



MAGNIFICENT PERSONALITY OF CLEMENCY & GENEROSITY

An epitome of Love...

An embodiment of grace..

A personification of brilliance

A symbol of self-respect

Above all he is an incarnation of a self-made persona

REV. DR. B. JOHN SURESH

**(A Catholic Priest of the Diocese of Chingleput,
Tamil Nadu, South India)**

It was around 11:30 PM on May 11th that I received an alarming call from the Global Hospitals that our beloved Suresh was sinking. Fr. George Stephen and I rushed to the hospital. They informed us that they were helpless, and he breathed his last breath at 12:37 AM that day (May 12). Our dear Suresh who served the people of our Lord with the motto of **“as a ransom for many”** (Mathew 20:28) has dissolved into the Divine Lord to be one with the Lord.

The pandemic corona played its evil games and gobbled his lungs. It was just last week that I was also infected with Corona and was hospitalised. So was he. He sent me a message after knowing that I was also hospitalised due to the infection. It was on April 30, 9:30 PM he sent, “Dear Bro! See that your lung is not affected”. My eyes are filled with tears when I see the message today. My beloved little brother who told me to take care of mine did not take care of his lungs. He went away in a hurry and here I am left with anger, blubber, frustration, and resentment.

Among the very few who call me Anna (Elder Brother) with lots and lots of love, Suresh is my dear most. I really admire and like him a lot! I know him well since the days he was in class 8 in Don Bosco, Pannur. **His natural celerity, selfless vivacity, quest for out of the box thinking, tact in establishing justice, bigger dreams** were all for encouraging, educating, empowering, and evolving the dalit students and youth. He just did not have dreams, there were meticulous plans, unimaginable hard work, broad vision, decisive activities, emotional strength to take tough decisions and endurance to stand by them.

His age is as small as 51 (27.10.1970) but his humongous achievements stall way taller than his age.

- His wisdom in Tamil literature took forms of poetry and has resulted in many commendable creations. The book **“Mannukku Thirumbuvom”** (Let us Return to the Soil) released by scholar, politician and activist, Dr. Thol. Thirumavalavan the Founder President of Viduthalai Siruthaikal Katchi (VCK) tops the whole lot.
- His interest in art and art forms were not for entertainment. He vivaciously used the art forms for the upliftment and empowerment of the downtrodden. **Nadavu** and **Adavu** Art groups formed by his untiring efforts are still a standing example.

- With a clear mission and bigger dreams for the upcoming generations, he produced and published **Dalit Amudham** (DALIT NECTAR), the moral science and catechism books for our dalit students, that they may know their roots, culture and their leaders.
- He revolutionised by considering the **Parai** (Skin Instrument, a form of drum) music as divine music and the music of God. He also made use of the **Parai instrument** in liturgical celebrations. Innovation in Revolution!
- Rev Fr Suresh was the treasure that **Rev Fr K M Joseph** found to continue his 40 years of Community Service and Development. Just after his Priestly Ordination (22.04.2001), Fr. Suresh became Assistant Parish Priest of Porur Nugumbal where Fr K M Joseph was the Parish Priest. In just 3 months, Fr K M Joseph's death brought a huge responsibility to Fr Suresh. Suresh managed the whole parish efficiently single handed.

He continued the school building which was completed only till the basement. To everybody's awe, he completed the school building with two floors consisting of 36 classrooms. He raised the High School to the status of Higher Secondary School. The Dr. Arulappa Higher Secondary School at Neerpair in the Diocese of Chingleput is a result of his sweat blood.

- Since he earned the trust of **Dr. J. Mispagel**, a great and good hearted benefactor from Germany, Suresh's dream of a hostel

for boys and girls at Neerpair (ARUL ILLAM) became a reality. A separate Parish for Neerpair and an elegant Parish Church for Our Lady of Victory is a sign of his deep spirituality. All the projects at Neerpair was possible through **Aktion Indien. e.v** and **Arivu**.

- Hundreds of students who were nurtured by Fr Suresh are today as Government higher officials, Collectors, Professors, Writers, Poets, Music Directors, Art Instructors, Creators, Police Officials, Doctors, Engineers, Scientists, Doctorates, Software Engineers, Artists, Advocates, Nurses, Teachers, Media Professionals, Politicians, Social Activists, Human Rights Activists, Social workers for justice. He has the credit of creating such big personalities in silence.
- He gathered the alumni of Neerpair who are studying and working in various institutions and formed the **We Group**. The students and officials, who were once sponsored by Suresh, became the change-makers, torchbearers of his dreams and definite sponsors for the upcoming generations.
- The **We Group** not just celebrated the 50th birthday of Suresh, last October but also found the LEAD (**L**eadership **E**ducation for **A**dministrators and **D**iplomats), an IAS / IPS Coaching Centre. Currently there are nearly 2000 members of this group. Mr. Veerapandi, IAS, Collector of Karnul district, Andhra Pradesh and Mr. Christuraj IAS, Vice Chairman and CEO of

Tamil Nadu Maritime Board have reached this state due to Suresh's support and encouragement and there are many more to follow.

