

## **LOOK AT YOU, BUT ME**

### **Intent of this Exercise**

*Growth in Self-acceptance*

*Growth in Self-esteem*

*Discovering one's worth.*

*Stop comparing yourself with others.*

### **Introductory Session**

Singing hymns/bhajans

Starting prayer

## **The Story.**

*Give copies of the fable to the participants.  
Let them read it slowly and reflect on its meaning.*

**Narrator:** Long, long ago, when trees and plants used to talk like us humans, you could have heard them chit-chatting friendly among themselves. The coconut tree said to the teak tree:

**Coconut:** Look at my body! So ugly, shapeless, rough, full of scars... My flesh is useless... I admire the quality of your flesh! What strength, what sturdy timber you make... No rain, no sun, no cold will ever make a dent on you... No termites, no beetles, no rodents will ever be able to bite you.... But, me? Bah, what worthless stuff I'm made of!

**Narrator:** The teak tree turned to a mango tree and remarked:

**Teak Tree:** I admire your large, beautiful, sweet and smelling and tasty fruits! You have so much to offer to people. .. Everybody is so fond of you! You are everybody's favorite... But me? Frankly speaking, I feel ashamed of myself! Look at me. My body is ugly and bony... I am barren... I have no fruits to offer to any one. When I see myself so dry and barren, I hate myself!

**Narrator:** The mango tree cast an envious glance at the rosebush and pulling a long face, said:

**Mango Tree:** O! How I envy you! You are so beautifully decked with a mantle of exquisitely colored, sweet-scented flowers. How pretty you look! How charming, how attractive. The bees flock to you for honey, men love to have you in their homes and gardens! But me? Alas, poor me! I have no color, no flowers, no scent, none of your many splendor and beauty!

**Narrator:** The rosebush espied a neem tree nearby and said:

**Rosebush:** You know, I love the texture of your skin! So smooth! How finely honed you are. You look so fresh and sensuous! So pleasant to the touch! But me? I hate my skin. Look, I'm poky and prickly, spiky and spiny. No one likes to touch me or to pat my body.

**Narrator:** The Neem tree stared at a big, sturdy, and magnificent banyan tree. He said:

**Neem Tree:** Gosh you are really strong from root to top! I can hardly figure out where your roots end and your branches begin. Every root, every branch of yours is so tough and yet so supple. It will bend but not break. But me! I am so brittle! My branches easily break causing me so much pain and sorrow! As if the bitter ness in me was not enough!

**Narrator:** The great and hoary banyan tree looked benignly at a babul tree that grew near by and said:

**Baniam Tree:** I notice people making much use of your branches and trunk for firewood. You burn so fast and nice and provide so cheap and easy fuel. Poor people like to have you to cook their simple meals and keep their homes warm. But, me! Alas, poor me! My flesh is useless; it is all too knotty and fibrous not even fit to en-kindle a fire!

**Narrator:** The babul tree turned to the banyan tree and said:

**Babul Tree:** It's wonderful to see your spreading your branches and rich foliage as an expanse of green exuberance, you look glorious! Wow! How inviting you are! All the birds of heaven come to nest in your bosom. Passers-by rest under your shadow Children joyfully swing from your branches. But me? Only a cluster of thorny branches, and a rugged and skinny trunk! No leaf, no fruit, no shade! Ah me! No one cares to come close enough to me, much less to climb my branches or embrace me!

**Narrator:** The Peepul tree stared green-eyed at a coconut tree the nearest in the long line of its fellows standing on the sandy fringes of the wood. It looked so tall and stately! It was so loaded with a bunch of tempt-ing fruits... The Peepul tree with a mixture of envy and frustration said

**Peepul Tree:** When I see you as Coconut standing here so tall and sinewy, braving rain and wind, heat and cold ... swaying your body and obligingly offering your fleshy, refreshing and nourishing fruits to passers-by, I feel so small! I feel so ashamed! But me! What have I to offer but leaves and leaves and still more leaves!... You are generous, so productive. But what about me? The less said the better! I am useless! I am barren! Good for nothing!

**Narrator:** And so, all the trees in the forest led sad, disgruntled and dejected lives!

**Note:**

Once the participants spent some time reflecting on the meaning of the fable, give them a Xerox copy of the questions below:

Give them about 15 to 20 minutes to take some jottings on their reflections.

**SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION SHARING AND DISCUSSION**

1. Why all the trees in the forest were disgruntled and unhappy?
2. What had they to do to be happy?
3. Are most people happy with themselves and their lives?
4. Can all of us be exactly the same and have the same qualities? Why?
5. Can all people be equally happy? How?
6. Do you like yourself? Why?
7. Are you really happy? Why? What's there missing for you to be really happy?
8. Do you sometimes envy others? Why?
9. If you could change yourself, what and how would you like to be? What does this show of you?
10. If all the trees were exactly equal, how would the forest look like?
11. If all of us were exactly the same, what would life be?
12. What other lessons can you draw from this story? Which? List them.

**Teaching - Input**

After sharing and discussion, a short mop-up input may prove useful. Below here you may find some leading thoughts for the input.

**THOUGHTS ARISING FROM THE FABLE.**

- We are quicker to discover the strengths of others than ours.
- It looks as if we would take a secret pleasure in running ourselves down.
- By closing our eyes to our good points and qualities, we render ourselves incapable of using the talents we have.
- Instinctively, we tend to compare ourselves with others.
- Comparing is always harmful. It's freezing.
- Each one of us, as each tree in the forest, is unique.
- We all possess a "quasi-absolute" value. We cannot be duplicated. We are irreplaceable.
- There will never be another you or me.
- We have to accept ourselves as we are: we have to love ourselves as God made us and as He loves us!
- If we do not like ourselves, we are in for trouble.
- By comparing themselves to one another, the trees of the forest made themselves sad and unhappy.
- Had they accepted their "uniqueness" all would have been happy.
- The qualities and characteristics of the trees in the forest are complementary; thus, one gives flowers, another fruits, another timber, yet another shade, etc... Truly, the beauty of the forest depends on the variety of the trees..

- The beauty of human society lies in the variety of characters, gifts and qualities of all and each of its members. Men too, complement each other
- To create the grandeur of the forest, each tree has to be itself. Likewise, each man has to be himself to make our world a wonderful place.
- If all of us were equal to one another, life would be boring, dull and uninteresting.
- A man, each man, becomes worthy of being a man by "actualizing" his own talents and characteristics.

## **APPENDIX.    Some Exercises on Self-revaluation.** **How to grow in Self-esteem**

### **1st EXERCISE:    "My Strengths"**

#### **Activity**

- ✓ Give all participants a slip of paper.
- ✓ Ask them to write down a list of at least **Five Good Qualities** they have
- ✓ Then, ask them to read what they wrote to the group.

#### **Sharing**    (*Instructions for the participants*)

- ✓ Share with the group what your feelings were while writing the list of your good qualities. Was it easy? Hard? Pleasant? Why?
- ✓ Share what your feelings were while disclosing to others your good qualities? Why?

#### **Moderator's Observations**

- ✓ Normally, it easier to find our faults than our good qualities. Why?
- ✓ Explain what has our 'self-image' to do with this?
- ✓ Mention any points you observed in the group or in some individuals.

#### **Praying for one another.**

- ✓ Each one, aloud and spontaneously, will pray and thank God for the one on his right and the one on his left
- ✓ Afterwards, the members of the group will be invited to pray aloud for any one in the group.

### **2nd EXERCISE:    "A Map of my Personal Richness and Strengths**

#### **Activity**

- ✓ All are given sheets of paper.
- ✓ All draw a big silhouette of a human being; head, trunk, extremities.

- ✓ Each one will map on that silhouette in a symbolic way his richness and strengths, for instance, if one is clever, he may draw a big golden brain... If he is kind, he will draw a big red heart...
- ✓ Note that both the drawings and the colors should have a symbolic, expressive value. Only positive things should be mapped! No negative things!

### **Sharing**

- ✓ All will show their maps to the entire group and will explain in detail the meaning of its symbols.
- ✓ Participants are allowed to ask for clarifications. No discussions, much less criticisms, are allowed.
- ✓ Those present may point out to the one exhibiting his map some obvious omissions: for instance, you are a good singer you did not show it in the map!

### **Moderator's Observations**

- ✓ Be very positive and encouraging in affirming everybody's strengths.
- ✓ Question the group on "Why should there be so many omissions of our richness?"
- ✓ What does this tell us?

