



ESCUELA INTERNACIONAL DE FILOSOFÍA INTERCULTURAL
INTERNATIONALE SCHULE FÜR INTERKULTURELLE PHILOSOPHIE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FOR INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY
ÉCOLE INTERNATIONALE DE PHILOSOPHIE INTERCULTURELLE

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**Intercultural Philosophy
From Asian Perspective:
An Anthology**

Digital Edition
2021 EIFI

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INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY

FROM ASIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Intercultural Philosophy as a movement is still in its inchoate form in the West to which Asia is yet to produce an adequate response. Should we ask the question “what do we mean by Intercultural Philosophy?”, we can only say that it is a new movement in Philosophy which affirms that philosophy, though deals with only ultimate questions concerning reality and for that reason should be by its very nature universal and ideal, nevertheless, has a component which is particular and hence cultural. Even if we admit that human mind and its faculties are same in all humans and there could be only one formal way for its epistemological manifestations, there still remains scope for cultural influences as the explicit intentional relations of human beings to the world are pre-intentionally shaped by the culture in which they are born. All philosophy is expressed in language constituted of meanings and nuances conditioned by the cultural milieu and philosophy cannot but make use of this important instrument of communication to explicate the world-views it constructs in the process of its development. All this means, first of all, that every philosophical enterprise is culturally founded.

Secondly, Intercultural Philosophy affirms that there is no culture which is totally bereft of a philosophy as there is no culture without its own ‘world-view’, although all the world-views may not be in possession of a ‘formal’ philosophy systematically delineated in a scientific manner. But no world-view and hence no culture is without a philosophical ‘perspective’. All philosophies are tribal in their inchoate form. As we know from history that some tribes become powerful, because of might and power and these either annihilate the others or at least suppress them. The hegemonization is an integral process of historical development. The big fish eating the smaller ones is not a phenomenon operative only at particular points of history but it is an integral aspect of historical growth pervading throughout the human history and in all spheres of human activities: social, political, religious and philosophical. The asymmetry in the growth and development of philosophical thought and maturation of conceptual structures in particular cultures is sheerly due to historical exigencies and lack of opportunities to

them as they were always victims of hegemony. Intercultural Philosophy takes upon itself to make good this lacuna, by encouraging research in subaltern cultures and to build up their philosophical world-views by means of universal conceptual schemes.

Thirdly, the most important function of Intercultural Philosophy is to promote dialogue between cultures which claim to possess formal and developed systems of philosophy. The fundamental dynamic of all dialogue is to understand the other and to be understood by the other, which constitute the two faces of the same hermeneutical coin. If this is realized certainly there can emerge a viable hermeneutic through which the different world-views can meaningfully interact and fecundate one another. If the philosophers are open to enrich themselves through such dialogue, they can in turn responsibly and critically respond to the global situation in which humankind finds itself. A productive outcome of this intercultural philosophical dialogue could be a consensus on how 'history of philosophy'¹ has to be written and presented in the future. At present there is no unanimity among the philosophers, especially, of Europe, who claim that there is only one philosophy and it is of Greek origin. Any system of philosophy that can be traced to Greek tradition, can authoritatively be a legitimate candidate for explication under the "history of philosophy". They affirm that Philosophy is the exclusive and absolute possession of the western culture. All other cultures may have 'wisdom', but never 'philosophy'. Not only the term 'philosophy' is of Greek origin but also the science of philosophy with its own full-fledged methodologies and theories of epistemology, metaphysics and ethics is the exclusive heritage of this great western tradition. This point can be endlessly argued but the solution to change the situation is to develop an integral history of philosophy with adequate representation to philosophies of all continents. This is the most important goal of an enterprise like Intercultural Philosophy.

Hence the Intercultural Philosophy basically propagates an attitude that 'philosophy' as a science is not the possession of any single culture, nor is it centered on any particular tradition, nor is there any philosophy which can make absolutistic claims. It holds that universally valid concepts and

arguments are found in all cultures, there is rationality in different human ways of thinking and hence it attempts to do justice to the regional philosophical traditions. The intercultural philosophical dialogue while denouncing the dynamics of big fish eating small fish, creates on the contrary proper atmosphere for the small fish to grow and realize its potentialities. Concretely it means no particular culture aims at metaphysical hypostatization, on the other hand, all unitedly seek moral grounds for common action. While respecting all perspectives, no dialogue partner attempts to reduce or absorb the other into his own perspective. Such a dialogue can promote pluralistic norm of live and let live, believe and let believe. It is a dialogue based on non-reductive, open, creative and tolerant hermeneuticsⁱⁱ that remains open to analogous structural patterns and overcomes all centrisms. When philosophers meet in the spirit of interculturality, they promote the cause of collaboration and communication among them.

Finally we can summarise the concept of Intercultural philosophy in two ways: first according to Mall: “It is the name of a philosophical attitude, conviction; it is also a theory which revolutionizes our way of looking at the history of philosophy and lastly it leads us to a practice supplying us with a framework as the ground for the possibility of reciprocal communication among different cultures and philosophies”ⁱⁱⁱ. Second: according to Raul Fornet-Betacourt, the task of Intercultural philosophy is : “to reflect on the culturality or regionality of every kind of thinking on every level; to search for universally valid arguments and concepts, and to do justice to the respective regional philosophic traditions.”^{iv}

The papers under my name in this “Virtual Library” represent only one dialogue partner of Intercultural Philosophy as they all deal with Asian/Indian perspective of Philosophy. They need to be complemented with other dialogue partners from Europe, Africa, Latin America and especially from China, Tibet and Japan.

Indian Philosophy since the time of colonizers has given sufficient importance to Western Philosophy. The syllabus of Philosophy in Indian Universities show a well balanced emphasis on both the traditions. But India has not yet commenced any philosophical dialogue with Latin America and Africa, nor with China and Japan. To make philosophy truly intercultural, the syllabus needs to be complemented with the philosophical wealth found in these cultures. Besides, Intercultural philosophy in India has a tremendous

task of developing *dalit* and tribal philosophies. Research in their folk-lore, symbols and myths should initiate a process of conceptualizing their thought through universal philosophical concepts. India will have made a great contribution to the future of philosophy if it earnestly pays attention to this dimension of its cultural heritage.

Last but not the least, if I am privileged to enter into the Virtual Library of the EIFI it is sheerly due to Dr. Raul Fornet-Betancourt, who since 1995 consistently invited me to participate in all the Intercultural Congresses on Intercultural Philosophy organized by him. After the Eighth Congress in Seoul in 2009, I had to express my inability due to other preoccupations and responsibilities. But again in 2016 when I approached him, he immediately responded and asked to me to participate in the congress at Naga City in Philippines and from 1995 till today all that I have written on the theme of Intercultural Philosophy is displayed in the Virtual Library.

Date: January 2021

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ⁱ Cf. Franz Martin Wimmer, *Interkulturelle Philosophie*, Wien: 2004: 75-134.

ⁱⁱ Ram Adhar Mall, *Intercultural Philosophy*, New York 2000; 52-58

ⁱⁱⁱ Mall, "Interculturality and Interreligiosity", in *Interculturality of Philosophy and Religion*, Ed. by G.D Souza, Bangalore: 1996; 26.

^{iv} Cited by Franz M. Wimmer, "Is Intercultural Philosophy a New Branch or a New Orientation in Philosophy, in *Interculturality of Philosophy and Religion*, 51.

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

**ASIAN PERSPECTIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
INTERCULTURAL THOUGHT**

I

The theme of this paper concerns ‘development’, a term which refers to a complex phenomenon that has assumed the characteristic of almost an ideology in recent years. The study of development was the integral part of social sciences, specially that of economics, though it has now become a common feature to apply the term to all branches of sciences, hence we can meaningfully speak of development of thought as well. This is because the focus of development today is not merely on material welfare and economics, for, material affluence in itself need not necessarily result in the fulfillment of life; rather the emphasis of development is on the total existence of man as a being-in-the world with the consequent goal of realizing his potentials and possibilities. “Development is regarded, normatively speaking, as a process which widens access for all human beings to those components which are essential for civilized living. It is perceived as an attempt to enlarge the area of choice.”¹ Two elements of integral development mentioned in this citation are: widening the access and enlarging the area of choices. Fundamentally every human being should have access to basic needs of life such as healthy food, water supply etc., and secondly, man need to have alternatives from which he can choose things needed for the fulfillment and happiness of his life. We need to apply these criteria to the interculturality of thought to judge and evaluate how far it has developed and how to accelerate the progress of its development.

As man is invariably born within a particular cultural milieu, he grows breathing the air impregnated with a particular culture and *weltanschauung*, learns to speak its language and assimilates the world-view of that culture and gets rooted in it. Culture is thus pre-given to man, pre-intentionally shaping his explicit intentional relations to the world in general; nay, for man his culture is the condition for the possibility of existing in a common world. It becomes his way of being-in-the-world. Different cultures could therefore be described as different ways of man’s

being-in-the-world having different world-views. What makes actually the difference between the cultures is the different understanding of Being, which underlies the differences in the grasping of truths, beliefs, and norms of interrelatedness. These in turn express themselves in a variety of religions, philosophies, languages, arts, codes of conduct etc.

Further, man's way of relating to the world involves the dynamics of affirmation and negation. Hence, man while assimilating a particular culture has also within himself the capacities to reform, recreate, transform, modify, revolutionise the assimilated culture. And if we were to attempt to describe man without any ontological prejudices, we observe that there are constitutive elements in his nature which are culturally neutral.² Human potentialities such as thinking, understanding, consciousness etc. are open to any culture although existential exigencies feed these faculties of man with the patterns of thought in which one finds oneself from birth. Nevertheless, Epistemological capabilities of man are such that while being rooted in one culture, he can grasp, assimilate and understand other cultural traditions and make himself at home in another's home if spatio-temporal exigencies demand. This phenomenological observation of human situation speaks volumes for the possibilities of intercultural thought. What we lack may be an acceptable theory of intercultural hermeneutics, which is a task we need to undertake, a task which demands right orientation and attitude towards the cultures other than our own and an openness to the understanding of their conception of Being.

With this background we try to elucidate the Asian perspectives of Intercultural Thought. If culture could be understood as a way of being-in-the world, then Asian³ culture (assuming that we can speak of such a cultural entity in general) presupposes a particular way of being-in-the-world and a particular understanding of Being. It is obligatory therefore, to grasp the conception of Being and Reality in Asia on the one hand, and expressions of this conception *ad extra* realized in religion, philosophy, language etc., on the other, so that we can project the salient perspectives for the development of intercultural thought in our own times.

Heidegger bemoaned the forgetfulness of the question of Being in the West and attempted to resuscitate it by making it the subject of inquiry of his work *Being and Time*.⁴ The forgetfulness of the question of Being in the

Western thought since the time of Greek philosophers, and consequent attention of thinkers towards the beings (according to Heidegger), has in the Western thought given rise to a gap between the Being and the beings, a sort of dichotomy due to the unclarified link connecting the two i.e., the ontic plurality of beings has not been sufficiently grounded on the ontological understanding of Being itself. We notice that for centuries in the West the investigation of beings at the neglect of the inquiry into the meaning of Being has resulted in a tremendous progress of 'modernity' characterized as scientifico-technological rationality⁵ which is now actually dominating the life-style of humanity as a whole and seems to give birth even to a world civilization.

In Asia however such a forgetfulness of Being has not been observed during the past centuries; for, the attention of thinkers (at least in India and China) predominantly concentrated on the question of Being itself, i.e., history in this part of the world witnessed a relentless search to dis-cover or un-cover (*nir-vri*)⁶ the meaning of Being and to ground the ontic plurality on the ontological understanding of the Being. As a result one does not observe any dichotomy between the Being and the beings, both the dimensions of the reality being well integrated into a coherent whole founded on sound intuitive reasoning into the meaning of Being itself.

The question of Being and the beings is the same as the question of the One and the many. The problem of interculturality is to be ultimately reduced to the problem of One and many or that of Being and the beings. One cannot speak meaningfully of intercultural thought unless one has discovered the meaning of pluralism. Any hermeneutics of intercultural thought should be preceded by a hermeneutics of pluralism. It is not enough to take for granted the fact of pluralism but we need to integrate it within our world-view and thought patterns by finding an answer to the question: what could be the ontological foundation of ontic plurality.

This paper attempts to show how Asia has provided such an answer in its past and how it could serve as a paradigm for the development of intercultural thought. The multiplicity of thought and expressions are not merely juxtaposed facts but they are integrated and assimilated into a coherent world-view which has the dynamism to absorb further elements of development of thought and life-style. We try to delineate the asian

conception of the one and the many, how the latter is grounded on the former, the possibilities of intercultural thought and future perspectives for the development of such an enterprise.

II

The question of the meaning of Being demands intense and relentless seeking because Being in itself is imperceptible, unobtainable and hidden⁷ from common experience in opposition to the beings which are tangible, accessible and easily obtainable and hence easily manipulable to serve human ends. Since Asian thought is predominantly concerned about the question of the meaning of Being, we see in its development the following characteristics:

1. The progress in its thought is actually a process of regression *ad intra*, as it is a movement from common awareness to original awareness. It is a process from the beings to the Being in order to return to the beings in a right perspective; it is a process from the manifest to the unmanifest so that the meaning of manifestation could be laid bare.⁸

2. The regression is from cosmological and physiological categories to psychological categories. It is the experience of the seekers that the ultimate Being is to be found neither in cosmological categories nor in physiological categories but to find it one should turn to one's own self, to the inner core of one's own being, to the cave of heart.⁹ As a result the emphasis is on the study of the states of consciousness,¹⁰ leading to the original awareness.

3. Knowledge was thought of essentially as an awakening and not something which man acquires through the use of his cognitive faculties. It was taken for granted that the true knowledge is a discovery of what one actually is and not the acquisition of something which one does not possess. Hence the enquiry after that knowledge knowing which everything else will be known,¹¹ which involved a shift from the empirical and the rational categories to the intuitive reasoning.¹²

4. The approach undertaken in Asia to dis-cover the meaning of Being is that of asceticism and renunciation and not so much of rational analysis. One can know the real truth only through *Tapas* (i.e. a type of yogic meditation): "From Tapas mightily kindled Law and Truth were born."¹³ All

great seekers and enlightened personalities in Asia like, Yájñavalkya, Buddha, Jina, Mo-Tzú renounced comforts and conveniences of ordinary life in order to strive after the meaning of Being.¹⁴

5. The seeking on the part of the seeker results in the revelation of the Being called “enlightenment” or “awakening”.¹⁵ It is the shining of the Being before the seeker like a “smokeless flame”,¹⁶ it is an “intuitive experiencing of Truth with one’s whole being”,¹⁷ it is again an insight into the Being and Reality, a sort of subtle and piercing intuition¹⁸ attained through the approach mentioned above (i.e. the *Tapas*), but the approach only disposes one to the revelation, uncovering and uncealedness of the Being, the Enlightenment in itself is an eruption a sudden manifestation of the Being, the Being unveiling its form.¹⁹ This experience is the bond that connects Being and beings, One and the many, gives ontological foundation to the ontic multiplicity, provides unity to diversity and gives meaning to pluralism.

The experience of awakening or enlightenment is also an experience of the revelation of the meaning of Being a “perception of the essence”,²⁰ which renders cohesive Unity to the whole reality. This unity as experienced by the seekers in India can be explicated as having the following characteristics:

1. It is a climax of one’s relentless seeking resulting in the experience of Unity at the microcosmic and macrocosmic levels of being,²¹ it means that there are two possibilities of approach to the meaning of Being, namely, one can begin his search reflecting on beings and arrive at the ultimate ground of all beings. Or one can also reflect on himself and discover the ultimate ground of his existence at the depth of his being. In India the inner principle i.e., the ultimate ground of one’s own existence was transposed to the cosmic plane for the world was considered to be the cosmic equivalent of man (microcosm) animated by a spirit. The identification of both the principles was arrived at, due to the basic tendency of Indian Mind to reduce multiplicity to unity resulting in the vision of a cohesive whole. This Unity is conceived as One without a second,²² *summum bonum* and the purpose (*telos*) of all that exists with no possibility of positing a *heteros* or a duality.²³

2. The Being discovered in the awakening is said to be indescribable.²⁴ The numinous that is ultimately reached is undemonstrable, ineffable, ontologically simple, indefinite, incomprehensible, incapable of qualifications, determinations and diversity implied in descriptive attribution, transcending all class characteristics, free from all internal distinctions and hence escapes the reach of all categories²⁵ and finally characterized as transcending the dialectic of opposites: “it is both being and not-being, light and darkness, active and acted-upon.”²⁶

3. This unity does not take one to solipsistic abyss but it is an experience of the unity of beings which embraces the totality of beings giving a holistic vision of Reality to the seeker. It is essentially a cosmic unity where all beings from the highest divinity to the blade of grass,²⁷ constitute an organic whole, including one’s own being enveloped into the wholeness of the One. “What moves and what moves not, all that, the One rules”.²⁸

A very good explication of this holistic view of reality is found in the Bhagavadgita (henceforth BG),²⁹ where the Unity is depicted not as the sum of all beings, but the wholeness realized in every being. The world of BG is an organic and cosmic whole, the total reality conceived not as mechanic but as organic: in the former one part of the whole is related to the others externally but in the latter the relation is conceived as internal. In the organic unity each part conditions not only other parts but also the whole constituting the cohesiveness of the whole. In the cosmic world-view of BG everything is related to everything else at the level of beings and assumes that this unity at the level of beings be perceived at the level of consciousness leading to the experience of awakening.³⁰

A question can be raised at this juncture as to how the holistic and unitive conception of Reality elucidated above could be reconciled with the phenomenal multiplicity; in other words, how to explain the autonomy and independent existence of beings. Phenomenal reality is, first of all, the just an outpouring of the One.³¹ The one itself that becomes severally all that is”. “It is the one that has severally become all this”³² asserts Rigveda. Again this One become “severally all that is” has been explicated as the One taking the different forms: “He became corresponding in form to every form. This is to be looked upon as a form of him.”³³ If individuals are the partial revelations

and different forms of Being, then these need to be identified. In order to identify these differentiations of the Being man has named these forms. “Being is One, the learned name him many-wise.”³⁴ Therefore particulars are beings with name and form (*nama-rupa*). Just as clay can have different forms in different types of pots and statues, but their essence is clay itself, so is with regard to phenomenal beings. Ultimately the thread that connects all beings organically is clarified in the following question of Udd laka to his teacher Yájñavalkya: “What is the thread (*sutra*) that holds this world and the next and all the beings thereon in their places; and again who is the Inner Ruler of this world and the next and all the beings thereon?” After a long discourse on the question the Yájñavalkya answers that it is the soul (*atman*) that inhabits every being and is the thread that binds them together. The soul is “the unperceived perceiver, the unheard hearer, unthought thinker, and the ununderstood understander.”³⁵ The unperceived perceiver bridges the gap between the ontic plurality and ontological unity which is dis-covered in enlightenment. The holistic vision is a vision of an enlightened person. For such a person all things are interrelated because they are bound together by the same bond of Being.

The bond of Being that binds all together is conceived still another way by the Jaina Philosophy founded by Jina. The living beings (*jivas*) bound together through life particles have, first of all, infinite characteristics, and secondly, they are independently real and spiritual. Accordingly there arises two important doctrines, one that of epistemological, called theory of Modality of Knowledge (*syadvada*) and the other ethical, named the doctrine of non-violence (*ahimsa*), which have influenced Indian culture enormously. We explicate the former here and now and the latter will be referred to in our conclusion.

The theory of Modality of Knowledge (*syadvada*) strongly asserts the inexplicability of Reality in itself; what can be expressed is only a particular aspect of it. The historical context under which the so called *syadvada* (Theory of Modality) took its genesis is not the context of any confrontation with the abolutism but that of Agnosticism (*ajñānavada*) which asserted that nothing beyond experience can be known. The theory teaches: “you can affirm the existence of a thing from one point of view, deny it from another; and affirm both existence and non-existence with reference to it at different

times. If you should think of affirming existence and non-existence at the same time from the same point of view, you must say that the thing cannot be spoken of. Similarly, under certain circumstances, the affirmation of existence is not possible; of non-existence; and also of both.³⁶

Being itself is extremely indeterminate and any assertion or negation of it is only partially true. The dynamism of thought and logic envelopes both assertion and negation with equal validity and excludes one from the other and dichotomises Reality. But Jainism asserts that Being rejects dichotomisation and the logical categories fail to denote it in its totality. Either reason should surrender and imprison itself under the categories of logic and language or accept the function of language as elucidating complex Reality only partially and conditionally. In other words, the epistemological relativity has its grounding in the ontological finitude of man in the sense that man can expand his horizons but he cannot stand outside of his particular horizon within which he exists. Similarly man's reason cannot validate its own activity and the mental act cannot analyse itself without inviting fallacy of infinite regress. Due to this enigmatic position of man's existential situation many a times partial truth is mistaken for the whole truth thereby giving rise between different schools of thought ideological differences and disputes.

In brief, what is absolute is the Reality in itself and it is incomprehensible and ineffable; what is comprehensible and expressible is phenomenal and it is interrelated. The Jaina tradition thus preaches an attitude of interrelatedness of the phenomenal beings and the categories of thought. If inculcated, this attitude can go a long way towards the development of intercultural thought.

Thus we find an Asian (Indian) philosophical explanation for the fact of pluralism. The pluralism is understood not merely as a fact, just juxtaposed along with every other fact, but as integrated within the coherent vision of the Reality. This basic perspective has made Asian thought down the centuries very intercultural. Moreover, this perspective has inner dynamism to integrate categories of thought and beliefs foreign to it. We shall provide existential evidence to this assertion by elucidating how the above perspective has filtered through concrete everyday banal life of man

in Asia. As representative countries we take three important ones: India, China and Japan.

INDIA: Basic conception of Reality as One, which simultaneously manifests everything and embraces everything, has been filtered through the day to day life and thinking of Indians, promoting cross-cultural interaction and giving rise to a multicultural society. Philosophically Indian people recognize and rationalize the fact that there exist many different world- views, religious traditions and cultures in the world. All these, even with seemingly conflicting doctrines have their source in the One which reconciles even the dialectic of opposites. The dominant Hindu tradition Vedanta considers even heretical doctrines as having their basis in the Brahman, as they too are partially true but incomplete in themselves. In the ultimate analysis they are manifestations of the One.

That Indians basically view reality as multidimensional is evident in all Indian languages which have more than one word to signify the same object, each word expressing an aspect of the object denoted. Thus “sun” is named *dinakara*, the “day-maker” from one aspect and “*divakara*” the “light-maker” (from the root *div-* to shine) from yet another. There are not less than fifty words for sun in Sanskrit and it is true of all other developed languages of Asia.³⁷ Even in day to day conversation different words are used to denote the same object depending on the aspect the speaker wants to highlight. Again, the word for culture in Sanskrit is *sanskriti* and a cultured man is a *sanskrita*: a learner man, a pundit i.e., one who has mastery over grammar and vocabulary which means the capacity to grasp and name different aspects of the reality.

This fundamental attitude appropriated in the way of thinking of Indian people has given rise to a cultural reality which could serve as a paradigm for a world culture and world philosophy. This attitude is an outcome of the encounters and interactions for centuries between numerous races, castes, religious traditions and languages. History gives sufficient evidence for the encounter between Aryans, Sumerians, Akadians, Harappans, Dravidians, Mundas and other aboriginal groups in ancient India. Since the time of the invasion of the Turkish ruler Mahmud of Ghazni (1001 A.D.), the Islam culture has grown and is rooted in India, and since

the arrival of Vasco-da-Gama (1498 A.D.), Europe too has considerably promoted cross-cultural interaction specially through the English language and literature. The encounters and interactions involved battles and fights, controversies and misunderstandings, suspicious and quarrels, but nevertheless, no culture was annihilated, but all got integrated through intermingling and even through intermarriages. Today in India every child in metropolitan cities³⁸ converses fluently in two or three languages before stepping into the school-door. Speaking three languages means absorbing three world-views, three ways of looking at the same phenomenon.

CHINA: Buddhism is the common factor that relates India with China and Japan and one can confidently assert that it is Buddhism that has influenced Asian culture to a very great extent and created a common pattern of looking at reality. The Buddhism which made inroads into the culture of China, where Taoism and Confucianism – the two dominant traditions – existed for centuries, provides an interesting example to the student of intercultural thought. It can also be a study of analogous hermeneutics proposed by Mall³⁹ which proposes to see overlapping between two cultural patterns. The study how Buddhism confronted Taoism and Confucianism, and how the overlappings existing between two ancient cultures in their fundamental approach towards Reality established affinities to Buddhism can have two aspects: first, the way the Buddhism accommodated itself into the thought pattern of another culture; second, how the people of China accepted and incorporated new teachings and integrated them into their own thought pattern and praxis without losing their own cultural identity.

Buddha was basically a positivist and a pragmatic, and the doctrine he taught too concern mainly practical reason. He diplomatically avoided all metaphysical quests and inquiries and did not insist that his teachings embody absolute truth to the exclusion of others and even recognized tacitly the valid claims of other philosophies. As practical ethics he taught universal compassion, unity and equality among his followers: “what has been designated as ‘name’ and ‘family’ is only a term.”⁴⁰ This way the metaphysical unity of Upanishads was brought to the level of practical ethics by Buddha.

But the pragmatism and the positivism of Buddha was not upheld by his followers. The later Buddhism (*mahayana*) resorted to original Indian vision of the Reality as One, indestructible and ineffable. Asvaghosha, the founder of later Buddhism conceived Reality (*Tathata*) as a harmonious Whole, which transcends Reason and is indescribable through logical categories. It is neither existence, nor non-existence, nor both nor neither; it is neither affirmation, nor negation, nor both nor neither.⁴¹ Absolute Reality itself appears as this manifold world of phenomena and also transcends everything that manifests itself as conditional reality.⁴² Buddha's teachings of impermanence, causal concatenation, and non-self etc. are applicable only to the phenomenal Reality. We note that this branch of Buddhism was introduced into China.

That a holistic and unitive vision of reality even in China is clear from their ancient understanding of Tao,⁴³ according to which the real Tao (*Ta-tao*) exists in the realm where all names and ways of practice of doctrines are abandoned. The original state of the Universe was an existence of no form or name to serve as the symbol of the Truth.⁴⁴ Its followers were open to any determinism of the Tao, Buddhism happened to be one of them. Again the Chinese believed in the universality of Tao and different ways of realizing it, that even different religious traditions observed and followed the same moral principles and realize the Tao;⁴⁵ in other words the idea of Tao is found in all cultures in various forms as it is open to polycultural and polymorphic anchorages.

This was the background into which Buddhism was introduced. Moreover the introduction was not through Sanskrit, Pali or Prakrit, but the scholars did the (free) translations of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese and wrote their own commentaries interpreting Buddhism in terms of Chinese categories of thought; as a result the Buddhism of China varied from the original Indian Buddhism to a very great extent. China's classical and conventional way of thinking modified Buddhism very much,⁴⁶ but nevertheless, integrated the new doctrine into its patterns of thought without losing its own cultural identity.

Historical exigencies too favoured a favourable reception of Buddhism⁴⁷ as there was just a revival of Taosim and the New-Taoists found close affinity (i.e., overlappings) between the doctrine of "non-being" of

Lao-Tzú and Chaung Tzú⁴⁸ and the concept of “emptiness” (*snyata, k’ung*) in Buddhism. A statement of Liu Chi’iu confirms this: “From the K’un-lun mountains eastward the term ‘Great Oneness’ is used. From Kashmir westward the term *sambodhi* (wisdom) is used. Whether one looks longingly toward ‘non-being’ (*wu*) or cultivates ‘emptiness’ (*k’ung*), the principle involved is same.”⁴⁹ For the people of China all the three, Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism preach the same goal. They use pictorial and intuitive similes to explain this point: “Once, a duck was flying in the sky. Someone saw it and said that it was a pigeon, while another said it was a mandarin. A duck is always a duck; however, only men distinguish things from each other.”⁵⁰

Like Jainism sometimes they see different aspects of the same reality: Buddhism is the sun, Taosim is the moon, and Confucianism the five stars⁵¹ they all co-exist on the same sky which holds them together. This is the attitude which could accept and integrate Buddhism, a doctrine imported from a foreign land, nevertheless, possessed intellectual and spiritual elements akin to their own way of thinking.

