

Are you happy?

Josephine Kunnacherry, a gynaecologist, was born in Kerala, India. She is a numerary member of Opus Dei. After graduating, Dr. Kunnacherry worked for several years in Europe and in Africa. Before coming back to India she was the Director of a hospital in Nigeria. Since 1997 she lives in Delhi, where she is in charge of a social project called Family Health Care.

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After so many years learning and working abroad I really wanted to come back to my country, as a doctor, to do something useful for the people here. That was my dream and, excited about it, I finally came back to India in 1997. I remember that during my first days in Delhi, I used to go all over the city searching for a job and trying to settle professionally. One day I bumped into a lady in the street. I greeted her with a smile. She surprised me with an unexpected question: “Are you happy?” Although at first I was startled, I replied immediately that I was certainly very happy. Then she answered, “If you are happy, show it to me.”

This unusual conversation was the beginning of my friendship with Nilisha, who is a Hindu, and somehow the start of a social project as well. Because together with her and some other friends, we have

started an NGO in Delhi to provide education to women and children on basic health topics. We have set up a dispensary in a very poor area of the city and attend to many patients there.

To make this project financially viable, another out-patient clinic, for private patients, was initiated in the mornings. All of them know they are indirectly helping people with fewer financial means and they cooperate generously. In the evenings and over the weekends, we go to many neighbourhoods in Delhi where a large number of immigrants live. With the help of more than 200 volunteers, doctors and other professionals, we have been able to attend to more than 25,000 people over the last few years. Most of the volunteers are young people of different cultural, religious and social background. All say that giving their time to collaborate with our

social project has enriched them with greater happiness.

Countless are the steps we have to take in order to raise funds and meet the costs to promote education and health care. Our project proposals have found support from individuals and institutions from India, Belgium, Germany, Japan, Sweden... Last year, for example, some friends from Valencia, in Spain, organised the exhibition “Painters in Solidarity with India.” A group of local painters donated some of their works to collaborate with our social project. Thanks to the funds collected on that occasion we managed to vaccinate more than 500 children and start a new programme in a slum area of more than 15,000 inhabitants.

“Are you happy?” I cannot forget Nilisha’s surprising question addressed to me more than ten years ago. Now, thinking of the work we

have been doing together since then, I can say that I am certainly very happy and give thanks to God for that. I am happy to be a doctor. And I am happy to be able to use my professional work to help many people in my own country.

Reading the writings of St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, I found some words that struck me again. These words sound very familiar, at least to Nilisha and myself: **“Happy?” The question made me think. Words have not yet been invented to express all that one feels – in the heart and in the will – when one knows oneself to be a child of God** (*Furrow*, 61).