

**INM-DBL-CIR 07/08-2023**

**AUGUST 2023**

**“... Our Hearts are Restless till they Rest in Thee...”**

*“A daily sincere and childlike listening to the restlessness of our heart is the simple path to Conversion, Confession, Cheerful Consecrated life in Christ = for the Community, Congregation, Church and Cosmos” (The 5 C’s for the 4 C’s!).* The watchword is to be **“Conscious”** with our **‘Core’**.

My dearest confreres, in my circular of June (flowing from the ‘Passover’ of Jesus in the previous circular of May), I meditated together with you about the two P’s that were behind the Passover of Jesus namely, Prayer and Planning. As part of this prayer and planning and at its **‘core’** (from Latin meaning ‘Heart’), in this circular I would like to contemplate with you on the life-giving and life-restoring ‘Sacrament of Confession’. I highlight it as the ‘heart’ of our praying and planning, for our very life, both the present and eternal, depends on it. Without it our very being (our productivity, fruitfulness, joy, peace, faith, hope and love) is at stake. For apart from it we can do nothing, as what we do will only be ‘nothing’. For then all that we do and say will only be as per the Prophet’s Isaiah’s warning which Jesus our Lord quotes in Mt 15:8: **“This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me”** (cf. Is 29:13). All our worship and action will be empty and a vain show, as it won’t be the worship preferred by the Father and offered by Jesus: in the Spirit and in truth (cf. Jn 4:24).

In this background of our very existence as human beings, religious, priests, province, congregation and the Church, the most important and penetrating question is: how serious am I about this? Is confession in my heart and is it really the heart of my being? I purposely choose not to use the term ‘reconciliation’ (though it is the better and complete expression) in order to underline the need to really pray/confess/articulate/speak out our ‘sinfulness’. For understood superficially the term ‘reconciliation’ can mean to some of us, a style of life where I am reconciled with my sinful way of life i.e. I am okay with it saying: it is the way I am and everyone is and therefore I do not feel the need to kneel at the confessional with humility in the Spirit and in truth. That life is a ‘dead life’ and that decision can be compared to a ‘suicide’. The irony and tragedy of this type of death is that as I am a person called to be a channel of Christ’s own abundant life and entrusted with children, boys, girls, men, women and confreres to take care of, I not only die in a wrong sense but become the means of death and not life for the others! It is a life of contamination, pollution and poisoning of the whole interior and exterior environment. It does not end in the secret corners of our thoughts and actions however we may be smart, skilful and talented in hiding our sinful ways, for we are so interconnected and webbed together. For the spirit speaks to the spirit even without visible words and gestures. Instead our life in Christ demands a different way of dying, a death like His, of dying to oneself. Yes true confession is a death experience but in favour of abundant life. It is a passing through death to life, a ‘Passover’.

The urgent need here is a 'humble and a contrite heart'. What is that? In simple words it is taking time to listen to our heart's restlessness like St. Augustine and discovering the depth of the sadness I carry within me and its sources. Only then we will also wake up and yearn like him with all our being by saying: ***"For Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee"***. This is how St. Augustine begins his 'Confessions' which is not just one book but thirteen books. They were written as prayers to God, thus the title confessions/prayers to God before the eyes, ears and hearts of not just one confessor but generations of human beings. He was not ashamed to cry out and cry aloud for his sins openly to God before the whole world. What trust, what humility, what fearless witnessing of not just one's brokenness but more than all one's total willingness for conversion! Thus this becomes not just a confession but a real 'conciliation' and 'reconciliation' with oneself, God and the other. This is the 'nakedness' that God wants from us and destined us to be; and which Adam and Eve were ashamed of and tried to hide from by sewing for themselves garments out of fig leaves (cf. Gen 3:7). Adam and Eve represent each one of us in this.



Instead St. Augustine comes out his hiding place boldly and strips himself, in front of God and humanity with humility and confidence, of all his masks and layers of clothing. This is the invitation of the Prophet Joel at the beginning of every Lent when he says: ***Rend your heart*** (Joel 2:13). This is the true worship and such a one is the true worshipper of "Our Father" in the Spirit and in truth. Such worshippers and worship is what the Father is seeking according to Jesus as I pointed out before.

