

## **The Divine Pedagogy of Formation – XIV Formee As The Incarnated Form of God’s Passion**

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### *Abstract*

Passion and compassion – these are two essential poles in the art of formation. Hosea’s divine vocation was to mirror the passionate and compassionate personality of Yahweh. God infatuated him and forced him to live this strange vocation. He had to suffer a lot to live this most enigmatic call. Hosea has to become the living symbol of the Lord’s mental anguish in being constrained to punish his beloved people. What Hosea had to suffer was a mere tiny trace of the intense agony that Yahweh had experienced in His relationship with Israel, His wife. Rejecting his passionate and emotional affection and devotion the unfaithful and adulterous Israel ran after Canaanite deities, not only once, but again and again. The prophet-disciple was asked to portray in his own personal life this tragic and heart-rendering emotive figure of his Master.

### **Introduction**

It is certainly fascinating and enchanting to see that the divine Formator makes use of totally different and distinctive methods in giving formation to the biblical personalities. The story of Hosea provides a unique example. He was called to live a life that has to portray the passionate and compassionate personality of Yahweh. It gives articulation to the figure of God who is the most infatuated and tremendous lover in the history who suffers because of His ardent and

jealous love for the people of God, whom He considers as His spouse. The poor Hosea had to suffer a lot to live this most enigmatic call. One may say, God has totally gripped him and forced him to live this extra-ordinary vocation. The Book of Hosea does not record any of the protests or dissent of this human person.

### **Name of the Formee**

The book begins with this introduction: “The word of Yahweh came to Hosea, the son Beeri at the time of Uzziah ... the kings of Judah, and of Jeroboam, the son of Joash the king of Israel.”

### **The Formee as a Portrait of the Formator**

The Hebrew name *Hose'a*, which is the abbreviated form of *Hose'ayahu* means “Yahweh saves.” This is analogous to the Hebrew name of Jesus *Yese'ayahu* that also means “Yahweh saves.” Jesus never claimed that it was He who saves, but always attributed the saving function to the Father. The Old Testament prophet became the symbol of the Lord, the saving agent. It was his call to make his life a living symbol of the saving God. This he had to do by taking upon himself the sufferings, passion and compassion of the divine Formator. The poor formee did not have a personal life to enjoy on earth. But he never rebelled against this tragic call, as Jeremiah had done.

### **Reflection I**

The name Hosea gives a vivid articulation to the nature of an authentic formee. He/she is called to give total freedom to the Lord to live in him/her. The formee should appropriate in his/her life the words of Paul, “I now longer live, but Christ lives in me.” (Gal.2:20). In this sense Jesus was the most genuine formee, in whom it was the Father who lived, moved and had the being (Acts.17:28). Do the modern formators and formees stick to this ideal and wholeheartedly endeavour to attain this goal?

### **The Agony of Marriage**

It is the right of every young man to choose his future partner whom he likes, and marry her. Nobody, even his parents can deny him this freedom. But the divine Formator commanded Hosea: “Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and have children of unfaithfulness” (1:2). This command was enforced on the called one by his Formator. Could any person with a sense of honour willingly take a prostitute as wife, one who lived the life of a *devadasi* (a temple prostitute) who belonged to the Canaanite religion. When Palestine was given to the Israelites as

the land, Yahweh had strictly forbidden them to have any contact with Canaanites, its inhabitants, who used to practise cultic prostitution, in order to appease the deity of fertility, and ensure rich crops, increase of animals and of humans. Now the Lord himself commands his disciple to marry a Canaanite *devadasi* who was willingly giving herself to every man who approached her.

### ***Reflection II***

Any formee may question his formator, pointing out the immorality and illogicality of such action, which was a defiant transgression of the divine mandate. Now it was the Lord Himself who was asking the formee to commit this heinous sin. Any formee would think that the divine Master had lost the senses, and rebel against Him. Most probably he/she will renounce his/her vocation. We find an analogues scene in John 6 when the Rabbi insisted that everyone has to eat His flesh. Most of his disciples found it a hard teaching and turned back from following Him (Jn.6:61-66). But poor Hosea did not complain and silently embraced a life of suffering by marrying Homer.