JAPAN: Buddhism was introduced into Japan through China and the contact between the two countries was originally through the language. Japanese scholars expressed abstract concepts through the use of Chinese script. The consequent influence of China on Japan was tremendous. Japanese scholars studied Buddhist scriptures in Chinese and then as in the case of China, they translated the scriptures into Japanese and interpreted them again in their own categories of thought, as a result Buddhism was profusely modified once again.

Shintoism which existed prior to the arrival of Buddhism in Japan upheld the intrinsic values of life in this world. As a result the people of Japan appreciate so much their existence here on earth that they have transformed Buddhism into a religion of this world. Even the concept of Enlightenment was brought down to this world. Enlightenment in Indian Buddhism meant an insight into the numinous, a comprehension of what is beyond this world. In Japan the concept was brought down to refer to understand things within this world in a new perspective; truly, an immanent conception of ‘enlightenment’.

Japanese welcome new patterns of thinking and foreign cultural values but try at the same time to hold on to the values inherited from their own past. Although they have borrowed heavily from Chinese language, their own language has not made changes in its syntax. This attitude prevails in adopting foreign cultures i.e., a “foreign culture is adopted as a constitutive element of the Japanese culture”.⁵² A simultaneous fixation to the self-identity and openness to the ‘otherness’ of the other bring into bold relief that a hermeneutics of identity cannot be applied to the historical manifestation of absorption of Buddhism into Japanese culture but bears witness to the fact that cross-cultural integration is possible without losing one’s own cultural identity. We can enlist some predominant contemporary perspectives of Japanese culture formulated by Matsumoto Shir in order to throw light on this point:

- a) An adoration of Naturalism rather than humanism.
- b) A praise of experiential anti-rationalism (e.g., mysticism of Zen or tantric Buddhism) over logic and intellect.
- c) A praise of totalitarianism over individualism, which in turn paves the way to corporate nationalism, in a forced application of *wa* or “harmony”.
- d) A praise of animism and polytheism, on the basis of relativism, over absolute monotheism.⁵³

Present day Japan has integrated heterogeneous cultures of foreign countries without much confrontation and criticism because of their cultural emphasis on naturalism, anti-rationalism, totalitarianism, pantheism and relativism. It has grown into a land of multiplicity and pluriformity, a vision of intercultural thought concretely realized in practice!

Thus, China and Japan – and also India to some extent – are classical examples of integrating foreign cultural traditions into their own without losing their cultural identity and basic outlook of the Reality. They have succeeded to integrate alien categories of thought and the doctrines of praxis into their own culture. We have in these countries therefore historical examples of intercultural integration and assimilation. But the process should continue even in our own time on a global level, some reflections on possible ways of going about it.

III

1. Interculturality in an aspect of interrelatedness. What are the conditions of interrelatedness and intersubjectivity? People belonging to the same cultural tradition interrelate because there is “belongingness to something” that unites them. What is that “belongingness to something?” We name it as community, religious tradition, nation, language etc. But if we can dis-cover or un-cover “something” that can unite different religious traditions, communities, nations, cultures etc., interrelatedness can acquire a wider perspective. This “something” is a sense of “belongingness to Being”, cultivation of which will give to humanity the consciousness that all the cultures are partial revelations of the Being. This can certainly unite our common world. Without this consciousness our planet and the humanity in it can exist only as spare parts of a big machine. The humanity could take upon itself for the future the task of intuiting the organic and living bond that connects all beings.

2. A coherent and unitive vision of the whole is the specific Asian perspective of Reality which can help to develop intercultural enterprise throughout the world. But this vision of the whole should emerge through an intense search for the meaning of Being, resulting in an “awakening” or “enlightenment”, which alone will help man to transcend the microcosmic and macrocosmic dichotomies and give a vision of the unity of both, and, only then will he realize that the ontic pluralities are really grounded on an ontological unity. This vision of a whole, the vision of Being which gives foundation to all diversity and multiplicity is the need of the hour. Man is a being-in-the world but the term ‘world’ has a macro-cosmic dimension and significance, which needs to be brought into the awareness of contemporary man. He is a cosmic being with the possibilities of macrocosmic interrelations. The development of intercultural thought presupposes this awareness from the part of man.

3. What can hinder intercultural development is the conception of a particular culture itself as a ‘whole’. If a particular culture is the ‘whole’, then, first of all, to get out of this ‘whole’ in order to understand and relate with something outside of one’s vision of reality is a conceptually unimaginable possibility; secondly, such a conception will not evoke a

feeling of affinity to cultures other than one's own; thirdly, the possible interaction in such a case will be that of either confrontation or domination. If on the other hand cultures are conceived as different aspects of the manifestation of the Being, which is macro-cosmic in dimensions, then a fruitful polylogue⁵⁴ i.e., a multifaceted communication among all the cultural world-views, could be conceived as fulfilling and widening one's horizon of existence. Intercultural polylogue can even be conceived as limitless and endless possibility of existential communication always involving the discovery of new horizons at all levels: inter-personal, communitarian, political, religious and cosmic.

4. At the empirical level, we said, the development depends on two factors: widening the scope of access and enlarging the area of choices. We observe that presently the accessibility to the scientifico-technological rationality is being universalized. As a result there is the globalisation of this rationality. Future culture of humanity will certainly be dominated by this rationality conditioning intersubjectivity both at the theoretical and practical levels and enlarging the area of choices, specially with respect to the availability of things at-hand. Should we not subject modernity itself with its all embracing rationality to a critique on the perspectives elucidated above? We need for this purpose "enlightened" prophets who can intuit into the brokenness of humanity that uncritically subjects to modernity.⁵⁵

A question needs to be raised whether the academicians of the world find access to philosophical reasoning available in cultures other than their own and whether they in their respective branches of humanistic sciences create access towards intercultural enterprises to the future scholars under their guidance. Can our departments of Philosophies all over the world provide lectures on Philosophical thought of other continents so that the choices of students in choosing their curriculum are enlarged. Another productive way to widen intercultural accessibility is to encourage research in comparative philosophy which can propagate the proposal, "analogous hermeneutics" by discovering the homogeneity of answers and praxis. The study could also be directed towards the investigation of the points of concordance and discordance between different philosophical traditions on the one hand, and possible complementarities on the other, thus enhancing global collaboration at the philosophical level.

5. During the medieval period India witnessed its philosophers trying to establish a ‘comprehensive system of world philosophy’, or a ‘Systematic conception of the world’.⁵⁶ In the present century we witness the genesis of World Trade Organisation as a result of almost half a century of negotiations between the participating partners. Why shouldn’t we then meaningfully hope to witness an authentic striving towards the ideal of a “world-culture”⁵⁷ through an effective polylogue? It all depends on our willingness to participate and to cultivate an attitude of openness to Being, which can give rise to a new humanity based on mutual understanding, trust and sharing at all levels. It could certainly be a possibility if we create an ecumenism of cultures. The Asian principles for the evolution of such a culture could be (i) that of non-violence (*ahimsa*),⁵⁸ grounded on the understanding that the life principle in all the living beings is essentially the same and hence all beings are worthy of respect, reverence and sympathy; (ii) the four cardinal virtues of Confucian Tao: *jên*, ‘goodness, benevolence’; *i*, ‘righteousness, justice’; *li*, ‘sense of propriety’; and *chih*, ‘wisdom or knowledge or ability to distinguish between right and wrong’.⁵⁹ These virtues which are inherent in man, if given existential expression universally, can accelerate the process of a World Culture founded on authentic human values and reverence for cosmic order.

6. Finally, a clarification needs to be given regarding the qualifications attributed to Asian thought by some philosophers from Europe (or from ‘west’), that it is inclusivistic, relativistic, syncretic, eclectic and pantheistic. Possibly this is due to the fundamental difference in the understanding of Being in Europe and in Asia, and also due to the difference in the epistemological approaches between the two continents. When a subject-object relation is to be established, the Europe considers it as an intentional conquest; for, “object” is something totally “other” than the perceiver, and hence only relationship possible is to conquer it through analysis i.e., subject it to the categories of reason and establish the line that divides the two. Plato compares it to “butchering” and “chopping”.⁶⁰ Analysis is a process of chopping the object in order to conquer it. In Asia, on the other hand, to know something is to become it i.e., to realize the Being of the being, the “otherness” of the other. The distinction between the subject and the object is only epistemological and not ontological. Since

ontologically they are one, epistemological functions are ordained to uncover the curtain that separates the two. In Asia knowledge is a union, a discover, i.e., the discovery of Being of a being; it is also a humble submission, i.e., the submission of the mind in order to receive unto itself the form (*vritti*) of the being. Can we say that such an experience is foreign to those western thinkers and the qualifications they attribute to Asian thought could only be the consequence of a lack of openness? Intercultural enterprise pleads for an openness that will help the West to realize and apprehend the ‘otherness’ of Asia, consequent upon the realization that the Asian thought is only an another aspect of the manifestation of Being itself.

NOTES

¹ V.K. Nataraj, “The Crises in Development”, Key-Note Address for the Congress of the Association of Christian Philosophers, Mysore 1994. p. 2.

² Rudolf Brandner, “*Interculturality: Some Preliminary Remarks*”, Mysore 1994, 2f.

³ That Asia is culturally and geographically a complex reality does not need any explanation. We have left out completely the Neat East Asia. As for the rest, we have touched only India, China and Japan, with particular emphasis on India.

⁴ Our purpose of citing Heidegger is neither to interpret him nor to judge his thought. Our purpose is to highlight Asian thought by highlighting Heidegger’s distinction between the ontic and ontological conception of being. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: 1962, 21-63; *Holzwege*, 3rd ed., Frankfurt a.M. 1957, 243 ff.; Joseph George Seidel, *Martin Heidegger and The Pre-Socratics*, Lincoln 1964, 27-57.

⁵ Brandner, *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶ Matsumoto Shiró interprets *nirvana* as “uncovering”: the liberation of the *átman* from that which not *átman*. Cf. Paul L. Swanson, “Zen is not Buddhism,” *Numen*, Vol. 40 (1993), 124.

⁷ There is nothing by which he is not covered, nothing by which he is not hid” Brih. 2.5.18; cf. a. up. 15.

⁸ The different steps in this regression can be broadly tabulated as follows: awareness of material reality (represented by the symbol *anna*: food) to the awareness of the mental phenomena (*manas*) and from there to the consciousness (*vijñāna*) including the subconscious and finally to bliss (*nanda*) i.e., the original awareness where the revelation of the Being takes place (Taittiriya Up. 2.1-6). This method of introspection flourished in China and Japan through Buddhist teachers like Asanga and Vasubandhu and very specially through the Hoss sect founded by Dharmap la. Cf. Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. By Derk Bodde, Vol II, Delhi: 1994, 299-317. Cf. also Hajime

nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India-China-Tibet-Japan*, Honolulu: 1971, 154.

⁹ Chand. Up. 6. 10-15, 3. 13.

¹⁰ For example the analysis of sleep and the interrelation between sleep and consciousness. Cf. Brih: 4.3. 19-34.

¹¹ Chand. Up. 6.1ff.; Taittiriya Up. 2.1.

¹² In many Asian cultures to conceive reality means to become it. A seeker who meditates upon Reality in a particular way makes himself the Master of Reality as he conceives it. Cf. Chand. 4.3.5-8; Cf. also Yu-lan, *op.cit.*, vol. I, 291 and the concept of ‘sage wisdom’ vol. II. 219f and 561.

¹³ RV. X. 190; Cf. Rüpung, Klaus, “Zur Askese in indischen Religionen,” *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*, 2(1977), 81-98.

¹⁴ Brih. 2.4; Mundaka 1.2.11. M. G. Bhagat, *Ancient Indian Asceticism*. New Delhi: 1976; Yu-lan, *Op.cit.*, vol. I, 66 f., vol. II.

¹⁵ Different words used to denote this concept: jñana, vimocana, mukti, satori, kaivalya, nirvana, moksa, etc. Cf. George Stenger, *Intercultural Thinking – a question of Dimension and Dimensions*, Mysore: 1994, 4f.

¹⁶ Katha II. 1.13.

¹⁷ Fung Yu-lan, *op .cit.*, vol. II, 238; For the conception of enlightenment in Lao-Tzú, cf. *ibid*, vol. I, 181-3.

¹⁸ Katha I. 3.12.

¹⁹ Katha I.2.22.

²⁰ Stenger, *Intercultural Thinking*, 5.

²¹ The three texts where *ātman* is identified with *brahman* are: Brih. 2.5.19; 4.4.5; 4.4.25 also the text *aham Brahmasmi* Brih. 1.4.10 and *tattvamasi*: Chand. 6.9-16.

²² Chand. Up. 6.2.3; Brih. 2.4.14.

²³ S.K. Belvalkar and R.D. Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy, Creative Period*, Delhi: 1974, 190f.

²⁴ Brih. Up. 44.20; Tait. Up. 2.4. 7.

²⁵ Cf. the *neti, neti* texts: Brih. 2.3.6; 3.9.26; 3.8.8; 4.4.4.

²⁶ RV.X. 129; Mundaka Up. 2.2.1; also cf. RV. X. 82 and X. 121. For negative description of Tao see *Tao Tê Ching* (The Way and its Power), 21.

²⁷ *brahmadi-stamba –paryantah*, Samkhyakarika 54.

²⁸ RV. III. 54.8.; Brih. 3.5 explains the holistic vision of the interrelatedness of all things with Brahman as their ground. Cf. also Chand. Up. 1.9.1.; 3.14; 3.19.1 etc.

²⁹ Cf. BG. 3.14-15 and Chapter 11.

³⁰ Cf. Francis X. D’Sa, “Zur Eigenart des Bhagavadgita – Theismus”, in *Offebarung als Heilserfahrung im Christentumum, Hindusimus und Buddhismus*, Freiburg: 1982, 98f.

³¹ The word for creation in Sanskrit is *sristi* which is derived from the root *srij* – which means to let go, to emit, to pour out, to pour forth, to flow, to cause etc.

- ³² RV. 8.58.2.; Cf. also teaching of Neo-Taoism on spontaneous origin of things. Fung Yu-lan, *op. cit.* vol. II. 209.
- ³³ Brih. 2.5.19.
- ³⁴ RV. 1.164.46; cf. also fung Yu-lan, *op. cit.* vol. II. 214.
- ³⁵ Brih. 3.7. 1-23.
- ³⁶ Hermann Jacobi, *Jaina Sutras*, Part II, Introduction, xxvii, in *Sacred Books of the East*, ed. by Max Mueller, Vol. XLV.
- ³⁷ In China, for example, the work *Book of Odes* has 18 words for the concept “mountain” and 23 words to mean “horse”.
- ³⁸ Salman Rushdie asserts that one is surrounded by 20 different cultures in Bombay; and “then there’s Indian culture”, says he in *Newsweek*, (February 6, 1995), 52.
- ³⁹ R.A. Mall, *Interculturality and Interreligiosity – A conceptual Clarification*, Mysore: 1994, 11.
- ⁴⁰ *Suttanipata*, 648 also 610 & 611; (Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking*, 168f.).
- ⁴¹ D.T. Suzuki, *The Awakening of Faith in the Maháyána*, Chicago: 1900, 59.
- ⁴² T. Richard, *The Awakening of Faith in the Maháyána*, Shanghai: 1907, 10f.; cf. also the concept of “*Tathagata-garbha*” in Paul L. Swanson, “Zen is not Buddhism” *NUMEN*. Vol. 40 (1993), 119-121.
- ⁴³ Zaehner compares Tao to the Upanishadic concept of Brahman. Cf. R.C. Zaehner. *The Catholic Church and World Religions*, London: 1964, 69f.
- ⁴⁴ *Chinese Thought and Japan*, 8, in Nakamura, *op. cit.*, 244; cf. Fung Yu-lan, *op. cit.*, I, 223-25.
- ⁴⁵ cf. Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking*, 177-180.
- ⁴⁶ The transformation of Buddhism in China has been so radical that some scholars today argue Zen Buddhism is not Buddhism at all. Cf. Swanson, “Zen is not Buddhism”, 115-123.
- ⁴⁷ Fung Yu-lan names the historical period between A.A. 220 A.D. to 906 A.D as a “Period of Disunity”, as there was political disintegration of Han dynasty, Chin dynasty and Northern and Southern Dynasties. Cf. Vol. II, 168.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. I, 224f.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. II, 240. The region east of K’unlun refers to China and region west of Kashmir refers to India.
- ⁵⁰ *Hung-ming-chi*, VI, (*Taishó*, LII, 38 c-39a in Nakamura, *op. cit.*, 291.
- ⁵¹ *San-chio-p’ing-hsin-lun, part I.* (*Taishó*, LII. 781 c. in Nakamura, *ibid.*
- ⁵² Nakamura, *op. cit.*, 401.
- ⁵³ Matsumoto Shiró, from the paper delivered on the Lotus Sutra and Japanese Culture in Vancouver, Canada in 1990, cf. Swanson, Zen is not Buddhism, 126.
- ⁵⁴ A neologism invented by Franz M. Winner, which means a multifaceted communication among all cultural world-views on an equal level. The ‘dia-logue’, he says, has basically two interlocutors and founded on the conviction of a logic of “*sic et*

non". Polylogue can envelope diversity of subjects and logical possibilities. Cf. *Is Intercultural Philosophy a New Branch or a New Orientation in Philosophy*. Mysore: 1994, 2.

⁵⁵ As an example we can refer to the spate of Yoga, Zen and T. M shops every nook and corner of our cities selling just like fast-food or instant coffee such commodities as 'peace' and 'tranquility'.

⁵⁶ Nakamura, *op. cit.* 170.

⁵⁷ The proposal of 'World-Culture' is only an ideal similar to the ideal of *Ramarajya* in Hinduism, or the ideal of original unity and harmony in Taoism (see. *Chuang Tzú*, 9.20) or the ideal Rule of Yao and Shun in Confucianism (see Analects 13 & 15) or even the ideal Messianic times described in *Isaiah* Ch. 11 or the vision of a New Heaven and New Earth described in *Revelation* Ch. 21.

⁵⁸ Cf. Chand. Up. 3.17.4 and 8.15.1; *Manavadharmasastra* Ch. 5 (Vv. 5,27,32,48,49 & 52) and Ch. 8 (Vv. 85,91 & 92); cf. also John McKenzie, *Hindu Ethics*, New Delhi: 1971, 60-66 and 108-115.

⁵⁹ Zaehner, *op. cit.*, 62.

⁶⁰ *Statesman*, 262B7, 287C3-5; *Phaedrus*, 265E3.

Reference: *Concordia, International Journal of Philosophy*, Vol 19, (1996); 83-100

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

The Monastic Tradition in India and the Origin of Indian Christian Ashrams

1. Introduction

The essay is aimed at summarising succinctly the monastic heritage of India from its origin to its present form and then to study the origins of Indian Christian Ashrams in order to see how the Christian Ashrams can create an indigenous form of Christian monastic tradition in India. Within Hinduism and Christianity there were movements initiated by charismatic men in order to make their belief meaningful to themselves and to their contemporaries. The monasteries in the Christian tradition and the Ashrams in the Hindu tradition are basically prophetic movements which manifest basic aspirations of man of faith to make his faith meaningful and relevant. The Fathers of the Desert, St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Benedict, St. Francis etc. in the Christian tradition and the Munis, Rishis, Sannyāsins in Hindu tradition represent basically the faith response of religious men in their quest for the union with God. Most predominant element of this particular response is contemplation, and other elements like renunciation, asceticism, service, etc. are to be understood and interpreted within the context of a relentless quest for God in prayer and contemplation.

With considerable certainty we can assert that Christianity has taken sufficiently deep roots in India and should attempt indigenous expressions of its faith. The monasteries, friaries and convents should take forms of structures intelligible to our contemporaries in India. From this angle we should see the recent phenomenon of naming the monasteries, friaries and convents as “Ashrams”. This at least manifests the desire of the inmates to integrate contemplation and action and to inculcate indigenous spiritual insights in living their particular charisma.

2. The Monastic Tradition in India

a. The Concept of Ashram in Indian Tradition

The Hindu soteriology claims three paths or ways (mārgas) of attaining salvation: the path of action (karma mārga), knowledge (jñāna mārga) and devotion (bhakti mārga).¹ The most ancient among these is the way of action propounded in the Vedas, according to which the way to salvation was through the ritual sacrifices. Action basically meant here the sacrificial action. There was a time when the sacrifices became too ritualistic and as a reaction to this there sprang up the way of knowledge which sought the Ultimate Reality through intuitive knowledge (jñāna mārga). The seeker after God (sādhaka) renounced all ritualism and had recourse to the forest in order to experience the Absolute in silence and contemplation in the cave of his heart. When the seeker experienced God through enlightenment he became a man of God and this fact attracted others towards him in order to receive guidance and inspiration. The master-disciple context gave rise to a living together which came to be known as an Ashram (ca. 6th cent. B.C.).

The word Ashram literally means *to strive after, to exert oneself* (ā-śrama). Historically there developed four stages of striving after in life which were named as aśramas. A boy as he grows should strive hard to learn the Vedas and other religious customs and duties (Brahmacarya). Then he must strive strenuously to build a good family inculcating sound religious and moral values (grahastha). Once he begins up his children he should renounce his family and strive after higher religious values of penance (tapas) and prayer by resorting to lonely places like forest (vānaprastha) and finally he should accept the ideal of an ascetic life of a hermit (sannyāsa).²

The origin of Ashram life was due to a particular historical exigency, but the Brahmins have integrated it within the whole Hindu soteriology and have given it a definite place in all the law books such as those formulated by Apastamba³, Gautama⁴, Vasishtha⁵, Baudhāyana⁶ and Manu⁷. In these formulations Ashram life or hermitage became an integral stage in the growth of a believer in Vedic Religion.

Most important aspect of Ashram life is the presence of a Guru, i.e., a person enlightened by God-experience. The Guru leads his disciple stage by stage to self-realization and God-realization through asceticism (tapas) and concentration (yoga). The Guru and the disciples form an informal community of 'sādhakas' (people given to the quest after God). They live a

very simple and austere life amidst the natural setting of a forest or a valley or a river bank.

“Ashrams were not introvert communities; they played a formative role in socio-political life. In them princes were initiated to martial arts, kings were given political counsel, householders received instruction on their family duties, farmers get training in agricultural skills, students learned the scriptures and methods of meditation, and young artists were initiated to music and dramatics. Above all ashrams were power-houses of spiritual renewal in society: spirituality meant harmony between the divine, the human and the cosmic dimensions of life.”⁸

The last sentence in the citation elaborates the basic Indian attitude towards the World. The conception of reality in India is anthropocosmic. Man is not a master of the world but an integral part of it. There is an organic unity between the inner man and the outer nature. Nature is nothing else but the transformation of the Ultimate itself. A seeker should learn to transcend from the levels of naive and scientific-rational consciousness to the level of mystic consciousness so that he can learn to intuit through deep meditation the interconnection between the microcosm (i.e. individual Self) and the macrocosm (the universal Self). Unless one experiences this unity of the divine, human and cosmic, no enlightenment is possible. The guidance of the Guru and the natural setting of the Ashram should help him to realize the goal of his life (moksha).

b. The Ideal of Sannyāsa

The quest of a seeker after God was elaborated through the ideal of ‘sannyāsa’.⁹ Sannyāsa is ‘samyak nyāsaḥ’ which means a total abandonment and renunciation of all temporal things and a total trust in the Absolute. A person who practices the way of life called ‘sannyāsa’ is called ‘sannyāsin’. Total detachment from earthly things, relentless quest for the Ultimate

Reality and an intense desire to attain total liberation (moksha) through penance (tapas) and contemplation (yoga) characterize the ideal of 'sannyāsa'. Whoever desires to be a 'sannyāsin' goes to a Guru and appeals to him to accept him into the fourth stage of Ashrama. The Guru tests his motivation and sincerity and then initiates him into 'sannyāsa'. He takes five vows, begins to live as a wanderer begging his food and spending his time in solitude and silence and practicing the virtues of universal love and equanimity.

The Hindu Law-giver Apasthamba declares the life of Sannyāsin as follows:

“Now follow the rules regarding the ascetic (sannyāsin). Only after having fulfilled the duties of that order of students he shall go forth as an ascetic, remaining chaste. For him (the Sannyāsin) they prescribe the following rules: He shall live without a fire, without a house, without pleasure, without protection. Remaining silent and uttering speech only on the occasion of the daily recitation of the Veda, begging so much food only in the village as will sustain his life, he shall wander about neither caring for this world nor for heaven. ... Abandoning truth and falsehood, pleasure and pain, the Vedas, this world and the next, he shall seek the Atman (soul/self). ... He obtains salvation if he knows Atman.”¹⁰

Further, in Manu we have: “By deep meditation let him recognize the subtle nature of the supreme Soul, and its presence in all organisms, both the highest and the lowest,”¹¹

c. The Vows

The Hindu Law-giver Baudhāyana describes the vows as follows:

“Now following vows are to be kept by an ascetic:

Monastic Tradition in India.

Abstention from injuring living beings (ahimsā), truthfulness (satya), abstention from appropriating the property of others (asteya), continence (brahmacarya) and liberality (aparigraha).

There are five minor vows, namely: abstention from anger, obedience towards the Guru, avoidance of rashness, cleanliness and purity in eating.”¹²

The vows have been very much elaborated by Patañjali in his Yoga aphorisms. He considers them as five abstinences (yamas) which lead a yogi¹³ towards the attainment of perfect contemplation.¹⁴

Finally Lord Krishna describes a true Sannyasin in the following manner:

“He does not desire or rejoice in what is pleasant. He does not dread what is unpleasant, or grieve over it. He remains unmoved by good or evil fortune. Such a devotee is dear to me. His attitude is the same toward friend and foe. He is indifferent to honour and insult, heat and cold, pleasure and pain; he is free from attachment. He values praise and blame equally. He can control his speech. He is content with whatever he gets. His home is everywhere and nowhere. His mind is fixed upon me, and his heart is full of devotion. He is dear to me.”¹⁵

The idea of Sannyāsa clearly brings to light the Indian conception of asceticism and religious life: “To the mind of the Hindu, the life of the sannyāsin who has freed himself from all human ties, and stripped himself of all that ministers to physical comfort and well-being, has almost always seemed to be the highest.”¹⁶

d. Jainism

Indian monasticism received a firm structure through two heterodox movements known as Jainism and Buddhism. Both borrowed their ascetic rules from the ideal of sannyāsa.¹⁷ Jainism, a religion founded by Jina

(means *conqueror*), very specially copied the Hindu ascetic ideal and implemented it through its monasteries meant both for nuns and monks. The Jaina monks known as 'śramanas', professed the same five vows of the Hindu sannyāsa and practiced them with greater vigour. Jainism is known for its emphasis on the first vow: the vow of Ahimsā. Their profession of the vow of Ahimsā runs as follows: "I renounce all killing of living beings, whether subtle or gross, whether movable or immovable. Nor shall I myself kill living beings nor cause others to do it, nor consent to it. As long as I live, I confess and blame, repent and exempt myself of these sins, in the threefold way, in mind, speech and body."¹⁸ A Jaina monk firmly believed that every being is animated by a soul and hence so strict observance of the vow.