### **Thanking God for my good qualities.**

- ✓ Ask them to put their prayers in writing
- ✓ Request the Participants to thank God individually, for the good qualities given them. The prayers should be very specific: namely, their good qualities should be mentioned by name!

### **Thanking God for my the good qualities given to their companions.**

- ✓ Request the participants to thank God for the gifts He has given others.
- ✓ Let the prayers be specific as regards the person they thank God for, and the gifts given him/her
- ✓ Close the prayer with a thanksgiving hymn.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> EXERCISE: "I Like You Because"**

### **Activity**

- ✓ Divide the group into equal halves.
- ✓ Make them sit in two concentric circles, facing each other.
- ✓ Partners will speak to each other for two minutes.
- ✓ Partners alternately will speak to each other using only this sentence: "I like you because..." They will have to complete this sentence in a different way each time they address each other.
- ✓ Insist both on seriousness and honesty.
- ✓ After the two minutes are over the inner circle will move one place to their right.
- ✓ The circle rotates till the partners come to their original position.

**Sharing**

- ✓ All will be asked to tell the group:
- ✓ What I felt while the exercise was going on?
- ✓ What I feel right now?
- ✓ What I learned about myself and about others?
- ✓ Any other comments or remarks.

**Moderator's Observations**

- ✓ Anything he observed while the exercise was on.
- ✓ Why do we find it difficult to tell people their good points and what we like about them
- ✓ Why do we find it hard to accept compliments from others Has this anything to do with our self-image?
- ✓ The moderator may add any remarks that may enhance the self-image of the participants.

**Prayer**

- ✓ End the exercise thanking God for the discoveries they made about themselves and others.
- ✓ Ask the Lord for the grace to be able to like people "individually" and to accept the fact that I am liked by others.
- ✓ Praying for each other. Be specific.
- ✓ Praising God for each other... Be specific.

**APPENDIX TWO****A check on your vision of self****SELF- IMAGE & SELF-ESTEEM**

Each of the statements below can be rated with the words Never, Sometimes, Frequently or always. Make your choice and then write in the number (1,2,3 or 4) that corresponds to the word you have chosen. When you finished, total up your answers. The ratings go from 0 to 100.

1. Never    2. Sometimes    3. Frequently    4. Always

1. When my feelings are hurt, I express them.
2. Others value my opinions.
3. I feel intellectually capable.
4. I feel worthy of the compliments and gifts given to me.
5. I enjoy meeting and talking with new people.

6. I am happy to be me and wouldn't want to be anyone else.
7. I have been happy in all my life situations
8. I am happy with the way I live my life.
9. I enjoy positive strokes though I do not crave for them..
10. I enjoy my work/studies.
11. People admire me.
12. I am considerate of others.
13. I am self-reliant.
14. I make a positive contribution to the lives of others.
15. I enjoy attending to my own needs; in eating, exercise, general care of myself.
16. I enjoy spending some time alone by myself. .
17. I like myself.
18. I respect and value myself.
19. I do not keep grudges and resentments.
20. I see myself as a good looking person.
21. I see myself as attractive to the opposite sex.
22. I think of myself as a loving person.
23. I think of myself as a generous person.
24. I think of myself as a confident person.
25. I see myself as a successful person.

## **APPENDIX THREE**

### **Bible Quotes Helpful for Reflection and Prayer on Self-Acceptance, and Self-Esteem**

#### **Note**

There are no specific texts in the N.T. on "self-esteem".

What we see in the Gospel as a whole, is the manner in which Jesus dealt with all kinds of people. He was always affirming, assuring and accepting in his dealings with them.

A person discovers his self-worth by the way he is treated.

Mt 5:21-22                      Jesus wants us to treat others with great respect.

Mt 5:43-48                      He even wants us to love our enemies.

Mt 7:1-5                          He forbids us to judge others. .

Mt 4:18-22; Lk 5:1-11; Mk 3:13-19; Mt 9:9-13. Jesus chooses his disciples. He sees worth where others saw none.

Lk 7:36-48; 19:1-10; Jn 4:1-41; 8:1-11. Jesus accepts and respects Mary Magdalene, Zacchaeus, Adulterous Woman, and The Samaritan Woman.

Mk 9:33-37; 10:13-16. Jesus accepts and loves children, thus helping them grow.