These confessions were written by St. Augustine patterned on the Psalms of David, that is, that real confessional style of placing oneself before God. Of all the Psalms we know how much the Ps 51 brings out that 'humble and a contrite heart' as the best sacrifice pleasing to God. Such a sacrifice for St. Paul is to be offered every day in our body which is the living temple of God (cf. Rom 12:1-2; 1 Cor 6:19-20 and 2 Cor 6:16).

We experience the joy of being in the garden of Eden; we enter the intimacy of God's love for us in the bridal chamber of our life; we taste the mercy of God in the Holy of Holies; we rest peacefully in the tender arms of God our Father and Mother not by 'putting on' but by 'stripping ourselves of' everything and by losing ourselves into Him. But since it is so difficult for us like Adam and Eve to be naked i.e. to be really ourselves without putting on airs before God and the other, God Himself in Jesus teaches us by stripping Himself of His divine nature and revealing Himself in the naked baby of Bethlehem and in the naked adult on Calvary. He reveals powerfully in these two places that sums up the mystery of His incarnation or His being with us, His own very Heart: **the heart of a child that trusts unconditionally God and the other**. This is the healing He brought us, healing from our fear of trusting God and the other unconditionally. The gates of the Garden of Eden are closely shut because of this fear and lack of trust expressed as shame and original sin. The great Physician Jesus that's why invites us earnestly: physicians heal yourselves! (cf. Lk 4:23) Because He healed Himself first of this wound for us and in us, thus opening the gates of Eden, to our original blessing and our original being as the naked children of the same Father (cf. Gen 2:25).

It is exactly this what Jesus means when He places so much importance on we becoming like little children in order to enter the Kingdom of God. He Himself is that little child before God and us. Opportunities for such a '**Passover**'/conversion/losing oneself/stripping oneself

of/dying to oneself; and having a humble and contrite heart/childlike heart, should not be searched for in extraordinary places, moments and preachers but in the simplicity and normality of our daily Salesian community and personal living. The daily liturgy of the hours, meditation and Eucharist celebrated with such a listening, childlike heart to our restlessness and hard-heartedness; culminating well with very good confessions in the monthly recollections and annual retreats are more than enough. Thus in the first place we enjoy the joy of being healed through regular confession and spiritual direction. But we do not stop with ourselves. We have to provide such opportunities to our boys, formees and people in our communities and parishes. We will provide for sure when we enjoy it first. We have to restore that lovely Salesian tradition very much dear to Don Bosco and we ourselves have benefitted especially in our Aspirantates, Boardings and Hostels: the opportunity for weekly confessions. In our Parishes naturally that possibility should be there daily.

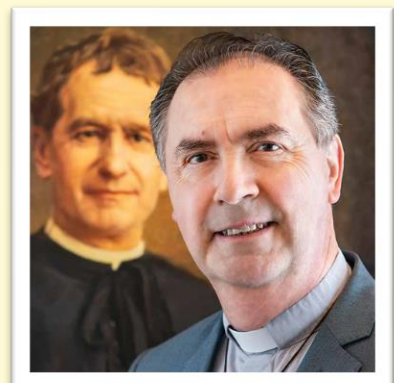
Central to the month of August are: the Independence Day and the Feast of the Assumption of our Blessed mother on August 15<sup>th</sup> and the Birthday of our Father and Founder St. John Bosco on 16<sup>th</sup>. August 15<sup>th</sup>, nationally and ecclesiastically stand for our true inner freedom from our slaveries which is the basis not only for our true personal joy but for building up a healthy Nation, Community, Congregation, Church and Cosmos. May Mary lead us and intercede for us towards this true Freedom from our restlessness. The Birthday of Don Bosco be for us a rediscovery of how much he personally lived Confession and Spiritual direction regularly and how he tirelessly encouraged his boys and every person he met anywhere to live them by being always available to them in person. For he knew very well that **only Confession can turn our structures into true homes and places of worship for all those entrusted to our care; and our coming together as confreres from different backgrounds, walks of life and age-groups, as one body and one spirit in Christ.** Then how can any Salesian, be it young or old, feel bad or ashamed to be called Confessor or appointed as a Confessor! Is it the end of one's life as often it is jeered at? Or the beginning of our own new life and the real meaning of life in and like Christ?!