- **Justice, Human Rights, Dalit Honor** - He never even had any thoughts of compromise on these. He acted with wisdom, courage, knowledge and pure spirituality on establishing equality in the Thatchur Church and cemetery. The whole dalit community of Thatchoor even today bow down to his unparalleled service.
- Not just Thatchur, he played a major role in the protests against the Dalits being prohibited from using the main road leading to the Main entrance of the church and being denied to use the funeral procession car in the church at Eraiyur, Pondicherry Diocese. He led similar protests against injustice to Dalits at K K Pudur and R N Kandigai Villages in the Diocese of Chingleput. During all these protests he involved the students and the youth and created awareness and empowered them to become active dalit leaders.
- He did an awesome job in the districts of Chengalpattu and Kanchipuram as the Director of CRDS (Chengalpattu Rural Development Society)
- As the Rector and Parish Priest of the Seashore St. Antony's Shrine at Palavakkam, he took painstaking effort to make the

ritual and tradition-oriented spirituality into spirituality of justice, equality, and convergence.

- His lifetime dream of empowering the power-denied community was made true by his Present appointment as the Director of Jeevan Jyothi Institute of Administrative Studies, the institute of Chengalpet diocese to create IAS, IPS Officers.
- Additionally, he also served as the Regional Secretary of the Political Wing of the Tamil Nadu Bishops' Council and took several initiatives. In just two months after he became the secretary of the Christhava Vaazhvurimai Iyakkam (**Christian Right to Live Movement**) and **Political Council** of the Tamil Nadu Bishop's Council, came the Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections, 2021. Suresh was very keen that the Secular progressive party should win according to the recommendation of the Tamil Nadu Bishop's Council and he made sure it reached the whole catholic community through the Weekly magazine Nam Vaazhvu (Our Life). I see that DMK, the current secular ruling party's victory in Tamil Nadu is the victory of Suresh's untiring efforts too.
- He maintained good relationship with political leaders and fieldworkers of parties like Vidudhalai Siruthaigal Katchi (VCK), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Puratchi Bharatham which work for the upliftment and betterment of the Dalits.

- He participated and organised various seminars, debates, discussions, conferences, and conventions focussing on the rise, awareness, and upliftment of people.
- Suresh always had interests towards people's art, culture, literature, spontaneity protests, music, songs, dance, dialects and has also been able to learn and master them and carry them with utmost pride. He considered these to be **People's Knowledge and Power**. It was on this basis that he also learnt medicines such as Sidha, Naturopathy, Accupuncture and Accupressure and also treated the poor and the needy in places where he served.
- Suresh had special interests towards street plays right from his school days and he learnt the nuances of it from the influential Indian dramatist and theatre director **Badal Sircar** himself. Suresh has organised more than 1000 workshops in the past 25 years through which he trained and infused the spirit of freedom into the veins and blood of several students, brothers, priests, religious and several other groups on Street plays, Parai music and dance.
- He has created a number of entrepreneurs through the entrepreneurship trainings at Neerpair on tailoring, embroidery, Fashion designing, handicrafts, typing, software and other trainings like carpentry, Plumbing, Electrical, Welding,

Electronics, Photography, Videography, DTP, Graphic Works with the help of the Jesuit's Institute from Ooty.

- Flat out efforts for friendship is his signature! He used to go out of his way to help friends in trouble by giving them moral, psychological and even financial support.
- Even though money flows in hundreds, thousands and millions through his hands from his donors, never does his heart or hand think of withholding any. He took pride in being a pauper and he made sure all the money reaches the deserving and needy. Pure heart and clean hands!
- A philanthropist who always used his position, opportunities, international contacts and economy to provide education, medicine, employment and abode for the poor.
- Though he was fully occupied in social service he never failed to involve himself in pristine piety, self-discipline, fidelity in celebrating the Holy Mass, Sermons with a social message, gaining strength from the Eucharist in solitude, devotion and love for our Mother Mary and her Rosary.
- Suresh never restricted himself in the image of a Catholic Priest only. He was in cordial relationship with political movements like Marxist, Leninist, Ambedkarite, and Periyarists and groups like Theendamai Ozhippu Munnani' (Untouchability Eradication Front), Poovulagin Nanbargal (Friends of the Earth) and always

remained as an activist who worked for humanity, human rights and human liberation.

