith and trust is needed. It is really a gift of the Spirit. The Religious people are supposed to be visionaries.

**Mission:** To be in mission means believe in witnessing to Gospel values look at the world from people's perspective. By being present with the people in their joys and suffering, mutual conversion happens. Our sense of solidarity with those made poor deepens justice and peace work. The work for justice and peace leads us to be involved with others on behalf of the earth and all creation. As Jesus worked to change the unjust oppressive structures of his religion, his culture, his nation, so the religious have to grow in our realization that issues of justice and peace are integral to our mission. Our mission has to take us to different life-threatening and life-destroying situations and areas, such as exploitation of women and children, tribals, dalits, fish workers, social injustice like poverty, illiteracy, bonded labour, unequal and unjust wages, displacement of people; social evils, such as drug addiction, alcoholism, increasing cost of health care, increasing consumerism, manipulation of media etc. Christ had given us the mandate "go into the entire world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15), for "the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Rom 8: 19).

**Joy:** According to Paul, joy is a fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22) and a typical, constant feature of the Kingdom (cf. Rm 14:17) that is strengthened by trials and tribulations (cf. 1Titus 1:6). The source of joy must be found in prayer, charity and unceasing thanksgiving (cf. 1Titus5:16; Phil 3:1; Col 1:11 f.). These are the words spoken by Pope Francis "There is no holiness in sadness", (8) the Holy Father continued. Do not grieve like others who have no hope, wrote St. Paul (1Thess 4:13). Jesus message always brings us joy if we are able to take it in good sense. "I have said these things to you, so that my joy may be in you that your joy may be complete" (Jn 15:11) He promises his disciples "You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy" (Jn 16: 20)

**Pioneering:** Religious spirit of pioneering makes us alert to the spirit's promptings to new needs, as well as the call to let go and move on when the time is right. In faith and courage we take risks, letting go of the past, searching for new ways, and moving on into the unknown. A spirit of readiness and openness is integral to Religious vocation as missionaries. Pioneering spirit involves some fear, risking our comfort and security, is always thrilling. It is still a challenge to be inserted into something that is not completely planned but unfolds with time. God's hands will always be with the pioneers all the time. In short the spirit of pioneering has to inspire us to enter into new possibilities of in our mission, responding to present areas of concern and creative response is integral to pioneering.



WITNESSING ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE



# *Witnessing role of Religious Life*

1. Seeing Crucified Jesus in crucified people and the Crucified Nature
2. Communion (Last Supper) and Unity

We must be able to find God hidden in the suffering face of the poor and find him crucified in the **crucified people**. Human liberation has to be part of the Christian understanding of salvation. Salvation isn't exclusively otherworldly; it has something to do with the here and now. Liberation spirituality invites us to look at the crucified people of our world and ask them the same question: What do I need to do to bring you down from the cross? It is part and parcel of the witnessing role of the consecrated people to see God in the poor and suffering people and walk with them in their struggle. Our way of contemplating God's face in the world must be in action to change his face, hidden and disfigured in the poor and oppressed, in to the face of the living God who gives life and raises from the dead. This has to be very radical. It needs a real conversion, abandoning many things and many ways of behaving, losing friendships with powerful and their benefits and gaining the affection of the poor. It has meant above all returning to Jesus' gospel, to the Jesus of the gospel and to the poor whom Jesus preached and was gospel, that is, good news.

We must be able to see the crucified face of Jesus not only in the crucified people but also in the **crucified environment** as part of our witnessing role. Environmental degradation is a result of socio-economical, technological and institutional activities. Degradation occurs when Earth's natural resources are depleted. Water, land and air are getting increasingly polluted, water tables are falling, soil erosion is leading to desertification, global warming is well underway, and species are dying out 1000 times faster than their natural rate of extinction. At times the destruction is so great that it cannot be reversed. We are killing our planet and the consequences are tremendous. Each of us is responsible for the health of our planet. Our choices and our actions contribute to the well being or deterioration of the environment. Yet, it's our earth, the only one we have. If we don't care about the environment, who will? Whether it's making large efforts or simple ones, there are many ways that everyone can do their part to help preserve the health of the environment.