Confession is the best 'prayer' and best 'plan' we have at our disposal and it should be the heart of our EPP. Let us experience it and share it as it is the deeper meaning of 'to be with Him and to be Sent Forth!

#### NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

##### **Congratulations Cardinal Elect Rev. Fr. Angel Fernandez Artime!**

We are immensely grateful to God and Pope Francis for appointing our dear Rector Major, Rev. Fr. Angel Fernandez Artime SDB as a Cardinal of the Church. This announcement was made during the Angelus on 9 July 2023. Our beloved Rector Major is one among the 21 new Cardinals who had chosen to be Cardinal of the Church at the next Consistory on 30 September 2023. I consider it as a great blessing for the Congregation and the Salesian Family and it is also an evident appreciation and recognition for our ministry in the Church. It is also a distinct expression of Holy Father's love and esteem for our Rector Major and our Congregation. On behalf of the Salesian Province of St. Thomas the Apostle, Chennai, we extend our warmest congratulations to our beloved Rector Major for accepting in obedience to this new office that is being assigned to him for the greater glory of God and the good of the Mother





Church. We wish him all the choicest blessings as he takes up the principal ministry as Cardinal in September 2023.

I am sure all of you went through the letter sent from the Rector Major's desk on 12<sup>th</sup> July (Prot. 23/0319) where he elaborated on his concerns and immediate steps to be taken after the meeting with the Holy Father. We shall keep our Rector Major in our prayers and shall continue to pray for the upcoming paramount events in our Congregation.

### **South Asia Formation Delegates Meet**

We are very much delighted to host the meeting of the Formation delegates and representatives of South Asia in Chennai. This meeting is scheduled from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> August at the Citadel campus. On behalf of the Province, I extend my warm welcome to **Fr. Jose Kuttianimattathil** and **Bro. Raymond D. Callo** from the Formation Department of the congregation and all the Salesians from the various provinces for the South Asia Formation Delegates meet. Let us pray for the success of this very important event.

### **Welcome Fathers!**

**Fr. Biju Michael**, our Regional, **Fr. Andrea Bozzolo**, the Rector of UPS, **Fr. Jarosław Rochowiak** Secretary General of UPS will be in our Province from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> of August to visit the formation houses of our Province. We wholeheartedly welcome them and wish them a memorable experience.

### **Grazie Mille!**

My deepest gratitude to Fr. John Alexander our Vice Provincial for governing and animating the Province with enthusiasm and dedication during my absence due to the new Provincial's course at Turin. Most of the vital organs of the Province had their meetings and exchange of ideas during those days. The report of the meetings gives us the amount of hard work put in for the success of each meeting.

### **Extraordinary Visitation**

As we are well informed through the circular from our regional councillor Fr. Biju Michael on 13 July 2023, the anticipated extraordinary visitation for our Province will be from February – May 2024. **Fr Giovanni Rolandi** will be in our province as an extraordinary visitor. We welcome Fr. Giovanni Rolandi to our Province to explore and examine our apostolate. The details of the extraordinary visitation will be communicated in the next circular.

### **Preponing the Provincial Chapter & General Chapter**

The Provincial Chapter for our province has to be convened on the pretext of preponed General Chapter that will be celebrated in the month of February 2025. Therefore, it is the right time to prepare ourselves and the communities to make the coming chapters meaningful for the Province and the Congregation. We shall select the theme from a few topics proposed by the General Council for our reference. The theme will be announced by the General Council in September.

### **Team Visit & Canonical Visitation**

The team visit by the Provincial team is in progress in our province. This time the Provincial councillors are also involved to study the plans of the community. We have completed more than half of the communities in various regions. We could feel the need for the EPP, SCPL, Financial Budgets and other plans for empowering our communities and sectors. In this regard kindly include in the budget of the community, a contribution to the Province fixed by the Economer's office according to the individual houses, besides, contributions to various dimensions of the Province, and solidarity contribution to the Rector Major's fund. If any

deficits occur write in the form of projects that can be submitted to the Province project team for approval and funding. It is sad to note that those houses which are contributing to the Province and those that are self-sufficient, of which some communities execute the projects without explicit written permission of the Provincial council. Hence you are requested to follow the Province policy in getting proper permission for your project that exceeds more than 2 lakhs.