### ***Reflection III***

Let us turn to the contemporary field of formation. Can any formator have recourse to such seemingly absurd and irrational method of formation? In early days there existed in the religious traditions insistence on senseless methods in order to test how much the novice had grown in the practice of blind obedience. The candidates of today will make fun of such practices. Still a question lingers. Is it correct to totally and categorically reject such traditional methods? Jesus, the paradigm of true Pedagogue, seems to have sometimes embraced such methods, that the world deemed as foolishness and stumbling block (cf. 1 Cor.1:23). Has his teaching on denying oneself and taking up the cross, and losing one's life (Mk.8:34-37) relevance and pertinence for today?

### **The Agonized Formator**

After demanding the formee to take an adulterous wife and have children from her the divine Formator gives the reason for it. "The land is guilty of vilest adultery in departing from the Lord" (1:2b). In other words, the formee is called to become the living symbol of the repudiated divine Spouse, who still keeps a disloyal and faithless Israel as His wife. The people of the covenant were running after the Canaanite gods and practising fertility rites. This was the most perfidious transgression of the first commandment: "You shall have

no other gods besides me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God..." (Ex.20:2-4). In the words of Yahweh in Hos.1:2b one can feel the inner pain of the Lord who passionately loved Israel, who did not remain loyal to Him. Now His disciple is called to participate in the same agony of the Master, by becoming His living symbol.

### **Reflection IV**

In the story of Hosea we find the sublime dimension of call. The Master considers the disciple as equal to him, as His intimate companion. Therefore the Formator grants the called one the rarest grace to participate in His inner agonies, and become the divine portrait before the people. We find an analogous case in the Gospel. Jesus, the Pedagogue has elevated his disciples to the status of friends (Jn. 15:15) and opened His heart to them. This indeed provides ecstasy as well as agony for the mortals. Will the human formators make use of this art and method to give form to Christ in the formees (cf. Gal.4:9)?

### **The Divine Intention**

Thus Hosea, with distress and anguish, married the Canaanite prostitute. This act was a shock and scandal for his countrymen. They considered him as an outcast who betrayed the Israelite religion, and shunned his company. Some who were formerly his intimate friends, could trace out his inner agony, and would have questioned him about his unnatural behaviour. Hosea would have shared with them the divine dimension of his action. The companions would have communicated to others the reason for the prophet's unnatural behaviour. Sincere and serious persons would have taken it as a call to conversion, an invitation to reject their evil ways. This was indeed Yahweh's intention in compelling his formee to marry a Canaanite *devadasi*.

### **The Agony in Relation to the Begotten Ones**

The disreputable marriage was not the end of Hosea's sufferings. He was asked by the divine Formator to give to the children born to him disgusting and disturbing names, 1: 4, 6, 8.

### **'Jezreel'**

In the place Jezreel the King Jehu had ruthlessly shed the blood of the innocent persons. Thus the name of that town will remind the people of the crime of the monarch, and the forthcoming divine punishment.

God has decided to utterly destroy Jezreel. Now Hosea was asked to name his first-born son 'Jezreel'.

### *Reflection V*

No human father on earth will willingly give a name to his first-born that symbolizes the divine anger and the punishment. His heart will break if he is forced to do it by the Almighty. What about the disgrace and shame that the child will feel, when the people disdainfully call him with that heinous name? Is not this a cruel act from the part of the Lord, who introduces himself as "the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Ex.34:6-7)? How can He demand such an insensible act from the disciple? An ordinary called one will be then forced to renounce his/her vocation. What is the use in serving such a blood thirsty and sadistic Master?

### **The Divine Motive - I**

Yahweh intimates the formee His intention for such a demand: "I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. In that day I will break Israel's bow in the valley of Jezreel" (1:4b-5). By compelling the called one to give his first child the name "Jezreel", the Lord was giving the inhabitants of Jezreel a chance to mend their ways and ask the Lord for pardon and mercy. For this the divine Formator was inflicting an unbearable pain on the formee. Hosea has to become the living symbol of the Lord's mental anguish in being constrained to punish his beloved people.

### *Reflection VI*

As already mentioned, we find in Hosea's call the most exalted degree which one can attain in the discipleship. Jesus, the divine Son of the heavenly Father who was called to become the incarnated form of the divine passion and compassion, is the paradigm and pattern of it. Blessed are those disciples in whom the Holy Spirit enkindles such an aspiration to strive for such a sublime and celestial status!