Besides the Vows a Jaina monk or a nun must also practice three forms of self-control:¹⁹

1. curbing of activity of speech,
2. curbing of activity of body,
3. curbing of activity of mind.

They should also practice five rules of conduct:

1. care in walking,
2. care in speaking,
3. care in accepting alms,
4. care in taking up and setting down,
5. care in excreting.

Besides they should control the four forms of passions:

1. anger,
2. pride,
3. deceit,
4. greed.

Finally a Monk or a nun should practice the following ten virtues:

1. forbearance,
2. humility,
3. uprightness,
4. desirelessness,
5. truthfulness,
6. self-discipline,

7. self-mortification,
8. renunciation,
9. poverty,
10. celibacy.

These are important elements in the life of a monk or a nun. All the above ascetic practices were aimed at cleansing the soul of all karmic matter. Once the soul is purified, it will attain the desired end which is liberation from rebirth. The final state of freedom in Jainism is called 'kaivalya'.

e. Buddhism

Buddha, a contemporary of Mahāvīra or Jina, practices asceticism for few years, but gave up extreme forms of asceticism and preached a middle- path, consisting of Four Noble Truths and an Eight-fold Noble Path. The *summum bonum* of life according to Buddhism is the attainment of Nirvāna, a state of peace sans sorrow. A Buddhist monastic community is called 'Sangha' and a Buddhist monk is called 'Bhikkhu'.

Sukumar Dutt divides the history of Buddhist Monasticism into four periods:

1. 500 – 300 BC: The Primitive Sangha. Inspired by the wandering sannyasins of Upanishadic period, the Bhikkhu movement grew as a sect among the wanderers. Gradually they settled down as communities of monks and nuns. Their life got organized and there arose well established monasteries.

2. 250 BC to 100 AD: The period of Emperor Ashoka i.e. the Maurya dynasty. The North Eastern part of India centred round Magadha came to be known as Buddhist land, where monasteries got multiplied. After the extinction of the Maurya dynasty (184 BC), Buddhism spread southwards beyond the Vindhya mountains and took roots in Andhra Pradesh (Hills of Nagarjuna).

3. 300 – 550 AD: Spread of Buddhism during the Gupta dynasty characterized by the popularity of Mahāyāna (the great vehicle of later Buddhism) and the rise of Bhakti mārga.

4. 500 – 1200 AD: The period of monastic universities. Intellectual movements characterized by a shift from the "study of faith" to the "study of

knowledge”. The Mahāvihāras (great monasteries) functioned as universities, the Nālandā being the most important one.

The schema shows how powerful the Buddhist monastic movement in India was. Rhys Davids and Hermann Oldenberg note that Buddhist Sangha was the oldest and the most influential of all fraternities of monks in the world.²⁰

Coming to the life of the Bhikkus, first of all they, like the Jainas, appropriated for themselves the five Brahmanic vows and added to them five more:

1. I take the vow not to destroy life.
2. I take the vow not to lie.
3. I take the vow not to steal.
4. I take the vow to abstain from impurity.
5. I take the vow to renounce all interest in worldly things, especially to call nothing
my own.
6. I take the vow to abstain from intoxicating drinks which hinder
progress and
virtue.
7. I take the vow not to eat at forbidden times.
8. I take the vow to abstain from dancing, singing, music and stage
plays.
9. I take the vow not to use garlands, scents, unguents, or ornaments.
10. I take the vow not to receive gold or silver.

The first vow, ‘ahimsā’ is practiced in Buddhism in its positive sense: i.e. through compassion (karuṇā) towards all creatures. The monk considers himself as a loving servant of humanity.

f. Monasticism During the Classical Period

During the classical period, monasticism was revived by great theologians like Śankara and Rāmānuja. The former established monasteries or ‘maths’ of advaitic tradition. The basic characteristic of these monasteries

is the realization of oneness of reality through contemplation. But the Vaishnava tradition, to which Rāmānuja belongs, integrated the Bhakti mārga, the path of devotion, preached by Bhāgavata and Vishnu Purānas. They integrated also the path of selfless action (Nishkāma Karma) into their monastic living. Rāmānuja and Nimbarka, the theologians of the path of devotion, stressed the loving devotion to God combined with selfless service to humanity. Another tradition called Shaivism also propagated the path of devotion. The basic characteristic of the path of devotion was total and unconditional surrender to God.

g. Modern Period

Hindu monasticism received a new impetus at the beginning of this century in the wake of the Hindu Renaissance or Neo-Hinduistic movement. Swami Vivekananda founded a new monastic order under the aegis of his Guru Ramakrishna and called it “Ramakrishna Mission” in order to propagate the Neo-Vedanta doctrine. “Salvation of my Soul and the Service of Humanity” was the ideal of the monks. The order trained monks to integrate contemplation and action. While imbibing the ascetic ideal through five vows handed down from ancient times, the monks also engaged in philanthropic activities such as establishing schools, orphanages and hospitals. Alongside Advaitic Ashrams whose emphasis is on knowledge, we have also Seva Ashrams emphasizing the Bhakti or devotion and Seva, Service. Vinobha Bhave’s Paunar Ashram at Wardha is an example.²¹

h. Concluding Remarks of Hindu Monasticism

If we can compare the monastic rules of all the three i.e. Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism we find that all three forbid that the monks (and nuns in the case of Jainism and Buddhism) have anything which they can call their own.²² This corresponds to the vow of poverty in the Christian monastic tradition. Even the things which a monk always carries about himself, as clothes, alms-bowl etc., are not regarded as his poverty, but as things necessary for the exercise of religious duties. “A monk must be chaste”, is another great vow which corresponds to the vow of chastity every

religious professes in the Catholic Church. “A disciple should obey his Guru”, is found thus formulated only in Hindu tradition. If it was not stressed much in Buddhism and Jainism, it is because they wanted to give spiritual freedom to a disciple to have his own way of achieving the goal of liberation. Once a person is enlightened, he is free to follow his own path.

3. Indian Christian Ashram

Indian Christian Ashrams sprang up with the aim to inculturate Christianity in general and Christian monastic tradition in particular. For our study we need to make a distinction at the very beginning between two types of Christian Ashrams – although the protagonists of Christian Ashrams in India may not agree with such a distinction. First of all, the Indian Christian Ashrams in the strict sense of the term actually try to inculturate the ascetic ideal of the Hindu tradition inculcating in their Ashrams the values of silence, common prayer and contemplation, simple life and spontaneous service. The emphasis is on the path of knowledge, without however rejecting the path of devotion and the path of action. But there are other Christian Ashrams which try to integrate contemplation and action: these along with prayer and contemplation try also to engage themselves in welfare activities. The emphasis is on the path of devotion and action, and the path of knowledge being a value of lesser importance. We describe the origin of the former first.

The early founders of Indian Christian Ashrams were protestants.²³ The first Christian Ashram at Tirupattur (North Arcot District) was founded in 1921 by S. Jesudason and E. Forrester Paton. With the goal of identifying themselves with the poor they adopted a life style of simplicity and deep prayer. The second ashram was at Poona called “Christa Prema Seva Ashram” founded by the Anglican Priest Father Jack Winslow. The Ashram projected a way of life intelligible to the poor of India again through its simplicity and prayerfulness. Another protestant Ashram was founded at Kareli, in Bareilly District by Rev. Murray Rogers along with his wife Mary and his friend Heather Sandeman. After spending some time in the Sevagram of Mahatma Gandhi and after imbibing the spirit of the Ashram there, he came to Kareli where his friend offered him some land where he

started the Jyothiniketan Ashram nearly 25 years ago. He offered the Ashram to Indian Capuchins when he left for Jerusalem. At present Swami Dayanand is the Guru in this Ashram. Beautiful natural surroundings along with an Indian style Chapel attract the visitors here for prayer and contemplation.

The initiative to found Ashrams from the Catholic Church came from two priests: Fr. Monchanin (Swami Parama Arubi Ananda) and Fr. Henri le Saux (Swami Abhishiktānanda) who lived for some time in the Ashram of Sri Ramana Maharshi at Tiruvannamalai. Swami Abhishiktānanda explains his experience in the Ashram as follows:

“In the Sage of Arunachala of our time I discerned the unique Sage of the eternal India, the unbroken succession of her sages, her ascetics, her seers; it was as if the very soul of India penetrated to the very depths of my own soul and held mysterious communion with it. It was a call which pierced through everything, rent it in pieces and opened a mighty abyss.”²⁴

Having spent considerable time in Ashram experiences the two decided to found an Ashram integrating the rule of St. Benedict and also the ascetic ideal of the Hindu tradition. This attempt gave rise to the Saccidananda Ashram at the banks of Kaveri in Tamil Nadu in 1950.

Now there are several Catholic Ashrams of this type which try to inculcate the ancient Ascetic ideal of Hinduism and also the monastic spirituality of Christian tradition.²⁵

We need to note also another type of Christian Ashrams, which try to inculcate Indian spiritual values along with service to humanity after the model of Hindu Renaissance Ashrams like that of Ramakrishna Missions. While being deeply contemplative the inmates try to serve the humanity to the best of their ability. These also are modelled after the basic principles of an Ashram, i.e. quest for the Ultimate through prayer and contemplation and also service to humanity.

In the future every Monastery, every Friary, and every convent in India should be an Ashram imbibing the spiritual tradition of India. This brings us to the question regarding the salient features of a Christian Ashram in India. First of all we need Gurus, i.e. enlightened men of God. Without Gurus even the best of atmosphere and setting will be lifeless. We need spiritual animators who can inspire the seekers after religious experience. The Gurus should have basic knowledge of Indian spirituality and culture to be effective leaders of inculturation of Indian spiritual values. Secondly, we need motivated disciples who relentlessly seek God-experience. Half-hearted and lukewarm disciples can destroy the atmosphere and ideals of an Ashram. The third element is a programme of 'Sādhanā' based on Indian spiritual heritage, which should integrate the Christian spiritual tradition and the charism of a particular religious founder. This programme of Sādhanā goes to distinguish one Ashram from another. A particular Ashram may emphasize the Advaitic path, the other the path of devotion and still another the Buddhist path of Dharma, and so on. The fourth element is the service, spontaneous or organized. Without service an Ashram cannot really be 'christian'. We can even assert that every Indian religious community should inculcate these elements if they want to be relevant in India and if they want effectively bear witness to the message of their master.

Of course, there could be few Ashrams which specifically integrate in their life the ascetic ideal of ancient Hindu tradition through the five vows of asceticism (maybe with special insistence on 'ahimsā'), a natural ecological setting, independent cottages, hospitality to strangers and, maybe, through particular dress projecting the image of a 'sannyāsin'.

What we wish to assert is that pluriformity in the concept of Ashram is to be admitted in living religious life within Indian context. We saw how the Upanishadic Ashram ideal gave way to monastic tradition in Jainism and Buddhism. Later on Śankara established Maths. The present century saw Hindu Ashrams imbibing the ideal of service. Indigenization of Religious life in the Church should take note of all these historical phases and accept a pluriform concept of the Ashram ideal.

The 'All-India Seminar on the Church in India Today' held in 1969 at Bangalore has this to say regarding the incorporation of Indian spiritual

values such as deep personal prayer, meditation, silence, a sense of adoration, yoga methods of concentration, spirit of prayer and ascetic life:

“Incorporation into Christian behaviour, these values would help the Church to incarnate herself in this country. Accepting these values, however, does not mean becoming Hindus nor is it a rule on our part to convert Hindus. These values belong to Christ and are a positive help to an authentic Christian life. They point to a dimension of interiority, an awareness of the presence of God so often missing in the lives of many Christians. This interiority is greatly favoured by the spirit of silence which is really a positive attention to God’s presence in the depths of our being, giving value to every word and action.”²⁶

At the inauguration of the above Seminar Archbishop Sergio Pignedoli, then the Secretary of the S. Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples observed:

“It is in India in a very special way, that the Gospel message should be presented as the Presence of God and that the Church should be presented as a community of prayer. This, and this specially, has the power to attract the esteem and confidence of the Indian masses. Some Indian personalities wrote me the following: ‘For the average Hindu, only the monk, the man of God’.”²⁷

To conclude, a religious person in Indian setting is fundamentally a seeker (sādhaka), a person who renounces everything and dedicates himself to a relentless quest for God-experience. The ideal of such a religious person is the ‘sannyāsa’. Inculturation of Religious Life or the Christian monasticism in India means nothing else but the assimilation of this ideal. Ashram is the locus where this ideal is concretized in the lives of its inmates. It is not an esoteric ideal, but realizable by all who wish to experience the

fulfillment of their innermost religious aspirations and proclaim to the world that religious life has a prophetic value.

Notes

¹ Cf. Nalini Kanta Brahma: *Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā*. New Delhi: 1988, 38-273.

² Cf. Max Mueller: *Sacred Books of the East*. Volumes II, XIV and XXV, Delhi 1882 (Reprint 1975).

³ SBE Vol. II.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ SBE Vol. XIV.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ SBE Vol. XXV.

⁸ Vedanta Kesari: *Monasticism – Ideal and Traditions*. Madras 1991, 81-147: cited by Sebastian Painadath, in: *Concilium* (August 1994), 37.

⁹ Cf. “Sannyasa Upanishad” in: Paul Deussen: *Sixty Upanishads of Veda*. Vol. II, Delhi 1971, 733-739; Prasannabhai: *Indigenous Form of Religious Life*. In: *Word and Worship*, Vol. IX (April 1976), 196-206; Varghese Manimala: *Indian Sannyasa and the Franciscan Way of Life*. In: *Francis of Assisi, Relevant to India*. Ed. by Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, Indian Capuchin Research Forum, Vol. I, Mysore 1991, 71-100.

¹⁰ Apasthamba, II, 9, 21, 7-14. SBE Vol. II.

¹¹ Laws of Manu, VI, 65. SBE Vol. XXV.

¹² Baudhayana II, 10, 18, 1-3. SBE Vol. XIV.

¹³ Yogasutras II, 35-40.

¹⁴ Cf. Noelle: *Indigenization of Religious Life*. In: *Word and Worship*, Vol. IX (Aug.-Sept 1976), 348-356.

¹⁵ Bhagavadgītā XII, 17-19.

¹⁶ John McKenzie: *Hindu Ethics*. New Delhi: 1971, 133.

¹⁷ See Hermann Jacobi: ‘Introduction’ to: *Jaina Sutras*. SBE Vol. XXII, xxiv-xxxii.

¹⁸ Akaranga Sutra II, 15, 1. *Jaina Sutras*, SBE vol. XXII, 202f.

¹⁹ Cf. R. Williams: *Jaina Yoga*. Delhi 1983 (Reprint 1991), 32-35.

²⁰ Cf. Rhys David: ‘Introduction’ to: *Vinaya Texts*. SBE Vol. XIII. ix.

²¹ For detail description of contemporary Ashrams existing in India cf. Vandana: *Gurus, Ashrams and Christians*. Delhi 1989, 71-115.

²² Hermann Jacobi: ‘Introduction’ to: *Jaina Sutras*. SBE Vol. XXII, xxv-xxxii.

²³ Cf. Vandana: *Gurus, Ashrams and Christians*. Delhi 1989, 71 ff.

²⁴ Abhishiktananda: *The secret of Arunachala: A Christian hermit on Shiva's Holy Mountain*, Delhi: 1988, 8-9. Cited by Jose Kuttianimatathil: *Practice and Theology of Interreligious Dialogue*. Bangalore 1995, 54f.

²⁵ For description of Christian Ashrams see: Vandana, loc. cit., 71 ff.

²⁶ Cited by Vandana: *The Ashram Movement and the Development of Contemplative Life*. In: *Vidyajyoti* (May 1983), 180.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

Reference : *Studien zur Intekulturellen Philosophie*, Vol 7 (1997), 1-14.

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

Intercultural Conflicts from Asian Perspective

1. Possibilities of Intercultural Interactions

Intercultural interaction is possible because it is a human enterprise grounded on human experience. *Mitsein* or *mitdasein* is an ontologically pre-given possibility for a Dasein. Every human being is a product of union at the deepest level of human communication. No man is an island is verified by the fact that man always attempted to extend and widen his possibilities of interpersonal relationships by undertaking new ventures of communication.

We say that man is born within a culture, which means a particular pattern of living is pre-given to him. He assimilates this pattern and builds up a world-view constituted of variegated configurations of beliefs, norms of conduct and a cluster of symbols and myths. Thus man gets rooted in a particular culture with a set of “root paradigms” (Victor Turner) through the so-called process of enculturation. But the potentialities of human understanding and reason – which are culturally neutral – cannot be fully conditioned by any particular culture. Man’s openness to realities knows no bounds. He can widen and expand his horizon through limitless and endless communication. While remaining rooted in one’s own culture one can relate and understand, appreciate and criticize, assimilate and integrate another culture which he encounters. This explains why cultures can interact mutually and why intercultural interactions and encounters are a fact of human existence.

1.1 Three Levels of Intercultural Encounters

Intercultural interactions can take place at different levels. We would like to delineate three such levels. At the ‘pragmatic level’ the orientation of interaction is towards socio-economic and socio-political enterprises. World Trade Organization and United Nations Organization –with all its subsidiary organizations – and the like are the examples of intercultural encounters at the pragmatic level. Trade, tourism, transfer of technology etc. are the things which determine and constitute the dynamism of intercultural interactions at

this level. According to some philosophers like Rudolf Brandner, this level is the most prominent and most active sort of interculturality based on a scientific-technological rationality characterized with ‘modernity’ and on the way to revolutionise the human way of being-in-the-world.¹

The second level of interaction could be conceived at a deeper level, wherein one “brackets” his own world-view and root paradigms in order to investigate, understand and evaluate another culture. Research in cultural anthropology is an example for this level. Man investigates the structures of belief and thought, ethics and symbols in view of either making a comparative study between cultures or just to make pragmatic level of intercultural interaction more effective and fruitful. There is another kind of interaction at this level, named by anthropologists as “acculturation”. Due to existential exigencies a man finds himself amidst another culture and as a result begins to assimilate its world-view so that his existence becomes possible and meaningful in an alien soil.

The third level of intercultural interaction will be at the deepest level of cultural values enshrined in the Philosophy and Religion of peoples. When one speaks of Religion and or Philosophy, one is at the level of convictions. People in general are committed to Religious values and philosophical view points. Every culture presupposes a particular understanding of being and this understanding of being of a particular culture is predominantly manifested in the Philosophical perspectives and religious beliefs and symbols. A particular culture may not have an academically formulated and developed philosophy but its very *raison d’etre* is founded on philosophical presuppositions which pre-intentionally shape the explicit intentional relations with the world and man. Same is true of religion, one may be a professed atheist and the cultures may take more and more secular orientation, but nevertheless, man basically faces an ultimate concern which conditions has existence in the world.

All these reasons underscore the intercultural interaction at this level and for a future peaceful existence on this planet as a humanity determined to survive, we need to enhance the cross cultural encounters particularly at this level.

2. Possibilities of Intercultural Conflicts

2.1. Philosophical Reasons for Intercultural conflicts

Intercultural conflicts – for that matter conflicts of any sort – are grounded in the human capacity to disagree. Why men disagree? Because human reasons conforms itself to the principle of bi-valence: something is either true or false. The categorical rationality is committed itself to this principle which is dual and dualistic in every way. This is the logical ground for all disagreements and conflicts. The formal structure of categorical reason is such that it functions on contrary principles such as thought and object of thought, consciousness (thinker) and the object of consciousness (what is thought). There is once again differentiation between the objects of consciousness themselves. What makes a thing what it is, is its difference from other things. This differentiation gives the object its identity.

Secondly, this categorical thought manifests itself in the logical form of predication. Predication too is grounded on differentiation. To be a particular predicate P, it has to be differentiated from non-P. Similarly to be a unique subject S, it has to be differentiated from non-S. This is the logic of *sic et non*, either/or. “A given Subject S cannot be both P and non-P (at the same time and in the same respect); or a given subject S must be either P or not- P.”²

This formal logical feature of polar opposites has ontological analogues. It limits the rational understanding and puts constraints on the formation of meanings, i.e., the meanings should be categorically correct and true. Intelligibility will be determined by category relations. Thus the statements such as ‘stones can eat and drink’ or ‘numbers can run’ become unintelligible. The meaningful predication is conditioned by categorical structure. A term gets a definite identity and a specific place in the whole language structure building up a coherent whole in which all predicative possibilities of polar terms are linked together.

Categorical structures constitute world-views constituted of coherent system of truth propositions. The categorical rationality is such that when you are committed to one world-view you are bound by it and there is no neutral stand from which you can judge another world view. You can judge

it only from the world view into which you are bound with. This predicament plunges us into a dilemma where intercultural interaction becomes enigmatic proposition. Each judges other culture from the point of view of his own culture. The predicament faces crisis in the case of belief structures. Within a particular world view the different truth propositions and sets of beliefs stand in relation to one another and constitute a coherent rational system of logically interrelated truths and beliefs. When this world view confronts another world view with contradictory truth propositions and structure of beliefs, there should certainly be a conflict because same person at the same time cannot acquiesce in contrary beliefs. The very nature of a belief is such that it demands radical commitment, and a person may be ready to die in order to defend his belief rather than give it up. Added to that, principle of bi-valence proposes that if I am true you should be wrong, if I am right you should be wrong; and if one believes that falsity has no right to exist, he can also demand that one who professes falsity too has no right to exist; then the conflict could be acute and the mighty can annihilate the weaker one's to defend the truth and the beliefs they hold to absolute. We need therefore a hermeneutic in which the categorical reason could be transcended giving rise to agreements on conflicting issues on a higher level of logic. Take for example the terms such as self, world, God and the like. Taking into account each ontology has a specific use of these terms – thus the use of the term self is not the same in Cartesian, Humean, Hegelian, Hindu and Buddhist ontologies – should there not be a common ground where these ontologies meet each other and consider the nuances of meanings and settle the semantic scores? In such a trans-categorical rationality the hermeneutic of the category of opposition, duality, differentiation and polarity should be replaced with the hermeneutic of the categories of nondifference, nonidentity (unity), nonduality and bipolarity.

2.2 Cultural Differences and Conflicts: Historico-existential Perspective

We said that the intercultural interaction is a human enterprise and it is an enterprise between different cultures. The differences between cultures is due to the difference between the understanding of being among different men and this difference itself can be a cause of conflicts. Thus from the

historico-existential point of view the basis of conflict is the difference between human beings. “The persons with whom we have to deal have not merely a different way of thinking and feeling, a different conviction and attitude but also a different perception of the world, a different recognition and order of meaning, a different touch from the regions of existence, a different faith, a different soil. To affirm all this in the midst of the hard situations of conflict without relaxing their real seriousness is the way by which we may be permitted to touch on the other’s truth or untruth, justice or injustice.”³

The affirmation of differences between men is most conspicuous in the case of politics and religion to which human beings confess their allegiance and loyalty. This may be the reason why most conflicts in the history of mankind are either political or religious. The primary reason for the former is human desire to dominate; when this desire is coupled with power, authority and material means, there invariably occurs a conflict followed by violence. But we focus on the latter, because religion by its very nature should strive towards peace, harmony and liberation of men. Paul Knitter bemoans that the religions have failed to do their job. “I would suggest that one of the major reasons why there is so much disunity and lack of peace in today’s world is because the religions of the world have not done their job.”⁴ The religions must have brought about concord and harmony among the peoples as every religion upholds the ideals of love, peace compassion and forgiveness.

Why they have failed in this? Why religious conflicts occur? Because within every religion there exists, according to Elise Boulding, two contrasting cultures; that of holy war and that of peaceable garden. According to Karl Marx, religion becomes instrument in the ruling classes to maintain and safeguard their power structures. According to Teilhard de Chardin, the religions of the world follow a “universal evolutionary pattern by which each religion must first go through a ‘microphase’ of consolidation through self-interest before it can enter a ‘macrophase’ of relationship and cooperation with others.

Be that is it may, the dynamic of any conflict is such that it entails a process which moves the partners of the conflict towards its resolution.

Conflict by its very nature is a transitory phenomenon. It is only an intermediary antithesis leading to a synthesis. The demand for synthesis is due to the fact that a conflict brings about an undesired state of affairs. This is the reason why despite all wars, battles, violence and fights men have lived together, have forgotten all their hatred and reconciled with one another and begun new life once again. Humanity's survival instinct and propensity for peace are powerful enough to overcome conflicts of any magnanimity. But the ground reality of human selfishness and desire for power and domination is also co-exists along with the propensity for peace and the former constituents assert themselves when a crisis erupts. Hence we cannot create a situation where conflicts become outdated.

3. Intercultural Conflicts in Asian Philosophy

Intercultural conflicts in Asian Philosophy are integrally related to religion due to the fact that in Asia Religion and Philosophy remain inseparable; both propose the same objective of realization of the supreme end of man. We delineate some examples of religio-philosophical conflicts in Asia followed by their historical background and then propose a hermeneutics for the purpose of resolution of these conflicts.

3.1. Dravidian and Aryan Conflict in Ancient India

The original settlers of India were Dravidians. There are historians who affirm that the people of ancient Indus Valley Civilization (ca. 2500 B.C.) were Dravidians who were conquered by the Aryans migrated from central Asia (ca. 1500 B.C.). It is an evidence of bringing a civilization to an end with might and power. The conflict generated between these two cultures is evident in the literature of the Aryans, namely, the Vedas. The Aryans believed in gods, had well defined religious practices with various sacrifices, and hence they accused Dravidians as having no gods (*abraham*) (RV IV, 16, 19), without religion (*avrata, apavrata*) (RV I, 15b; V, 52, 9) and without sacrifices (*akarman*) (RV X, 22, 8). The Aryans philosophized on the nature of man and the ultimate reality and criticized the Dravidians as concerned with earthly and material things, and with sex and fertility. Because the Aryans developed a refined language, they ridiculed Dravidians

as yelling like puppies.⁵ Of course as years elapsed the Aryans realized the need to acculturate and we see Aryans assimilating pre-Aryan Dravidian culture. Aryans were pleasure loving, but pre-Aryans pursued an ascetic ideal. We see the Aryans giving up the former to accept the latter. Shiva the Dravidian Deity and Krishna, the black God came to be universally accepted. But nevertheless, the root paradigms of two cultures come into conflict even today after four millennia of co-existence. The Dravidian Tamils do not accept the Aryan language Hindi as the national language of India. They have somehow maintained their political identity too. The identity between the two persists even today, even though there is no explicit durable conflicts.

3.2 The Shinto-Christian Conflict in Japan.

In 1597 at the command of the ruling King, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, twenty six Christians (twenty Japanese and six missionaries) were crucified in Nagasaki. Ten years earlier he had issued series of edicts commanding Christians to renounce their faith on pain of death or exile. This is an example of conflict in its extreme sense hued in blood and violence. When twenty six Christians accepted martyrdom they believed that they sacrifice their lives for what they hold to be the supreme truth. The king who ordered crucifixion is also convinced that he is doing the right thing. He is the guardian of the nation and the people. He has exercised his duty by ordering their crucifixion and thus saved the nation.

An analysis of the historical context of this conflict will certainly throw some light on the subject of Intercultural conflicts. We have two conflicting world-views in interaction here. Japan's geographical isolation made her to maintain a cultural homogeneity. It developed a perception to distinguish things foreign and indigenous; it could perceive things which are useful and assimilate and adopt them – even things foreign; at the same time it could denounce and reject what seemed derogatory to its stability and concord. Roman Catholic Christianity was first introduced into Japan by Portuguese traders in 1549 with the arrival of Jesuit missionaries. This was the period of civil wars (1482-1558) and social and political upheavals. The nation was thirsting for a new order. People turned towards Christian

religion with the desire to establish a new order. The newness and foreigners contributed its growth and in 1614 there were three hundred thousand Christians in Japan (three times more than the present number).⁶

At the same time there were stark differences between the Japanese religious sense and that of Christianity. It had a polytheistic and pantheistic sense of the sacred which considers god, man and the world as one reality, optimistic conception of human life, cyclic conception of time, corporate notion of ethics and divine origin of Monarchy as against Monotheistic belief of Christianity affirming God as a transcendent reality, man as a sinful creature, time as linear and eschatological so on so forth.