Kindly note that the canonical visitation by the Provincial for the scholastic year remains cancelled in order to prepare the communities for the extraordinary visitation that will commence in February 2024. However, the Provincial will visit the communities as and when needed as part of his yearly plan.

### **New Missionary**

This year **Br. Anthony samy Soosai Arputharaj** will be participating in the Missionary Course from 21<sup>st</sup> August to 24<sup>th</sup> September at Turin. He will be serving as a missionary in Romania after the missionary course. We wish him God's choicest blessing for his perseverance in his missionary calling.

### **New Provincials course @ Turin**

The formation and accompaniment course for 10 newly appointed Provincials concluded on Friday, 23 June 2023, at the liturgical memorial of St Joseph Cafasso. This event, which lasted three weeks, allowed the Provincials to receive fundamental pointers for the spirit-filled completion of their service. The highlight of the course was that all the new Provincials went for *rendiconto* with the Rector Major, Vicar General, Economer General and all the members of the General



Council that lasted more than two hours to discuss the cases and issues of the Province for better governance. Thank God for Don Bosco, Mary Help of Christians, and Mamma Margaret! Thanks to the Rector Major, to his Vicar, to the whole Council: it was the experience of a group where accompaniment was truly perceptible and demonstrated by closeness and availability.

### **Rectors/Leaders Meet**

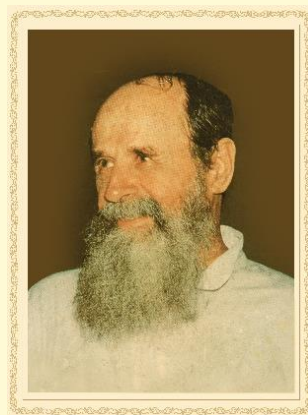
As our Rector Major has been appointed as a Cardinal, the 29<sup>th</sup> General Chapter will be anticipated, and so too the Provincial Chapter. We need to select the theme from the topics suggested by the General Council. Added to this, we will also have an extraordinary visitation in the month of February 2024. Therefore, we will have to work together and complete the forthcoming events unitedly. To discuss the above-said agenda, meetings for the Rectors/Leaders will be organized at Citadel on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023.

### **Pray for Manipur**

The state of Manipur is going through the worst phase in its decades-long history of ethnic conflicts and militancy. A Team of Salesians consisting of **Fr. Joseph Leo** (SURABI Director), **Fr. Simolin** (Don Bosco Migrant Services, Director), and **Fr. Bosco Periyannayagam** (IND) along with Salesians working in that region visited a few places of devastation in Manipur State between 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> July 2023. They feel that the major sufferers of the conflict are the Kuki community who are economically weak. Several temporary relief camps without adequate basic facilities (mats, bedspreads, medicines) continue to haunt their lives. The ultimate victims are the children. The homeless situation and loss of property further curtail any development. Our prayers will be a great help to those suffering in the forests and relief camps.

### **An Italian Sainly *Siddhar* Lived in Rural India**

An international seminar on the centennial birth of the *Nallayan Samiyar* (**Good Shepherd-Rev. Fr. Venantius Villanova SDB**) was organized at Sacred Heart Parish, Polur Campus on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023 by the Salesian communities of Polur and Veeralur with the help of *Santror Thalam and Aram Pathipagam* to recall the great service done by Rev. Fr. Venantius Villanova SDB as a good shepherd who lived, worked and even shed blood for his flock. The event began with an introduction by Fr. Raj Michael and there were 15 resource persons who were mostly lay people who are now living the dream of Rev. Fr. Venantius Villanova SDB and contributing to society in various capacities of life such as education, health, social, and pastoral sectors. Rev. Fr. Alexander SDB the present Parish priest of St. Antony's Church, Veeralur concluded the seminar by praising Fr. Villanova "A saintly priest who knew the smell of the sheep and always accompanied his sheep." Further, he invited everyone to follow the charism of *Nallayan Samiyar*. We shall also honour Fr. Venantius Villanova in the Province with a special event at a convenient time.



