

THE FROZEN MASSES

Oppression in Society

Intent of this event

- ✓ *To become aware of how our societal structures as they exist, freeze large groups of people into inert, bloodless and stupefied masses.*
- ✓ *To realize how some small organized minorities do freeze the large majority of their countrymen.*
- ✓ *To realize that all of us, are part and parcel of the total social reality. No one can excuse himself and disclaim responsibility for the injustices that are going on in "his" society.*
- ✓ *Finally, to motivate the participants, through this exercise, to do their bit to tackle the problems of injustice and social exploitation.*

Target Audience

All audiences, specially youth

Uses of These Jottings

Talks

Discussion groups

Catechism and moral instruction classes

Social awareness sessions and work-shops

Requirements

A roomy place to play the "Freezing Game", such as a hall, a terrace, a garden or a compound

Copies of the Reflection Questionnaire.

Step 1. Introductory Session

- Singing hymns and/or bhajans, such as
 - ✓ : "The World Stands in need of Liberation",
 - ✓ "When I needed a Neighbor".
- Opening prayer

Step 2. Group Dynamics **THE FREEZING GAME"**

Get the participants to play the starting game.

Rules of the game

Ask for volunteers. You need roughly 25% of the total number of participants to volunteer. (Say 5 volunteers from among 20).

1. The volunteers will be the "**freezers**", and all the rest will be the **free** or "**unfrozen**" people

2. The "**unfrozen**" will move all over the space assigned for the game. (*The size of the space assigned should be proportionate to the number of participants*)
3. The "**freezers**" job is to run all over the place and freeze all the "free" or "unfrozen" ones by lightly touching them.
4. Those who have been touched instantaneously will become "**frozen**". They are to remain frozen (like statues) on the very spot where they have been touched. They will keep their arms folded on their chest.
5. Those still "free" or "**unfrozen**" may "**defreeze**" their partners who have been "**frozen**". They will do so by coming close to them and touch them lightly.
6. The "**defreezed**" ones will be free again to run all over and to "**defreeze**" their companions.
7. The goal of the "**freezers**" is to freeze the whole lot, and that of the **free** and "**unfrozen**" ones to stop them from doing so.

When the whole lot of the free persons has been frozen, or if the "freezers", after a reasonable time, do not manage to do so, (*say 6 to 8 minutes*), the game is called off. (*Make sure that the area allotted, for the game is not too large otherwise the "freezers" will not manage to freeze all the "free ones". Ideally, the "freezers" should win the game.*)

Step 3. Personal Work. REFLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE.

Note for the Moderator:

- ✓ *Participants will reply to it, and in silence.*
- ✓ *Frame the questions keeping in mind the age group and nature of the audience.*
- ✓ *The questionnaire printed below was used for an "Awareness Day" given to a mixed group of College Students (Catholics, Non-Catholics, Boys and Girls).*
- ✓ *We offer this questionnaire in the hope that it will help you to prepare your own when you give this exercise to other types of audiences.*
- ✓ *Note that questions have to be framed keeping in mind the "social reality" of India today.*
- ✓ *It is worth noting that questions 1 to 8 of the questionnaire are meant mainly to draw from the participants their ideas, reflections and thoughts.*
- ✓ *Questions 9 to 15 are of a personal nature and ask the participants to draw on their own life experiences. Keep this in mind when you ask the participants to share and discuss their replies.*

A Questionnaire

Applying the Freezing game to our Indian social reality

1. Who are the "frozen" people or masses in our Indian Society? What are their characteristics? Explain.
2. Who are the "freezers"? What are their characteristics? Explain.
3. Who are the "defreezers"? What are their characteristics? Explain.
4. How do we, individually or as a group, consciously or unconsciously, freeze our fellow-citizens? Give illustrations.
5. How can we defreeze the Indian masses? Give practical suggestions.
6. Why is it that many of our "frozen Indian brothers and sisters" do not show any inclination to be defreezed? List the reasons.

7. Why most of the "free" or "unfrozen" citizens are not eager to "defreeze" their fellow men? Find the reasons.
8. Why do some of the "free" or "unfrozen" people positively oppose any "defreezing" efforts?
9. What would you call this class of "freezers"? Who are they in India today?
10. Do you belong, in any way, to the "frozen" masses of our Indian Society? If so, share your experiences and feelings?
11. How and since when do you belong to this group?
12. Have you ever been defreezed. How? When? By whom? Share your experiences.
13. If, once upon a time, you were a frozen citizen, and now you are a free one, how do you feel towards your "frozen" brothers and sisters?
14. What have you done something to defreeze them? Explain.
15. Do you belong to the "freezing" sector of our Indian Society? Have you ever been aware before, that you were a "freezer"? If so, how do you feel? What will you do?

Step 4. Group Sharing

- ✓ Begin sharing the replies to questions 1 to 8. Take one question at a time.
- ✓ When someone has shared on one question, the group members may ask him for clarifications. Discussion will not be entertained at this stage.
- ✓ After sharing and clarifications are over, discussion will be encouraged.
- ✓ When questions 1 to 8 are over, the participants will share their reactions and experiences on questions 9 to 15. No discussion will be held on these questions; clarifications may be asked.

