

ASIAN
HORIZONS
Vol. 14, No. 2, June 2020
Pages: 459-474

SEXUAL ABUSES IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF INDIA: NEED OF HOLISTIC HUMAN FORMATION

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Abstract

Sexual abuse in the Catholic Church has become a universal phenomenon. But, the Church was silent for a long time regarding this issue. Now the silence is broken and the Catholic Church has clearly revealed its stand that it is for zero tolerance against the child sexual abuse and insists on doing justice to the victims. In the Indian scenario, sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults is emerging as a major concern. Due to the culture of silence in India on sexuality, we do not have sufficient data on sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. However, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, in order to eradicate this problem, keeps zero tolerance policy on sexual abuse. To achieve this aim, we need to have an appropriate formation in the seminaries so as to train future priests to abstain from abuses. That is why we insist on holistic formation which includes human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral dimensions of formation. This is purely a self-formation by interiorizing the human virtues and adequate understanding of sexuality and the purpose of being a celibate for the kingdom of God. Priest should learn not to underestimate the role of laity and to take positively the constructive criticisms which are given by the lay people for the pastoral ministry.

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The on-going formation of priests would be a great help to attain moral and spiritual integrity.

Keywords: Affective Maturity; Catholic Church in India; Celibacy; Clericalism; Human Formation; Priesthood; Psychosexual Integration; Seminary Formation; Sexual Abuse; Sexuality

Introduction

India is a land of religions. Many of the religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, etc. were born in India. Besides these, Christianity and Islam, which arrived in India in the first centuries, also became rooted in India, and have significant number of believers. People of India, we can say, are generally orthodox in their religious praxis. Indians of different religious faith highly respect, revere and give special place to those who are offering priestly services in their respective religions. In a special way, Indian Catholics are giving an important place to the priests in their life. For example, mostly Indian Catholics approach priests to get spiritual guidance, to bless houses, institutions, commercial buildings, fishing materials, etc., to seek for financial and educational assistance, to share the family problems and to get counselling. In other words, the Catholic Christians consider a priest as one of their family members. For they believe that the priests are more spiritual, that they are holy and special grace is poured on them at the time of ordination. Catholic Christians admire the virtuous life and selfless service of many priests in the parishes and different institution with commitment and dedication. For they believe that priests are taking the peoples' offering directly to God and they are mediators between God and people. In this condition, when some priests sexually abuse the minors or vulnerable adults it becomes a big scandal to the people and their spiritual life is shaken. For, it breaches the trust, honour and reverence of the people towards the priests. It does not only bring disgrace to the local churches but also to the people of other religions who have received different forms of training in Christian institutions and have high regard for priests. Although only a few priests involve in sexual abuse it brings dishonour to the universal Catholic Church. In this situation a few questions are raised. Despite the many years of formation in the different levels (seminaries) why do some priests sexually abuse the minors or vulnerable adults? Is it because of any flaw in the periods of formation? Or is it because of the cultural changes in the highly sophisticated technological world? What sort of formation or changes in the priestly formation do we need today?

Being a formator and professor for 19 years in the minor and the major seminaries I try to analyse this crucial problem. The aim of the article is to show what changes or steps the Catholic Church in India has to undertake in order to prevent the priests from abusing the minors and vulnerable adults and to respect their dignity instead of becoming prey to their sexual passion. To achieve this aim, this article is structured into four parts. The first and second parts explicate the context of sexual abuse against minors and vulnerable adults in the Catholic Church of India. The third part describes the present priestly formation in India. The final part focuses on the paradigm shift in the priestly formation in India in order to prevent sexual abuse.

1. Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church of India

The Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) has taken a policy of “zero tolerance against sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults.”¹ This stand is recently taken not only because of the direction of the Holy See but also because of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults which alarmed the whole Indian Catholics. The believers, Catholic priests and nuns, well-wishers and others were on the street to raise voice against sexual abuse of the minors and vulnerable adults. In India, there are only a few cases² of sexual abuse by Catholic priests registered in the criminal records of the nation/state. Many believe that this is only a tip of the iceberg of the phenomenon. There would be many incidents of such which were erroneously hidden in order to protect the culprits due to the social and religious stigma in India. As one reads in the *Hindustan Times* which presents the registered cases of sexual abuse of minor by Catholic priests, one can conclude that mainly girls are among victims of sexual abuse by the clergy in

¹ The implication of the phrase is to take disciplinary action against the perpetrators, to listen to the victims of sexual abuse with compassion and solidarity, to render them adequate care, to address this issue to prevent the minors and vulnerable adults from abuse, to make proper mechanism with apt infrastructure and fast dealings to redress the cases of sexual abuse and not to shield or hide any incident of sexual abuse from the trial of government. See Nirmala Carvalho, “Abuse Expert Tells Indian Bishops ‘Safety of Vulnerable’ most Important Issue,” *Crux: Taking the Catholic Pulse*, Feb 21, 2020, <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-asia/2020/02/abuse-expert-tells-india-bishops-safety-of-vulnerable-most-important-issue/> accessed on 01.05.2020.

² Fathers Raju Kokkan (Thaikkattussery, Trissur) in 2004, Jayabal (Ootacamund) in 2006, Mathew Vadakkancheril (Kannur) in 2017, and Bp. Franco Mulakkal (Jalandhar) in 2018 were arrested for the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults.

India.³ In addition, although we do not have sufficient data it must be also remembered that the women religious in India are also vulnerable to sexual abuse by the priests. This situation makes us ask why priests are sexually abusing minors and vulnerable adults?

2. Rationale of Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church

In the Indian context there are several factors which cause child sexual abuse and sexual abuse of vulnerable adults by priests. Although we cannot discuss each factor elaborately, we shall consider a few factors which are commonly identified. They are theological, ecclesial, cultural and personal.

2.1. Theological Factors

In theology, priest is considered 'anointed one'⁴ and 'alter Christus' (another Christ);⁵ he acts 'in persona Christi capitis' (in the person of Christ, the head)⁶ and possesses 'Sacra Potestas' (sacred power from Jesus, the high priest);⁷ the "indelible seal (is) imprinted in the soul on the day of his ordination,"⁸ according to the order of Melchizedek; and at times he is considered greater than angels.⁹ Implications of these theological teachings on the priest is succinctly presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) that "Now, the minister by reason of the sacerdotal consecration of which he has received, is truly made like to high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person

³Ramesh Babu, "Wayward Priests' Accused of Sexual Crimes Trouble Kerala's Catholic Churches," *Hindustan Times*, 12th August 2019, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/wayward-priests-accused-of-sexual-crimes-trouble-kerala-s-catholic-churches/story-IBQaofsaeF0cP3DUPxzhDL.html>, accessed on 08.05.20. According to the available data regarding sexual abuses of the minors in the Catholic Church both boys and girls are being abused by the priests although boys are more targeted for abuse in the Western Europe. See Mayo Moran, "Cardinal Sins: How the Catholic Church Sexual Abuse Crisis Changed the Private Law," *The Georgetown Journal of Gender and Law* 21 (2019) 100. In India, boys might be also sexually abused by the priests. But no cases are filed.

⁴John Paul II, *Pastores Dobo Vobis*, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1992, no. 70.

⁵Ronald D. Witherup, *God Tested in Fire: A New Pentecost for the Catholic Priesthood*, Collgeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012, 63.

⁶Vatican Council II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2.

⁷Witherup, *God Tested in Fire*, 63.

⁸Daniel Donovan, *What Are They Saying about the Ministerial Priesthood?*, New York: Paulist Press, 1992, 30.

⁹Shaji George Kochuthara, "The Sexual Abuse Scandal and a New Ethical Horizon: A Perspective from India," *Theological Studies* 80, 4 (2019) 938. He has taken this phrase from one of the prayers of the priestly ordination ceremony of the Syro-Malabar rite.