When conflict struck all these differences were exaggerated from both sides; Christianity insisting on its purity of doctrine, and distinctness from the existing religions such as Shintoism and Buddhism that too at a time when there was a consensus and demand for unity and cultural identity in the nation as a whole. Christianity, which denounced the divine origin of the Monarchy, came to be misinterpreted and held in polar opposition to that of the Kingdom of Japan.

The reasons for the conflicts are clear. The differences between the two world views were exaggerated and the similarities were ignored. There was a failure of dialogue between the partners of conflict, enhancing suspicions and collisions leading to violence. Christianity too failed to distinguish the cultural constituents of Japanese ethos from that of their religious beliefs.

3.3. Hindu-Muslim Conflict in Contemporary Times

December sixth of 1992 was a doomsday in the cultural history of India. On that day a large group of radical Hindus called *kar sevaks* demolished a magnificent Mosque built in 1528 at Ayodhya, the holy city of the Hindus in North India where it is believed that epic Divinity Rama was born (*rama-janma-bhumi*), whom people worship now as an incarnation of the Godhead (*visnu*). After the destruction of the Mosque a make-shift structure was made and an idol of Rama was installed. The aftereffects of this incident were quite predictable. Conflicts and violence being two sides of the same coin, riots broke out, temples and mosques in different parts of

India were attacked, hundreds lost their lives causing untold misery and tension to millions of people for several months.⁷

This is another extreme example of intercultural and interreligious conflict: how two cultural groups can go on with misunderstanding and animosity for centuries and precipitate crisis.

The first Mosque came into existence in South India in the year 629 A.D on a piece of land donated to the Muslims by a Hindu King. This proves the existence of Islam in India since then. But they grew in power with the invasion of Muslim kings from Turkey and Iran at a time when Hindu society was totally caste-ridden and divided among themselves, which made the Islamic rulers to establish their role in Delhi and spread their kingdom in all four directions of the Capital lasting for seven centuries. The Muslim monarchs said to have destroyed Hindu temples in order to erect Mosques in their place and propagated their religion even with coercion. It is also historically true that the low caste Hindus who had lost self-respect in Hinduism converted to Islam seeking equality and prestige and their number grew very much counting hundred and ten millions today making 12% of total population.

It is said that the Muslims have not enculturated themselves in India and have failed to distinguish between religion and culture. The crisis has day by day worsened due to political developments. When Indian National Congress was founded with the aim of liberating India from the British rule the Muslims did not join it but started a parallel party called Muslim League; on 23 March 1943 the party resolved to demand an independent nation for Muslims consisting of areas where they are in majority. This resolution culminated in the creation of Pakistan when independence was granted to India by the British.

As a reaction to these movements there developed counter organizations among Hindus. The RSS with its political wing BJP has only one agenda: to transform India into a Hindu nation by re-establishing Hindu rule at the center. One of the points on their agenda was to destroy the Mosques said to have built over the Hindu temples during the Muslim rule. As it was argued that the Mosque at Ayodhya was erected at the birth place

of epic god Rama after destroying an existing temple built by the Hindu King Vikramaditya. The deed was undone on the above date.

These are only examples of intercultural conflicts, but they raise several questions: is the categorical rationality the main reason for the conflicts? Actually such a rationality pervades western thought and culture; why then there should be conflicts in Asia which seem to have no traits of dual logic? First of all, the human capacity to disagree is not the prerogative of western culture. Secondly, the principle of bi-valence is basic to all religions and most of the Asian conflicts are grounded on religious beliefs. As we said, Beliefs demand unconditional commitment. For example, if my belief in one God is true, then your belief in many gods should be untrue. Here we need the clarification of the term “God” itself which demands a hermeneutic acceptable to all parties in conflicts. To evolve such a hermeneutics is the task of philosophers.

4. The Possibilities of Resolution of Conflicts from asian Perspective

We said, that all conflicts have in themselves as innate dynamism which moves towards its own resolution. After all, conflicts are also human encounters where negative ethical values, such as misunderstanding, hatred, discord, disharmony and the like prevail. But humans as we are, we do not sincerely desire to live amidst these negative values for long. Having given expression to our aggressive passions, humans cool down (at least at the face of defeat and humiliations) and take initiatives to create situations where again positive moral values will be cultivated and practiced. As we have invented tools of aggression, violence and conflicts, so also institutions of reconciliation both at micro and macro level which can play the role of meditation between the parties involved in conflicts surround us.

But still we need to ask, why conflicts arise and how they could be resolved? In Asia Buddhism gives an answer to this question. Buddha as a fruit of his meditation and enlightenment proposed the doctrine of Causal Concatenation (*pratitya-samutpada*) in which he reduces the ultimate cause of all sorrow, suffering and conflicts (*duhkha*) to ignorance (*a-vidya*). *vidya* means knowledge, *a-vidya* (Ignorance) is lack of knowledge, lack of understanding. Ultimate reason for all conflicts is ignorance: i.e., the lack of

knowledge of other parties point of views, lack of understanding regarding the issues involved in the conflicts.

The remedy to overcome such a situation is very clear. We need to take up steps to understand the other and to know his point of view. To understand the other, one has to open oneself to the other. This openness is possible only through encounter and through dialogue. How such a dialogue is to be had, is again explicitated in Buddhist tradition” the oft quoted example of the conversation between Nagasena and king Milinda or the Greek King Menandros in 150 B.C. provide an insight into an effective dialogue. King Milinda went to Nagasena and said:

“Venerable Sir, will you discuss with me again?”

“If your majesty will discuss as a scholar, yes; but if you will discuss as a king, no.”

“How is it then the scholars discuss?”

“When scholars discuss there is summing up, unraveling; one or other is shown to be in error and he admits his mistake and yet is not thereby angered.”

“And how is it that kings discuss?”

“When a king discusses a matter and advances a point of view, if any one differs from him on that point, he is apt to punish him.”

“Very well then, it is a scholar that I will discuss. Let your reverence talk without fear.”⁸

Nagasena is demanding from the King the detachment from (or bracketing of) the political principle, which is a principle of domination and coercion. On the other hand we have the principle of scholars viz., Social principle which is a principle of fellowship; the former is vertical and the latter is horizontal. In other words for a speedy resolution of the conflicts through effective dialogue the participants should approach the issues with a detached intellect. The Atman should be detached from ‘I’ and ‘thou’ in order to concentrate on the content of the dialogue itself, i.e., what is being said. The postulates emerging from what is being said can result in summing up and unraveling. Daya Krishna⁹ would call this collective creation. All the partners participate on this creative activity with a feeling of equality and with attention to ‘what is said, rather than who said what’. Asians would

insist on the element of silence for this purpose, which is an act of listening that respects the uniqueness and inwardness of the other. Dialogue may demand the detachment of self-centered views but not one's own inwardness and uniqueness through listening to the inwardness and uniqueness of the other. Finally, many things may happen in a dialogue: conflicts might be resolved, discords might give place to concord, misunderstanding to understanding, hatred to love and respect; but all these need to be sustained. Situations may change and new conflicts may emerge again. Hence most important aspect of the Dialogue is that it should not stop; the parties should keep dialogue going and it should remain as an endless process.

5. The Locus of intercultural Dialogue in Asia: the Concept of an Ashram

It is not enough to describe what makes a genuine dialogue and how it 'should be' carried out. All that we said will remain only in the air unless an atmosphere is created where parties willing to meet can gather together to commence the dialogue. We need mediators to function as catalysts of authentic dialogue. We need appropriate places where the partners encounter mutually in an atmosphere of cordiality and openness, parties in conflict can settle their disputes and the confluence of cultures can take place.

In the Asian context such a need has been fulfilled from time immemorial through Ashrams. We delineate the concept of Ashram¹⁰ in order to present a viable locus for intercultural interaction in our own times. Ashrams historically represented open communities marked by hospitality permeated by peaceful and cordial atmosphere and silence surrounded by natural beauty. On the one hand they were centres of formation of personalities of all hues, and on the other, they were dwelling places of spiritual men (*guru*) who relentlessly sought after knowledge' (*vidya*) and yearned for enlightenment.

From the very beginning the Ashrams were open places invariably situated in an ecologically attractive places: river bank, forest or hill-side. One of the important characteristics of an Ashram is hospitality. All members of the human species, rich and poor, high caste and casteless, kings and slaves, men and women could find shelter in the open space that

surrounded the Ashram. Though primarily they were centres for spiritual excellence, nevertheless, they rejected no one who came there from any ulterior motive. The atmosphere itself made the inmate to change his attitude.

Secondly, Ashrams were the formation centres where great personalities were molded and educated; in this sense they were also academic and cultural centres: Ashrams were not introvert communities; they played a formative role in socio-political life. In them princes were initiated to martial arts, kings were given political counsel, householders received instruction on their family duties, farmers got training in agricultural skills, students learned the scriptures and methods of meditations, and young artists were initiated to music and dramatics. Above all Ashrams were power-houses of spiritual renewal in society: spirituality meant harmony between the divine, the human and the cosmic dimensions of life.¹¹

Ashrams brought out what is highest in man because there one could meet the cream of the society. They were in this sense the centres of dialogue where different world-views could resolve their differences in mutual encounters.

Finally, the Ashrams were the centres of meditation. In such a suave atmosphere one could transcend from the naïve to scientific consciousness and then from scientific to meditative consciousness. At the level of naïve consciousness one encounters the world naively, i.e., the 'object' of consciousness here is taken for granted from common sense point of view. But when man wishes to gain the knowledge of the world and its sciences he reflects upon the object, subjects it to the categories of understanding and through scientific methods transforms it to suit his purpose. At this level the categorical (dual) reason is at its best, the form of which is one of opposition, polarity, and differentiation being governed by the laws of identity and difference. At this level man develops definite world views and the fixity of forms of thinking takes place leading to a definite system of thought patterns and beliefs founded on specific interconnected truth propositions.

We have already underscored the need to transcend this level of consciousness in which men meet with only contradictions when they

encounter a world-view other than their own. Ashram is a place where this need is met with, where one can transcend rational categories by attaining a trans-categorical (nondual) rationality through meditation. The meditative consciousness is the deepest level of consciousness where a dynamic self transformation of the categorical reason can take place. When a person concentrates on the object of meditation for a long time in an attitude of surrender, the distinction between the subject and object disappears i.e., the logical space between the subject and the object of consciousness vanishes and as a result there takes place a fusion between the two. This fusion is a unity of experience, an experience of nonidentity and nondifference.

What are the features of meditative reason? First of all there takes place the transcendence of the fixity of categorical time in meditation. The either /or logic of differentiation has validity only in categorical time. Within this time the unity or the non-duality between the subject and the object of consciousness appears as a mere contradiction. This is because there is a constituent of time in the formal principle of dual reason: "A given subject P cannot be both P and not-P at the same time." Due to the expansion of time consciousness in meditation the principle of dual reason is transcended in it.

Secondly, the logical space of differentiation between mind and object, object and meaning etc. is also eliminated in meditative reason. The predication becomes nondual i.e., there results non-difference or identity between the subject and the predicate; "the polar opposition and differentiation evaporates into a bi-polarity and the fixity of essentialist univocal meaning flows into the multi-vocal unity of metaphor. This logical space turns upon itself in a virtuous circle in which the infinite distance is the point at which one begins: "here" is "everywhere," "now" is "everywhen," and "I" specifies everything and nothing. Process of development (becoming) moves in the stillness of nondual "becoming." In short, the categorical particular shines forth with the cosmic significance of the transcategorical universal."¹²

To elaborate phenomenologically, in the passivity of meditation the functions of the active categorical reason are brought to rest. The object of consciousness is no more something that stands opposite to me but it is just part of me. Meditative reason then becomes intuitive, and the intuitive

consciousness perceives the reality in its wholeness; this in turn reveals also the relativity of particular objects and the particular world-views. It means that within the unity of the whole each culture obtains an unique place and they no more stand in conflict and in contradiction to one another but in the uniqueness of their own relative position. There results a widening of the horizon – and not the fusion of horizons as Gadamer would say¹³. In this widened horizon no culture, no world-view is either annihilated or made to merge with another but each culture and its world-view is confirmed and a correlation between them is perceived at the background of the experience of unity.

Moreover, in the meditative consciousness one realizes the uniqueness of one's own culture and its value system in inwardness without creating an attitude of contempt to another culture. On the other hand there emerges an attitude of reverential respect to other cultures and their value systems. This attitude leads to a cordial co-existence of different cultures in mutual respect and reverence. Nevertheless, no conflictless ideal situation is presupposed; i.e., when conflicts arise the personalities enlightened through meditative reasoning can take active initiatives towards effective dialogue which can resolve the conflicts amicably and resume living in authentic I-thou relationship constantly attempting to create a true fraternity of human beings.

What is the correlation between an Ashram, dialogue and transcending of rational categories? The context of an Ashram proposes the physical possibility for a Dialogue where persons with different ontologically confirmed world-views can assemble together. Ashram is a place centred round guru or enlightened personalities (who have already transcended categorical, dual rationality) who can play the host, function like mediators between partners in conflict and propose a hermeneutics such as analogical (Mall) or diatopical (Panikkar)¹⁴ for a fruitful dialogue between different world-views, and thus start the ball rolling. There are basic common concepts in all ontologies such as 'world', 'self', 'God' and the like, but there is no unity regarding the meaning of these concepts. Thus for example the meaning of the concept 'self' is no the same either in Hinduism or in Buddhism in the East nor in the western ontologies such as Cartesian,

Humean or Hegelian. What hinders to mutual understanding is the judgements arrived at under the guidance of categorical reason. If the participants of the dialogue can bracket the categorical reason with the assumption that there are plurality of possible and actual world-views and if they can admit that the natural reason can inhabit multiplicity of world views, then the door is opened to ontological relativity and pluralism. The next step could be to negotiate the logical space between dual (finite) and nondual (infinite) discourse. This is actually a process of descending from the intellect to the heart level of perception. The former differentiates and particularizes and the latter unites and universalises. For this the participants should be open to enter into deeper levels of consciousness through meditation where the unity at the level of heart could be experienced for oneself. This experience is also an experience of nonduality and non- differentiation and hence it is a step towards the transcendence of categorical dual rationality.

6. Conclusion: the Concept of Non-Violence (*ahimsa*)

No one can posit any culture or ethnic group that could be considered as bereft of all conflicts. Being an integral dimension of intersubjectivity, the conflicts cannot be eradicated totally as long as men interrelate among themselves. But the greatness of a culture depends on its philosophy that has developed ideals which have gone a long way to impregnate the lives of its people with values that create harmony and cordiality in the society and in the world. Asian culture in general and Indian culture in particular can be really proud of possessing such an ideal in the concept of *ahimsa* which has influenced the people of Asia throughout the centuries in creating an atmosphere of freedom and peace.

The French Indologist Alfred Foucher, has bequeathed following spiritual testament to his posterity. All that I would like to state is that I have a vision deeply engraved in my memory, which has even been present with me, and which accords with the inmost convictions of my heart. If it is the destiny of the earth to be saved, it will owe its salvation to India, and, in India, to that virtue whose Sanskrit name you should agree to learn and retain, since it has no equivalent in other languages, viz., *ahimsa*!¹⁵

Ahimsa is an ancient concept of Indian culture popularized throughout Asia with the spread of Buddhism. What is the idea of ahimsa? *a-himsa* is the negative of *himsa* and means “non-killing” and in a comprehensive sense means “non-injury, non-violence, abstention from causing pain to others by thought, word and deed.”¹⁶

The origin of the concept is traced to pre-Vedic times when wandering ascetics practiced *ahimsa* and lived on vegetarian diet. They were so popular and their influence on masses was so great that later on the vedic Bramins came to imbibe the doctrine and became vegetarian.

In the Vedas (1200 B.C.) the word is combined with *himsakarman* (*himsa*-act), used to refer to the violence or harm done through the magical rites which were condemned. In the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* (ca. 600 B.C.) the word gets the positive connotation of compassion (*daya*) (5.2.1-3) a concept which gets prominent place in the teachings of Buddha.¹⁷ In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, the word derives a cosmic meaning i.e., *ahimsa* to all beings (*ahimsan sarvabhutani*) (8.5.1.). An exegesis of this text by Philosopher Shankara declared this as a cosmic virtue, and in the epics and the puranas (mythical narrations) the concept was raised to the status of a ‘supreme virtue’ (*ahimsa paramo dharmah*).¹⁸

The greatest contributors in Indian History towards this doctrine were Jainas who held the doctrine of animism (*jiva*) as the most important principle of their religion according to which everything on the face of this earth is a living being and hence one should take care not to injure any living being. This doctrine took the normative principle of *ahimsa*: ‘non-killing, absence of the desire of killing.’ We read in Jaina scripture: (1) Earth, water, fire and wind; (2) grass, trees, and corn; (3) oviparous animals, the two kind of viviparous animals; (4) beings engendered in fluids and (5) in dirt and (6) plants. These six classes of living beings a wise man should know and treat tenderly, in thought, words, and acts; he should neither do actions, nor desire property, whereby he might do them any harm.¹⁹

The Jaina ascetics propagated the doctrine and the practice of *ahimsa* with zeal and zest for centuries which influenced India society and Hinduism so much that many of the Hindus became pure vegetarians.

If the practice of *ahimsa* spread beyond the boundaries of Indian continent to other countries of Asia, it is through Buddhism, specially through later or protestant Buddhism called Mahayana. Chinese Buddhists both monks and the laity gave up meat eating and the ethical considerations that made them to practice *ahimsa* were two great positive virtues taught by Buddha: compassion (*karuna*) and friendliness (*maitri*) and also the belief in transmigration. There is also a metaphysical reason why Buddhists propagated the virtue of non-violence viz., the theory called ‘the womb of *tathagata*’: which says that the nature of Buddha is identical with Ultimate Reality. All beings participate in this Reality and possess the possibility of becoming Buddha. This means all beings are essentially one, by inflicting pain on any being one harms oneself and hence *ahimsa* is to be strictly followed.²⁰

We see here how the doctrine of *ahimsa* has been handed down for centuries in India and China. It has been deeply rooted in the psyche of these peoples. Mahatma Gandhi made it a weapon to fight against the British rule and succeeded to win freedom to his country.

One may ask what way the doctrine has helped to resolve intercultural conflicts in Asia. Violence and conflicts are two sides of the same coin. If conflicts beget violence we can see how an ethical theory of non-violence or compassion can assuage causes which give rise to conflicts. If the causes of intercultural conflicts are to be nipped in the bud one should practice and propagate the virtue of *ahimsa*.

Moreover, the virtue of *ahimsa* has a cosmic and ecological dimension: it propagates non-injury to all beings and even to nature. When so much destruction of nature is undertaken around us, the cultural world-views cannot afford to exclude environmental issues from their perspectives. Contemporary wars – causes for which are definitely intercultural – with non-conventional weapons – have effected annihilation of cosmic dimensions. To protect our planet from all conflicts we need cosmic ethics and Indian ethics is essentially cosmic in nature: *ahimsa* is an example of it. *ahimsa* is part of *dharma* (cosmic law) which is cosmo ethical.... What the Indian cosmo-ethics has for its world is something indefinitely larger than our planet, but that is so in principle. For in fact the planet (*bhuloka*) with all

forms of life in it, is its immediate world. And man, while he has to take his place in a democracy of an indefinite number of living species, is nonetheless not only their crown in an evolutionary-hierarchical sense but also their priest, first-fruit and spiritual guardian. In this cosmo-ethical scheme man's place, his destiny and his significance are only heightened and in no way lessened.²¹

Our world is being reduced to a global village in which the responsibility of each and every cultural group to create peace and to preserve the cosmos is all the more heightened. For this the perspectives of cosmo-ethics are most conducive. Asia in general and India in particular has contributed its Lion's share to maintain cosmic order, promote human welfare and unity among peoples. This should be the goal of all intercultural enterprise. Finally, we can say that *ahimsa* is an attitude which recognizes the sanctity of life both human and non-human and propagates respect to all living beings. It is also an attitude of tolerance, both towards tolerant and the intolerant. This is because it is a prophetic virtue which condemns the intolerant in a prophetic manner, i.e., by refusing to be intolerant. The contemporary times demand prophets of *ahimsa* who will promote intercultural harmony and understanding so that as we step into the third millennium we find a world more open to resolve their conflicts through dialogue keeping in view the welfare of all beings.

Notes

¹ Rudolf Brandner, "Situation of Philosophy Today and the Question of Interculturality" in *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, vol. XIII (1995), 12ff.; Cf. also Felix Wilfred, *From the Dusty Soil*, Madras: 1995, 314ff.; R.A. Mall, "Interculturality and Inter-religiosity – A Conceptual Clarification", in *Interculturality of Philosophy and Religion*, ed. by Gregory D'Souza, Bangalore: 1996, 13ff.

² Ashok K. Gangadean, "The Hermeneutics of Comparative Ontology", in *Religious Pluralism and Truth*, ed. by Thomas Dean, Delhi: 1997, 234ff.

³ Maurice Friedman, *Intercultural Dialogue and the Human Image*, New Delhi: 1995, 102.

⁴ Paul Knitter, "Interreligious Dialogue and the Unity of Humanity", in *Journal of Dharma*, vol. 17, 1992, 283ff.

⁵ Ait. Aranyaka, III, 2,6; RV I, 182; VIII 96, 13. Cfr. J.B. Chethimattam, "The Multiculturality of Indian Philosophy," in *Interculturality of Philosophy and Religion*, 164f.; Cf. also Kroeber, *Anthropology*, New Delhi: 1967, 746f.

⁶ Hori Ichiro (ed.), *Japanese Religion*, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 71-88, 29-46; Cf. Ernest D. Piryns, “The Taoist View of Reality: the Human Being and Society,” in *The Japan Mission Journal*, vol. 50, 1996, 83-89.; Cf. Takeo Doi, *The Anatomy of Self*, Tokyo: 1988.

⁷ India Today, December 15, 1992, 15ff; December 31, 1992, 27ff.; Victor Narivelli, “Politics of Mandir-Masjid Conflict: Undoing of a Secular and Pluralistic Society”, in *Journal of Dharma*, vol. 17, 1992, 299-308; Mumtaz ali Khan, “Islam’s Encounter with Hinduism in Secular India”, in *Journal of Dharma*, vol. 19, 1994, 270-383; Subhash Anand, “The Hindu Temple”, in *Jeevadhara*, vol.23, 1993, 397-118.

⁸ The Debate of King Milinda, Ed. by Bhikku Pesala, Delhi: 1991, 4f.

⁹ *Intercultural Dialogue*, 180f.

¹⁰ The word Ashram literally means to strive after, to exert oneself (*asrama*). Historically there developed four stages of striving after in life which were named as *asrama*. A boy as he grows should strive hard to learn the Vedas and other religious customs and duties (*brahmacharya*). Then he must strive strenuously to build up a good family inculcating sound religious and moral values (*grihastha*). Once he brings up his children he should renounce his family and strive after higher religious values of penance (*tapas*) and prayer by resorting to lonely places like forest (*vanaprastha*) and finally he should accept the ideal of an ascetic life of a hermit (*sannyasa*).

¹¹ Sebastian Painadath, “Ashrams a Movement of Spiritual Integration”, in *Concilium*, (August 1994), 36-46.

¹² Gangadean, *Religious Pluralism*, 240.

¹³ Cf. Mary Ann Stenger, “Gadamer’s Hermeneutics as a Model for Cross-Cultural Understanding and Truth in Religion”, in *Religious Pluralism*, 151-170.

¹⁴ Anthony Sevani, “The Diatopical Hermeneutics: R. Panikkar’s Response to the Scientific Study of Religions”, in *Journal of Dharma*, vol. XXI, 1996, 198-203.

¹⁵ Cited by K. Luke, “Ahimsa”, in *Indian Capuchin Research Forum*, vol. I, ed. by Johnson J., Bangalore: 1991, 139.

¹⁶ V.S. Apte, *A Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Delhi: 1989, 196.

¹⁷ The first reference to the concept of Daya is found in Samannaphalasuttam 2.5.45.: “A monk, refusing to harm any creature, moves about as a compassionate man, with sympathy for the well-being of all species,” *Dighanikaya*, vol. I, Bihar, 1958. 55.

¹⁸ Mahabharata “Adi parva” 11,12,12, “Anusasana Parva” 115. 25. Kurma Purana 11.11.13,14.

¹⁹ Sutratkanga, 1, 9, 8-9.

²⁰ Prajñāparamita and Related Systems: Studies in *Honor of Edward Conze*, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series I, Berkeley 1977, 283-3112.

²¹ John G. Arapura, “Ahimsa in *Basic Hindu Scriptures*, with Reference to Cosmo-Ethics (Ecology)”, in *Journal of Dharma*, XVI, 1991, 198.

Reference: *Unterwegs zur interkulturellen Philosophie*, Ed. by Raul Fornet-Betancourt, Frankfurt: 1998, 89 - 105

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

TRADITION AND MODERNITY FROM INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

1. Introduction

The distinction between tradition and modernity is not so well formulated in India as in the west where we have a set of philosophical articulations constituting the intellectual core of the agenda for the project of modernity¹. Nevertheless, we can perceive mile stones of fairly well defined marks of paradigm shifts in the thought pattern of Indian thinking and behaviour through which we can formulate components constituting its tradition and modernity.

From the available literature we can delineate a dialectic of movement from action to withdrawal and again back to action. The primitive Indian mind invented cultic action to control the powers of nature in order to survive amidst the forces of nature threatening life. As a reaction to overemphasis on ritualism we find the next phase of withdrawal into self reflection and contemplation, which has given rise to different systems of thought (Darshanas). Another paradigm shift characterised by modernity is very complex: it has the basic component of nationalism realising through different ideologies.

2. Tradition

From the known History of India what one perceives is that it is from the very beginning very complex, even if we take only the Harappan culture of 2500 B.C. The written history clearly delineates the co-existence of a multicultural and multireligious and pluralistic world-views, prominent among them being those of *Brahmanism* and *Shramanism* (tradition of ascetic monks), the division being made on the basis of belief in Vedas, the former known as orthodox and the latter heterodox.

Let us begin with a concept common to both: namely, the concept of **guru**: The entire Indian traditional thought can be succinctly expressed in a single term **guru**, which expresses two-fold experiences of men of old in India. The first syllable *gu* - represents *guha* (cave) experience, the experience of the innermost essence of man realised through a process *ad intra* generally known as *atman* experience. The second is the cosmic experience of the infinite realised by discovering unity amidst multiplicity and pluriformity through a process *ad extra*, generally known as *Brahman* experience. The ancient seers came to the ultimate experiential knowledge that the two experiences are one and the same, and the *atman*, the inner

essence of man is qualitatively the same as the *Brahman*, the cosmic equivalent of the *atman*. This is expressed through so called great sentences: *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman) and *Tattvam asi* (That thou art).. The seers not only held on to this tradition, but also sought this experience of the ultimate meaning of life relentlessly for themselves. They also developed meticulously a system of *sadhana* (method of exercise) called “eight fold Yoga” (*ashtanga yoga*), through which one can progressively and systematically organise his/her life in order to climb the ladder of the vision of perfection. This was the essence of Indian tradition, all other dimensions of life were integrated into this spiritual tradition. A perfect person, a free person was one who could transcend the indispensable law of transmigration eliminating any possibility of repeated existence in this world.

