

## INDIA CENTRAL PROVINCE PROFILE:

India is a land of ancient civilizations, its social, economic and cultural configurations are the product of a long process of regional expansion along the Indus valley. The 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries saw the arrival of European traders, with Britain becoming the dominant power, administering India for two centuries, bringing about further social and economic changes until their withdrawal in 1947.

The most dominant religion in India is Hinduism with 80% of the population adhering to it, followed by Islam 12%, Christians 2%, who trace their origins back to the Apostle Thomas and the missionary work of St. Francis Xavier.



India is a land with great diversity in peoples, cultures and religion. The State of Bihar is the center of Buddhism, here Buddha received his Enlightenment; West Bengal is the birth place of great poets and writers like Rabindranath Tagore, as well as the place where Mother Teresa began her work; in Odisha one finds the largest number of tribal groups.

### **RNDM Presence in India: Background**

Our Province history is very closely linked with that of Bangladesh. In 1883 when Euphrasie Barbier, foundress of the Congregation, laid the foundation stone of the mission in India, at Chittagong, the country encompassed present day India, Bangladesh and Burma. The mission expanded in 1897 to Sittwe (Akyab), Burma, 1915 to Shillong and 1918 Haflong in North East India, yet the Administration remained in Chittagong.

When, in 1947, India gained its independence from Britain it was necessary to find new structures, which would better serve the needs of the new countries of India and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) with Burma. The central administration continued to be in Chittagong with regional administration in Shillong. With the continued tension between East and West Pakistan, which led to the creation of Bangladesh the General Council of the Congregation reached the decision to make each country independent – India's administration moved to Calcutta, Burma's to Sittwe.

The missionary work of the Sisters grew resulting in new foundations in the North East, Center and in the South, at Bengaluru 1963. Given the vast distances, different languages and customs, the Sisters of the Province felt it would further the mission

and reduce travel etc. if the Indian Province could be further divided into separate entities. This occurred in the year 2000: India North East with its administration in Shillong; India Central with its administration in Kolkata (Calcutta) and India South's administration in Bengalura (Bangalore).

### **Our Mission Centers:**

#### **Kolkata: Our Lady Queen of the Missions (1946) – West Bengal**

Through the means of education offered the Sisters, at the English Medium High School and the Hindi Medium Primary School, strive to impart value based education principally to women and girls, providing an environment which instills in the students an awareness for social justice, equality and an openness to the less privileged in society. In the beginning progress was slow but the Sisters were not deterred they took on other ministries such as teaching catechism, visiting the sick and elderly. By 1950 a dispensary, using homeopathic methods was opened and in 1968 the Sisters extended their educational outreach through a free Hindi afternoon school for underprivileged girls in the neighbourhood.



**Students of Queen of the Missions, English Medium**



**Sr. Kurmila with Hindi Medium students**

#### **Kalyanpur: Holy Angels' Convent (1967) – West Bengal**

This is the first village mission the Sisters undertook. The Sisters offered hostel accommodation for girls from rural areas enabling them to complete their primary education in the Bengali Medium School up to class IV. The children are given basic



primary education and helped to prepare for further studies at the government school. By offering hostel accommodation to the children, their parents, especially their mothers, are able to seek work. Beside the school the Sisters take care of the health needs of the people in a well set-up dispensary. In addition, a mobile clinic is also arranged for once a week for the benefit of the tuberculosis patients. Pastoral ministries such as visiting the sick and elderly, preparing children for the sacraments are not forgotten.

### **Narkatiagunj: Shanti Sadan Convent (1986) – Bihar**

In 1986 the Province began a mission at Shanti Sadan Market in Bihar State among the very marginalized – the untouchable group of citizens to empower women, provide non-formal education, helping to set-up income generating projects, visiting and supporting families. In time the Sisters were asked to provide more formal education for the children. At present there are 500 children attending the school.



### **Kanti Muzaffarpur: Jyothi Bhavan Convent (1993) - Bihar**

A second mission in Bihar, the Jyothi Bhavan-Kanti mission was opened in 1993. The Sisters' mission here focused on the empowerment of Dalit women and children through non-formal education, income generating projects, health care, especially a dispensary for the treatment of snakebites, very prevalent in this area, in that they are



able to administer “Anti Venom” injections. The Sisters are also involved in community development projects known as *Mahila Mandals*, seminars on health care, sanitation.