Jesus himself (*virtue ac persona ipsius Christi*)” (no. 1548). The theological teachings on priesthood invite the priests to live like Christ who is more compassionate and love children and women. The spiritual power which is obtained at the time of ordination is for the selfless committed service to the people and not for subjugating the people under their control. But the abusive priests behave like higher political rulers, consider themselves as superior over all the faithful, exploit minors and vulnerable adults for selfish motives and to satisfy sexual desires by abusing the spiritual power. Moreover, the improper understanding of theology of priesthood has made priests being arrogant, misusing power and “insensitivity to the rights of others.”¹⁰

2.2. Ecclesial Factors

Pejorative understanding of the theology of priesthood has resulted in clericalism among the priests. Clericalism is “an authoritarian style of ministerial leadership” holding on to the rigid notion of hierarchy in the Church.¹¹ This is a distorted attitude of priests regarding the power of the priesthood that makes power differences between priests and lay people.¹² This is seen in misusing the priesthood for cursing, punishing, and ordering the people. Some priests think that they know everything and they should never be questioned. This attitude of clericalism never respects anyone and uses others as objects of pleasure. Clericalism is very evident when a priest is appointed in the administrative works of the diocese or any other institution. As Shaji George Kochuthara indicates, many priests are involved in the administrative work in higher educational institutions, and are financial officers of the congregations and dioceses.¹³ At times, a single priest holds all the administrative and financial powers of the institutions. In such a situation of having all powers, with the attitude of clericalism, there is a possibility of abusing the power, and eventually of abusing minors or vulnerable adults. Thus, Kochuthara observes, “the clericalism combined with hierarchical social structure and patriarchy entrenched in the Indian culture, is a fertile ground for abuse of power that can find expression in sexual abuse of minors.”¹⁴ Clericalism would also play a pivotal

¹⁰Kochuthara, “The Sexual Abuse Scandal and a New Ethical Horizon,” 938.

¹¹Eamonn Conway, “A Church Beyond Clericalism,” in *Towards Just Gender Relations: Rethinking the Role of Women in Church and Society*, ed., Prüller-Jagenteufel and others, Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2019, 121.

¹²Conway, “A Church Beyond Clericalism,” 121.

¹³Kochuthara, “The Sexual Abuse Scandal and a New Ethical Horizon,” 939.

¹⁴Kochuthara, “The Sexual Abuse Scandal and a New Ethical Horizon,” 939.

role in covering up the sexual abuses by threatening the faithful or promising them allurements.

2.3. Cultural Factors

The Indian family structure observes 'the culture of silence' or 'culture of secrecy' regarding the issues of sexual abuses. In the context of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, the culture of silence or culture of secrecy means erroneous hiding of the truth (sexual abuses) in order to preserve a person, family or society from social dishonour. However, the culture of silence inflicts a great harm to victims and creates guilt conscience in them. This culture is observed at different levels. First of all, the victim tries to hide the sexual abuse from her/his parents. For, "[t]he victim is left confused and silent because she tries to reconcile her experience with her learnt image of a priest. She feels, it is her sin not his; she has crossed the boundaries."¹⁵ At times she is also threatened by the priest not to reveal it to her parents or friends. If the people come to know about the sexual abuse, they would also blame the victim than the perpetrators. They start gossiping that the priest is good, that the priest became a prey or victim of the temptations by the girl. This affects deeply the family and victims. Thus, they remain silent regarding abuse that took place. Second, when it is revealed by the victim or found out by the parents looking at the symptoms in the body, a traditional Indian family hesitates to reveal the sexual abuse and keeps it a secret for it would bring a greater damage to the family and to the future of the victim; her future marriage would be at risk. Third, on behalf of the priest or institution some approach the family of the victim not to reveal the sexual abuse by the priest for it would damage the name of the institution/parish/diocese. They also try to negotiate with the family of the victim, perhaps even offering an amount of compensation to the victim. In India, the culture of silence tries to protect the perpetrator than doing justice to the victim of sexual abuse. However, we see glimpses of change in the attitude of the Indian Catholics to report the sexual abuse to the concerned authority. The CBCI policy regarding sexual abuse encourages the victims to reveal the abuse courageously.