Step 5. Input

Suggested Thoughts

- All societies are stratified and class-structured.
- In India the stratification of society is mainly based, even today, on caste and economic status.
- The existing structures tend to "freeze" large numbers of citizens.
- These "freezing structures" tend to be self-perpetuating.
- Such freezing structures operate in all vital areas of public life as education, economy, development, caste, politics, ownership of the means of production, trade, banking, labor, industrial policies, etc.
- The upper classes are mostly the beneficiaries of such stratification; the lower classes, the sufferers. In fact, the former thrive on the latter.
- The upper classes as a whole are the "freezers", the lower classes the "frozen"
- In other words, some classes are the exploitative and oppressive ones, while others are the exploited and oppressed ones.
- Note that the words "exploitation and "oppression" as used in the present context do not imply any moral judgment or accusation. They only describe a social reality, a situation that obtains in all societies..
- Though we may not be conscious of it, we have been both actors and victims of exploitation and oppression. That is an incontestable fact.

- The educated, progressive and socially better placed classes are in a position of advantage in relation to the rest of society They enjoy most of the privileges, facilities and amenities of life, which are denied to the other classes, simply because of the latter's educationally, socially and economically weaker position.
- To the extent that we appropriate the fruits of modern scientific, technological and cultural progress to our own advantage, we become, unknowingly, instruments of an unjust social order. Examples:
 - ✓ I buy a house which poor people built with meager and unjust wages paid to them by the building contractors
 - ✓ I purchase commodities at the retail store, which wholesalers and middle men bought from the primary producers at exploitative prices.
 - ✓ I pay my servants and employees the minimum wages stipulated by "law", which, in any case, are insufficient and below a fair living family wage.
- We have to open our eyes and become aware of all these injustices in the ambience in which we live.
- To ameliorate the conditions of the oppressed and exploited, it is not enough to apply remedial measures like charity, beneficence and social promotion
- To defreeze the masses the very structures of society have to be radically changed.
- To defreeze people it is not enough to dole out charities and undertake some social welfare measures. No, we have to conscientize them, make them realize the rights they have as citizens, and help them fight for them and secure their dues!
- It is our bounden duty to take positive interest in our country and its problems.
- We have to get involved with our fellow-citizens.
- To help them, it need be, we have enter into the socio-political arena and become activists.
- In conscience, we cannot just sit on the fence and say: "It is not my business" or "There is nothing I can do".
- As members of society, it is our business to look after it, to improve it and to make it a just and equitable one. .
- If we want To defreeze our brothers and sisters
 - ✓ We shall have to forget some of our vested interests and class privileges
 - ✓ We might have to climb down the social ladder one step or two,
 - ✓ We may have to forgo few of the advantages of our social and economic status.
 Are we ready for it?
- It is comfortable – but not fair - to remain in a state of ignorance as regards the condition of our weaker brethren.
- Since we do not like to see the injustices around us, we close our eyes to the glaring inequalities staring in our face.
- We block our consciences, as otherwise we might feel constrained to do something we are not prepared to.
- Is it ours, invincible ignorance or culpable negligence?
- To save our consciences, we lull our sense of justice and fair play with the thought that we have a constitution that bids guaranteed equality of rights and opportunities for all the citizens of our country!

- All our slogans on democracy, liberty, equality of opportunities, justice for all, education for the masses, etc. are empty and meaningless formulae and catch phrases to pacify our guilt-ridden consciences, and to acquiesce with the “status quo”
- When shall we open our eyes to the fact that the very texture of our society is based on "inequality" and "discrimination"?

APPENDIX ONE. Interiorisation - Self-examination

Ask the participants to reflect and to examine themselves in silence.
Give them the following Examination Sheet.

An Examination Sheet :

In the presence of God and in a prayerful way, reflect and examine yourself on the following points:

1. Do you belong to the "frozen" or to the "freezing" classes? How do you feel about it?
2. What have you done to help the "frozen" members of society? Explain.
3. Do you show appreciation towards the poor, the down-trodden, the ignorant, the harijans, and the unskilled workers? How?
4. Do you "freeze" them still further with your attitudes of "superiority" and aloofness?
5. In your present situation what can you do to help the underprivileged and exploited masses around you?
6. What do you intend doing in the immediate future to ameliorate the situation of the weak and the down trodden with whom you live?
7. Are you ready to give up some of your privileges, and comforts to defreeze some of your frozen brothers and sisters?
8. Can you do something to help the poor and exploited to claim their legal and constitutional rights? What? How?

APPENDIX TWO Activities

Note for the Moderator

*Activities are very useful and effective to drive home the main thoughts of day.
The best time for group activities is the afternoon hours.*

Preparation of the Activities

- ✓ Divide the participants into smaller groups. (6 to 8 each)
- ✓ Give them the required instructions to prepare any activity to exemplify one of the main ideas of the sessions.
- ✓ Give sufficient time to the groups for preparation.

Suggested Topics:

Each group will prepare one activity to exemplify any of the topics or ideas of the day ; for instance,

Freezing,	Defreezing,
Frozen people.	Unjust social structures,
Unequal economic status,	Caste system,
Political forces,	Political power in the hands of a few people,
Social inequalities,	Exploitation of labor,
Elitism,	Ownership of the means of production,
Monopolist tendencies,	Nepotism,
Corruption in public life,	Regionalism,
Unjust wages,	Import and export policies,
Trade prodigality in spending,	Mass media in the hands of the powerful
Rich minorities framing the economic policies of the country,	

Possible activities.

Drama.	Mime.	Poster.	Radio-play.	Song.
Collage	Role-play.	Action-Song.	Cartoon.	Puppet Show.
Poem.	Photo-language.	Dance drama.	Parable.	Tableaux,
Stories,	Etc.			

Presentation and Analysis

The groups will present their activities to the house.

Each presentation will be followed by a short analysis, evaluation and discussion.

The point to evaluate is not so much the artistic or dramatic value of the presentation but its representative value, its ideological and emotional impact.