**Barasat, Kolkata:** Nava Jeevan Convent (1998) – West Bengal

Barasat, West Bengal located on the Ganges/Brahmaputra delta region is the Formation House for Aspirants and the Pre-postulants. The mission of the Sisters is to provide an atmosphere conducive to study and includes visit to the elderly and sick in the area, care of mother earth by tending the grounds of the compound which also enables them to experience the presence of God in everything.



**Chatterhat, Darjeeling:** St. Thomas Convent (1999) – West Bengal

Chatterhat is located on the Indo-Bangladesh border. The community consists of the Indigenous people, Muslims and Bengalis including the migrants from Bangladesh. Bishop Thomas D’Souza invited the Sisters to take on the responsibility of St. Thomas Primary School, which had been providing a service for the underprivileged tribal children of the different groups in the Darjeeling area since 1971. Besides the school, which is a Bengali Medium School, the Sisters look after the hostel for boys and girls, children from the day labourers and farmers on the tea plantations; run a dispensary, a mobile clinic and take part in pastoral active in the Parish, empowering youth, family visits etc.



**Salt Lake, Kolkata:** Our Lady of the Missions Convent, (2001) – West Bengal

Salt Lake is a planned Satellite Township of Kolkata. It is the hub of economic and social expansion with many facilities such as clean, well-maintained roads and a relatively pollution free environment. It is a policy of the town that there be no visible signs of any religious expression such as temples, mosques, Churches.

We are the first missionary Congregation and the first Christian School to be established, keeping in mind the mission of the Congregation the Sister strive to proclaim the values of the Kingdom by their way of life and their availability to be at the

service of all. The Sisters provide relevant and value-oriented education and provide scope for all religious groups to reflect on their faith in their own cultural milieu. The students are enabled and inspired to live and work for the building up of a just and fraternal society.



**Patna:** Our Lady of the Missions, Study House (2004) – Bihar

In 2004 at the Province Assembly a frank discussion was held on initial formation, the outcome of which was to establish a base from which the student Sisters and Aspirants could further their university education in a good learning environment. Patna was chosen as here the Jesuits conducted educational institutions, which would enable the student Sisters to also interact with other students from other Religious Congregations. Besides their university studies the Sisters are engaged in visiting the sick and elderly of the Parish, providing catechetical instruction to the children and young people and to take time to care for the earth.



**Kunchinda:** Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions Convent (2010) – Odisha

The Central Province had often planned to have a community in Orissa (Odisha) in the hope that there may be candidates that would come to join the community. To this aim the Sisters offer intensive English lessons, provide faith formation and help students to complete their secondary education. The Sisters are also involved in Parish ministry and in 2015 they were able to open a English medium school, since such did not exist. Young girls who feel called to religious life are accompanied along the way with their studies before moving to Barasat for the pre-postulancy programme.



**Gwal Toil, Darjeeling:** Our Lady of the Missions Convent, (2015) – West Bengal

This new mission started in response to a request from parents for a school to provide and encourage their children to complete their schooling. The Sisters commenced an English Medium School, as well as offering tailoring courses and English classes for the parents.

Like the Convent at Chatterhat, Darjeeling the village is surrounded by tea gardens and most of the families live in mud huts, many have little or no education. Children and young people drop out of school to join their parents in the tea gardens to supplement the family income. The Sisters are trying to offer them an alternative.



**Rajarhat:** Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, Euphrasie House (2009, 2016)

For many years the community at Queen of the Missions, Park Circus, also housed beside the community, the school and the Provincialate putting a great strain on the facilities thus in 2009 the Administration moved first to Dargar Road, not far from Park Circus and then in 2016 to Rajarhat. The former also provided hospitality to Sisters

from within the Province and from other Provinces. There was limited opportunity for ministry in the surrounding area.

The new premises provide plenty of room for the administration work and also provide support for our elderly Sisters in the twilight of their years. This house has become the power house, the prayer house, of the Province.



Dargar Road

Provincial House

Euphrasie House