### **Participation in the Global Film Festival**

Season 2 of the Don Bosco Global Youth Festival which involves the whole Salesian Family is scheduled for the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2023. I would like to remind the Headmasters and Principals to encourage youngsters between the age of 14 to 25 from all our presences to participate in this coveted event. The deadline for the submission of the content has been extended to 15<sup>th</sup> August 2023. You may contact Fr. Ernest Rosario and Fr. John Britto Savarinathan and visit the [www.dbgyff.com](http://www.dbgyff.com) portal for further details.

### **ADMA**

The words of our beloved Rector Major at the conclusion of the ADMA Congress in Buenos Aires in the year 2019 are worthy of recalling. He said "We must always be more and more Marian, more and more belonging to Her. Without Mary, we are not the Sons and Daughters Don Bosco dreamed of. In our journey, Mary cannot be a decorative element, but she is essential. Without Her, our educative and pastoral care will be empty, poor and inconsistent. Let us make more explicit announcements of Jesus and keep Mary more on our lips." ADMA is the school of training to be deeply rooted in the Catholic faith, Spiritual life and communal life of service as Don Bosco wanted. An animation for about 135 members of ADMA at our Lady of Lourdes Shrine, Perambur was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July. The participants were from Perambur, Ayanavaram, Broadway and Sastrinagar. The Triple Devotion to the Most Holy Eucharist, Mother Mary and the Pope. ADMA is the way. Let us introduce ADMA to all our Catholic youth and children in the Parishes and Institutions.

### **Barefoot Counselling Skills Workshop**

I am happy to remind you about the 3-day Barefoot Counselling Skills Workshop (18-20 August 2023), a joint venture of Chennai and Tiruchy provinces. Niraivagam (INM) and DB Cares (INT) are organising this much-needed and relevant initiative to equip the Salesian Family members with both fundamental and advanced-level counselling skills. I earnestly invite the Salesians and other members of the Salesian family to participate and benefit from it. Please contact Fr. Joseph Jeyaraj, the Director and his team for registration details.



### **Welcome Back Fr. Raphael Jayapalan!**

We are happy to welcome Fr. Raphael Jayapalan after working in Kilinochchi - Sri Lanka. He will be assigned as Administrator and Animator at Mount Don Bosco, Kotagiri. We wish him all the best.

### **Reports of the Province-Level Meetings in July**

#### **Meeting for INM Higher Education and Technical Institutions**

INM Higher Education and Technical Institutions meeting was organized by Rev. Fr. John Alexander, Vice Provincial and the delegate for the higher education of INM province on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 at Citadel. Rectors and Secretaries of higher educational institutes, College Principals, IQAC Members and Deans from various sectors were invited to the meeting. The panel discussion was convened by Fr. John Alexander along with the keynote panel speakers Mr. Joshua Madan, co-founder and CEO of Covenant and Mr. Anand Jagannathan, Senior Director of CommScope company enriched the meeting. Dr. B. S. Ponmudi, Advisor for NAAC, enlightened the members through video conferencing about the need for NAAC accreditation. Later the members were sent for discussions according to their sectors namely Arts and Science, Polytechnic and Technical institutions. The leaders of each group shared their views and concerns from their sectors. At the end of the discussion, Fr. Jesusdass, the Director of Deepagam shared with the members how we need to have a maturity of growth in faith and how to educate in faith and Fr. Jeyaraj, the Director of Niraivagam enumerated the service offered by the Province psychological service centre.

#### **Quinquennium Meet**

An enriching spiritual assembly of young Salesian priests from Chennai and Tiruchy Provinces was held on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> July at Mount Don Bosco, Kotagiri. Forty-six Salesian priests from the INM and INT provinces assembled for a fellowship, cultivating spiritual



and emotional wisdom and reflection, primarily centred on the transformative third, fourth, and fifth years of Priesthood. The day began with the Holy Eucharist integrated with morning prayer led by Fr. John Alexander, SDB, the Vice-Provincial of Chennai Province. Fr. Gnanadoss, the guest speaker elaborated on 'Celebrating Priesthood through the great gift of Eucharistic Presence.' Exploring the depth and significance of this unique spiritual gift and its impact on fostering Priesthood offered a wealth of insights. In the group discussion, the participants shared their diverse joys and challenges inherent to the Salesian Priestly life. The presence of Fr. Agilan Sarprasadam, the Provincial of Tiruchy Province and Fr. Don Bosco, the Provincial of Chennai added colour to the event. A stimulating panel discussion led by Fr. John Alexander in the presence of Fr. Don Bosco and Fr. Agilan, focused on the Salesian Religious life and the community experience of each young priest. The exchange of experiences and outlining the expectations for young Salesians resulted in a rich and transparent conversation.