### **"Without-Mercy"**

Hosea obliged for the divine Formator and with a heavy heart gave his first born the name Jezreel. But this was not the end of the story. Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call her *Lo-Ruhamah* (without-mercy,)", 1:6a. Usually human fathers show a particular affection for a girl child. They will give most endearing name to their darling daughter, like Mercy, Gracy,

Lovely etc. Now the formee was asked to call his daughter *Lo-Ruhamah*, “without-mercy”.

### **Reflection VII**

Naturally every disciple will revolt against such a barbaric demand from the Formator, who seems to deny his own compassionate and merciful nature. This is indeed irrational and inconsistent behaviour. Only with special grace and help of the Holy Spirit, can one yield to such a demand. For us who have not undergone such a heart-rendering experience, cannot even imagine the agony, which poor Hosea would have felt in naming his beloved daughter *Lo-Ruhamah*. What would the modern psychologist say about Yahweh’s this pedagogical method of formation? Is not God’s approach obsolete and old-fashioned? Most of us may be inclined to think so. Still is it correct to reject this pedagogy of omniscient God?

### **The Divine Motive - II**

Yahweh provides the reason for his strange instruction: “For I will no longer have mercy on the house of the Israel; instead I will withdraw it from them” (1:6b). The covenant Lord wanted to threaten his people that He will no more connive at their infidelity and perfidy; He will be ready to contradict his very nature of compassion and mercy, and to assume the face of a harsh judge who will pronounce severe punishment on Israel, without taking into account their human fragility and frailty. Hosea has to become a living symbol of the Lord, by naming his beloved daughter *Lo-Ruhamah*. It is as if the Formator was beforehand punishing the formee by inflicting upon him such a great anguish. Some may question Hosea about his unnatural behaviour. This will give him a chance to expose the divine intention, which may give a chance to them to repent of their sins and turn back to Yahweh, so that the Lord could retract his punitive steps. We can see here the suffering portrait of God, who was compelled to renounce His compassionate and merciful character. He was hoping against hope that His chosen people will repent of their sins and accept Him as the only Spouse. Yahweh was forced to inflict upon his beloved disciple a seemingly cruel suffering, for an ulterior purpose.

### **Reflection VIII**

Only those who are gifted with a supernatural vision will support the divine action. Will our modern formators subscribe to this kind of pedagogy? The fundamental question is: What is the ultimate motive of forming the religious and priestly candidates? Are they not called

to become the living symbols of God and Christ? If so, the human formators are obliged to follow the methods of the divine Pedagogue.

### **“Not-My-People”**

The special call of Hosea demanded him further sufferings. Gomer gave birth to another son. Then the Lord said: “Call him *Lo-Ammi*” (not-my-people), for you are not my people, and I am not your God” (v.9)

### ***Reflection IX***

When Yahweh had entered into the covenant relationship with Israel He declared: “I am your God, and you are my people.” Thereby He willingly took upon himself the role of their Father, provider, helper, defender, leader and avenger in case somebody does them any harm. All these roles are implied in the biblical concept of God. The designation ‘people’ points to the idea of children. Thus the covenant formula expresses a family relationship, God being the Father of Israel, and they His children. Now by demanding Hosea to name his third child *Lo-ammi*, the covenant Lord was exterminating the existing covenant relationship between him and Israel. The name given to the child *Lo-ammi* was intended to make conscious of Israel that Yahweh had cancelled their privilege status.

### ***Reflection X***

The tragic story of naming Hosea’s children reaches the climax. The poor child has to constantly remind the inhabitants of their loss of the position of God’s elite community. The people naturally will hate the prophet and his child. He will be considered as an outcast of the society, and others will discontinue to communicate with his family. How could we give articulation to the state of agony in which Hosea was forced to spend his earthly life?

### **Divine Intention**

Most of us will be naturally inclined to find fault with the divine Formator. The ordinary faithful will think like this: What sin had the prophet committed that God punishes him this way? Is He a just God? Is this the reward for those who live a faithful life? But those who look at things from the divine perspective may be blessed to have a glimpse at the anguish that Yahweh was suffering because of the perfidy of Israel. Instead of loving Him as their only God, and render Him praise and worship, they were running after the Canaanite fertility deities. How can Yahweh, the passionate Lover condone it? The poor heart-broken Husband still loves His unfaithful spouse, and wants to bring

her back to Him by all means. The only way available to the Lord was to speak through the disciple by making him a symbol of his betrayed love, an incarnated form of His passion and wounded wrath. Blessed are those human formators and formees who let their hearts throb with the intense emotions of the Lord, and dedicate themselves to live in loving communion and communication with the divine Bridegroom!

