

MY INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka is known for its Tea estates and Tamil Refugees. The language spoken in Sri Lanka is Sinhala and the second language is Tamil. The majority are Buddhists and minority are Catholics. It was a great opportunity for me to know and experience the place, culture, religion and the Mission of the Good Shepherd Sisters in Sri Lanka. I prepared my goals and expectations. The experience I had in Sri Lanka was very life-giving.

Prayer was the first priority for the sisters. The many practices of piety like novenas, divine mercy prayer, rosary, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and of course the prayer of the Church was part of their prayer life. The girls too were encouraged to pray daily. I was inspired by their life of prayer and this helped me to draw closer to God, experience Him more intimately and to have strong faith in Him. The sisters were loving, kind and united. There was a lot of joy, give and take attitude and respect for each other. I was inspired and touched by their way of life. This enabled me to fulfill my responsibilities with freedom, to interact with one another with ease, to share my happiness and knowledge. I experienced the sense of hospitality and acceptance. The sisters are creative and innovative. The people have a lot of respect for religious and for their own religion.

For the first one month I was with Single mothers and with their babies. Also children in the Boarding in Poovarasankulam. I spent my time with them teaching them, value classes, yoga, spoken English, hymns, Counselling, handicraft, gardening, praying together, accompanying them to hospital, and to the court for adoption. These girls come from very difficult background, they undergo a lot of pain in their life and they are work in the garments company and are cheated mostly by the married men.

For two months I was sent to the Balangoda and Gompola Communities. Here many Tamil speaking families are living in the tea estate. The main occupation is plucking tea leaves. They also have skill training programmes for girls and women, like handloom, bag making and handicraft. Many girls and women in the villages benefit through this project. They have school going girls from different villages, they stay with sisters in the boarding. They also have the Nursery school for the children. My experience was teaching the Nursery children, visiting the villages with our sisters and teaching catechism to the parish children. It was a totally different kind of experience. I got a great opportunity to learn handicraft and to be creative. It was a good learning and growing experience for me to spend time with these girls and children. As I was in Gompola community, one week exposure programme was arranged by another NGO for the orphan children. and were 60 Children from different homes participated. I was asked to accompany the children to Colombo. I also got a good opportunity to visit the different places in Sri Lanka, like Pilgrim Church, Buddhist Temple, Museum and a few tourist places etc. It was an enjoyable and challenging experience for me to be with them.

In conclusion I can say that it was a learning and growing experience for me, to be in another country and yet to feel at home. Since Tamil was the second language in Sri Lanka, I was able to communicate with people and built a good relationship. I enjoyed my stay in Sri Lanka and the Sisters were also very good to me. I thank Sr. Sabina and Council for giving me this opportunity. A special word of appreciation and thanks to Sr. Kala for all the hard work arrangements and communication. My international experiences I was enjoyable and meaningful for my mission. I am grateful to Sr. Francine, Provincial of Sri Lanka, Sr. Roshanthi, Junior Mistress and all the sisters who accompanied me while I was in Sri Lanka. I shall cherish the valuable experiences I had there.