The two inseparable pillars of this tradition are *Dharma* and *Karma*: two very complex dimensions of reality as found in the Indian tradition which explain spatio-temporal existence in all its aspects. The term *dharma* can be translated as righteousness, duty, law, justice, religious merit, a system of beliefs, moral norms and customs, etc. and is used to specify goodness in its different dimensions: religious, ethical and socio-political. It is found in all systems of thought both orthodox and heterodox (*Buddhism and Jainism*) with different nuances of meaning.

Originally referring to the principle of universal stability, the power which sustains, upholds, and maintains, the firmly established order, this term in general means the lawfulness and regularity, the harmony, the fundamental equilibrium, the norm which reigns in the cosmos, nature, society and the individual existence. Dharma is the basis for the norms of individual conduct, it sustains the structure of the community and regulates the continuity in all the manifestations of reality.²

The term *karma* literally means action, work or the result of work. The law of *karma* states that the sphere of morality is an ordered realm and is the moral equivalent of the physical law of causality. “One becomes good by good action and bad by bad action”³. “When a man dies, the two things that accompany him are *vidya* (experience of God) and *karma*.”⁴. “According as one acts, according as one conducts, so does one become.”⁵ The doctrine of Karma related to transmigration, the “flow of life from beyond birth to beyond death”⁶. The soul is eternal and it passes on from one life to the other until one purifies himself of all negative *karma* and attains liberation. The belief in the cycle of births and deaths is most fundamental to Hindu tradition permeating all aspects of its thinking and doing even in contemporary times.

3. Modernity and the Rise of Nationalism in India

The paradigm shift from the traditional mode of thinking in India is effected not so much by any external influences like the invasions of Muslims and political power they yielded for centuries; not even by the British rule which lasted for 150 years, even though their influence cannot be denied. The change was effected prominently by Indians themselves who migrated to Europe for studies and returned with a new outlook to life and society having encountered Western culture and thought for themselves. Raj

Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) is the first example for this phenomenon who acknowledged the virtues of Western learning, their liberal legal and social institutions and the social ethic. The modern nationalism emerging in the West influenced the thinking and the activity of the “enlightened” personalities like Roy. The question raised was, how to reconstruct India as a modern nation on a par with other modern nation states? Three strands of thought emerged: the first one led to an attempt at reconstructing Indian society on the basis of Western ideas originating in the “ages” of Reason, Enlightenment and Liberalism, the goal here was to build a secular India; and the second wanted the reconstruction to take place on the foundation of ancient Vedic Hindu traditions. The third visualised modern India to be a nation built by the oppressed, suppressed, and marginalized people on the basis of equality, fraternity and social justice⁷. All the three strands are present in India competing with each other in moulding and shaping the society.

3.1. Nationalism based on Secularism

Secularisation is a counterpart of modernisation and the modernisation of a society assumes the existence of a nation-state, of democracy, of industrialisation and investment whether private or public and of the emergence of a middle-class, professionally involved in this change. Considerable number of Indians think in these lines and try to build a just and ethical society. But the creation of a civil society is a new experience for India and the secularising of such a society is equally an innovation. India being a multireligious and pluricultural society, it needs to intensify the movement of secularisation in order to empower the civil society by promoting social ethics involving legal order, political freedom, individual autonomy and material well-being.

The constitution of India declares that it is a secular state. The secularism of the State should preferably interface with the secularism of the society⁸. There are three aspects involved in the process of secularising Indian Society.

The first is the strengthening of civil society by insisting on defending the rights of the citizens; the second concerns the state which has to activate these rights; and the third touches on the role of religion and religious institutions in civil society and the state. India, though a secular state constitutionally, it is yet to become a secular society. Modernisation of Indian state should accompany the process of secularisation of its society.⁹

The secularisation and industrialisation has given rise to a new global phenomenon in which India too participates, i.e., the emergence of scientific rationality which is making its in-roads into every fabric of human endeavour. The process of globalization has given a fillip to this rationality. In which direction India is proceeding is a question mark, that too after the nuclear test at Pokhran. Modernity is disorienting several nations and India is an example for it: basic civil rights such as primary education and availability of basic health care facilities - the least of which a modern state expected to provide are grossly neglected. The tenets of Modernity and its priorities are to be redefined. This is a task which all nations should undertake with genuine concern for the welfare of humanity.

3.2. Nationalism founded on Hindutva Ideal:

The second movement is radically opposed to the secularism and also to the project of modernity formulated and carried on in the West. The *Hindutva* movement claims primary importance to a particular cultural form as against the moral unity of human species¹⁰.

The movement had its origin through *Arya Samaj* in 1875 founded by Dayanand Saraswati (1824 – 1883), in order to effect social and religious reform through renaissance of early Hindu doctrines. He worked for the regeneration of Hindus by adhering to a purified "Vedic faith". The Movement became stronger when Keshab Baliram Hedgewar founded the RSS (*Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh*) in 1925. The objective of RSS is the unification of the Hindu community and the inculcation of a militant awareness of its common heritage and destiny. These ideals were reformulated by V.D. Savarkar in his treatise on "*Hindutva*" which has become the title for an ideology which refers to a people united by a common country, blood, history, religion, culture and language. The ideology is relentlessly implemented and propagated by RSS through its nearly thirty filial organisations together known as the Family of RSS (sangh parivar). In order to propagate *Hindutva* world-wide and forge a corporate identity for the Hindus another organisation called *Vishva Hindu Parishad* (VHP: World Organisation of the Hindus) was founded in 1964. The final goal of this movement is to have a Hindu state ruled by a Hindu party¹¹.

3.3. The Nationalism Envisaged by the Oppressed Classes of India.

In contrast to the Hindutva movement, the modern India saw the rise of the oppressed classes as a force to reckon with. Dr. Bhimrao (Babasaheb) Ambedkar (1891- 1956) was the contemporary leader of this movement who led a fight against untouchability, Hinduism and the *Brahman* caste, declaring that caste was not only unjust but also immoral. He argues that if caste was to be destroyed, then its religious foundation in the *Vedas* and other scriptures (*Shastras*) must also be destroyed. According to him “it is wrong to say that the problem of Untouchables is a social problem ... the problem of the Untouchables is fundamentally a political problem.”¹² He launched his revolutionary movement for the liberation and advancement of the *Dalits* (low caste people). The movement seeks to construct an alternative identity of the people based on non-Aryan, non-north Indian and low-caste perspective, that was critical not only of the attitude of oppression of the dominant Hindu caste society but also of its claims to antiquity and to being the major Indian tradition¹³.

Conclusion:

The project of Modernity in the West had rational and normative contents. The former was given by Kant who “installed reason in the supreme seat of judgement before which anything that made a claim to validity had to be justified”¹⁴. The latter was centered on universalism, subjectivism and egalitarianism¹⁵.

The same principles could be applicable to India. In the place of Kant India has Gandhi and his concept of truth. For him truth had three meanings: ontologically it was *sat*, “reality”, existentially it was the personal conviction, and empirically it was something to be constantly explored and discovered through discernment of seeking. India needs another Raja Ram Mohan Roy to give normative content to its modernity, namely, to bring together different strands and weave them into a unity as envisioned by Vedic seers: “The Truth is one, the wise call it by many names”¹⁶.

Notes

¹ Lucius Outlaw, “Life-worlds, Modernity, and Philosophical Praxis: Race, Ethnicity and Critical Social Theory”, in *Culture and Modernity*, Ed. By Eliot Deutsch, Delhi: 1994, 22f.

² J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, Vol. 1, Stuttgart: 1960, 289f. cited by Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe*, Delhi:1990

³ Brih. Up. 3.2.13.

⁴ Ibid. 4.4.2

⁵ Ibid. 4.4.5

- ⁶ T.M.P. Mahadevan, “The Religio-Philosophic Culture of India”, in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. 1. Calcutta: 1970, 178
- ⁷ .S.M..Michael, “Dialogue with Hindutva: Is it possible”, *Mission*, Vol.1, (1999), 1-29.
- ⁸ Romila Thapar, “The Sacred and the Secular”, *Sunday Herald*, June 20, 1999, pp.1, 6.
- ⁹ Cf. Donald Eugene Smith, *India as a Secular State*, London: 1963.
- ¹⁰ Cf. P.D. Mathew, *Hinduism, Hindutva and Secularism*, New Delhi: 1999
10. Cf. J.T.F. Jordens, *Dayanand Saraswati: His Life and Ideas*, Delhi: 1978; Tapan Basu and others, *Khaki Shorts, Saffron Flags*, Hyderabad: 1993.; Cf. Richard D. Lambert, “Hindu Communal Groups in Indian Politics”, in Richard L. Park and Irene Tinker (eds) *Leadership and Political Institutions in India*, Princeton: 1959.
- ¹² Ambedkar, B.R. *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables*, Bombay: 1945, 190.
- ¹³ Gail Omvedt, *Cultural revolt in a colonial Society: The Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India , 1873 to 1930*, Pune: 1976; Vasant Moon, *Dr . Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*. Vol 4. Bombay: 1987. M.S. Gore, *The Social Context of an Ideology. Ambedkar’s Political and Social Thought*, New Delhi: 1993. A.M. Rajasekhariah, *B.R. Ambedkar: The Politics of Emancipation*. Bombay: 1971.
- ¹⁴ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. by Fredrick Lawrence, Massachusetts : 1987, 16 – 18.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 5
- ¹⁶ ekam sat vipra buhudha vadanti. (Rgveda 1.164.46).

Reference Data: *Kulturen Zwischen Tradition und Innovation*, Ed. By Raul Fornet-Betancourt, Frankfurt: IKO Verlag, 2001. 115 –121.

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

South -South Intercultural Dialogue from Indian Perspective.

1. Asymmetry of cultures and the need for South-South dialogue

The subject of the paper needs clarification regarding two points: what do we mean by South- South reality and what is the need and urgency for a South –South dialogue.

As we know that to understand others and to be understood by the others constitute the basic principle of all human phenomenon of communication. Why do human beings understand each other? What is the basis of human communication? Ancient Indian sages had an interesting answer. Human communication is possible because there is a ‘thread’ that binds together all of them. Hence the master questions his pupil, “Do you know that *thread* by which this world and the other world and all things are tied together?¹ This thread constitutes the ground of all human communication and understanding. But we can ask, ‘what is this thread?’, the answer of the sages will be, “that One²” (*tad ekam*). But this One is ‘unborn’ and hence pre-conceptual; in other words he remains eternally an object of human seeking and inquiry:

“I, unknowing, ignorant, here
Ask the wise sages for the sake of knowledge;
What was That One, in the form of the unborn,
Who established these six worlds?³”

The One is the object of transcendental consciousness to be intuitively experienced and realized, characterized as pre-conceptual and pre-reflective awareness. What is the object of actual and conceptual understanding then? What do we understand and what is it that can be understood? The object of our understanding is the temporal, historical world, in other words, according to the sages it is the world of ‘names’: “That which is One, the sages name differently⁴”. This historical temporal world, named differently, is according to the sages, constitutes multiplicity and plurality and the object of all human perception and knowledge and hence subject to conceptualization and becomes the realm of human communication and sharing.

What is the dynamic that underlies human communication and sharing in this temporal world? The answer could be different depending on the 'standpoint' one takes. In the Vedic tradition the temporal world is maintained by the sacrifices (*yajña*), and sacrifices become effective through the sacred formula, known as 'Bràman', which is conceived to be impregnated with divine power. We can conclude from this that it is the 'power', invested in the sacred formula (*mantra*) that maintains the temporal order. But the word 'power', expressed through the word Bràman came to be 'transcendental' through further theological reflection and corresponding to that on the temporal side there came to be the priest, *Brahmàn* (stress on the second syllable), who represented power on earth, with which he could control the cult as well as the effect of sacrifices⁵. Thus the One from transcendental point of view is the Bràman, the Ultimate Reality and from temporal point of view is the Brahmàn, the member of the priestly class, both being invested with divine and temporal powers respectively.

The priestly class being invested with so much power, sought relentlessly to consolidate it and stabilize it by making it unquestionable. This they did by founding it firmly on theological foundation and making it integral part of religious belief and the moral code. Thus in the creation of the world through the sacrifice of Cosmic Man (*purusha*) we have the following narration:

When they divided up the man

His mouth became the Brahmàn, his arms

Became the warrior – prince, his legs

The common man who plies his trade.

The lowly serf was born from his feet.⁶

Supremacy of priestly class was willed by the Creator himself by producing him from his mouth and no creature can deign to refute it. The dialectic of power is such that it always consolidates and the powerful become unquestionable and irrefutable by the powerless.

In the moral code of Manu, the priestly class (later on came to be known as Brāhmanas) is divinised and considered to be worthy of union with the Absolute:

Simultaneously there is the degradation of the lowest class the The very birth of the Brāhmana is an eternal incarnation of the sacred law; for he is born to (fulfill) the sacred law , and becomes one with Brāhman⁷

Shudras (presently known as Dalits) who have no other role but be at the beck and call of the higher castes:

The service of Brāhmanas alone is declared (to be) an excellent occupation for a shudra; for whatever else besides this he may perform will bear him no fruit.⁸

One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Shudra, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes⁹.

No accumulation of wealth must be made by a Shudra , even though he be able (to do it); for a shudra who has acquired wealth, gives pain to Brāhmanas¹⁰.

The importance of Caste dichotomy lies in the fact that it has been assiduously nurtured throughout the past three millennia and presently penetrates every cultural aspect of contemporary Indian society and presents a paradigm for social asymmetry in the Indian cultural history. What is important for us here to note is that it is the conception of ‘power’ that has sustained it throughout the history. The polarity between the powerful and the powerless finds historical expression in India and presents a paradigm to understand the reality of North-South Dichotomy. The South-South reality can be comprehended only when it is contrasted with the North and the dynamics that sustains the two is the polarity between the powerful and the powerless.

The caste dichotomy brings to light an important aspect of the dynamics of power¹¹ that it invariably yields to the phenomenon of inequality. Exercise of power willy-nilly enhances asymmetry and injustice, even if it is not consciously intended. To envisage a situation of total equality is chimerical and that of perfect justice is utopian; but power is an ingredient that can actually be used to establish justice and equality among cultures and societies, but nevertheless, it has hardly been the case in the history; on the other hand human history is a history of consolidation of power and hegemonisation by hook or crook resulting in the aggrandizement of human

inequalities. What differentiates the powerful from the powerless is the inequality that exists between them. India recognized and sought for a transcendental unity but never could conceive such unity at the anthropological level of its culture due to the fact that the hierarchy of social structure founded on the asymmetry of power was very stable and firm. As a result there was no effective dialogue worth the name in India between the Dalits and high caste people. Last three millennia the high Caste Indians always sought to be understood by the Dalits and never took care to understand them¹². What India needs therefore is a deculturalisation¹³ of the higher castes and an intracultural dialogue among Dalits with the aim to make themselves strong. Strength begets strength, power begets power. No rights can be claimed without equal strength. Dialogue without this moral strength will never bear fruits between unequal partners. In South Africa Apartheid existed for so many centuries and for three millennia the high caste Indians exploited the Dalits because the latter were powerless. The weaker ones make themselves the object of exploitation by the powerful, unless they unite themselves and consolidate enough power to resist exploitation. The unethical principle, “Might is right” cannot be fought without power and equivalent might.

The same is entirely true with regard to the North-South Dialogue which represent the powerful and powerless polarities respectively and unless this polarity is eliminated, no effective interaction and collaboration can be expected between the two. There is no other way to abolish the polarity except the powerless South empowers itself by South-South collaboration. This explains the existential urgency for a dialogue that bears concrete fruits. The dialogue can create atmosphere of sharing at all levels among its constituents which can give impetus to a new cultural and anthropological unity among them.

The collapse of colonialism during the 20th century resulted in the breakdown of East-West dichotomy, impelling the powerful to play the new game of domination and hegemonisation. The rise of USA as a superpower and collapse of Soviet Republic shifted the axis of power centres giving rise to North-South dichotomy characterised by a neo-colonialism. The

phenomenon called Globalization with new ingredients of scientific rationality, technological formations and global market dynamics provided powerful North opportunities to establish new structures for the universalisation of its particularities and to dictate terms to the powerless South and exercise power over it. The North remains now at the centre, with power and capacity to dominate and to dictate terms to South. The South, being pushed to the periphery remains marginalized, helpless and powerless.

Hence South-South dialogue is a question of survival for the South and an opportunity to empower itself. But no dialogue is possible if there is total incommensurability between the proposed dialogue partners. This means that there should be some commensurability between them that brings them together and impels them to initiate dialogue. What is it that should bring together the entire 'South'? In other words, what is the 'thread' that binds together all the nations of South. The answer is simple: it is the consciousness of its own reality of powerlessness. The South has been pushed to the periphery because it is powerless. The purpose of the dialogue for the 'South' is to 'empower' itself and become strong. Effective dialogue should bring all southern nations together, giving rise to mutual sharing of ingredients that make one powerful with the sole aim of establishing a strong unity through the consolidation of all their energies which would enable them to initiate renewed dialogue with the North as equal partners¹⁴.

2. Interculturality and South-South dialogue

The constituents of the 'South' are so diverse in their perspectives and historical conditions, only a dialogue from intercultural perspective can be an enriching and empowering experience to all the participants of the dialogue. What do we mean by interculturality?¹⁵ Interculturality is basically an attitude which while affirming individuality and particularity of each culture, takes care that no particularity is universalized and absolutised through the process of hegemonisation. Only universal principle that pervades intercultural dialogue is the right of every culture "to understand the other and to be understood by the other" which constitute the two faces of the same hermeneutical coin. The following dialogue between a Buddhist monk Philosopher Nagasena and the King

Milinda delineates a healthy atmosphere for effective intercultural dialogue:

Then the king said, “Venerable sir, will you discuss with me again.”
“If your majesty will discuss as a scholar, yes; but if you will discuss as a king, no.”
“How is it then that scholars discuss?”
“When scholars discuss there is summing up, unraveling one or other is shown to be in error and he admits his mistake and yet is not thereby angered.”
And how is it that kings discuss?”
When a king discusses a matter and he advances a point of view, if anyone differs from him on that point he is apt to punish him.”
“Very well then, it is as a scholar that I will discuss. Let your reverence talk without fear.”¹⁶

Nagasena while proposing conditions for honest dialogue, demands that the dialogue must be ethically founded and it should remain not merely as a way of communication but also a way of life. Dialogue as critical discussion of human relationships should help people how to reason and also how to solve differences in a rational manner.

The intercultural dialogue while denouncing the dynamics of big fish eating small fish, creates on the contrary proper atmosphere for the small fish to grow and realize its potentialities. Concretely it means no particular culture aims at metaphysical hyostatisation, on the other hand, all unitedly seek moral grounds for common action. While respecting all perspectives, no dialogue partner attempts to reduce or absorb the other into his own perspective. Such a dialogue can promote pluralistic norm of live and let live, believe and let believe. The dialogue partners meet to differ and differ to meet. It is a dialogue based on non-reductive, open, creative and tolerant hermeneutics¹⁷ that remains open to analogous structural patterns¹⁸ and overcomes all centrisms. When cultures meet in the spirit of interculturality, they promote the cause of collaboration and communication among them. In China the three religions Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism constituted of three different world-views

have succeeded to integrate all the three with the perspective “three teachings, one family”.

Intercultural attitude brings the dialogue partners together around one table as members of one family to plan and to act in a corporate manner, to share and grow unitedly with a strong will to become powerful as a single body without any intention by any one culture to establish hegemony over the other culture in any aspect of cultural life, specially political and economic. The dialogue should also help its constituents to organize corporate action against the internal and external forces that militate against mutual accommodation and assimilation and dissuade them from ways of importunate detrimental action.

3. South-South dialogue, mutual sharing and common unity.

The dialogue between South-South will be futile if it does not lead to mutual sharing. Sharing can be at different levels: lowest level of sharing is between the master and his slave which does not in any way contribute to the growth of the personality of the slave. Here the master not only dominates but also proposes all conditions of sharing and the receiver has only the obligations to fulfill the conditions, which by degrees only demoralizes him. Sharing between equal partners promotes the growth and development of both, as both mutually agree upon the conditions of sharing and take upon themselves the moral responsibility of mutual welfare. Most important ingredient that the South – South can share is the knowledge, knowing well that knowledge is power. Sharing of knowledge at all levels, scientific, technological and philosophical can not only promote the welfare of both the donor and the receiver and help them to grow equitably but also build up their power capacities in an aggregate manner.

Sharing should be complementary and mutual, encompassing both giving and receiving, if not, the receiver will always be receiving converting himself into a victim and the donor *mutatis mutandis* into an oppressor and manipulator. Sharing, if genuine, should go to unwrap the power potentialities of both resulting in enrichment, development and growth.

South-South dialogue and sharing need to be oriented towards an historical unity¹⁹ that does not ignore the diversity and multiplicity of participating

constituents but holds them together with a powerful goal of united action and self empowerment. Such a unity cannot be inductively derived from the actual historicity of individual constituents that go to make South, nor is it an abstract universal that cohesively integrates all similarities between races and cultures of the South. But it is a unity founded on a moral demand for justice and equality and the result of a conscious will to empower oneself. It is a unity, despite plurality of cultures, languages, races and world-views, all of which find their respective place and value in the total unity based on a higher ideology to be realized historically, is to be worked out from the grass- root level rising up to the supreme political authority in all the constituents of the South. It is a unity meticulously planned and systematically worked out oriented towards the concrete objective of fighting against any marginalisation or oppression by external forces on the one hand and taking up corporate projects that strengthen self empowerment on the other.

The south-south unity should entail both quality and quantity as the former, though very significant in itself, will be too 'ideal' without the latter. When both are integrated, the unity becomes historical, visible, recognizable, and action oriented. Without such a unity the South will only maintain its *status quo* forever, but if it succeeds to realize corporate unity, it will be transformed into an equal partner with North. And this will bound to usher in North-South unity, nay, unity of humanity itself. When South makes itself so powerful that it can qualify itself to sit in dialogue with the North on equal terms, the North is coerced to share its power with it in view of its own welfare and stability. That will be the first step in establishing a human community founded on justice and equality. Only then can the humanity seek for a transcendental unity envisaged by the sages in the conception of *tad ekam*, 'that One'. If that too is realized, there will be a new heaven and a new earth, where no one will be left hungry and thirsty, no one will be oppressed, and all will seek the welfare of all beings.

Notes

¹ . Brihदारanyaka Upanishad 3.7.1; For an answer to the question Cf. 3.7.23 and 3.8.11. Cf. The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, tr., R. E. Hume, London 1931 (R. 1977).

² Rigveda I.164. 6, 46; III. 54. 8-9; III. 56.2ab; VIII 58, 2; Atharva Veda XIII. 4. 12-21. Cf. Raymundo Panikkar, *Vedic Experience*, New Delhi 2001) p. 660. Cf. also Rgveda Samhita, tr., by Satya Prakash Saraswati and Satyakam Vidyalkar, 13 Vols., 1977-86; The Hymns of the Rgveda, tr., by R. T. H. Griffith, ed. by J. L. Shastri, Delhi 1973; Hymns of the Atharvaveda (2 Vols) by R. T. H. Griffith, New Delhi, 1985.

³ Rig Veda I.164, 6

⁴ Rig Veda I. 164. 46.

⁵ This is due to the evolution of the meaning of the Sacrifice. What makes sacrifices fruitful? The power to make the sacrifice effective cannot be something that is external to it. It should be something that is very integral to itself and this integral part of the sacrifice is the mantra, known as 'Bràman' meaning 'prayer', (with accent on the base, bràh -, which constitutes an action known with neuter gender). But who is the one that actually utters this 'Bràman'? Certainly, it is the Brahman, the priest (with accent on the prefix - màn, which constitutes an agent noun with masculine gender.) the member of the first class in the society. The power of the sacrifices thus came to be concentrated in the "priest", which he can manipulate as he wants and thus remain supreme in the society. Cf. H.Oldenberg, *Zur Gesichte des Wortes bràhman*, Nachrichten von der Koeniglichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Goettingen., Berlin, 1916, 715-744. Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of Upanishads*, New York, 1966. 126f.; Cf. Belvalkar and Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy, Creative Period*, S.K. Belvalkar and R.D. Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy, The Creative Period*, New Delhi, 1927 (reprint 1974.) Oldenberg, Hermann, *The Religion of the Veda*, trans. Shridhar B.Shrotri. Delhi 1988, pp. 181 ff, 207 ff. ; Keith, Arthur Berriedale. 1925. *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, *Harvard Oriental Series*, Ed. Charles Rockwell Lanman, Vo. 32. London 1925. pp. 442 ff.

⁶ Purana S'kta X.90. verse 11 and 12. We are not trying to delineate a theory for the emergence of the complex phenomenon of Caste system (or Varna theory) from a historical point of view. Our aim is only to give a philosophical background for the problem of inequality – which is the basis of North-South dichotomy - in Indian cultural tradition. Cf Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Demographic Revolution*, New Delhi 1994. pp. 21 –58; Tripathy Rebat Ballav, *Dalits: A sub-human society*, New Delhi 1994, pp. 3-64.

⁷ The Law of Manu (Mânava-dharma- shâstra) 1. 98. Cf. G.Buehler (Trans), *The Law of Manu, The Sacred Books of the East*, Ed. By Max Mueller, Vol. XXV, Delhi 1970.

⁸ Ibid. 10.123

⁹ Ibid. 1. 91

¹⁰ Ibid. 10.129; Cf. Jhingran S., *Aspects of Hindu Morality*, Delhi 1971; McKenzie J., *Hindu Ethics - A Historical And Critical Essay*, New Delhi 1971

¹¹ Power is defined as “capacity to effect change”, “the ability to move reality”, and “being actualizing itself over against the threat of non-being”. Power can be compared to the concept we have of energy – boundless and dynamic – but with the difference that power becomes ‘human’ as it exists in human beings and integral to human act. It becomes an observable phenomenon only when some one makes uses of it. It is intimately related to human decision making process which give direction to power, nay, the power is exercised and made effective through the human decisions. It is also determines the means and goals of human activity. Cf. H.Cox, “Power”, *Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, p. 265.; R. Guardini, , *Power and Responsibility*, (Chicago: 1961), p. 2. ; P. Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice* , New York , 1960, p. 47; Thomas McMahon, “The Moral Aspects of Power,” *Concilium*, 1973, pp. 51-65

¹² During the last two centuries leaders like Babasaheb Ambedkar (1891-1956), Jotirao Phule (1826 - 1890) and E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker (1879 – 1973) etc., tried to lead an intra-cultural dialogue among the Dalits themselves in order to empower them. As a result we have the Indian Constitutions with good number of privileges to the Dalits but these have not yet reached to the grass root level. Gail Omvedt, *Cultural revolt in a colonial Society: The Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India , 1873 to 1930*, Pune: 1976; Vasant Moon, *Dr . Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*. Vol 4. Bombay: 1987. M.S. Gore, *The Social Context of an Ideology. Ambedkar’s Political and Social Thought*, New Delhi: 1993. A.M. Rajasekhariah, *B.R. Ambedkar: The Politics of Emancipation*. Bombay: 1971

¹³ Raul Fornet-Betancourt, *Philosophy as Intercultural*, *Vijnanadipeti*, 4 (2000), 145 ff.

¹⁴ Gerd-Ruediger Hoffmann, “Balance of Power: African and Western Philosophies” *Vijnanadipiti*, 5(2000), 47-75.; Dina V. Picotti, “Dialogue and Power”, *Vijnanadipiti*, 5(200) 35-46.

¹⁵ Raul Fornet-Betancourt, “Philosophische Voraussetzungen des interkulturellen Dialogs”, *Unterwegs zur interkulturellen Philosophie*, ed. by Raul Fornet-Betancourt, Frankfurt, 1998, pp. 148- 166; Franz Martin Wimmer, “Ansaetze einer interkulturellen Philosophie”, *Philosophische Grudnlagen der Interkulturalitaet*, hrsg. Von R.A. Mall / D. Lohmar, Amsterdam 1993. pp. 29-40; Ram Adhar Mall, “Intercultural Thinking – Asian Perspective”, *Kulturen der Philosophie*, ed. By Raul Fornet-Betancourt, *Concordia*, 19 (1996), 67-82. Vincent Gabriel Furtado, Asian Perspectives for the Development of Intercultural Thought, *Concordia*, 9 (1996), 83-100.