2.4. Personal Factors

Another important factor which contributes to the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults is personal. Joseph Benedict Mathias, in analysing the personal characteristics of the perpetrators of sexual

¹⁵Virginia Saldanha, "Women's Rights in the Church—In the Context of Sex Abuse," *Asian Horizon* 13, 1 (2019) 82.

abuse in the Catholic Church in India reveals that the abusive priests are mostly immature and lonely men. Mathias adds that they feel that they are burdened by the demands of the priesthood and they lack the personal integrity. He mentions that “[t]he clinical data of priests who have been treated for sexual abuse of minors exhibited intimacy deficits, often emotional congruence with adolescents and other problems, e.g., stress, obesity, alcohol, gambling, etc.”¹⁶ Many of the offenders do have problem with the peer group relationship and discomfort with close friendships. In addition, since many priests are handling money they can afford to buy all sorts of sophisticated information technological gadgets. Thus, many are spending time in chatting with women through WhatsApp or other social media networks even late in the night. Many who fail to have psychosexual integration and pay least attention to the commitment to celibacy are addicted to watch pornography. “The scientific evidence available clearly shows that sexual abuse of minors by clergy has no causal relationship whatsoever with celibacy,” but lack of sexual integration.¹⁷

3. Priestly Formation in India Today

Since the future of the diocesan ministry or congregation is in the hands of the seminarians the formation of the seminarians is considered one of the most important works of the Catholic Church. Seminary formation demands huge amount of money, resources, and personnel. According to the directory of Catholic seminaries, there are 109 philosophical and theological seminaries in India owned by religious congregations and dioceses.¹⁸ It means every year hundreds of priests are ordained for the Church doing various ministries. The programme for the formation of seminarians is designed according to the directives of the Catholic Church.¹⁹

¹⁶ Joseph Benedict Mathias, “Priestly Formation in Indian Context: A New Pedagogy for Integral Formation of Candidates to Priesthood in India,” 14. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/af45/19633ab5de558fde8780c3b97379fce5097b.pdf> accessed on 01.05.2020.

¹⁷Mathias, “Priestly Formation in Indian Context,” 14.

¹⁸Michal J. Kramarek, Thomas P. Gaunt and Santiago Sordo-Palacios, *Global Directory of Catholic Seminaries*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate Georgetown University, 2017), 37. <https://cara.georgetown.edu/Part%20I%20General%20Overview.pdf>, accessed on 02.05.2020.

¹⁹The following documents are the main sources for human, Spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation of the seminarians. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992, St. John Paul II), *Ratio Fundamentalis* (2016, Pontifical Congregation for Clergy), *The Charter of Priestly Formation for India* (2004, CCBI).

3.1. Present Conditions of the Candidates in the Seminaries

India has been a fertile land of vocation. Although the number is slowly decreasing the dioceses and men's congregations receive sufficient number of candidates. However, in general, the motivation of becoming a priest is very vague. Jeyaprakash D'Souza has found out in his research that the motivation of the young seminarians is not rooted much in the experience of God; rather many select priesthood for social security, careerism, ambition for raising one's social status or mobility and so on.²⁰ Many seminarians who are recruited for the formation are mostly from very poor economic background and from marginalized communities. Some of the seminarians enter into in the seminary with poor self-esteem which causes inferiority complex and loneliness. This may eventually lead them to develop habits like masturbation and watching pornography. In addition, the relationship of some of the seminarians with the formators is not encouraging. The seminarians are often putting on masks and are insincere in their approach, behaviour and dealings with the seminary formators. In their interpersonal relationship, some are envious and jealous.²¹ Since seminarians are not often rooted in God experience, their faith is very shallow. Community prayers become routine and very boring. They also do not cultivate the habit of personal prayer and there is lifeless participation in the liturgy and spiritual exercises.²² In this condition, the formators are trying to instil in them the proper motivation of becoming priests through the constant and continuous conferences, retreats, spiritual guidance and classes. Many are lukewarm during their priestly formation. If problems such as lack of motivation, poor self-esteem, and difficulties in relationship are not rectified in the periods of formation itself, there is a danger of developing the attitude of clericalism which is a contributing factor for abusing the minors and vulnerable adults. In this condition, we need to ask, what is the role of formation to rectify these problems in the seminary?

