

## THE APOSTOLATE OF SR. JULIE PARMAR AMONG THE MOST DEPRIVED PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY.

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Sr. Julie Parmar had a desire to work among the marginalized and neglected people of the country. These are Tribals of India seen in practically every nook and corner of the country. In recent times in some parts of the country these people have access to education and are on the way to join the mainstream of life. A few of them have managed to climb the social ladder through education and hard work and one of them belonging to the untouchable caste had become the President of the country in the past. But this is only a rare case. The majority of them live far away, not even on the fringes of civilization. Some of them have not even seen a single person outside their own tribe.

The Tribals have their own customs, language and dress. When at first Sr. Julie entered a tribal village she saw a group of children happily playing. As she went closer, they realized that an outsider had come. They ran away with all their might. This was repeated very many times. Later when they had become friendly, they told her that they thought that she would catch them to be sold at distant places. After making friends with the children she tried to make contact with their mothers. She used to stand in front of the closed door of their house and ask, "Is any one in?" The answer invariably was 'Please go away. There is no one here'. Like the children, the women too were frightened that they too would be sold. This state of affairs continued for a long time.

Slowly, the women started opening their doors and started conversing with Sr. Julie. Seeing that nothing untoward was happening, others took courage and came out to meet Sr. Julie.

**Health Care:** Tactfully, Sr. Julie introduced the topic of health for pregnant women. For the poor, free iron tablets were available in Government hospitals. But due to ignorance and superstitious beliefs, the tribal women never took advantage of this. To get rid of Tuberculosis from the country, the government had made it easy for the poor to obtain

medicines from government hospitals. But corrupt government officials instead of distributing it among the poor, take it as an opportunity to make some money for themselves. Seeing Sr. Julie's determination and courage they reluctantly let her have the medicines for her patients. It took years to convince the women that infants should be inoculated against common infectious diseases.

To maintain good health, Sr. Julie encouraged them to start and maintain kitchen gardens. The health of the people has improved considerably and they have become energetic and have the confidence to attempt anything to better their lot. They have lost all fear of outsiders. In fact they will come forward and speak to them.

***Education:*** After some years, Sr. Julie started Nursery classes for the children. The attempt was so successful that she was able to start nursery classes in many places. Through the efforts of Sr. Julie, many Self Help Groups (SHG) have started where the women save their own money, put it in the bank and withdraw them in times of need. In this way Sr. Julie has released them from the clutches of money lenders who charge exorbitant interests and in the course of time destroy the family.

Through the efforts of Sr. Julie, these tribals are slowly integrated into the mainstream of society, and are able to contribute to the uplift of other tribal societies. In a short span of fifteen years, with determination, courage and God's grace, Sr. Julie was able to 'lift' their lives from pre-historic age to the dawn of the twenty first century. **Praised for ever be Jesus and Mary!**