### **A Heart-Rendering Directive**

Gomar, whom Hosea passionately loved, went back to her old ways. She left the prophet and went in search of other lovers and finally married one of them. Now the divine Formator commands the disciple to go and love the adulterous Gomar and bring her back (3:1-2). A self-respecting Israelite will never do it. Re-marrying her who had left him and made the new lover her husband! A most repugnant and abhorrent act! It was forbidden to take back a woman whom one had divorced according to the law of Moses: "That would be detestable in eyes of the Lord. Do not bring sin upon the land Yahweh your God is giving you as an inheritance." (Dt.24:4). Now the divine Formator demands the formee to commit a heinous sin that is explicitly forbidden in the covenant law! A further humiliation of a most bitter type Hosea had to suffer. He was asked to pay to the lover of Gomar 170 gram silver and 330 litre barley. An ordinary man can never handover such a huge amount even if he sells his whole earnings and property.

### **The Aftermath of the Act**

We, moderns can never understand the depth of the agony that the formee would have undergone to obey the command of Yahweh. He would have become the laughing stock of the countrymen. Everyone will abhor his company that was reckoned as an accursed thing. The wretched Hosea, who was supposed to be the prophet of Yahweh, will not be allowed to address the religious assemblies and to take part in the liturgical services. One can give him the designation sudran, the lowest caste of Hindu religion with whom the other classes avoided any contact in former times. Further, paying the huge amount to the former husband of Gomar would have reduced him to live a life of abject poverty. He would have to do menial works in order to feed his wife and children.

### **Reflection XI**

It is said in 3:2 that the formee bought Gomar for the amount prescribed by Yahweh. The verb *krh*, 'to buy', is unusual in the Hebrew Bible and generally signifies purchase by trade or bargaining (Dt.2:6; Job.6:27;



41:6), which may suggest bargaining with a prostitute or bargaining for a marriage price. Such a buying act further increases the degradation and ignominy that the poor disciple had to suffer. What Hosea had to suffer was a mere tiny trace of the intense agony that Yahweh had experienced in His relationship with Israel, His wife. Rejecting his passionate and emotional affection and devotion the unfaithful and adulterous Israel ran after Canaanite deities, not only once, but again and again. In Yahweh's words in Ezekiel Israel exposed her nakedness in her promiscuity with her lovers (Ez. 16:36); she added lewdness to all her other detestable practices (Ez. 16:43). Still the compassionate Lord went in search of her and redeemed her by paying the greatest price, the life of His beloved Son, Christ. He even abased himself by renouncing his divine trait of justice, and in a certain sense became a non-deity. Now the divine Formator asks the formee to love Gomar who had run away after her lovers, as "the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin-cakes" (3:1b). Will any human formator be willing to go after those candidates who had run away, and to bring them back who do not show any trace of compunction and still retain the rebellious and malevolent attitude? If anybody dares to do so, he/she will be unanimously condemned by religious and ecclesiastical superiors and be dismissed from the office. But this is the divine pedagogy followed by God of the Bible! Is He a deranged and insane person? How this kind of behaviour will affect the formation of other aspirants? Will it not cause indiscipline and anarchy in the seminary? Still, can one categorically reject this kind of divine pedagogy?

### **Formee, the Passionate Voice of the Master - I**

The biblical God is called Yahweh, one-who-becomes-with-humans. He is passionately wedded with them, and cannot live without them. In order to make Israel, His bride to remain faithful to him, the divine Bridegroom makes use of all possible, and sometimes unimaginable and humanly speaking repulsive means. He demands Hosea to communicate to Israel, who is always tempted to run after other lovers, the methods that the covenant Lord is planning to do.

### **Yahweh the Hunter**

Israel is always tempted to leave the divine Bridegroom and seek the company of the deities of Egypt and Assyria. This attitude is compared to the action of a dove, which is easily deceived and a senseless creature (7:11). Now Yahweh tries to bring her back to Him by becoming a hunter who throws his net over these human 'doves' and pull them down and

catch them (7:12). Symbolically the formee was asked to do the same with Gomar who lacked foresight and discretion.