3.2. 'Training' Model of Formation

In India, still we follow 'training of the candidates to priesthood' as a model of forming the seminarians. Archbishop Eamon Martin, in his foreword to a book, states that we train the candidates through

²⁰Jeyaprakash D'Souza, "Challenges to Human Formation of Priests," *Asian Journal of Vocation and Formation* 32, 2 (2007) 22-23.

²¹Ashley Alphonso, "The Role of Accompaniment in the Seminary Formation," *Jnana-Sanjeevini* 1, 3 (2015) 17.

²²Ashley Alphonso, "The Role of Accompaniment in the Seminary Formation," 17.

discipline and instruction in the basic habits, attitudes, etc. He adds that this method of formation often isolates the seminarians from the world in order to equip them with sound and sufficient spiritual, intellectual and moral knowledge. In addition, he observes that the main tasks of the formators are to make them grounded in the theological truth and spirituality of priests. In other words, the formators mould the seminarians according to the demand of the local churches than the self-formation of the seminarians. After their ordination, many priests find a disconnect between this type of 'training' in theology and the prevailing culture around them.²³ In this model of formation, once all the requirements are over in the formation, the candidates think that the formation for priesthood is over.

3.3. Role of Formators in 'Training' Model

In the model of 'training' the formators in the seminaries are often authoritative. They strictly follow hierarchy in forming the seminarians such as rector, administrator, prefect and animator who are having a specific role in the formation of the seminarians. Although rules, regulations and timetable would surely help the proper function of the seminaries, there is strong emphasis on these in the 'training' model of formation by formators. They often reiterate on "keep the rules and the rule will keep you." The formators, in this 'training' model of formation, have an illusion that observance of rules and regulations of the seminary would perfect the candidates. In such a condition, the seminarians would follow the rules of the seminary out of fear rather than conviction. This also has brought negative repercussions among the seminarians. In one of the studies, some seminarians reported that "they were not given enough free time, and they took refuge in illicit activities that were not permitted within the seminary."²⁴ In addition, when the seminarians are committing mistakes formators become angry and judgmental; they fail to deal with them with love and concern. Under such circumstances, the seminarians would not be open, transparent and sincere. They would try to be authoritative and arrogant. Even if they have sexual problems, they wouldn't reveal them, for they fear that they would be misunderstood and

²³Declan Marmion, Michael Mullaney and Salvador Ryan, ed., *Models of Priestly Formation: Assessing the Past, Reflection on the Present, and Imagining the Future*, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2019, xvii.

²⁴Jobin Joseph, "A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of the Seminarians During Formation," *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* 9 (2019) 321.

eventually sent out from the seminary. If seminarians are formed in such a way, there is a danger that they would not resolve problems in their sexual life and eventually become abusers. In this condition what sort of change or paradigm shift do we need today in the priestly formation?