The emphasis on **last supper** is on a joyous meal, a covenant celebration. Supper's social character - in order to remember His body, we must be one body (1 Cor. 10:16,17). It is impossible to eat the Lord's Supper if the brethren come together in disunity - eating at different times, and clustering in various separated groupings (11:20). It is a very serious matter to go through the motions of the Supper together in a state of disharmony and division. It should be one of celebration and joy. The table should not be a place of "gloom." However, in too many cases the atmosphere at the Lord's Supper is more like a funeral than a festival. We cannot be like the two sorrowful men on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:17,21). These men's hearts came alive with joy when Jesus made Himself known to them in the "breaking of bread" (Luke 24:30-35).

In a world where relationships seem increasingly fragile and conflict reigns, Pope Francis says that consecrated people are called to be **witnesses** of "the communion of spirits and hearts" of those who gather around Jesus to follow and be nourished by him. In their finite humanity, on the margins, in their everyday struggles, consecrated men and women live out their fidelity, giving a reason for the joy that lives in them. So they become splendid witnesses, effective proclaimers, companions and neighbours for the women and men with whom they share a common history.

All the reflections above are well depicted in this Mandala with **Crucified Christ** in the center like a tree having leaves and roots. Around Him are the **crucified suffering poor** as well as the **crucified nature** and the hands protecting the earth. Below is the table of God (**communion and unity** in last supper) there every body is coming around for the meal and rejoicing.





# *My Life Journey*

**My life journey is divided into 8 main mile stones**

1. My life at **home** which is depicted below as a happy free child rowing the small country boat and enjoying life in the back waters of Pulincunnoo (my father's house) and Veliyanad (my mother's house). I had a very happy childhood with my parents and siblings.

2. **College life:** After the 10th standard I moved into the city to continue my studies in the college (5 years in Alleppey for pre-degree and degree and one year in Palai for my B.Ed Degree). I enjoyed the studies as well as the company of my cousin sisters and brothers in Alleppey. At the same time I was well protected and cared, like in a very special country boat with a beautiful tent like cover and guided by others. I finished my studies at the age of 22.

3. **M.M.S. Formation:** Soon after my B.Ed exam I decided to join the Medical Mission Sisters. I had to fight with my father to make my own independent decision. He didn't want me to send to the MMS. So I had to undergo 3 days hunger strike at home. Finally he himself had to take me to the convent at Kottayam. Since it was my independent decision I drew it as if I am sailing the boat alone with great freedom and happiness. When I joined MMS in 1972 it was a time of drastic changes in Medical Mission Sisters in the light of Vatican II giving more stress on option for the poor. So I went through a formation which was very challenging. But it was a very meaningful time enabling me to reflect deeply on the religious life.

4. **Poothura life with the fisher-people:** Soon after my religious profession as a Medical Mission Sister, in 1975 I joined a group of four Sisters who opted to live and work among the 'fisher people' in Poothura, a coastal village of Kerala. Their life and struggle became part and parcel of my life, leaving unforgettable experiences and impressions, which, to a great extent, shaped my convictions in life. Since we were living in one of the small

houses among the fisher-people along the coast itself, we got the opportunity to come into close contact with the suffering people and to understand their problems. The social analysis and awareness building process helped the fisher-women to come to a better understanding of the causes of their poverty and exploitation. In course of time they were ready to confront the authorities for their rights to demand justice. Poothura people were using the traditional type of fishing boat (Kambavala) during that time. So it is depicted in the Mandala.

**5. Anjuthengu Area:** My involvement in the struggle of the fisher-women was spontaneous and a conscious decision. My own commitment for the poor in their situation of exploitation made me jump into the fray. My formation in religious life helped me to make this a conscious choice and commitment to the cause of the poor, as an expression of authenticity in my religious life. Our involvement with the fisher-people began to extend to other areas especially concentrating more in Anjuthengu Area. This period is depicted in the Mandala with a different type of boat which could use Yamaha machine.