#### **Meeting for the Senior Salesians of INM**

The Province celebrated the richness and wisdom of the senior Salesians under the title "Energetic and Experienced Salesians" at Citadel on 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> July 2023. 48 Salesians above 70 years of age responded. Fr. Provincial welcomed them and gave them a good night talk after the *vespers* at Deepagam Hall on 27<sup>th</sup> evening. The first-day event began with a special morning prayer in honour of our Indian Saint Alphonsa, the patron for suffering. The morning

session began with the words of welcome by Fr. John Alexander, our Vice-Provincial. Fr. Provincial handled the first session on Silence, Solitude and Stillness in the presence of God.

The participants were divided into three groups with a set of questions for the discussion on Confession, Community life, Joys and Challenges. They were also given a few themes for the Provincial Chapter which was taken for the discussion. The leaders of each group shared on behalf of the group with other participants. At 11.30 a special Eucharistic celebration was conducted to pray for the elderly and suffering. Fr. Rajkumar Fernando, the Rector of Citadel shared his thoughts on “How to Dodge your Age and Live a Long and Happy Life” and on the following day Fr. Stanislaus Swamikannu SDB, Rector DBYAC, Ennore interacted with them on the title “Intergenerational Dialogue.” Dr Saravanan, with a high profile in the medical field, shared his insights on how to live a healthy life. The session was much appreciated and useful to our seniors. The meeting was well organized with prior planning and execution under the leadership of Fr. John Alexander. The participants were grateful and appreciative of the fun and frolics and the way the meeting was held.



### **Student Brothers Meet**

INM Student Brothers assembled for a meeting at Citadel on 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

The meeting began on 29<sup>th</sup> July with the Holy Rosary and a good



night talk by Fr. Vice provincial on respecting elders and confreres. On the 30<sup>th</sup> Fr. Sahayadas and Fr. Jesu Pudumai Doss celebrated the Sunday Eucharist and broke the word of God for the brothers and participated later in the panel discussion where they shared their experience with college studies and thoughts for their spiritual and intellectual growth. The panel discussion on “Growing in Knowledge and Wisdom” was moderated by Fr. Vice provincial. After the break, each brother individually met Fr. Vice Provincial with their academic performances. Later, Fr. Provincial interacted with the participants on “Youthfulness is the Ground of Holiness and Vocation has to be Cherished and Preserved.” Brothers were given an opportunity to express their concerns and suggestions to the Provincial. The meeting concluded with a hymn to Don Bosco and a solemn lunch.

### **Province-Level Events in August**

2 - 5	Annual Meeting of the SAFC – Chennai (SPCSA)
7 & 8	Monthly Recollection
9 & 10	Provincial Council
19	INM & INT Lay Brothers Meet
24	Rectors/Leaders Meet
31	SPCSA Council meeting – Sri Lanka



### **Rest in Peace!**

**Fr. Chenginiyaden Thomas SDB** (80 years) belonging to the Province of Guwahati passed away at Swagat Hospital, Guwahati on 30 July 2023. We offer our heartfelt condolences to Fr. Januarius S Sangma, the Provincial and confreres of the Province of Guwahati.

**Mrs. I. Amsa Mary (83)** the beloved Mother of Fr. Clement Antony Ignatius SDB (Mary Help of Christians Church, Tirupattur) and Msgr. Dr. I. John Robert (Diocesan Administrator of Vellore) passed away on 6 July 2023. We offer our deepest condolences and prayers to the bereaved family.

***Wishing you a Very Happy Feast of the Assumption & Happy Independence Day!***

Yours affectionately,



**Fr. Don Bosco SDB**  
INM Provincial



Date: 01.08.2023

Place: Chennai - 10