¹⁶ B. Pesala, *The Debate of King Milinda*. (Delhi 1991), 4-5.

¹⁷ Ram Adhar Mall, *Intercultural Philosophy*, New York 2000, 52-58

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15 f.

¹⁹ Georgia Warnke, “Communicative rationality and cultural values”, *The Cambridge Companion to HABERMAS*, ed. By Stephen K. White, Cambridge, pp. 129-140; Tobias J.G. Louw (Fort Hare), “Democracy in an Ethical Community” *Philosophy and*

Democracy in Intercultural Perspective, ed. By Heinz Kimmerle/Franz. M. Wimmer, Amsterdam 1994, pp.203-220; R.A. Mall, *Intercultural Philosophy*, 45-58.

Reference Data: *Intercultural Philosophy from Indian Perspective*, Bangalore: 2004, 83-94.

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

PHILOSOPHY AND INTERCULTURALITY IN INDIA

1. Introduction

The theme proposed for our debate today refers to philosophy and interculturality, the latter concept being an aspect of interrelatedness and intersubjectivity conditioned by the ramifications of a particular culture. In order to give a concrete orientation to our discussions we could begin our discussion by asking the question, ‘what do we understand by ‘culture’?’ rather than raising the question ‘what do we understand by ‘philosophy’?’

Every human being is invariably born within a particular cultural milieu, grows up breathing the air impregnated with a particular culture and weltanschauung, learns to speak its language and assimilates the world-view of that culture and thus gets rooted in it. Culture is thus **pre-given** to man, pre-intentionally shaping his explicit intentional relations to the world in general; nay, for a human his culture is the condition for the possibility of existing in a common world. It becomes his way of being-in-the-world. Different cultures could therefore be described as different ways of human’s being-in-the-world having different world-views. What makes actually the difference between the cultures is the different understanding of Being, which underlies the differences in the grasping of truths, beliefs, and norms of interrelatedness. These in turn express themselves in a variety of religions, philosophies, languages, arts, codes of conduct etc.

2. Possibility of Intercultural Philosophy

Further, human being’s way of relating to the world involves the dynamics of affirmation and negation. Hence, humans while assimilating a particular culture have also within themselves the capacities to reform, recreate, transform, modify, and revolutionise the assimilated culture. And if we were to attempt to describe human beings without any ontological prejudices, we observe that there are constitutive elements in their nature which are culturally neutral. Human potentialities such as thinking, understanding, consciousness etc. are open to any culture although existential exigencies feed these faculties with the patterns of thought in which one finds oneself from birth. Nevertheless, Epistemological

capabilities of human beings are such that while being rooted in one culture, they can grasp, assimilate and understand other cultural traditions and make themselves at home in another's home if spatio-temporal exigencies demand. This phenomenological observation of the human situation speaks volumes for the possibilities of intercultural thought. What we lack may be an acceptable theory of intercultural hermeneutics, which is a task we need to undertake, a task which demands right orientation and attitude towards the cultures other than our own and an openness to the understanding of their conception of Being.

3. Philosophy and Interculturality in India

With this background we try to elucidate the India perspectives of Intercultural Philosophy. If culture could be understood as a way of being-in-the-world, then Indian culture¹ (assuming that we can speak of such a cultural entity in general) presupposes a particular way of being-in-the-world and a particular understanding of Being. It is obligatory therefore, to grasp the conception of Being and Reality in India on the one hand, and expressions of this conception *ad extra* realised in religion, philosophy, language etc., on the other, so that we can project the salient perspectives for our discussion on the topic of Philosophy and Interculturality in India.

In India the attention of thinkers predominantly concentrated on the question of Being, i.e., history in this part of the world witnessed a relentless search to dis-cover or un-cover (*nir-vr*)² the meaning of Being and to ground the ontic plurality on the ontological understanding of the Being. As a result one does not observe any dichotomy between the Being and the beings, both the dimension of the reality being well integrated into a coherent whole, founded on sound intuitive reasoning into the meaning of Being itself.

The question of Being and the beings is the same as the question of the One and the many. The problem of interculturality is to be ultimately reduced to the problem of One and many or that of Being and the beings. One cannot speak meaningfully of intercultural thought unless one has discovered the meaning of pluralism. Any hermeneutics of intercultural thought should be preceded by a hermeneutics of pluralism. It is not enough to take for granted the fact of pluralism but we need to integrate it within our

world-view and thought patterns by finding an answer to the question: what could be the ontological foundation of ontic plurality.

This short introduction attempts to introduce how India has provided such an answer in its past and how it could serve as a paradigm for the development of intercultural thought. The multiplicity of thought and expressions are not merely juxtaposed facts but they are integrated and assimilated into a coherent world-view which has the dynamism to absorb further elements of development of thought and life-style. We can delineate the following important characteristics of this world-view:

1. The progress in Indian philosophy is actually a process of regression *ad intra*, as it is a movement from common awareness to original awareness. It is a process from the beings to the Being in order to return to the beings in a right perspective; it is a process from the unmanifest to the manifest so that the meaning of manifestations could be laid bare.³

2. The regression is from cosmological and physiological categories to psychological categories. It is the experience of the seekers that the ultimate Being is to be found neither in cosmological categories nor in physiological categories but to find it one should turn to one's own self, to the inner core of one's own being, to the cave of heart.⁴ As a result the emphasis is on the study of the states of consciousness,⁵ leading to the original awareness.

3. Knowledge was thought of essentially as an awakening and not something which man acquires through the use of his cognitive faculties. It was taken for granted that the true knowledge is a discovery of what one actually is and not the acquisition of something which one does not possess. Hence the enquiry after that knowledge knowing which everything else will be known,⁶ which involved a shift from the empirical and the rational categories to the intuitive reasoning.⁷

4. The seeking on the part of seeker results in the revelation of the Being called "enlightenment" or "awakening"⁸. It is the shining of the Being before the seeker like a "smokeless flame"⁹, it is an "intuitive experiencing of Truth with one's whole being"¹⁰, it is again an insight into the Being and Reality, a sort of subtle and piercing intuition¹¹ attained through the approach mentioned above, but the approach only disposes one to the revelation, uncovering and uncealedness of the Being; the

Enlightenment in itself is an eruption, a sudden manifestation of the Being, the Being unveiling its form.¹² This experience is the bond that connects Being and beings, One and the many, gives ontological foundation to the ontic multiplicity, provides unity to diversity and gives meaning to pluralism.

5 The experience of awakening or enlightenment is also an experience of the revelation of the meaning of Being a “perception of the essence”¹³, which renders cohesive Unity to the whole reality. It is a climax of one’s relentless seeking resulting in the experience of Unity at the microcosmic and macrocosmic levels of being¹⁴, characterized as cosmotheandric¹⁵ and also labeled as ‘universism’¹⁶, which affirms that ultimate ground for one’s own existence can be transposed to the cosmic plane, as world should be considered as the cosmic equivalent of a human being (microcosm) animated by a spirit. This perspective rejects any dichotomy between macro and microcosm, integrates human being as an integral reality of the cosmos projecting a cohesive vision of the whole as a unity of the divine, human and the cosmic.

4. Interculturality in India

The basic conception of Reality as One, which simultaneously manifests everything, has been filtered through the day to day life and thinking of Indians, promoting cross-cultural interaction and giving rise to a multicultural society. Philosophically Indian people recognise and rationalise the fact that there exist many different world-views, religious traditions and cultures in the world. All these, even with seemingly conflicting doctrines have their source in the One which reconciles even the dialectic of opposites.

This fundamental attitude is an outcome of the encounters and interactions for centuries between numerous races, castes, religious traditions and languages. History gives sufficient evidence for the encounter between Aryans, Sumerians, Akkadians, Harappans, Dravidians, Mundas and other aboriginal groups in ancient India. Since the time of the invasion of the Turkish ruler Mahmud of Ghazni (1001 A.D.), the Islam culture has grown and is rooted in India, and since the arrival of Vasco-da-Gama (1498 A.D.), Europe too has considerably promoted cross-cultural interaction

specially through the English language and literature. The encounters and interactions involved battles and fights, controversies and misunderstandings, suspicions and quarrels, but nevertheless, no culture was annihilated, but all got integrated through intermingling and even through intermarriages. Today in India every child in metropolitan cities¹⁷ converses fluently in two or three languages before stepping in the school-door. Speaking three languages means absorbing three world-views, three ways of looking at the same phenomenon.

5. Contemporary situation

But the process does not seem to continue as the traditional world – views based on above characteristics is undergoing radical changes in India due to the impact of Globalisation¹⁸ founded on the principles of hegemonization and universalization of one particular cultural perspectives. Hindutva movement¹⁹ in India is an offshoot of a new consciousness of particular identity giving rise to series of intercultural conflicts in the recent past. The craving to experience and consolidate temporal power over the ‘other’ and to “neutralize the other”²⁰ has resulted in the breakdown of traditional values of non-violence (ahimsa) and tolerance, and also in an attitude of disrespect to the basic experience of oneness and wholeness propagated in the long tradition of Asia.

8. Conclusion

The theme of this Congress being reconstruction of our philosophical traditions and curricula through the challenges posed by the intercultural debate, we could ask what are the challenges the Indian and the Asian philosophy poses today to the humanity and to the globalized world. This is a point to be best left for our discussions. But one point that we can fruitfully reflect is that proposed by Alfonso Reyes on Universalism. According to Reyes, “the mission of the New World was ecumenical overcoming of cultural and racial differences between peoples and nations.” He proposes a “reconciliation of Hindu knowledge, the ancient Greek and Chinese wisdom with Western European cultures and science.”²¹ We can go into further reflection on this point so that we get some insights to reconstruct our philosophical tradition and the curricula.

Secondly, we need to inculcate in our curriculum the opportunities that enhance fruitful polylogue²² i.e., a multifaceted communication among all the cultural world-views, which would not only widen the horizon of our students of philosophy but also encourage them to dis-cover new horizons at all levels: interpersonal, cultural, political, religious, and cosmic.

Notes

¹ That India is culturally and geographically a complex reality does not need any explanation. We have left out completely the Near East India.

² Matsumoto Shiro interprets nirvana as “uncovering”: the liberation of the atman from that which not atman. Cf. Paul L. Swanson, “Zen is not Buddhism,” *Numen*, Vol.40 (1993), 124. “There is nothing by which he is not covered, nothing by which he is not bid” *Brih.*2.5.18; cf. *isa.up.*15.

³ The different steps in the regression can be broadly tabulated as follows: awareness of material reality (represented by the symbol *anna*: food) to the awareness of the mental phenomena (*manas*) and from there to the consciousness (*vijnana*) including the sub-conscious and finally to bliss (*ananda*) i.e., the original awareness where the revelation of the Being takes place (*Taittiriya Up.* 2.1-6). Cf. Fung Yu-lan. *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. by Derek Bodde. Vol. II, Delhi: 1994, 299-317. Ef. Also Hajime nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: Indo-China-Tibet-Japan*, Honolulu: 1971, 154.

⁴ *Chand. Up.*6.10-15; 3. 13.

⁵ For example the analysis of sleep and the interrelation between sleep and consciousness. Cf. *Brih.* 4/3/10-34.

⁶ *Chand. Up.*6.1 ff.; *Taittiriya Up.*2.1.

⁷ In India, to conceive reality means to become it. A seeker who meditates upon Reality in a particular way makes himself the Master of Reality as he conceives it. Cf. *Chand.*4.3.5-8; Cf. also Yu-lan, *op.cit.*, vol. I, 291 and the concept of ‘sage wisdom’ vol.III.219f and 561.

⁸ Different words used to denote this concept: *jnana*, *vimocana*, *mukti*, *satori*, *kaivalya*, *nirvana*, *moksa*, etc. Cf. George Stenger, *Intercultural Thinking—a question of Dimension and Dimensions*, Mysore: 1994, 4f.

⁹ *Katha.* II. 1.13.

¹⁰ Fung Yu-lan, *op-cit.*, vol.II, 238; For the conception of enlightenment in Lau-Tzu, cf. *ibid*, vol.I, 183-3.

¹¹ *Katha.* 1.3.12

¹² *Katha* 1.2.22

¹³ Stenger, *Intercultural Thinking*, 5.

¹⁴ The three texts where atman is identified with brahman are: *Brih.*2.5.19; 4.4.5; 4.4.25 also the text *aham Brahmasmi Brih.* 1.4.10 and *tattvamasi: Chand.* 6.9-16.

¹⁵ Raimundo Panikkar, *Vedic Experience*, Delhi 2001. p.73.

¹⁶ R.A. Mall, “Intercultural Thinking – An Asian Perspective”, *Kulturen der Philosophie, CRM Band 19, ed. By Raul Fornet-Betancourt. Aachen 1006. pp. 80 - 82.*

¹⁷ Salman Rushdie asserts that one is surrounded by 20 different cultures in Bombay; and “then there’s Indian culture”, says he in Newsweek, (February 6, 1995), 52.

¹⁸ Walter Fernandes, “Globalization, Cultural Consequence”, *Vijnanadipti*, 4(2001), pp. 172 - 177.

¹⁹ Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*, Oxford: 1999; E. Fasana, “From Hindutva to Hindu Rashtra: The Social and Political Thought of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, The 13th Modern Conference of Modern South Asian Studies, Toulouse: 1994; Yvon Ambrose, “Hindutva’s Real Agenda and Strategies”, *Hindutva, An Indian Christian Response*, Bangalore: 2002, 11 – 102.

²⁰ Leela D’Souza, “Globalization and Religion”, *Vijnanadipti*, 4(2000). p. 218.

²¹ Eugeniusz Górski, “Eastern Europe and Latin America in a comparative and Universalist Perspective” *Documentos de Trabajo*, 35. Versovia 2001, p. 13.

²² A neologism invented by Franz M. Wimmer, which means a multifaceted communication among all cultural world-views on an equal level. The ‘dialogue’, he says, has basically two interlocutors and founded on the conviction of a logic of “sic et non”. Polylogue can envelope diversity of subjects and logical possibilities. Cf. *Intellectual Philosophy a New Branch or a New Orientation in Philosophy*. Mysore: 1994, 2.

Reference data: Presented for the panel discussion in the V International Congress on Intercultural Philosophy at Seville, Spain. 2003.

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

Text, Context and the Curricula: Intercultural Perspective Teaching Philosophy in Asian Context.

1. Contextuality

The paper deals with the three main topics: “Contextuality, interculturality and Gender Sensitivity”¹ with the intention of projecting a new vision of teaching philosophy in Asian contexts so that these could be integrated into the syllabus of philosophy taught in the Universities and Institutes in Asia. An attempt is made in this paper to elaborate the above three concepts and then to propose some projects for direct implementation under each topic dealt with below. It is an evident fact that the reality of Asia is complex and the curricula being an evolving and constantly changing constituent of educational system, we can speak only of certain principles underlying such an exercise which should actually respond to the exigencies of the contexts. In this paper wherever possible we highlight the Indian perspective which could have tacit applications to other contexts of Asia.

1.1. The Concept of Contextuality

The concept of contextuality in imparting philosophical education will become clear if we look at the question from an wider perspective, namely, teaching philosophy is an integral part of the whole educational system prevalent in a nation. Not only the curricula of philosophy but the entire system of education should take into account the three topics mentioned above. Hence we shall try to have a look at the education system in general under the optics of “integral education” a concept proposed by Sri Aurobindo², and then analyse the concept of contextuality in teaching philosophy and propose concrete steps in the form of a ‘project’ for the future.

1.1.2. Educational System in general

As philosophy is one of the subjects taught in our Universities and colleges, its curricula should be viewed within the context of general teaching system prevalent in the world and in the country we represent. Secondly, teaching being

done by a teacher, we cannot overlook the qualities required to be a good teacher, and thirdly, what is to be taught is given through in the curricula, which we would like to see as a 'text' that is to be taught. None can disagree if we say that every text entails a 'context'. In the case of any education or even in the particular case of philosophical formation, the fundamental constituent of context is the 'student' or the human person himself. But human person cannot be seen in isolation as s/he is a 'being-in-the-world' and hence any formulation of curricula should take into account the 'life-world' or the particular context of the human person in the entire process of imparting of knowledge. The objective of any curricula is to impart relevant and sufficient knowledge in the subject concerned, and the objective of educational enterprise in general is the holistic development of human personality through the realization of his mental, psychological and spiritual potentialities, powers and possibilities.

All this entails basically the growth of human consciousness which is a complex entity constituted of different aspects such as noetic or scientific, aesthetic, social, ethical and religious. In any normal human growth all these aspects should be harmoniously blended and to be matured commensurate with the age of the human person in consideration. One sided emphasis on any one of these produces an imbalanced personality unable to face the future eventualities of life. If the entire system of education itself is imbalanced with biases against any one of the aspects of consciousness, then that can lead to a historical catastrophe.

We have in India at present an inherited system of education imposed on us by the colonizers with a strong contemptuous prejudice against whatever indigenous with no attempt made by them to integrate so much good found in the existing system of imparting formation with a tradition lasting for more than two millennia. As a result we have a bureaucratic system of education with entire emphasis on the 'text' centred "instruction" and the growth of the noetic consciousness, which leaves very little scope for creativity and the development of human potentialities and powers of the spirit. What we have now is the pathetic sight of children carrying an immense load of text books that manifests clearly a dire neglect of the 'context' of the child who is the primary agent of all learning.

When we come to the University education which concentrates on 'specialisation' of a particular branch of knowledge, we seldom see any attention paid to the integral development of the personality of the student, who has to face the future on his own, may be at times, inadequately equipped, in spite of spending so many years in the acquisition of so called specialised knowledge.

The question is not what science we specialize in, but what we shall do with our science and the 'know-how' of it. How development of scientific mind and temper is to be correlated to other power-bestowing parts of our intelligence and human nature. A concept of integral education should lay equal emphasis on human values, growth of all dimensions of human consciousness which is possible only when the 'text' of the curricula takes into account the 'context' of the human persons with a thought to their future survival as a human community of interrelated human persons.

All formation or training of future citizens should take into account not only the universal humanity and the individual person with all their respective characteristics, but also the intermediary entity called the particular 'culture' which is by its very nature 'pre-given' and hence determines one's initial world view as s/he imbibes its value systems, symbols, languages, and the beliefs. Through a purposeful orientation of her/his mind and spirit, s/he should be able to preserve, strengthen and enrich the positive values in her/his culture, while remaining open to other cultural values which s/he encounters in the world as they too are bound to enhance the qualities of her/his personality.

The teacher should combine both the text and the context and he can do this through instruction, example and influence. According to Sri Aurobindo³, teaching should be less a process of instruction and more of an awakening that enhances the process of growth of the faculties and experiences of the student. A teacher is like a farmer who throws the seed into the field that is well prepared and suitable, but the seed should sprout through its own internal process of fostering. A teacher never imposes his views and opinions, but always inspire students with new challenges by presenting a new vision of reality. He should always be aware that examples are more powerful than instructions and

influence is more effective than example. Example leads to motivation, and influence through personal relationship gives direction to life.

The concept of integral education consists in embracing in a harmonious manner the academic, psychological, physical, spiritual and social dimensions of human growth. The goal of natural science should not only be to promote material welfare but to discover the presence of the Spirit in the nature and its manifold appearances.

While study of ethics should lead one to seek the *summum bonum*, the *Dharma*, that of aesthetics to see the integration of reason, truth and beauty. The study of humanities should go to “inspire the regeneration in spite of all previous failures. Finally all education should encourage unity and harmony of knowledge and also foster the spirit of universality and oneness⁴.”

Another important element of Integral education is creativity which is possible only when the spiritual and psychical and the material are made to evolve simultaneously. There is no opposition between matter and spirit (purusha and prakṛti), only when they unite together there is evolution and creative activity. The education should help one discover something that is inmost in the psychological complexity of human consciousness. Secondly, educational formation should help the student to discover a teleology in his own human existence. This is possible only when the psychic and spiritual realms of one's own soul are sufficiently explored and one's own place in the society and history are ascertained.

Contemporary situation in the world proposes a universal techno-scientific rationality. There is no real enthusiasm to grapple with the issues of knowledge and wisdom, but a relentless striving to capture the intricacies of power derived from ‘softnomics’, that branch of technology related to software, procedures of deriving information and ‘know-how’ with increasing speed. The interest in the knowledge is only to the extent it results in economic benefits. What is the orientation of the humanity in the world? What is of ultimate value for the humans today? The humanity is leading towards a civilization of comfort and material welfare, and all the energies of mind, benefits of sciences are focused towards an utilitarian rationality. As a result the inner spirit of man is suffocating in its bondage and yearning to be uplifted and liberated⁵. In the

background of such a situation we see the importance and relevance of a subject like philosophy, at least, as far as the Asian understanding of it goes, and in this perspective we see the future of teaching philosophy in Asian context.

1.1.3. Context of Teaching Philosophy

We insisted that teaching in general and philosophy in particular should take into account the elements of integral education delineated above. The context should also take into account the moral and spiritual degradation of contemporary humans due to which humanity faces its own nemesis. The philosopher should be a person with a prophetic message and new holistic vision of reality which he should promulgate in his teaching.

The general context in which philosophy is taught is the Departments of Philosophy existing in our Colleges and Universities. The original vision of a University was the quest for excellence and a yearning to seek a meaningful life for oneself so that s/he could propagate these values into the society. This was not so difficult as a university graduate was considered to be a person of caliber. The concept of preparing young men and women for professional life was conspicuous by its absence. Now that the Universities have been given the image of bureaucratic corporations that produce professionals with degrees and merits suited for placements, the emphasis and the orientation is no more on knowledge and excellence with a harmonious development of the personality but the suitability of the graduate to be a fit candidate in the job-market. In the market an individual person has value only in so far as s/he can produce profits. Such a system will no more lay emphasis on the realization of the potentialities and powers of the spirit, but consider the individual person as a function, a cog in the wheel of the globally conceived material development. A student who cannot fit into this competitive world is simply left aside to fetch for himself.

Coming closer to the subject of philosophy, India - along with China and Greece⁶ - is generally acknowledged as an ancient abode where indigenous philosophy flourished. No doubt, it witnessed rigorous philosophical activity till the classical period, but since colonization, no philosophical activity worth the name can be traced. The colonizers with their absolutising mentality and the attitude of hegemonising declared, that there is no 'philosophy' as such in India,

what it could claim is only religious spirituality attributed to the realm of imagination, and hence introduced whole scale Western Philosophy in the University curricula. Of course later on Indian philosophy was integrated into the curricula and now at least in the curricula both Indian and Western thought systems get equal importance.

The remark made by Wimmer is perfectly applicable to Indian philosophers: “Non-occidental thinkers are in a mess... Either they behave as occidental philosophers do. In that case they are considered not to be true representatives of their respective cultures any more. Or they behave as their forefathers were supposed to have been behaving. Then they are not considered to be true philosophers, at least not in such a sense that contemporary academic philosophers would feel bound to take their arguments seriously”⁷. Concerning India, what we can truly declare is that contemporary Indian philosophers as a body have miserably failed to assert their own philosophical identity; if there is some recognition to Indian philosophy in the world, the credit should go to some Western philosophers who specialized in Indian thought⁸. India has made a mark in technology and software but in its own indigenous field of philosophy and culture, hardly any outstanding academic figure of international caliber is found today. The modern Indian philosophers mostly hang on the aprons of British philosophy developed in Cambridge and Oxford preoccupied to defend and validate Indian thought in terms Western philosophical movements rather than investigate and project Indian philosophy validating its identity in itself.

1.2. Projects for the future

i. The project of contextual philosophy should be to make the curricula of philosophy context sensitive. This is concretely done by making the curricula a harmonious combination of the text and the context. If the text should provide a historiographical knowledge of how philosophy of different traditions responded to the philosophical problems and carried on the enquiry into the reality in their own particular historical context, the integration of this text with the context should encourage the future philosophers to critically evaluate the present historical condition, from different perspective: philosophical, moral, socio-political, cultural and the like. This should set in motion a passionate

involvement in the process of philosophizing that is context sensitive, critical towards social injustice, prophetic against the violations of human rights and propagation of fundamentalism of all hues.

ii. The curricula of philosophy should be aimed at the implementation of the ideal of integral education. Specialisation in different branches of knowledge gives the scope to delve deep into certain aspects of reality which would otherwise be left unattended, but this has a basic lacuna of creating imbalanced human perspectives. The philosophical education should help one to construct a holistic world-view where fragmented spheres of knowledge find their respective meaningful loci under a wider horizon. This horizon should include the realm of the spirit and realization of its powers through the process of interiorisation and integration.

iii. Certain periods of exposure programmes should become another feature of philosophical curricula. Long hours of lectures, rote learning from the prepared text books and crammed written examinations make up the present picture of education in India. The students should be granted opportunities to verify the theoretical propositions with practicals, such as conducting interviews with people of all walks of life, discussing and evaluating life-situations. This has to be done by involving the students with people struck with tragedies and suffering from social and cultural conflicts, and the like.

iv. An external semester in an alien cultural context could be another means to make the curricula contextual and intercultural.

v. Finally, has contextuality anything to do with the language? Should not the philosophy be taught and practiced in the language of the people? In India Philosophy is taught in English, but should we not make an attempt to initiate lectures in the vernaculars? We need, may be a new prophet, like Buddha, who reacted against the literary language of his time and taught his doctrine in the vernacular.

2. Interculturality

2.1. The Concept of Interculturality

Seen from the Philosophical perspective Interculturality is a basic dimension of inter-subjectivity and interrelatedness. For a human person born in the world

the 'other' is pre-given. Being-in-the-world is also being-with-the-others. It is the primordial mode of existential condition of historicity of a being-in the- world. Seen from another perspective, Interculturality is an attitude which while affirming individuality and particularity of each culture, takes care that no particularity is universalized and absolutised through the process of hegemonisation.

Interculturality is a growing phenomenon in our contemporary world due to the emergence of a new type of consciousness caused by universal technological constellations, global connectivity, developed information facilities, transmission of world events even to the remote corners of the earth through the media and the like. Particular aspects of Interculturality are visible through movements such as demand for gender and racial equality, affirmation of ethnicities, subaltern and human right organizations and the like⁹. On the one hand Interculturality stands for universalism of scientific and formal categories in the field of purely formal disciplines. Thus a mathematician or a chemist from the West finds no difficulty to communicate to a colleague of his in the East. On the other hand, Interculturality is also exercised globally in the context of world trade, and other socioeconomic interests.

Some trends of post-modernity¹⁰, which have questioned the monocultural constituents of the reason in modernity such as universality, perenniality and certainty, are seen as playing a role in the growing awareness of Interculturality. Epistemological background of it could be traced in the new understanding that knowledge is never a finished product, but a process rooted in a cultural context and the contents of it are communicated in the modalities of particular languages. The belief that science can be panacea for all human ills is shattered as it is imbedded in a fundamental ambiguity. The holocaust, World wars, ecological disaster, racism, fundamentalism and rising terrorism have wiped away the optimism projected by scientific progress. Progress itself is no more considered as linear and unidirectional but basically constituted of very dangerous ingredients of human disaster. The so called age of Reason and universal rationality are being replaced by 'local rationalities' and emotional characteristics of human existence. The faith that reason can arrive at Truth with certainty is dwindled into mere possibilities of only so called 'probabilities'. As

a result there is a return to the particular, local and contextual characterized as a 'plurality' in thinking processes, communications, cultures and religious beliefs and morality. The emphasis now is on difference, tolerance and openness to the 'other' in his particularity.