**6. Trivandrum Area:** Deeper involvement through out Trivandrum district. When the fisher people's union was formed we also got involved politically in trade union activities, shouting slogans, participating in Dharnas (sit in) and picketing, fighting for the rights of the poor and oppressed. At that time it was very difficult for others to comprehend sisters getting involved politically. We had to face many objections, rejections, and criticisms from different sources: religious, priests, our own families and relatives, and the church, and even from our own sisters. We were kicked out from all the activities in the Church and banned as "Communist –Marxist Sisters". But being banned from the Church and so called Church activities gave us a different kind of freedom to involve with the poor. During Eighties and Nineties we were mainly fighting against trawling. So I depicted it with the picture of trawling boat in the Mandala.

It was the Power within me that gave me the courage to go through the ten-day hunger strike in front of the Secretariat in Trivandrum in 1984, and twelve – day hunger strike in Alleppey in 1985. It was an experience of deep solidarity with the fisher-people when



I was put in the central jail with three of our sisters and four other fisher-women and the spirituality of struggle became all the more powerful within me. For me it was a real experience of death and resurrection (Power of Cross), sharing a little bit of my body and blood with my fellow beings for a just cause. The hunger strikes were the real experience of Eucharist for me. My life with those fisher people became not a mere 'immersion experience' but a continuous process of commitment for almost three decades of my active ministry from 1975-2004.

**7. Philippines:** After 30 years of life in Poothura and the involvement with the fisher-people, in 2004 I went to Philippines to take the Masters Degree in Theology specializing Feminist Theology. There I decided to do a research on the spirituality (the power within) of the fisher-women based on their struggle for survival and my own personal experiences with them as part of my thesis. My study in Philippines is depicted by book, pen and light. Three years of study enabled me to internalize all my 30 years of life experience with the fisher-people. It helped me to find out the spirituality of the fisher-women as the MANAKARUTH (The will power) spirituality. Later I wrote a book on the "Manakaruth spirituality of the fisher-women: Challenges and Inspiration to consecrated women".

**8. Ayushya:** Soon after my studies I had to come back to Kottayam since I become sick with 'Rheumatoid Arthritic' problems in the knees. Afterwards I was assigned to Ithithanam, Chaganacherry and began to work in Ayushya, the Centre for healing and integration. Ayushya's symbol is depicted in the Mandala. Now I am getting involved in different programmes going on in Ayushya as well as in the children's clinic as a therapist.

I believe that God has His own plan for each one of us and there is a time for everything (Ecclesiastics 3:2). What we need is to discern the will of God continuously though it is very difficult at times. I thank God for allowing me to find meaning in whatever I do and enabling me to make use of my ability in teaching and be with the people who are suffering, mentally, psychologically and spiritually. I am also grateful to God for allowing me to complete my 50 Mandalas staying here in Ayushya.



THANK YOU LORD!



# *Thank you Lord!*

Thank you Lord for everything

Thank you Lord for the mother earth

Thank you Lord for the mother sea

Thank you Lord for the struggles in the sea

Thank you Lord for the fisher people, who gives the meaning to my life

Thank you Lord for the sea and the fishes, which became the part and parcel of my life

Thank you Lord for all my experiences

Thank you Lord for all my challenges

Thank you Lord for all my joys and hopes

Thank you Lord for all my pains and sorrows

Thank you Lord for my call and commitment

Thank you Lord for allowing me to express myself through these Mandalas

Thank you Lord for all those who HELPED me to draw these Mandalas

Thank you Lord for all those who encouraged and supported

Thank you Lord for all those who inspired me

Thank you Lord for all those who were with me to complete these Mandalas

Thank you Lord for all those who helped me to print it out.

# Mandala

Sr. Theramma Prayikalam is a member of Medical Mission Sisters founded by mother Anna Dengel who had laid the important ground work for the Sisters to explore more fully what it means to be a healing presence among people in need. Sr. Theramma Prayikalam joined the MMS after her B.Ed Degree and worked with fisher-people in Trivandrum area for three decades living among them in a coastal village Poothura in Anjuthengu (1975 - 2004) participating in their struggles fighting for their rights. With her 30 years of life experience she explored the spirituality of the fisher-women in Kerala as their Manakaruthu (the power within) and took Masters Degree in Feminist Theology in 2007 from Philippines. She had written a book in English "Manakaruthu Spirituality of Fisher-women: Inspiration and Challenges to Consecrated Women" as part of her Thesis. She started to draw Mandalas as a hobby and later it became part and parcel of her life reflections and way of prayers and meditation.