- Though Suresh was involved and indulged himself in a lot of social and secular movement activities, never has he fallen short of his duties as a priest in his pastoral ministry, parish responsibilities and diocesan duties. He has always shown great love and respect to the then Archbishop Most Rev Dr.Aruldas James, his mentor Bishop Most Rev Dr Antony Devotta, the current beloved Bishop Most Rev Dr Neethinathan. He has always stood by his bishops and has always been there to any of the brother priests who needed help.
- I was deeply surprised after watching and contemplating the Sunday homilies that he delivered with modern thoughts, in the mind of Christ and a common man's outlook in the Youtube Channel named **Eat the Word**, which he had been doing for more than a year, especially during the corona lockdown period.
- He saw Jesus in the world-class lawyer, social reformer and number one scholar **Babasaheb, Dr Ambedkar** and imbibed his principles of **Educate, Agitate** and **Organise** in his priestly ministry, the threefold ministries of **Teaching, Leading** and **Sanctifying**.
- **Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute** in Chennai conferred the Honorary Doctorate to Suresh appreciating his service to the Dalits and downtrodden.

He coordinated the youth from different countries like Germany, Austria and Belgium and organised exchange programmes facilitating them to involve in and contribute to the education of our poor students and to build houses for the homeless. He empowered the group of youth through various traditional art forms and made them perform in a few European Countries and also organised various Street Theatre Workshops in Canada, Belgium, Singapore, Burma and Sri Lanka.

- He saved thousands of lives during this difficult pandemic period by feeding the poor people reaching out to them village by village.
- We have seen a seasoned, cultured, well-mannered, Reverend! - these are the words of the eminent doctors who treated him in Global Hospital. If Suresh could earn such great words in just 4 days, people who have lived with and people who have got a new life because of him would have much more to say!
- Suresh has always been a person who never finds fault and seldom badmouths. He has a child-like heart that never thinks or does not even know to play cheap tricks. I've seen him being shattered when the iniquity wins over by tricky scams. But the next moment, he gathers it all and starts fighting with fury for what is just.
- I quote from Dr. J. Mispagel, the benefactor of Fr. Suresh and he fondly calls him as **Pappa**.

“Fr. Suresh was an Apostle of the Poor, the underprivileged. He was a fighter for social justice. He was dedicated to education of children and youth, the only way to change the prevailing system. He was a great man”.

- Fr. Suresh is a precious gift from God to the Diocese of Chingleput. He is God’s treasured possession. Now God wants His gift back to Him. Though God appears to be selfish in taking back Suresh to himself, He would have greater plans of sending Suresh to another land of suppressed, where again he will start his service of fighting for the downtrodden and the oppressed.
- With a heavy heart and eyes filled with tears, the diocese of Chengalpet along with its shepherd **Bishop Neethinathan**, the priests, the religious and the laity entrusts the gift of **Fr. Suresh into the hands of God.**
- Oh Selfish God!!! Do take care of our dear most Suresh!
- **Our beloved Suresh! You are a legend and a great legacy! God does not make many of your kind. You are one of the rarities in the human history.**
- Goodbye dear Suresh! Thank you for all your love and your committed service!
- Finally, I end by quoting a conversation between Joseph of Arimathea and Pontius Pilate.

Pontius Pilate said to Joseph of Arimathea, "Joseph, I don't understand! You're the richest man in the region; you have made this brand new tomb for you and your family; and, you're going to give it to lay Jesus?" Joseph responded "It's just for the weekend!" He won't stay longer.

- How true! This deep belief that Joseph of Arimathea had tells us that Suresh who was in soul and spirit one with the Lord, who had given his life **as a ransom for many**, who served a meaningful ministry as a **People's Pastor** may be laid to rest in the priests' cemetery at the Bishop house of Chengalpattu, but it is our belief that he will not rest there!
- The ***People's Pastor***, our beloved **Father Arul Surendar** (Fr. John Suresh loves to mention his name in pure form of his mother tongue, Tamil) just like his master Jesus, will continue to live in our hearts forever. We strongly believe that his students, friends, well-wishers and brother priests will continue to carry his legacy generations after generations.

**Eternal rest grant unto him, Oh Lord,
And let perpetual light shine upon him.**

**Homily Preached in Tamil by Fr. G. Backiya Regis,
Vicar General, Diocese of Chingleput
on 12.05.2021
in the Funeral Mass of Rev. Fr. B. John Suresh**