### *Reflection XII*

The divine Formator opens His heart and discloses his intimate intentions and strategies to his formee. This is indeed the ideal and sublime stage of formation. The disciple is elevated to the status of an equal partner and companion, with whom the Master freely and clearly shares his intimates thoughts and designs. Yahweh had an ultimate intention. The formee has to speak to his people what the covenant Overlord is going to do in order to prevent them from their wayward actions. The prophet has to put into practice the same method that the divine Pedagogue is about to pursue. The Lord hopes again hope that the stupid bride may come to her senses and remain loyal to Him.

### **Yahweh, the Ferocious Beast**

Human husbands will naturally be irate with passion at the betrayal of their spouses. This intense emotion in its zenith will be seen in those who love their beloved more than their life. The first reaction will be that of revenge that will be manifested often in insane forms. Yahweh, the passionate Lover of Israel makes use of the imagery from the world of wild beasts: "I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah. I will tear them to pieces and go away; I will carry them off, with no one to rescue them" (5:14); "I will come upon them like a lion, like a leopard I will lurk by the path. Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and rip them open. Like a lion I will devour them; like a wild animal will tear them apart." (13:7-8). In the first text the Lord makes clear that Israel will be annihilated. He speaks of Himself in the biomorphic terms such as lion, powerful and hungry young lions. He will rend and carry them off so that none shall stand in His way. In the second text He is depicted as a lurking panther that lies in ambush. He is like an enraged she-bear; nobody can escape from this voracious animal that tears open the chest.

### *Reflection XIII*

The God of the Bible is a tremendous lover. No earthly man matches Him in His love for His bride. Passion goes with jealousy and fury in case of betrayal of the spouse. Yahweh takes the form of a hungry lion, a young lion full of prows that can tear the victim and toss it about as it eats, and no one will be able to save it. The divine Lover in 13:7-8 employs the metaphors of a lion and leopard that lurk by the side of the road in order to attack and maul those who pass by. He also

compares Himself to a bear that has lost its cubs, which makes it even more terrifying as an enraged animal that tears out the enclosure of the heart of the victim. These imageries depict the most miserable portrait of the God of the Bible. No wonder that if he had recourse to the most shocking methods to retaliate and utterly destroy the spouse who had betrayed Him. Yahweh used the mouth of his disciple to make Israel conscious of her wretched situation. Perhaps we can read between the lines and surmise that the wounded Lover even at this critical juncture may be ready to pardon the infidelities if Israel wholeheartedly repents and falls at the feet of her Bridegroom. It seems that it was for this intention that the divine Pedagogue was making use of Hosea as his mouth piece. Who will not be touched by this pathetic figure of the biblical God, who was forced to oscillate between the poles of passion and compassion, since He loved with his whole heart and soul the humans! The prophet-disciple was asked to portray in his own personal life this tragic and heart-rendering emotive figure of his Master. What lesson could the modern formators drive from this agonizing method of the divine Pedagogue?

### **Yahweh, the Pus and Rot**

The passionate Lover gives vent to his intense emotions at the betrayal of His spouse by making use of most disgusting and nauseous language. "I am like pus to Ephraim, like rot to the people of Judah" (5:12). The words like pus and rot will be abhorrent to our aesthetic senses. Yahweh threatens that he will spread out throughout the body of his spouse as pus and rot, which will produce such a foul stench that will hinder anyone to approach her. What a picture of the irate Lover! It gives articulation to His wounded emotions of love. The disciple has to become the spokesman of the inner feelings of anguish of the heart of the Master. No ordinary human being will be willing to take upon himself/herself such a responsibility. At the same time it sheds light to the tragic conjugal love of Hosea, who is asked to become the living symbol of the passionate Lord who had recourse to the most offensive and abusive language. The only intention of Yahweh was to win back the exclusive devotion of His strayed spouse. As the Lord will assert in 11:8 that he is not man, but Yahweh, a God who has to become one with the humans, without whom He cannot live. Blessed are the human formators who could have at least a trace of experience of this kind of the divine passion! Blessed are they who learn to allow Yahweh to become one with the life of the formees, making their failures, temptations and infidelities his/her own!

## **Exertions to Win Back the Beloved**

In practical life the prophet, at the command of the Master, makes use of the following methods in order to compel his wife to repent and mend her immoral ways. These mediums are the same that Yahweh had experimented towards His adulterous wife.