The Interculturality emerged from above background, is said to have three fold perspectives: philosophical, pedagogical and political. The philosophical perspective while asserting that the one perennial philosophy is nobody's exclusive claim, proposes more than one birth place for the origin of philosophy. It also claims that no one particular language can exhaust the total horizon and subject matter of philosophy. The political perspective of Interculturality affirms the pluralistic and democratic principle that the political truth is the possession of not any single party, group or ideology. Pedagogical perspective is responsible for implementing the spirit of Interculturality. It promotes an openness to reciprocal understanding and pluralistic democratic values that are to be cultivated¹¹.

2.2. The Concept of Intercultural Philosophy:

Again, Intercultural Philosophy, seen from one perspective could even be a tautology, as there is no philosophy that is not intercultural. The concept of 'pure' culture is a utopia, at least according to those who profess the possibility of Intercultural Philosophy.

Seen from another perspective, Intercultural Philosophy, is not a matter of aesthetization or some sort of romantic, exotic and sometimes amateurish interest in all that is non-European.

Positively stated Intercultural Philosophy is "the name of a philosophical conviction, attitude and insight. No philosophy is *the* philosophy, and no culture is *the* culture. Such an insight accompanies all of the different philosophies and cultures and prevents them from absolutizing themselves. Interculturality of philosophy thus resides in different cultures, but it also transcends their narrow limits.¹²" It is a philosophical conviction that the one *philosophia perennis* is the exclusive possession of no one particular culture. On the other hand it presents as an attitude of respect for plurality, diversity, and difference as values and desists from presenting them as privations of unity and uniformity.

Intercultural philosophy is a fundamental philosophical orientation basic to all the different branches of philosophy. It understands the contextuality of the philosophy and the truth propositions. Philosophical traditions are born in a particular cultures and hence basically 'tribal' or ethnic' in their inchoate form and local in their character. They are similar in their attempt to explain reality in universal terms but they also bring to light the differences among themselves. Because of the cultural embeddedness of the philosophical traditions they do not lose their universalistic application of their genetic concept of philosophy. Thus Intercultural philosophy avoids the extremes of both a radical relativism and an exclusive essentialism.

Intercultural philosophy should be situated beyond all centrisms: Asian, European, or Chinese, African etc. This does not mean that one should desist from philosophizing from a centre. To have a centre does not mean to be centristic. What we need to avoid is to put our centre in an absolutistic position which will be discriminatory and exclusivistic. While possessing our own world view rooted in a centre of our own tradition, we need to be open to other world views, and denounce the different forms of intolerance.

2.3. The Project of Intercultural Philosophy

If Intercultural Philosophy should become a world-wide movement in the future, we have to seriously take up certain concrete steps to establish it as an acceptable proposal which demands immediate attention. Following are some projects for our consideration:

2.3.1. Intercultural Dialogue in Philosophy

The only universal principle that should pervade intercultural dialogue is the right of every culture *to understand the other and to be understood by the other* which constitute the two faces of the same hermeneutical coin. The intercultural dialogue while denouncing the dynamics of big fish eating small fish, creates on the contrary proper atmosphere for the small fish to grow and realize its potentialities. Concretely it means no particular culture aims at metaphysical hyostatisation, but all unitedly seek moral grounds for common action. While respecting all perspectives, no dialogue partner attempts to reduce or absorb the

other into his own perspective. Such a dialogue can promote pluralistic norm of live and let live, believe and let believe. The dialogue partners meet to differ and differ to meet. It is a dialogue based on non-reductive, open, creative and tolerant hermeneutics¹³ that remains open to analogous structural patterns¹⁴ and overcomes all centrisms. When cultures meet in the spirit of Interculturality, they promote the cause of collaboration and communication among them.

But there remains the basic problem in Philosophy whether such a dialogue can be conceived when some philosophers hold on to absolutistic and centristic positions. There is need to analyse such views and propose some suggestions, if we think, despite negative attitudes, dialogue can still be carried on. We discuss the two perspectives below, the occidental and the oriental in order to see where they stand regarding the concept of intercultural dialogue in philosophy.

2.3.1.1. Occidental Perspective

As we know that the historical exigencies have made the Western thought a main paradigm of reference in philosophy resulting in its asymmetry and hegemony. Unless the Western philosophical tradition participates in the dialogue in a spirit of the hermeneutic model of reciprocity, no effective and durable fruits can be expected in the venture of Intercultural Philosophy.

A look therefore into the prevailing attitude among the Western philosophers regarding other philosophical traditions is quite in place. Halbfass¹⁵ in his book *India and Europe* analyses the situation of dialogue between Europe and India. Four philosophers – Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer - studied by him are important for our purpose.

The whole question is whether Western philosophy is also a tradition like any other traditions. The four philosophers mentioned above are giving a clear impression that it is something higher than a philosophical tradition, a supreme model, a paradigm to all other philosophical traditions. The human potentialities and powers have become historically manifest in the Western philosophy. Hence it is 'more' universal, as it provides a global medium and framework of communication, a prerequisite to 'understand' all the so called cultural traditions in an objective and scientific manner. Secondly, historical research in all the fields all over is conditioned by the norms proposed by the West. "The attitude

of historical research and understanding is a particular way of being *in* the European tradition”¹⁶.

An important assumption made by the historians of philosophy is that there is only one birth place of philosophy and it is Greece.

“Ancient philosophy is essentially Greek philosophy...” (E. Duehring)
“The first scientific treatment of metaphysics may be found among the Greeks”. (E. von Hartmann.). “Just as its name, so philosophy itself is originally Greek.” (E. Bergmann). Philosophy begins with Thales” (Russell.)¹⁷

All these historians of philosophy were influenced by Hegel who claimed that the *Weltgeist*, the ‘World Spirit’ moves from East to West and it has superseded the East. As a result East has not progressed as the spirit is dynamically active in Europe as the history manifests. The Indian conception of the Absolute is an ultimate “substance”, pure and abstract which encloses all finite beings as non-essential modifications, due to which they have no identity and dignity of their own¹⁸. Indian spirit is of the imaginative (soft, feminine) sort, thus of a lower logical order than the rational (masculine) spirit of the West¹⁹. India has also failed to have a true understanding of truth, which only the West possesses²⁰.

Even Max Mueller reechoed Hegel when he wrote: “the bridge of thoughts that spans the whole history of the Aryan world has the first arch in the Veda, its last is in Kant’s Critique. While in the Veda we may study the childhood, we may study in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* the perfect manhood of Aryan mind.”²¹

Edmund Husserl is another philosopher who held that Greek philosophy is the only philosophy humanity has so far produced.

He (Husserl) refers to the “unique entelechy” of Europe, which directs it towards an “absolute idea,” a universality above and beyond all “merely empirical and anthropological” types such as “China” and “India”. The European tradition is not simply a cultural tradition among others. It owes its identity to the ideas of “philosophy” and “pure theory”, and it has a unique global mission. Europe alone can provide other traditions with a universal framework of meaning and understanding. They will have to “Europeanize themselves, whereas we, if we understand ourselves properly, will never, for

example, Indianize ourselves.” The “Europeanisation of all foreign parts of mankind” (*Europäisierung aller fremden Menschheiten*) is the destiny of the earth²².

The assertion that Greek philosophy is the only philosophy has led Heidegger to consider the phrase ‘western philosophy’ as a tautology. “The phrase ‘Occidental-European philosophy’ which one so often hears is in truth a tautology. Why? Because ‘philosophy’ is in essence Greek. To say that philosophy is in essence Greek is the same as to say that the Occident and Europe, and they alone, are in their inmost historical course originally philosophical.”²³ In addition to that, according to J.L Mehta, “Heidegger sees early Greek metaphysics ... has assumed a planetary importance, far exceeding the limits of a geographically or historically localized ‘culture’ or ‘civilization’. How can there be a “dialogue” with Asia if the European “ mode of thinking” has already attained planetary domination?”²⁴ “In the modern planetary situation, Eastern and Western “cultures” can no longer meet one another as equal partners. They meet in a Westernized world, under conditions shaped by Western ways of thinking”.²⁵

On the one hand all these philosophers proclaim that the West has a mission to rediscover its own teleology and its “universal human mission”. On the other hand, the whole problem discussed above is a problem of meeting the ‘other’ or the ‘foreign’ as Gadamer would say. The recognition of the ‘other’ as ‘other’ or recognition of what is foreign to us is important for any effective dialogue. If the western philosophers have taken a negative attitude towards Orient, it is because of their failure to recognize what is foreign, or they considered Orient as totally foreign, even in their study and research of the Oriental sciences²⁶.

In other words they affirm total incommensurability between the indigenous and the foreign, they affirm radical relativism and radical difference among cultures making reciprocity impossible. Hegel speaks of understanding the Orient in order to ‘go beyond’ it. It means understanding the Orient only to subjugate it. Martin Heidegger is of the opinion that the Dialogue with the East could be a “future enigmatic possibility and hence it cannot be planned and

organized; what we need to have is a serene willingness (Gelassenheit) to wait, and not to plan for this future”²⁷.

Wimmer²⁸ tries to understand the concept of philosophy in two ways: philosophy as a thematic study namely, a study of basic structure of reality (ontology), knowledgeability (epistemology) and argumentation on norms and values (ethics). In this sense there are different origins of philosophy and philosophizing is dependent on the framework provided by cultures. This is the broader understanding of philosophy. There is another restricted understanding of philosophy applicable only to Greek or European tradition. This view is based not on the contents or subject matter of philosophy but on certain forms of thinking and argumentation. This view, according to him, has led to the “occidentation” of philosophy itself but he is of the opinion that it has no future as it hinders globalization of philosophical enterprise.

Lakatos²⁹ has argued that all theories are refutable. Even the theory of Einstein was refuted within a year after its formulation. This does not mean that the theories lose their utilitarian value. All theories are refutable because they are invariably presuppose certain aspects of reality and become functional within a horizon or a framework. The Occidentation is founded on reason understood in a particular sense which was unduly universalized. If the presuppositions of such a concept of reason based on *sic et non* logic are refuted, then the edifice of Occidentation is bound to collapse.

All philosophical traditions including Occidental are tribal in their inchoate form and every tribe has its own nuances of reasoning. But as we know some tribes become powerful. What makes a particular way of reasoning universal is the power yielded by a tribe. What has made the Occidental concept of reasoning so universal and why it is making absolutistic claims is due to the sheer fact of political and economic power yielded by the West.

Buddha developed independent reasoning manifested in his theory of causality (*pratitya samutpāda*), used local vernacular, rejected the whole theological foundation of Vedic thought. No one can say Buddha’s logic is wrong or defective. Comparative study of reasoning in Hegel and Buddha can make an interesting reading and can bring to light intercultural dimension of human reason in bold relief. But that is not within the scope of this paper³⁰.

The whole problem is that of meeting between the dialogue partners on equal terms. If the process and mentality of hegemonization is still alive and dominant, how any project of intercultural dialogue can be carried out fruitfully? Is the need for dialogue only from the Orient? And that too under the conditions laid by the Occident? Such an encounter cannot be called dialogue.

There are some who speak of meeting of “East and West”, they look for synthesis, and dialogue based on mutual complementarities. They even expect from the orient the possibilities and dimension of meaning which are less developed in the West and even absent in the West. In this sense, W.E. Hocking, says that, “We need not only two but many eyes” and he refers to a hierarchy of three historic attitudes towards foreign cultures, specially East,:

- 1 .“This is strange and alien - avoid it”
2. “ This is strange and alien, investigate it “
3. This is strange and alien - but it is human; it is therefore kindred to me and potentially my own - learn from it”³¹.

Halbfass would like to work out a compromise and find reasons and methods through which East-West Dialogue could be initiated. He therefore asks: Is the “Universality”, proposed by the West “the true *telos* of mankind? Could it be that the global openness of modernity is till a parochially Western horizon? Or was Europe itself somehow left behind by the universality which it had inaugurated?”.³² Though Gadamer³³ was not very positive regarding a dialogue with the Orient, Halbfass is trying to apply his hermeneutics to establish a dialogue between Europe and India. The hermeneutics of Gadamer takes the concept of ‘prejudice’ seriously, and affirms that a totally open ‘unprejudicial’ study of anything, especially that which is foreign is an empty ideal. Understanding does not mean entering into another’s shoes, and experiencing the identity of the foreign as one’s own. For example, understanding ancient India does not mean “becoming like ancient Indians, thinking and seeing the world exactly like them”³⁴. Dialogue does not presuppose and is not conditioned by sheer ‘neutrality’ and ‘extinction of one’s self’ rather, “the conscious assimilation of one’s own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one’s own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one’s own fore-meanings.”³⁵ Gadamer also proposes the concept of

‘fusion of horizons’ (*Horizontverschmelzung*), a principle that can be utilized in intercultural dialogue, though Gadamer was interested only in the fusion of Western cultural traditions like Greek, Roman, etc. He practices this principle to different Western philosophical traditions of different historical periods, in order to integrate the past into the present. According to Gadamer understanding is always a process of fusion of horizons which we think sometimes as totally alien to us.

But “there is no compelling reasons”, says Halbfass, why Gadamer’s “hermeneutical concepts and perspectives should not be applicable in a wider, trans-cultural context.”³⁶ Even European tradition should remain open and transcend itself in order to avoid the danger of parochialism and provincialism in a globalised world. There will be a process of understanding and misunderstanding in every dialogue between two partners, but it may vary in intensity when the dialogue partners belong to entirely different traditions, for example to understand a ‘text’ of a foreign language. Dialogue need to be continued in and through both understanding and misunderstanding, but nevertheless, one need to be aware of misunderstanding and acknowledge that it is not an adequate understanding. This awareness itself an incentive to further questioning one’s own understanding.

Thus, relating to other traditions does not mean estranging one’s own tradition but widening it with the experiences of other philosophical traditions. Our interrelatedness and intersubjectivity does not permit us to live within the closed horizons. Historically conditioned human life need not be bound to only one stand point. Despite the problems of communication and interpretations of cultures and philosophies, the encounter between all cultures, including between the European and other cultures should go on with the sole intention of understanding the other and to be understood by the other.

2.3.1.2. Oriental perspective

The oriental perspective of the possibility of intercultural dialogue is laid bear by R. A. Mall, the founder of the ‘Society of Intercultural Philosophy’ (SIP)³⁷ in Cologne, Germany. An Indian by birth, but living in Europe,

Intercultural dialogue was a challenge that he had to face in the academic world of the West.

He is of the opinion that the situation has changed so much due to the new technological formations that no culture can claim exclusivity without inviting the label of parochialism and provincialism. Reciprocal Intercultural interaction in the contemporary society is inevitable. What we need is a hermeneutic theory that can justify and explain this enterprise and on his part he is proposing analogical hermeneutics of intercultural interaction which according to him can adequately account and philosophically justify Interculturality. He proposes that two extreme views are to be excluded : the first one holds the view of total identity or translatability or commensurability between different cultures and the second is the opposite, namely, that there is radical non-identity, or untranslatability or incommensurability between different cultures. The former sees the ‘other’ as an echo of its own, reduces all differences, and makes reciprocal understanding superfluous and the latter makes the understanding of the ‘other’ impossible. He promotes a ‘middle path’ or a mean between the two and favours “a metonymic thesis of dynamically overlapping structures. No culture is a windowless monad, so all cultures possess to varying degrees intercultural overlappings”³⁸

The overlappings are a fact because of contemporary hermeneutic situation in the world which concretely determines the hermeneutical dialectic which, according to him, is of four-fold:

First is the way in which Europeans understand themselves. Second is the European’s understanding of the non-Europeans. Third is the way in which non-Europeans understand themselves, and fourth is the way non- Europeans draw a picture of Europeans.³⁹

The cultural situation in the world is no more a one-way traffic, despite the dominance of Europe and the Northern hemisphere. In the contemporary historical context mutual reciprocity has become inevitable.

The fact that Europe itself is now an object of interpretation is quite astonishing, primarily, of course, for the European mind. The phenomenon of understanding is a very complex process, be it self-understanding or understanding of the other. It is very self-complacent to believe that one’s

understanding of the other is better than his or her self-understanding, but nearly all of the different branches of Orientalism have followed such a line of thinking. The alien, or the other, is given to us before our attempt at understanding the other. A hermeneutic that reduces and absorbs the other destroys the spirit of Interculturality. In our search for an adequate hermeneutics of intercultural philosophy, there is only one hermeneutics that does justice to an understanding of the other. This hermeneutics is analogous⁴⁰

What does Mall mean by analogous hermeneutics? Whenever the 'other' is inaccessible, what one can seek is analogous structural patterns that make the 'other' intelligible. He does not accept the concept of analogy found in Greek and Christian philosophy where it is used to correlate the divine and the human or creator and the creature. In this case, he asserts, that the two terms of comparison constitute different species resulting in tension between univocality and equivocation. The hermeneutical analogy stands for, "first, a consciousness of nonidentity; second, a consciousness of difference; third, a consciousness of not total difference; and fourth, a consciousness of not total identity. Analogy is defined here as a likeness of relation among unlike things."⁴¹

In the case of analogical hermeneutics there cannot be a total reduction of the 'other' culture into one's own, there is no possibility of repetition of one's own self-understanding in the name of understanding the other, nor one can say that the 'other' is impossible to understand; it will not put one culture in a supreme position and reduce the others to an aspect or form of it; it desists from interpreting truth in terms of a particular tradition and the tradition in terms of the truth; it also saves one from the hermeneutical circle namely that we cannot understand the other without any prejudices and we fail to understand the other if we have only prejudices. Finally analogical hermeneutic is founded on polymorphic philosophical anchorages which makes different philosophical traditions "to come into contact, to understand each other and retain their culturally sedimented differences. Such a hermeneutics proclaims as its motto to believe and let believe, read and let read, to interpret and let interpret and so on."⁴²

The approach of analogical hermeneutics moreover, produces a healthy understanding of comparative philosophy. It does not absolutise any particular

philosophical tradition nor any particular text or a particular language or a particular interpretation. It believes that there is no absolute text nor there is an absolute interpretation. If there is no proper attitude towards intercultural understanding, no sound comparative philosophy is possible. The other attitude could be none other than hegemonisation, where one studies another culture and another philosophy in order to subjugate it. Basically analogical hermeneutics is non-reductive, open, creative, and tolerant. It approves of overlapping centres, searches for them, finds them and cultivates them. It makes communication possible and allows philosophical traditions to retain their own individual character. It promotes values that make a society itself intercultural by making philosophy itself intercultural, religions tolerant of each other and politics founded on the moral commitment to a pluralistic democratic attitude.

Analogical hermeneutics rejects radical relativism, that overrates importance of difference and puts one particular difference in an absolute position which can lead to ethnocentric absolutism. But it affirms relativism that admits cultural differences and promotes open mindedness even towards the alien. Universalism that is egalitarian, which acknowledges different cultures and philosophies, and affirms their ability to think, question, and to propose answers is promoted wholeheartedly by the analogical hermeneutics.

The analogical hermeneutics can guide fruitfully all intercultural studies bringing into bold relief the overlappings between cultures which in turn can promote intercultural dialogue, as it provides lot of material concerning the similarities and differences between them serving as a basis for the dialogue.

There is an unfounded fear expressed by some that Intercultural philosophy would destroy the very ideas of truth, philosophy and culture. Through its deconstruction Intercultural philosophy would certainly destroy radical relativistic and extremely absolutistic use made of these concepts in some philosophical traditions. But it would promote the activity of philosophizing in all cultures and traditions. To know what philosophy is, we need not ask from where the word philosophy came from but 'what do we do when we do philosophy'. Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger held the view that doing philosophy is the exclusive activity of Greek and European mind. Such an attitude is rejected by intercultural philosophy. Its mission is to recognize, preserve and

promote the activity of philosophy in all cultures. Doing philosophy means making use of mental faculties and powers to construct world-views by interrelating concepts and truth propositions within particular horizons which could be widened by understanding and integrating other horizons. Finally, the goal of Intercultural philosophy has an emancipatory aspect. In the present context its task is to emancipate the non-European thought from Euro-centrism and aim at rewriting historiography of philosophy from a new vision of intercultural orientation.

The polyphilosophical anchorage of Interculturality is a strong move towards a cross-cultural dialogue in philosophy. Those who reject such an attitude and hold on to monocultural perspective are doing a disservice to the cause of the development of philosophy among all the cultures. Interculturality of philosophy makes possible consensualism without hypostatizing or ontologizing it. Though consensus is desirable and in some contexts necessary, but the lack of it should not hamper the dialogue.

Intercultural dialogue is thus based on overlapping consensus, similarities, and illuminating, irreducible differences among different philosophical traditions which point to a deep-rooted anthropological anchorage as they belong to the field of human enquiry in which fundamental questions regarding ultimate nature of things, beings and values are asked and answered.

Finally we can summarise the concept of Intercultural philosophy in two ways: First according to Mall: "It is the name of a philosophical attitude, conviction; it is also a theory which revolutionizes our way of looking at the history of philosophy and lastly it leads us to a practice supplying us with a framework as the ground for the possibility of reciprocal communication among different cultures and philosophies"⁴³. Second according to Raul Fornet Betancourt, the task of Intercultural philosophy is : "to reflect on the culturality or regionality of every kind of thinking on every level; to search for universally valid arguments and concepts; and to do justice to the respective regional philosophic traditions."⁴⁴

Regarding the curriculum what we can declare from the above study is that the Intercultural philosophy is a greater need in Europe than in Asia. In Asia,

most of the Universities while teaching their own philosophical traditions do not omit other traditions, the Western philosophy is invariably taught everywhere.

What they need to do is to supplement their curricula with African and Latin American and East European thought. In North America many Universities invite Guest Lecturers on different philosophical traditions. But most of the European universities teach no other philosophy except their own, as there are still many philosophers who hold on to the view that there is no other philosophy except the European. Therefore the change of attitude is needed in the Europe than anywhere else.

Due to political and historical exigencies, no Chinese and Japanese philosophy worth the name has been included in the curricula of Indian Universities. There is urgent need to make the curricula wider by including these philosophical traditions in India.

2.3.2. Intercultural Dialogue and the Subaltern Traditions

We discussed the global aspect of Intercultural Philosophy and insisted how important it is to make our philosophy intercultural. We saw the attitude of some philosophers in Europe who wish to absolutise the Greek Tradition. The same attitude *mutatis mutandis* is present in India, if we consider the concept of orthodox philosophy and the history of philosophy in Sanskrit and Brahmanic tradition. A short look at the hegemonisation by Sanskrit tradition and the marginalization of dalit and tribal traditions in India is necessary to develop a truly Intercultural Philosophy in India.

What would have been interpreted as a spontaneous development of social classes due to historical exigencies turned out to be great dilemma of asymmetry of cultures in India due to the perpetuation of the classes through rigid heredity and moral codes by those at the top of the ladder of hierarchy. The Brahmins with the design to make their position unquestionable gave a theological foundation to the class system. The *Purusha Sukta* hymn of the Vedas describes Brahmins as originating from the mouth, the warrior class from the arms and the business class from the thighs and the servant class from the feet of the cosmic man in the process of creation⁴⁵. This theological foundation was confirmed by

Manu through moral code and thus made a dialogue between the Brahmins and the Shudras existential impossibility.

The service of Brāhmanas alone is declared (to be) an excellent occupation for a shudra; for whatever else besides this he may perform will bear him no fruit.⁴⁶

One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Shudra, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes⁴⁷.

No accumulation of wealth must be made by a Shudra, even though he be able (to do it); for a shudra who has acquired wealth, gives pain to Brāhmanas⁴⁸.

The importance of Caste dichotomy in India lies in the fact that it has been assiduously nurtured throughout the past three millennia and presently penetrates every cultural aspect of contemporary Indian society and presents a paradigm for social asymmetry in the Indian cultural history.

At the philosophical level, Sanskrit being the language of the higher classes and the dalits/tribals⁴⁹ having no approach to it, they were left out of the ambit of academics. Though Buddha reacted to this situation and developed a tradition in Pali, at present Buddhist population is negligible in India continent. The fact is that all philosophical traditions in India represent only the higher classes creating so great an asymmetry between the Dalits/tribals and the others, that we see no possibility of any dialogue at the philosophical level for another few decades. Dalit and the tribals should learn either Brahmanic and Vedic tradition and remain within the ambit of Saddarshanas (six systems of philosophy) in order to be considered as philosophers or remain outside the circle of philosophy.

The Intercultural attitude towards philosophy should impel us to initiate the project of developing subaltern philosophical tradition by taking meaningful steps to seriously investigate their cultural tradition, folk-lore, beliefs, customs, the languages and a thorough study of their leaders like Ambedkar⁵⁰, Phule and Periyar⁵¹. What India needs therefore is a deculturalisation⁵² of the higher castes and an intracultural dialogue among Dalits and tribals with the aim to make themselves heard.

2.3.3. South-South dialogue

Another important aspect of Intercultural dialogue is to take up the project of promoting south-south philosophical dialogue, namely, the Dialogue between Asia, Africa and Latin America through exchange of literature, translation of

philosophical works and making them available to each other, organizing seminars and conferences and sharing visions of future philosophical developments.

South-South dialogue and sharing need to be oriented towards an historical unity⁵³ among them that does not ignore the diversity and multiplicity of participating constituents but holds them together with a powerful goal of united action and self empowerment. Such a unity cannot be inductively derived from the actual historicity of individual constituents that go to make South, nor is it an abstract universal that cohesively integrates all similarities between races and cultures of the South. But it is a unity founded on a moral demand for justice and equality and the result of a conscious will to empower oneself. It is a unity to be worked out despite plurality of cultures, languages, races and world-views, all of which find their respective place and value in the total unity based on a higher ideology to be realized historically. Again it is unity to be realized out from the grass-root level rising up to the supreme political authority in all the constituents of the South. It is a unity meticulously planned and systematically worked out oriented towards the concrete objective of fighting against any marginalisation or oppression by external forces on the one hand and taking up corporate projects that strengthen self empowerment on the other.

3. Gender perspective in Philosophy

The gender discrimination is an age-old problem⁵⁴. The Society was predominantly patriarchal and most cultures and religions have for centuries down played the role of women confining them to child bearing and domestic chores. Women enjoyed no authority in the society and they were made powerless by man dominated society. They had no voice in the public and there was no system of educating women for centuries. History is full of evidences how women remained behind the screen and how they played a subsidiary role all the time at the service of men. History is also full of stories how men ill- treated women, how they were marginalized and became the object of oppression.

Coming to philosophical tradition, all the bias expressed against Oriental philosophical tradition by the Occidental philosophers is applicable *mutatis*

mutandis to gender discrimination. From this perspective we can say that history of philosophy is male, white and occidental.

Though we can state that as a subject, philosophy is neutral from the perspective of Gender, as knowledge cannot be characterized as masculine or feminine, the question of making opportunities of philosophizing available to women, the discrimination is very evident. It is almost similar to dalit and tribal situation in India. The reasons for the question, why there are no women philosophers and why there is no subaltern philosophy in the world, are the same. Human consciousness, needs opportunities to grow, and growth is to be nurtured and facilitated. The “men” in the world have played a dominant role and denied women the opportunities to realize their potentialities and powers.

Intercultural philosophy takes cognizance of this asymmetry and imbalance and strongly pleads for concrete steps to rectify the lacuna and make philosophy gender sensitive⁵⁵.

3.1. Project Proposals

- i. Analysis of the history of philosophy critically from gender perspective could be the concrete first step to undo the past. Secondly, no one will deny the fact that we need more women philosophers, but the men philosophers with an attitude of Interculturality should take positive steps to take up the cause of Gender discrimination in philosophy.
- ii. We can also promote and support the movement of empowerment of women, which means making them conscious of their identity so that they can assert and defend it in public. For this they should be helped to educate themselves and actualize their hidden talents and gifts; they should be given authority to accomplish important tasks and take over salient roles in the society; they should also experience equality of opportunities that go to generate self-confidence and courage in them.
- iii. The project of re-reading the texts from feminist’s perspective wherever possible, discovering and investigating the writings of women so far ignored or neglected and including them in the historiography has to be undertaken. The ratio of women in University departments of philosophy is to be increased with special reservations.

iv. Women need encouragement and support moral, political and philosophical from all to produce philosophical literature which can help to develop a feminist philosophy which should find a place in the curricula. This is an important step that we can envisage.

