



An interview with Rev. Barik Silpa Rani

Recipient of St. Augustine Foundation Fellowship Grant

Please tell us a little bit about yourself:

I am an ordained Presbyter in the Diocese of Sambalpur, Odisha, of the Church of North India (CNI). After completing my Master of Theology in the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible), I joined the faculty of Bishop's College in Kolkata. I taught in the Department of Old Testament from 2017 to 2021 before moving to the United Theological College, Bangalore for my Doctorate in Theology (DTh). I am still part of the faculty of Bishop's College (currently on study leave) and I see teaching as a significant aspect of my ministry.

What is your research on?

I am currently in my third year of doctoral studies. My research focuses on the Dead Sea Scrolls, specifically exploring the identity of the community within the Socio-Economic Milieu of the Wisdom Corpus. My dissertation, entitled "Identity of the Qumran Community in the Socio-Economic Milieu of the Wisdom Corpus," delves into a rarely explored area by Indian scholars, aiming to uncover the identity of the Qumran community using the Social Identity Method. It emphasizes the roles and perspectives of women, children, minority groups, and the underprivileged in ancient Jewish society. The study seeks to draw parallels between the Qumran community and contemporary Indian society, with a focus on understanding Dalit identity. The research provides a fresh perspective on Indian biblical interpretation, particularly in the area of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Thanks to a generous research fellowship from the St. Augustine's Foundation, I'm now at the University of Birmingham to further my research. The academic resources available at the university's library, along with the invaluable mentorship provided by Professor Dr. Charlotte Hempel, who is a renowned scholar in the area of Dead Sea Scrolls, have profoundly impacted

the progression of my research, an opportunity that would not have been feasible for me otherwise.

What will you do after the placement?

Upon completing my research, I will rejoin Bishop's College faculty, contributing to the Biblical studies department with insights particularly relevant to Old Testament studies. I believe my research will fill the gap in current scholarship in the area of DSS and will enrich the understanding of biblical texts within the Indian theological context. In addition to my studies, I am committed to using my research, writings, and theological discussions to support the empowerment of disadvantaged communities in Indian society. By integrating scholarly pursuits with a passion for social justice, I aim to contribute to both academic discourse and the broader societal context, promoting inclusivism and co-existence.

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