### **Rebuking Acts**

“Accuse your mother! Accuse! For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband” (2:2). The verb *rib* is a juridical term, used in the court process. Hosea’s children are asked to file a lawsuit against their mother and formally accuse her before the court. They have to play the part of the aggrieved party and assail her with sharp questions to which she will not have any proper answer. Gomar, because of her frequent promiscuity did not attend to the needs of the children nor rear them as true Israelites, fostering in them the religious, moral, social and family values. Thus these poor children were compelled to lead a miserable life, bereft of motherly tenderness, loving care and proper discipline. Now the father induces them to file a case in the court against the mother who had forfeited their fundamental rights. She should be legally and publically exposed that will make her an object of ridicule and laughter of the people.

### ***Reflection XIV***

An ordinary woman who maintains at least some humaneness cannot stand up to this pathetic situation. She will fall upon her knees and beseech her children not to do such a thing, and will promise them that in future she will never leave them to themselves, but will be an affectionate mother who always keeps their company. This divine pedagogy can be applied to the various modern situations.

### **The Divine Intention**

In this instance Hosea was following his Master’s own method to win back Israel, His beloved. It becomes clear in the second part of 2:2: “For she is not my wife and I am not her husband.” While ratifying the marriage contract the future husband and wife used to pronounce an oral declaration in the Ancient Near East. The bridegroom will declare publically before witnesses: “(Personal Name) is my wife,” and the bride, “(Personal Name) is my husband”. In the case of divorcing the partner, the man/woman will say: “(Personal Name) is not my wife/husband.” Thereby the existing marriage relationship is repealed in the presence of an official assembly. Now Yahweh was employing a complete formula of repudiation of the existing marriage relationship

with Israel. The ultimate intention was to engender in her compunction of heart and a firm resolve to remain ever loyal in future.

### **A Forewarning**

Since the first threat did not produce the expected result, Yahweh now intervenes directly and takes a more severe action: “Let her remove the marks of her prostitution from her face and the signs of her adultery from between her breasts, lest I strip her naked and expose her as the day of her birth. I will make her like a wilderness, turn her into a parched land, and slay her with thirst.” (2:2b-3).

Here we find a surprising phenomenon. Both the formee and the Formator do the same thing. Gomar is identified with Israel. Both are addressed to completely break away from the life of adultery. During that time the Canaanite prostitutes used to bear certain marks or emblems, such as headbands, belts, nose-rings, necklaces or similar jewellery. Such cultic marks were signs of wilful prostitution and adultery. Formerly Gomar was a Canaanite prostitute and she continued to bear such cultic marks or emblems on her body. Concerning Israel their infidelity consisted in accepting Baal in the place of their covenant Lord and erecting sanctuaries of the Canaanite god in their land and practising cultic prostitution. Now the Master and disciple threaten their unfaithful spouses. Unless they remove such emblems, that meant a total rejection of promiscuity, a most shameful fate is awaiting them. They will be stripped naked, a most disgraceful state ever imaginable in the society of Israel. Totally rejected by both husbands, the spouses will be condemned to become like an arid plain and have to meet a premature death of thirst.

### **Reflection XV**

The God of the Bible is the most passionate Lover, who is madly in love with Israel. He demands exclusive love and devotion from her. Running after other lovers will evoke His intense jealousy that will lead him to take most deadly acts of revenge that are unimaginable for humans. Now the formee is instigated to follow the ‘deranged’ steps being perused by his Formator. The ultimate purpose is to engender trepidation in the spouses that may force them to have second thoughts about committing adultery. What will the modern psychologists say about this method? Will any formator dare to take such strong remedies?

### **Blocking the Paths**

Yahweh makes use of a third method: “I will hedge up her path with thorn bushes; I will build a rampart of stone against her so that she

cannot find her paths" (2:6). The Lord knows that humans will be tempted to go back to their evil ways. Now He takes steps to make such a attempt impossible. The divine Husband blocks the path of His unfaithful wife with a wall of thorns and a stone embankment. The Hebrew term *grr* denotes a heaped-up rampart of stone about one meter high. This will block the route to the Baal sanctuaries. Hosea had to imitate the action of the Master, and prevent Gomar from continuing her acts of prostitution.