4. A Paradigm Shift in the Priestly Formation

Priestly formation is not completed at any point of time; rather, it is a life-long process. It is apparent in *Ratio Fundamentalis* (RE) that priestly formation “is continuing discipleship meaning that, even after ordination, formation cannot be interrupted.”²⁵ In addition, formation is not something to do “with techniques and or functional role but following the path of the discipleship: internalizing, in cooperation with divine Grace, the core virtues and ideals of discipleship.”²⁶ This is “continuous transformation and conversion of the heart centred on the integration or liking their identity as configured to Christ, Head, and Shepherd.”²⁷ Thus we say that priestly formation is a process of attaining integrity in one’s life. To achieve this integrity we need to develop holistic human formation which makes a priest integral and prevents him from sexual abuse.

4.1. Holistic Human Formation

Being human is being moral; being moral is being holy; being holy is being integral. Thus, a priest needs to be an integral person. To be integrated, holistic human formation addresses two elements, namely, holiness and wholeness. The former refers to ‘grace’ and the latter refers to ‘nature.’ Joseph Benedict Mathias points out that these two elements are intrinsically connected. He explains that holiness depends upon the nature of the person and the healthier nature of the person always embraces the grace and transmits it through the liturgical, pastoral activities. If the person (nature) is sick due to various bad behaviours, then he cannot obtain grace.²⁸ Thus, holistic human formation insists on self-formation. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV)

²⁵Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation (Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis)*, London: Catholic Truth Society, 2017, no. 80. Hereafter it is noted as RF.

²⁶Declan Marmion, Michael Mullaney and Salvador Ryan, ed., *Models of Priestly Formation: Assessing the Past, Reflection on the Present, and Imagining the Future*, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2019, xix.

²⁷PDV, 21-23. Also see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program for Priestly Formation*, 5th ed., Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2006, no. 23.

²⁸Mathias, “Priestly Formation in Indian Context,” 24-25.

also clearly states that “we must not forget that candidate himself is necessary and irreplaceable agent of his own formation” (no. 69). In other words, a priest is responsible for his life. Thus, one can form himself by interiorizing and inculcating the human virtues of transparency, honesty, authenticity, love, compassion, sacrifice, generosity and forgiveness.

This type of formation involves three things: information, formation and transformation.²⁹ First, information refers to class lectures, library works from which seminarians understand the nature of priesthood and meaning of celibate life. Second, formation means putting into practice in daily life of the seminary what they have learnt in the class. Third, transformation refers to internalizing the values of priestly life and having conviction in them. Self-transformation is possible only in the situation of freedom, responsibility, accountability, self-discipline and proper motivation. In the context of sexual abuse, self-formation or self-transformation is only possible when one has adequate understanding of sexuality and celibate life.

4.2. Adequate Understanding of Sexuality and Celibacy

In order to interiorize the value of celibacy in the priestly life, the seminaries have the obligation to present or to give adequate knowledge about human sexuality such as biological and psychological, social and pastoral dimensions.³⁰ Sexuality does not merely refer to the genital aspect of human sexuality. Rather, as Kochuthara explains that sexuality is a basic element of personality. This is expressed as a sexual being, in communication, feeling, expressing and “living of human love.”³¹ Further he explains that celibacy is not a denial of sexuality but living it meaningfully in a different way. He adds that it is an invitation to intimacy, but abstaining from genital sexuality.³²

In the seminary formation seminarians should be motivated again and again through various talks, seminars, and spiritual conferences

²⁹Mathias, “Priestly Formation in Indian Context,” 27-28. In his article, Joseph Benedict Mathias gives six elements for integral formation. In this article the first three elements are used to serve the purpose of this article. The other elements related to formators are not discussed here.

³⁰Katarina M. Schuth, “A Change in the Formation: How the Sexual Abuse Crisis has Reshaped Priestly Training,” *America*, 2nd Jan 2012, <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/5125/article/change-formation>, accessed on 01.05.2020.

³¹Kochuthara, “The Sexual Abuse Scandal and a New Ethical Horizon,” 939.

