

# **"THE PRISONER"**

We are prisoners to ourselves.

Who imprisoned us?

Who forge our inner chains?

How to break free from them?

## **Aims of This ENCOUNTER**

- ✓ *To grow in self-knowledge*
- ✓ *To realize that we are not free but in bondage*
- ✓ *To discover our attachments - our inner chains.*
- ✓ *How to regain our `freedom'*

## **Target Audience**

All audiences.

Especially youth, College students

Educated grown-ups

## **Uses of These Notes**

Personal examination.

Recollections.

Prayer meetings

As a part of a retreat

Group discussions

## **Requirements**

Copies of the "Work-sheet."

If you intend having activities, get the requirements needed for them. Crayons, color felt pens, drawing material Writing material for all

## **Step 1. Introductory Session**

Singing hymns and/or bhajans.

Opening prayer.

## **Step 2. Personal Work.    WORK-SHEET**

### **1) Read very carefully the poem "THE PRISONER" (R. Tagore)**

Prisoner, tell me: who was it that bound you?

It was I, my Master!, said the prisoner.

I thought I could outdo everybody in the world in wealth and power,

And I amassed in my own treasure house the money due to my king!

When sleep overcame me I lay upon the bed that was for my Lord,

And on waking up, I found I was a prisoner in my own treasure house!

Prisoner, tell me who was it that wrought this unbreakable chain?

It was I, said the prisoner, who forged this chain very carefully,  
 I thought my invincible power would hold the world captive leaving me  
 in freedom, undisturbed!  
 Thus, night and day, I worked at the chain with huge fires and cruel hard strokes.  
 When at last the work was done, and the links were complete and unbreakable, I found  
 that it held me in its grip."  
 (Gitanjali No. 31)

## 2) Answer the following questions:

1. Are we not, often enough, humans prisoners of our cravings? How? Why?
2. In particular, in what way are you a prisoner to yourself too? Explain.
3. Who imprisoned you? When? Where? How?
4. What are the things you are running after?
5. What's the wealth you want to amass?
6. What is the meaning of "sleep overcoming us"? What sort of sleep is this? How does it overcome us?
7. How much has already overcome you? Explain.
8. What is the meaning of "being prisoners in our own treasure house"?
9. What do the chains stand for in the poem? Are we free? Who has forged our chains? How? When?
10. What can you do to break loose from your chains and escape the prison of your "treasure house"? Explain.

## 3) Symbolic Drawing

Your prison, your treasure house". Shape... color..., location... circumstances... surroundings, people around... etc.  
 Your "chains" the chains you forged! Length... size..., shape... thickness... color... links... etc.

## Step 3. Group Work: Sharing, feedback, interaction and prayer

### Note for the Moderator:

- ✓ *If the number of participants is large, divide them into small groups of about 6 each.*
- ✓ *They will do the sharing, interacting and prayer within the small groups.*
- ✓ *Ideally, secure good moderators for the groups.*
- ✓ *Tell the participants that they are free to share only what they feel comfortable to share.*

### Sharing, feedback, interaction`

By turns, group members will share their replies to the questions above and also show and explain the symbolic drawings of their prisons and chains.

While the sharing goes on, only clarifications are in place. . No interactions and discussions should be allowed.

Impress on the members to be very attentive and to listen to what others say, and even more how they say it. (*Non-verbal communication*)

When one member finishes his sharing, the other members of the group may pray for him aloud and spontaneously.

After all finished their sharing, anyone may ask the group to give him "feedback". No one should be given feed-back unasked.

On the occasion of the feedback, interaction should be encouraged.

### **Prayer**

Offer the participants some quiet time before God for personal reflection and prayer.

Encourage them to take some jottings on their reflections and prayer.

### **Step 4. An Input Suggested Thoughts**

- On attachments, good and bad ones.
- Inner freedom. True independence.
- Being possessed by our possessions.
- Being enslaved by the people we "love".
- In love relationships. freedom should not be lost
- Breaking away from compulsions, even religious compulsions
- Meaning of being autonomous persons.
- Freedom from fears, anxieties, guilt.
- The enslaving effect of resentments, rancor and unforgiveness.
- Being slaves to human respect, public opinion.
- Falling into the rut of competitiveness, trying to keep up with other Joneses.
- How to be free. Conditions and requisites for freedom; security, self-acceptance, self-love, being ourselves, awareness, radical questioning, away from prejudice, brutal honesty, courage, vitality, etc.

## **APPENDIX      Group Activities**

Activities are very effective to drive home the main learning of the event.

The best time for the activities are the afternoon hours

### **Activity One. Symbolic Representations**

#### **"Preparation"**

Ask the groups to find symbolic images or representations of what attachments are and how they enslave and destroy us, for instance:

Wild weeds growing uncontrollably in our garden.

White ants eating up our possessions.

Microbes undermining our health, etc

The symbolic representation may be expressed by means of:

A symbolic mime

A poster.

A parable or a fable                      A role-play.  
 An active tableau                        • Etc.

### **Presentation of the Activities**

In turn, the groups will present the house their activities

After each presentation, a short evaluation and discussion will follow.

### **Activity Two    General Group Prayer**

Close the sessions with a shared and participatory group prayer.

Divide the participants into small group of about 4 or 5 each.

Ask each group to prepare a part of the prayer service.

Give to each group one of the N.T. passages suggested below and ask them to prepare a short act or mime on it. We see that in all the passages the main actors were prisoners in his treasure houses.

Mk 10:17-31	The rich young man
Lk 12:13-21	The rich fool
Mt 23:1-28	The pharisees
Mk 6:17-28	Herod
Lk 9:57-62	The would-be followers of Jesus

#### Suggested order for the prayer services

1. Quiet down, Silence, Awareness exercises and/or listening to soft music
2. Opening prayer
3. Hymns and/or bhajans
4. Reading the poem of Tagore: "The Prisoner" (*By the moderator*)
5. Group participation: By turns, each group will come in and follow this procedure:  
*(no more than 6 or 8 minutes each)*
  - Act or mime the passage
  - Reflections on the passage
  - Silence for one minute
  - Shared prayer
6. Final prayer (*By the Moderator*)
7. Last prayer by the moderator
8. Closing hymn

#### Note:

**As additional materials for this session you may confer the file 'Attractions and Addictions of our series.**