### **Reflection XVI**

Psychologists may question this kind of pedagogy of Yahweh by saying that the formees should be given freedom to choose, and blocking it stands against the fundamental rights of every human being. No one should be forced to embrace the morally right path in his/her life. At the first thought this reasoning may seem to be the correct one. But on deeper reflection we may tend to question this kind of certitude. There may arise in human life most acute situations that will demand extreme steps to prevent a person from succumbing to his/her evil ways. An analogy may be made to the action of a doctor who conducts a most painful and dangerous operation to save the life of the patient, without paying attention to his/her protests.

### **Formee, the Passionate Voice of the Master - II**

Next we find a different face of the divine Formator. The Almighty appears as a weeping person, and decides to disdain His fundamental character of a God of justice and to manifest Himself only as incarnation of compassion.

### **A Weeping Yahweh**

The Indian sages prescribe four methods called *samam* (conciliation), *bedam* (alienation), *danam* (gift), *dandam* (punishment) in order to win a person to one's own side. Now Yahweh, and his disciple had recourse to all these four tactics, but they did not produce steady and stable results. What can the passionate Lover further do? The Almighty God deigns to the situation of ordinary human beings and begins to weep like a loving mother, whom the children have deserted. The text of Hosea 11:1-8 gives a vivid and most touching articulation to the throbbing heart of an inconsolable mother:

"When Israel was a child, I loved him  
and out of Egypt I called my son.  
But the more I called Israel  
the further he went from me..."

It was I, who taught Ephraim to walk,  
and took him by the arms...  
I drew him with humane cords,  
with ropes of love.  
And I was to him as one lifts a small child to the cheek,  
and I bent down to him to feed him...  
How can I give you up, Ephraim?  
How can I hand you over, Israel?  
How can I surrender you like Admah?  
How can I make you like Zeboiim?"

Yahweh's disciple is implicitly asked to become a loving and living symbol of this affectionate heart of the divine Formator who disconsolately weeps at the perfidious behaviour of the children.

### ***Reflection XVII***

Who will not be deeply affected by this caressing and fondling portrait of Yahweh! He is the most tender mother, who teaches Israel to walk, takes the child in her arms, draws it with humane cords and ropes of love, lifts it to her cheek and bends down to feed it. Even then the child becomes naughty, defiant and unruly. This compassionate Mother cannot give it up and hand it over to the penal authorities. The formee has to cultivate these tender sentiments and appropriate the language of love. The Son of Man was the incarnate form of God's compassionate and ever forgiving love. If the candidates were trained in the school of Yahweh and Christ, the face of the Church would have become totally different from today.

### **One Who Rejects Justice**

God becomes God only when He holds to righteousness and justice. His sense of justice compels Him to punish the adulterous Israel, and if she persists in following her treacherous ways, irrespective of frequent sanctions, He has to blot her out of the earth. Dt. 5:16 commands thus: "Honour your father and your mother... so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you." (Ex. 20:12). The covenant law prescribes the death to those who rebel against the parents. How to maintain justice and compassion at the same time? This was the predicament that God of the Bible had to face. Hos. 11:8b gives the following articulation to the struggle that takes place in the heart of the Lord.

"My heart turns against me,  
My remorse burns intensely"

This verse escapes literal translation. The underlying idea is that the divine bowels are turning upside down because of the intense internal agitation. One may compare it with the painful experience that the pregnant Rebekah felt, since the twin babies were jostled each other within her (Gen. 25:22). This is indeed the anthropomorphic language. The poor Yahweh suffered and suffered, and finally took a resolute decision.

“No, I will not carry out my fierce anger,  
I will not devastate Ephraim again” (11:9a).

### ***Reflection XVIII***

The biblical God who cannot live without Israel, whom He had made his beloved spouse, is ready to renounce one of the fundamental traits of Divinity, for the sake of the incorrigible humans. This is the highest degree of descent ever imaginable for humans. We, very frail beings, cannot, by our own strength, act in such a way. The last verse of lamentation Yahweh thus swears (11:1-9b):

“For I am God, and not man  
the Holy One in your midst,  
I will not become enraged”

This text gets a most sublime fulfilment in the New Testament. “God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son” (Jn. 3:16), in order to give eternal life to humans. He had to pay a great price for saving the sinful humanity. He offered the life of his beloved Son as ransom. Jesus took upon himself the punishment for the sinners, and willingly became a burnt offering. The divine Formator invites Hosea to follow his example, efface himself and pursue the path of compassion instead of justice. Here consists the authentic pedagogy of Christian formation and the call for self-immolating discipleship.