³²Kochuthara, “The Sexual Abuse Scandal and a New Ethical Horizon,” 939.

on the need of celibacy for the wholehearted committed service to build up the Kingdom of God. Further, 'a wise sex education' in the seminaries aims at informing seminarians for celibate life which concerns the integral dimension of human person. This education can also help them develop responsible love for everyone. As well, it can help seminarians tackle their sexual problems positively and realistically and to live in peace with their own bodies and feelings. Certain practices of asceticism in the seminaries, for example, day of silence, day of manual work, day of fasting and prayer, arts day, sports day, etc. would not only channelize sexual energies constructively but also develop the values such as openness, cheerful and generous heart and spirit of self-sacrifice which are some of the signs of celibacy.

4.3. Affective Maturity

It refers to an ability to live a "true and responsible love" and to relate with others with respect, empathy, and compassion.³³ Affective maturity helps the priests develop "vigilance over body and spirit, compassion and care for others."³⁴ It helps to express the emotion in proper way and to create a respectful interpersonal relationship between men and women (PDV 44). In addition, "it is an acceptance and valuing of one's sexuality as a good to be directed to God's service and it is life-long commitment to growth which means continuously integrating one's sexuality into a life and ministry shaped and expressed by celibate chastity."³⁵ Coeducation in some of the seminaries/faculties is believed to facilitate affective maturity. Also, the presence of religious nuns and lay women in different offices and departments in the seminaries, and opportunities to mingle with people of different age groups during weekend ministries, study camps and outside living programmes in the parish can help seminarians to construct healthy and responsible relationship. Affective maturity results in psychosexual integration.

4.4. Psychosexual Integration

Psychosexual integration is a lifetime task. It is essential for a happy and healthy celibate life. This could be achieved by developing a profound intimacy with Jesus, by developing broad interpersonal relationship with parish community and learning to deal with our

³³United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Program for Priestly Formation*, 5th ed., Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2006, no. 92.

³⁴USCCB, *Program for Priestly Formation*, no. 92.

³⁵USCCB, *Program for Priestly Formation*, no. 93

identity and destructive behaviours. Psychosexual integration helps to clarify the male sexual identity. It establishes the wholesome friendship with everyone. This is an ability to maintain appropriate boundaries in interpersonal relationship with women, men and children.³⁶

One year focusing on psycho-spiritual programme which was introduced in the formation of the diocesan seminarians according to the direction of the priestly charter plays a pivotal role in bringing about the psychosexual integration. Group therapy, inner childhood history, inner healing, enneagram which are offered during this year help the seminarians overcome the psychological and emotional blocks which may lead to abuses in future and train them to develop healthy and responsible attitudes with themselves, and with other men and women. These programmes are followed up during the subsequent periods of formation. In some of the seminaries, experts are invited to address psychosexual integration before the ordination to diaconate. The counsellors, spiritual directors and animators help the seminarians who approach them seeking help regarding sexual problems.

However, the fear complex, and the judgemental attitude of some of the formators block the seminarians from revealing their problems even to the spiritual directors. For they are afraid of being sent out from the seminary or misunderstood if they reveal their sexual problems to the formators. Since they do not reveal their problems, the formators fail in helping them attain psychosexual integration. However, if the seminary formation makes the seminarians prayerful, cheerful, helpful and friendly, then there is possibility of achieving psychosexual integration.

4.5. Preventive Measures for Eradicating Sexual Abuse

Katarina M. Schuth, a religious nun and a seminary professor in USA for many decades, presents some of the methods to prevent the priests from sexual abuse. First of all, the seminarians must inculcate “moral virtues like integrity, justice and prudence, to grow in self-knowledge and self-discipline and to forgo a sense of entitlement. These virtues are integral to their spiritual life.” Second, they should disregard the attitude of considering themselves different and superior from the laity keeping them at a social distant. Third, the seminarians must be formed to avoid isolation from the rest of the community, for it may lead to “loneliness and psychologically

³⁶USCCB, *Program for Priestly Formation*, no. 280.

unhealthy conditions." Fourth, on-going formation or education about the dangers and pitfalls of a lifestyle that increases vulnerability to abusive behaviour. Last but not least, the priestly life must be grounded in Jesus Christ and enthusiastically involve in the active ministry.³⁷ Jesus who identified himself with the poor, treated women with dignity and blessed the children is our role model for priestly life.