### **Formee, the Compassionate Voice of the Master**

Now the divine Physician makes a radical change in his treatment of the morally sick Israel. He makes the patient drink the sweet medicine of healing love, and allows her to sit in His shade.

### **The Healing Love of Yahweh**

In 14:4 the divine Pedagogue thus affirms:

“I will heal the wounds of her apostasy  
I will spontaneously shower my love upon her.”

The most effective method of treating the mortal sickness of infidelity is to apply the balm of tender love without any restraint. The divine



Lover declares in 2:14: "I myself will allure her; I will bring her into the wilderness (place of loneliness) and woo her heart."

The verb 'allure' invites our special attention. In 7:11 Israel is called a dove that is easily seduced because of the lack of experience and intelligence. Now the divine Bridegroom makes use of the imagery of seduction. He appears as a seducer who whispers in her ears sweet and loving words, leads her into a solitary place, where she will be alone with Him and speaks heart to heart to her. This is indeed the language of lovers and courtship (Gen. 34:3; Ruth.21:3; Jg. 19:3) used to woo the heart. The divine Lover promises Israel vineyards. . The oral love is sealed by act, gift.

### **Reflection XIX**

The Latin phrase *Solus cum solo* ("Alone with the alone") is very relevant in formation. The first *Solus* (Alone) is God; the second *solo* is soul. Human formators should not feel aversion to speak in mystical language and to open the mystical milieu to the candidates, irrespective of male or female distinctions. In every human there is a human thirst to fall in love with Christ. St. Augustine exclaims: *quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te* (You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you - Confessions Bk I. Par. 1).

### **"Sitting in God's Shade"**

Treating the invalid bride with the medicine of tender love is said to have healed her mortal wounds. Its climactic instance is thus articulated in 14:5-7.

"I will be like dew to Israel;  
she will blossom like a lilly.  
Like a cedar of Lebanon  
her shoots shall spread out.  
Her splendour will be like the olive tree,  
her fragrance like the cedar of Lebanon.  
She will sit in my shadow;  
she will flourish like the grain,  
she will blossom like a vine,  
and her fame will be like the wine from Lebanon."

The Formator makes use of love language, and rich and colourful metaphors similar to the Song of Songs. The spouse is depicted as a flourishing and fragrant garden of Lebanon. Nourished by the healing and life-bringing love of the Beloved, Israel will blossom like lilly, and

spread out her shoots like cedar (Ps.104:16), that points to the durability and strength of the chosen race. The themes of lilly and Lebanon are frequently used in the Song of Songs (lilly: 2:1, 16; 4:5; 5:13; 6:2, 3; 7:3; Lebanon:3:9; 4:8, 11, 12, 15; 7:4). Israel's splendour is compared to the olive tree. The fragrant shrubs and herbs will fill the air with pleasant odours. The expression "sitting in the shade" also belongs the love song (Song of Songs.2:3). The bride finds there her delight, rest and self-realization. All her aspirations, longings, dreams get fulfilment. No more worries, apprehensions, distresses and perturbations. She enjoys celestial bliss, which will be a foretaste of heavenly life. This was indeed the dream of the divine Lover concerning Israel.

### *Reflection XX*

In the divine plan, only those who are gifted with a mystical blend are suited to adorn the office of the formators of the souls. They should have a poetic and ingenious heart of a visionary. Such persons, with their own personal experiences can easily draw the candidates to the mystical world of the divine Formator. A positive and creative approach, not delving merely on the negative traits, is the need of today. Otherwise their efforts may not produce lasting results. The divine Pedagogue stands out as the excellent model. He was willing to admit the failures that He had to face in the past, and humbly changed the formative orientations. An authentic formator will experience agony and ecstasy in the process of formation.

### **Concluding Reflection**

Passion and compassion – these are two essential poles in the art of formation. The human masters are invited to live as a loving symbol of the divine Pedagogue, who passionately loved his subjects, and because of that had to undergo agony, and volunteered Himself to become a failure. Such a call is indeed heroic that demands total kenosis, self-abnegation and audacious humility. Christ serves as the paradigm and pattern of this kind of humility. "Who has ears to hear, let him/her hear" (Mt.13:9).