Freedom with responsibility which aims at self-formation in all levels is the ruling principle invariably in all major seminaries in India. In addition, the formators, in general, are more loving and have great concern for the seminarians. This situation of the seminaries would surely help the seminarians to overcome abusive tendencies. In addition, if the seminarians spontaneously feel that they are well accepted, recognized, encouraged and loved despite their mischievous behaviours they develop the sense of belonging which makes them more responsible and committed. This condition of the seminary helps the seminarians to develop proper psychosexual health which helps them abstain from abuse. Further, the competent lay professors could be invited to teach theology in the seminaries and some of the lay people could also involve in the process of formation. This would help the seminarians come away from the aggressive superiority complex which leads to abuse in future. In order to eradicate abuses, the seminaries should conduct on-going formation programmes even after the ordination.

Conclusion

Sexual abuse by the clergy was often considered an issue of the Western world. Now it has become an important issue to be addressed in India as well. Although there are many factors which are contributing to the sexual abuse, in India the 'culture of silence' becomes an acute factor facilitating sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. Fortunately, this silence is being broken today by various social and ecclesial efforts. As we analyse this issue, the abusive behaviour does not emerge all of a sudden. It has something to do with the formation in the seminaries. If they are trained only to celebrate liturgy and sacraments, then their attitude towards priesthood, role of laity in the pastoral activities, interpersonal relationship with children and women would be hierarchical and

³⁷Schuth, "A Change in the Formation."

authoritative. This type of training and attitude may lead to abuse minors and vulnerable adults. If they form themselves (self-formation) rooted in God experience, interiorizing human virtues, healthier understanding of sexuality and noble purposes of being celibates then they would treat children and women respecting their dignity. Then there will be no possibility of abusing minors and vulnerable adults.

To prevent future priests from sexual abuse let me give a few suggestions for holistic human formation in seminaries.

1. Seminaries must aim at personal integrity: Instead of giving training the formators should focus on forming the seminarians, i.e. self-formation which aims at self-discipline or personal integrity. Allowing seminarians to have personal formation goals, making them accountable to their goals, evaluating their progress with great concern would bring personal integrity.

2. Having personal touch in formation: The formators should accompany the formees throughout their life. In order to understand them, the rector, animator, and spiritual director could visit their houses to learn more about their family background. This creates a platform for the seminarians to build up confidence and trust to open up their problems sincerely to the formators.

3. Seminaries should be the home of love not a court: Sincere love for the seminarians would bring great things. Thus, seminaries must be a home of love in which they feel comfortable and blissful. Even if someone errs in the seminary, he must be given chance to correct himself. The seminarians must be confronted with love but not judged.

4. Seminary formation must make the seminarians grateful: If the seminary decides to send out a seminarian for very grave reason/s he must be helped in all possible ways to build up his future. This would surely help the seminarian to identify alternative ways of living meaningfully, instead of remaining in the seminary hiding their behaviour which are incompatible with priestly life. The formators should deal with the seminarians in such a way that they remain grateful to the formators even if he has to leave the seminary for some reasons.

5. Formation to the formators: Holding a doctorate in ecclesiastical disciplines is not the only qualification to be a formator in the seminary. The formators should undergo special

courses in formation in order to understand, accompany and help the formees.

6. Role of laity and women religious: Many think that seminary formation is the work of the priests only. But the seminarians are formed to work among the laity, religious nuns and all people in the society. Lay faithful and religious nuns can have a special role in the formation process, for example, in the process of recruitment, evaluating the seminarians, in the weekend ministries, approval of before the ordination, allowing the seminarians to take competent women religious or lay women as spiritual mothers for receiving spiritual direction and so on.