4. Conclusion

As a conclusion, we would like to make a note on the concept of “Intercultural Polylogue” proposed by Wimmer⁵⁶ as an alternative to the concept of “dialogue”. The Greek origin of the term Dialogue presupposes basically *sic et non* logic and two partners or interlocutors: “Such thinking presupposes that there always are two exactly two contradictory propositions in every issue”⁵⁷ The intercultural attitude which insists on cultural context of philosophical traditions demands that we look for another model which need to be wider and more suited for intercultural interaction.

The word ‘polylogue’ in Greek means just “Chatter”, the prefix ‘poly’ refers to the diversity of subjects of the conversation. Wimmer proposes different model of interaction between philosophical traditions and cultures leading to the ideal model of ‘polylogue’. The first model is ‘Centered unilateral influence’: where occidentation is a confirmed case. There is only one philosophy and it is Occidental. All other cultures and traditions are ‘barbarian’. The second model of interaction is the “Extended unilateral influence”: in which case the Occidental philosophy may accept one or two philosophical traditions as dialogue partners and begin to interact with them. All other traditions will remain as ‘barbarian’. Still here the Occidental philosophy will be the absolute concept of philosophy. The third model is that of “Partial mutual influence” according to which there will be mutual influence between some selected philosophical traditions. They will mutually interact and consider ‘some’ other traditions still ‘barbarian’. The last model is the ‘polylogical model’ called “Complete mutual influence”. In this case no culture or no philosophical tradition will be considered as ‘barbarian’. All cultural and philosophical traditions remain open towards mutual interaction and mutual influence. This is the authentic ‘intercultural dialogue’ based on a synchronological approach. We need to be convinced of this reality of multifaceted dialogue where all cultures

and all humans without any gender discrimination and sense of asymmetry participate in an unending ‘polylogue’.

The Asian curricula for Philosophy should be polylogical: it should, first of all, display openness to all philosophical traditions of all cultures; secondly, it should be comprehensive with multiple themes like ‘ecosophy’ which will inculcate in the students a deep respect for nature and cultivate an awareness of the ecological disaster immanent in the one-sided concept of development; thirdly, it should facilitate a process of self actualization in them through a conscious growth of the powers of the spirit and a teleological sense; fourthly, while instilling a passionate love for the critical inquiry of the text, it should also facilitate to anchor this inquiry on the particular context of life-world. Fifthly, it should take into account the central problem of intercultural philosophy, namely, an in depth analysis of the issue of subjectivity, in the sense of fostering the principle of subjectivity as “the core of what we call the programme of humanities as a vital-existential formation process of the subject.”⁵⁸

Notes

¹The V International Congress on Intercultural Philosophy at Seville, Spain was preceded by a world-wide opinion poll on the status of philosophy in the contemporary world. Cf., Raul Fornet-Betancourt, Editor. *Quo Vadis, Philosophie? Antworten der Philosophen. Dokumentation einer Weltumfrage*. Aachen, 1999. The Opinion Poll was followed by a meeting of philosophers from all over the world in Aachen from June 11 to 15, 2001, during which these three topics came up as possible themes for future curriculum on Philosophy.

² Sri Aurobindo in his numerous articles on Education proposed the concept of Integral Education. He published a series of articles to elucidate his concept of education in Karma Yogin under the title “A system of National Education, in 1909-10. His insights on Education are also found in the “Eynthesis of Yoga. For a complete bibliography on Sri Aurobindo, Cf. Kireet Joshi, Editor. *Philosophy of Supermind and Contemporary Crisis*. New Delhi, 2003. pp. 471- 477.

³ Kireet Joshi, “Educational Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo”, op.cit. p. 89.

⁴ Ibid., p. 92.

⁵ Kireet Joshi, “On Materialism,” op.cit. pp. 119-154.

⁶ Cf. Heinz Hulsmann and Ram A. Mall. *Die Drei Geburtsorte der Philosophie: China, Indien und Europa*. Bonn, 1989 and R. Moritz, H. Rustau, G.R. Hoffmann. Editors. *Wie und warum entstand Philosophie in verschiedenen Regionen der Erde?* Berlin, 1988.

⁷ Francis M. Wimmer, "Is Intercultural Philosophy A new Branch or a New Orientation in Philosophy?", *Interculturality of Philosophy and Religion*, edited by G. D'Souza, Bangalore, 1996. p. 48.

⁸ The Nine Volume Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy edited by Karl Potter should be an example for this. Also Cf. Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe*, Delhi, 1990, pp. 172- 434.

⁹ Joe Mannath, "Post Modernism: A general Introduction." *The Postmodern... A Siege of the Citadel of Reason*, edited by Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, Delhi, 2002. pp. 35- 41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 31- 35.

¹¹ Ram Adhar Mall, *Intercultural Philosophy*, New York, 2000, p. 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 5,

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 52- 58.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁵ Wilhelm Halbfass, *Op. cit.* , pp. 145-159; Cf. also Franz Martin Wimmer, *Interkulturelle Philosophie*, Wien, 2004, pp.75-134.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 166. Cf. H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, New York, 1985. p.251 and 271.

¹⁷ E. Duehring, *Kritische Geschichte der Philosophie von ihren Anfaengern bis zur Gegenwart*. Leipzig. Third ed. 1878. p.12; F. Ueberweg, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie I*, Berlin, eighth ed. 16f.; J.Bergmann, *Geschichte der Philosophie,I*. Berlin 1892. p.8.; B. Russell, *A History of Philosophy*, New York. 1945. p.3. Cf. also. Halbfass cites several other authors, like A. Schwegler, J.F. Fries, E. Zeller, J.E. Erdmann and others. Cf. Halbfass, *Op. cit.* p. 152-155.

¹⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen ueber die Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. J. Hoffmeister, Leipzig, second. Ed. 1944. Vol. I. pp. 289 ff, 332-335.; Cf. also *Vorlesungen ueber die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte, II, Die Orientalische Welt*, ed. G. Larson, Hamburg, third ed. 1968. p. 398 -400.

¹⁹ G.W. F. Hegel., *History of Philosophy* , Trans. By J. Sibree, New York, 1956. pp. 160-61.

²⁰ J.L. Mehta, *India and the West*, Chicago, 1985. pp 121, 185.

²¹ K. Roy, *Hermeneutics: East and West*, Calcutta. 1989, P. 67.

²² Cited by Halbfass, *Op.cit.* p. 167.; E. Husserl, *Die Krise der europaeische Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, edited by W. Biemel. The Hague. 1954, pp. 14 and 320; E. Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seins Probleme*, Tuebingen. 1922. (reprint 1961.), p. 710 f.

²³ Martin Heidegger, *Was ist das- die Philosophie?* Pfullingen. 1956. pp. 13,15. Trans. By J.L. Mehta, *India and the West*, p. 138f.

²⁴ J.L. Mehta, Martin Heidegger, *The Way and the Vision*. Honolulu, 1976. pp. 462f.

²⁵ Halbfass, *Op.cit.*, p. 169.

²⁶ “It is true that Indologists deserve our praise for solid philological-cum-grammatical-cum-textual scholarship. Their main deficiency lies in their blindness to philosophical, historical and religious content in the text and also in their prejudice against returning to the original without taking the help of the rich hermeneutic tradition.” Mall, *op. cit.*, p. 17f.

²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*. Pfullingen. 1959. Also *Vortraege und Aufsaezte*, Pfullingen, second edition. 1959. p. 45-70.

²⁸ Wimmer, *Op. cit.*, p. 46. Cf. Wimmer, *Interkulturelle Philosophie*, pp. 34-42.

²⁹ Imre Lakatos, *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programme*. Ed. By Worrall John and Gregory Currie. Cambridge, 1978, p. 5

³⁰ For an example see Maja Milećinski, “European and Asian Philosophies Contrasted”. *Western Encounter with Indian Philosophy*, Edited by. Augustine Thottakkara, Bangalore, 2002. p. 243-255.

³¹ W.E. Hocking, “Value of the Comparative Study of Philosophy”, in *Philosophy East and West*, editor: Ch. A. Moore. Princeton, 1944. p. 11, see also pp. 1-10.

³² Halbfass, *op.cit.* p. 169.

³³ Gadamer, Preface to: W. Dilthey, *Grundriss der allgemeinen Geschichte der Philosophie*, Frankfurt, 1949. p. 18. also see *Truth and Method*. *Op. cit.* p. 245 ff.

³⁴ *Ibid.*; Cf. also S. Schayer, “Indische Philosophie als Problem der Gegenwart.” *Jahrbuch der Schoepenhauer-Gesellschaft*. 15 (1928), pp. 49-69.

³⁵ H. G. Gdamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 273.

³⁶ Halbfass, *op.cit.*, p. 165.

³⁷ Franz Wimmer, “What is Intercultural Philosophy?” *Satya Nilayam*, Vol 1 (February 2002), p. 14; Cf. www.int-gip.de For basic views of Mall Cf. “Interculturality and Interreligiosity- A Conceptual Clarification”, in *Interculturality of Phiolosophy and Religion*, *op. cit.* 1996. R.A. Mall and D. Lohmar, Editors. *Philosophische Grundlagen der Interkulturalitaet*, Amsterdam, 1993.

³⁸ Mall, *Intercultural Philosophy*, p.14

³⁹ *Ibid.* 3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 16

⁴² Mall, “ Interculturality and Interreligiosity”, p. 24. cf. also *Intercultural Philosophy*, p.32.

⁴³ Mall, “Interculturality and Interreligiosity”, p. 26.

⁴⁴ Cited by Wimmer, *op.cit.*, p 51.

⁴⁵ *Rig Veda*, X. 90, 11-12. *Rigveda*, X. 90, 11 f.; Cf. Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Demografic Revolution*, New Delhi 1994. pp. 21 –58; Tripathy Rebat Ballav, *Dalits: A sub-human society*, New Delhi 1994, pp. 3-64

⁴⁶ *The Law of Manu (Mânava-dharma- shâstra)* 10.123; Cf. G.Buehler (Trans), *The Law of Manu, The Sacred Books of the East, Ed. By Max Mueller*, Vol. XXV, Delhi 1970.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 1.91.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 10.129. Cf. S. Jhingran. *Aspects of Hindu Morality*, Delhi. 1971; J. Mckenzie, *Hindu Ethics – A Historical and Critical Essay*, New Delhi. 1971.

⁴⁹ Cf. R.S. Mann, *Culture and Integration of Indian Tribes*, New Delhi, 1993; Kumar Singh Anil, *Tribes and Tribal Life*, New Delhi, 1996.

⁵⁰ Cf. Vasant Moon, *Dr. Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, 4 vols. Mumbai, 1987; A. M. Rajashekhariah, *B.R. Ambedkar: The Politics of Emancipation*, Mombay, 1971.

⁵¹ Cf. Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India., 1873 – 1930* Pune, 1976.

⁵² Cf. Raul Fonet-Betancourt, “Philosophy as Intercultural”, *Vijnanadipti*, 4 (2000), 145ff.

⁵³ Georgia Warnke, “Communicative rationality and cultural values”, *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. By. Stephen K. White, Cambridge, 1995 (Reprint 1999), pp. 129-140. Tobias J.G. Louw, (Fort Hare), “Democracy in an Ethical Community” *Philosophy and Democracy in Intercultural Perspective*, edited by Heinz Kimmerle/Franz. M. Wimmer, Amsterdam 1994, pp.203-220; R. A. Mall, *Intercultural Philosophy*, 45-58.

⁵⁴ Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, Editors. *The Feminist Reader*, Malden, USA. 2nd Edition. 1997; Raj Kumar, Editor. *Encyclopedia of Women and Development*, 20 vols. New Delhi, 2000.

⁵⁵ Cf. Alison, M. Jaggar and Iris Marion Young, *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, Oxford, 2000.

⁵⁶ Wimmer, *Op. cit.* foot note number 3, p. 56.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Raul Fonet-Betancourt, *Transformacion intercultural de la filosofia*. Bilbao: Desclee de Brouser, 2001. (cited by Dr. Ricards Salas, Astrain. “Teaching of Philosophy in Latin America from an Intercultural point of view” (Manuscript). Paper presented for the V International Congress on Intercultural Philosophy, at Seville, Spain in March , 2003.

Reference Data: *Intercultural Philosophy from Indian Perspective*, Bangalore: 95 - 129.

Vincent Gabriel Furtado
**Intercultural Theology and
Mystical Experience**

I

In this essay we are trying to propose the analysis of Mystical writings as the most viable approach toward the praxis of intercultural theology, which is otherwise a very difficult proposal due to several reasons. First of all, theology is a science somewhat different from all others in the sense that it entails neither a purely academic pursuit nor is it a totally rational activity. Secondly, its presuppositions being basically transcendental, you cannot but remain committed to the belief structures you confess in order to be authentic in your pursuits. Thirdly, due to the very logical nature of all truth propositions, you will not be able to reconcile your beliefs with another set of beliefs acknowledged as true by your fellow human beings who stand in another religious tradition. Due to these reasons we are going to show how comparative study of mystical writings of the mystics who stand in different religious traditions can give a fillip to the praxis of intercultural theology and for this purpose we succinctly discuss two traditions: the Samkhya-yoga of the East and the Christian tradition of the West.

The logical basis of all beliefs is founded on the principle of bi-valence: something is either true or false. The categorical rationality is committed itself to this principle which is dual and dualistic in every way. The formal structure of categorical reason is such that it functions on contrary principles such as thought and object of thought, consciousness (thinker) and object of consciousness (what is thought). There is once again differentiation between the objects of consciousness themselves. What makes a thing what it is, is its difference from other things. This differentiation gives the object its identity.

Secondly the categorical thought manifests itself in the logical form of predication. Predication too is grounded on differentiation. To be a particular predicate P, it has to be differentiated from non-P. This is the logic of *sic et non*, either/or. “A given subject S cannot both be P and non-P (at the same time and in the same respect) Or a given subject must be either P or not-P”¹.

The categorical structures form world-views constituted of coherent system of truth propositions. The categorical rationality is such that when you are committed to one world-view you are bound by it and there is no neutral stand from which you can judge another world view. You can judge it only from the world-view into which you are bound with. This predicament plunges one into a dilemma where inter-cultural theology becomes an enigmatic proposition. Each judges other religion from the point of view of his own religion. The predicament faces crisis in belief structures. Within a particular world-view the different truth propositions and sets of beliefs stand in relation to one another and constitute a coherent rational system of logically interrelated truths and beliefs. When this world-view confronts another world-view with contradictory truth propositions and structure of beliefs, there should certainly be a conflict because same person at the same time cannot acquiesce in contrary beliefs. The very nature of a belief is such that it demands radical commitment, and a person may be ready to die in order to defend his belief rather than give it up. Added to that, the logical principle of bi-valence in Aristotelian logic proposes that if I am true you should be false, if I am right you should be wrong. We need therefore a hermeneutic in which the categorical reason could be transcended giving rise to agreement on conflicting issues on a higher level of logic. We need a trans- categorical rationality where the hermeneutic of category of opposition, duality, differentiation, particularity, and polarity can be replaced by the hermeneutic of the categories of non-difference, non-identity (unity), non- duality, and bipolarity. This is certainly possible in the case of mystical experience which is grounded on numinous experience and on trans- categorical rationality. Mystical Theology should therefore be a forerunner in the field of intercultural theology.

Authentic Mysticism is basically ethico-religious², namely, it is always accompanied by ethical excellence and practice of concentration, meditation and firm belief in the transcendence. In meditation one can transcend rational categories by attaining a trans-categorical (non-dual) rationality. The meditative consciousness is the deepest level of consciousness where a dynamic self transformation of the categorical reason can take place. When a person concentrates on the object of meditation for a long time in an attitude

of surrender, the distinction between the subject and the object disappears i.e., the logical space between the subject and the object of consciousness vanishes and as a result there occurs a union between the two. This union is a unity of experience, an experience of non-identity and non-difference.

What are the features of meditative reason? First of all, there takes place the transcendence of the fixity of categorical time in meditation. The either/or logic of differentiation has validity only in categorical time. Within this time the unity or the non-duality between the subject and the object of consciousness appears as a mere contradiction. This is because there is a constituent of time in the formal principle of dual reason: "A given subject P cannot be both P and not-P at the same time." Due to the expansion of time consciousness in meditation the principle of dual reason is transcended in it.

Secondly, the logical space of differentiation between mind and object, object and meaning etc. is also eliminated in meditative reason. The predication becomes non-dual i.e., there results non-difference or identity between the subject and the predicate.

To elaborate phenomenologically, in the passivity of meditation the functions of the active categorical reason are brought to rest. The object of consciousness is no more something that stands opposite to me but it is just part of me. Meditative reason then becomes intuitive, and the intuitive consciousness perceives the reality in its wholeness; this in turn reveals also the relativity of particular objects and the particular world-views. It means that within the unity of the whole each religious tradition obtains a unique place and they no more stand in conflict and in contradiction to one another but in the uniqueness of their own relative position. There results a widening of the horizon in which no world-view is either annihilated or made to merge with another but each religious tradition and its world-view is confirmed and a correlation between them is perceived at the background of the experience of unity.

II

With this introduction, we would like to make a short case study of two religions : Christianity and Hinduism and in Hinduism only a particular tradition, called “Samkhya -Yoga³” and even in that tradition only one concept, namely the concept of “kaivalya⁴”, which is used to delineate the existential condition of a liberated yogi. The case study⁵ highlights some possible points of contact in the mystic language of the Christian mystical tradition and the language used to describe the mystic state of *kaivalya* in the Samkhya-Yoga tradition, just to show how a dynamic self transformation of the categorical reason can take place in true mystical experience.

First of all, we would like to ask, ‘Can *kaivalya* be interpreted as a mystical state? Can we characterize the person who attains perfection in Samkhya-Yoga as a ‘mystic’?’ The first question in this regard is whether we can describe the state of perfection in terms of *unio mystica*. The phrase literally means ‘mystical union’, and generally used to describe ‘theistic mysticism’.⁶ If we can use the term in its literal meaning, it can certainly be applied to the state of perfection of the Yogi described in *Kārikās* 65-67, which assert that the union (*samyoga*) between the *purusha* (translated as Consciousness, the Self, the subjective counterpart) and the *prakṛti* (translated as materiality, the objective counterpart or the object of consciousness) continues but attains a different character. It is a union of mere presence without activity. Thus we can say the union becomes mystical. It can be described only through the categories of non-difference, non-identity (unity), non-duality, and bipolarity. The state of perfection is the state of mystical union between the Self (*purusha*) and the *buddhi or citta* (translated as intellect or mind). It is a state in which the mind-complex (*citta*) emptied of all contents experiences that it is ‘nothing’⁷ i.e., nothing of consciousness. This realization of ‘nothingness’ is also the realization of what it actually is: that it is ontologically ‘different’ from the pure Self (*purusha*) because it is just mundane, unspiritual and profane. This is the moment wherein occurs the revelation of the ‘otherness’ of the Self (*purusha*). This revelation is the presentation of the Self (*purusha*) to the intellect (*buddhi/citta*) as purely spiritual and as pure light of consciousness i.e., as fully realized what it really is. Can we not then assert that the discriminative knowledge invariably leads

to mystical union (*samyoga*), a union in which the intellect (*buddh, citta*) directly intuits the Self (*purusha*)?

The second question we ask is whether the state of perfection (*Kārikā* 65-67) has a numinous character. According to Philip Almond, the ‘wholly other’ (Self) represents the *mysterium* character of the numinous: “As *mysterium* the *numen* is wholly other, quite beyond the sphere of the usual and intelligible.”⁸ To cite Rudolf Otto, “Mysticism continues to its extreme point this contrasting of the numinous object (the *numen*), as the ‘wholly other’, with ordinary experience.”⁹ The ‘wholly other’ that lies beneath the person or personal or what can be known, is the numen, the inner essence of the individual, called the self, spirit or the soul.

During the Sāmkhya-Yoga state of perfection, wherein the intellect (*buddhi/citta*), having attained the discriminative knowledge of the distinction between itself and the Self (*purusha*), can be said to intuit the Self (*purusha*) as the ‘wholly other’, the *mysterium*, or the *numen*, and hence, we can certainly presume the state as a *unio mystica*. This mystical union ‘impenetrable to any concept’, is truly the numinous self-feeding by the Sāmkhya/Yoga mystic who experiences what is deepest in his being. This experience of the *kaivalya* is “quite undefinable, outsoaring all conceptions, ‘wholly alien’ to our understanding.”¹⁰

III

Next we proceed to elucidate some possible Complementarities between the Christian and the Samkhya Mysticism. To begin with, we would like to cite Zaehner, a Christian Indologist, who declares that there is no inconsistency between the Sāmkhya-Yoga and the Christian spiritualities:

The second type of mysticism is the experience of absolute oneness, what the *Sāmkhya-Yoga* system of philosophy in India calls “isolation”. This is not peculiar to India but has been more intensively cultivated there than anywhere else. It is sometimes interpreted as meaning no more than the isolation of one individual “self” in its own deep essence-which is not inconsistent with Catholic Theology-or it is interpreted as meaning that the soul in its inmost essence is *identical* with the essence of God-and this, if left wholly unqualified.¹¹

If Sāmkhya-Yoga mysticism is not inconsistent with the Christian mystical theology¹², we need to ask, ‘where do the consistencies could be found?’ Such consistencies could be found in the approaches towards the perfection in these two spiritualities. The Sāmkhya-Yoga seeks perfection through introspection, interiorisation and through the search for the Spirit within, in other words, it is a movement towards the centre of the being. The Johannine as well as Pauline writings give ample evidence for a spirituality of interiorisation. In the New Testament it is explicated through the doctrine of indwelling of God, stressed so much in the Gospel of John (Jn 14.10, 20, 23; 15. 1-10, 17.21 etc.) and in the epistles of St. Paul (Rom 8. 9-16; I Cor 3.16f.; Gal 4.6; Eph 1.3ff., 4.30; Col 2.11, 3.3 etc.). God dwells in man, we are created in the “likeness and image of God”; the realization of this presence of God in us is said to be a process of ‘God-realization’, a movement towards the centre of the being.

Secondly, the most important aspect of the Sāmkhya-Yoga meditation is the elimination of all psychic processes i.e., reducing the activities and operations of the psychic organism to the minimum. The following passage is from the *Mystic Theology* of pseudo-Dionysius (5th cent.C.E.) which refers to a similar process:

And thou, dear Timothy, in thy intent practice of the mystical contemplation, *leave behind both thy senses and thy intellectual operations, and all things known by sense and intellect*, and all things which are not and which are, and set thyself, as far as may be, to unite thyself in unknowing with Him who is above all being and knowledge, for by being purely free and absolute, out of self and of all things, thou shalt be led up to the *ray* of the divine darkness, stripped of all, and loosed from all.¹³

The Carmelite mystic, St. John of the Cross speaks again of elimination of sensations, images, and thoughts which flow through consciousness. Stace cites following quotations from *The Dark Night of the Soul* to bear out the view:

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The soul must be emptied of all these imagined forms, figures and images, and it must remain in darkness in respect to these.

(The soul should) rest without engaging in any particular meditation and without positing acts and exercising the faculties of memory, understanding, and will.

The more the soul learns to abide in the spiritual, the more comes to a halt the operation of the faculties in particular acts, since the soul becomes more and more collected in one undivided and pure act.¹⁴

Finally, we ask, are there any descriptions of the spiritual perfection in the writings of Christian mystics which could be compared to the state of *kaivalya* in Sāmkhya-Yoga tradition? Do Christian mystics explicate their mystical experience in a manner that we find in the Sāmkhya-Yoga, where perfection is described as the separation between the transcendental and the empirical selves? We have an example in Thomas Merton:

Contemplation is not and cannot be a function of this external self. There is an irreducible opposition between the deep transcendent self that awakens only in contemplation, and the superficial, the external self which we commonly identify with the first person singular. We must remember that this superficial “I” is not our real self. It is our “individuality” and our “empirical self” but it is not truly the hidden and mysterious person in whom we subsist before the eyes of God. The “I” that works in the world, thinks about itself, observes its own reactions and talks about itself is not the true “I” that has been united to God in Christ. It is at best the vesture, the mask, the disguise of that mysterious and unknown “self” whom most of us never discover until we are dead. Our external, superficial self is not eternal, not spiritual. Far from it. This self is doomed to disappear as completely as smoke from chimney. It is utterly frail and evanescent. Contemplation is precisely the awareness that this “I” is really not “not I” and the awakening of the unknown “I” that is beyond observation and reflection and is incapable of commenting upon itself. It cannot even say “I” with the assurance and the impertinence of the other one, for its very nature is to be hidden, unnamed, unidentified in the society where men talk about themselves and about one another. In such a world the true “I” remains both inarticulate and invisible,

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because it has altogether too much to say – not one word or which is about itself.¹⁵

The citation explicates the ineffability and the inexplicability of the deep transcendent self (the true “I”, comparable to *purusa*). It is awakened only in contemplation. It is just inarticulate and inexplicable because at that deep transcendent level one encounters the ‘divine’ and the ‘holy’. When this becomes a reality, one can say, he has realized his ‘destiny’. Do we not observe similarities between Christian and Sāmkhya-Yoga mysticism at this level of our common destiny? Do they not both speak of the unity of experience, an experience of non-identity and non-difference? What we can assert is that at this level the language spoken by two different traditions is no more dualistic and contradictory; and the study of mystical experience is able to provide a neutral stand point which can unite different religious traditions giving rise to a discourse that can promote intercultural theology.

To conclude, we affirm that the proximity of concepts in mystical writings of different religious traditions should promote the evolution of a theological language through which the belief structures of different religious traditions can be presented in an intelligible manner to the dialogue partners so that the intercultural theological enterprise becomes a smooth sailing. Our contention is that theological discourse should be brought down from its ivory towers to the grass root level by evolving a religious language based more on numinous experience and less on logical categories so that the discourse could be made intelligible even to the ordinary believer. A deeper and wider study of mystical writings of various religious traditions can certainly enhance this enterprise.

¹ Ashok K. Gangadean, “the Hermeneutics of Comparative Ontology”, in *Religious Pluralism and Truth*, edited by Thomas Dean, Delhi: 1997, 234 ff.

² We exclude mysticism of “hocus-pocus” type such as derived through drugs. For clarification of the meaning of the term see, Karel Werner, “Mysticism as Doctrine and

Experience,” *The Yogi and the Mystic*; (London: 1989) 1; Frits Staal, *Exploring Mysticism, A Methodological Essay*, Berkeley:,1975), 155 f.

³ For the text of Samkyakarikas of Ishvarakrishna cf. N.Aiyrishna aswamy Sastri, *Suvarnasaptati Sastra*, Samkyakarika *Saptati of Ishvarakrishna*, Venkateshvara Oriental Series, No. 7 (Tirupati: 1944). Cf. also Suryanarayana Sastri, SS (trans). *The Samkyakarika*, Madras: 1933). For Yoga Sutras cf.: Woods, James Haughton (trans). *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, Harward Oreintal Series, Vol. XVIII (Delhi: 1914, Reprint 1977.). Also Cf. Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, (Eds) *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy* ((EIP), vol. IV (Delhi: 1987), 12 and 624.

⁴ *Kaivalya* means “Isolation” or separation of the πῦρ{α from prakrati, Cf. Karika Nos. 63-68.

⁵ For a detailed study of the same theme cf.: Vincent G. Furtado, “Mysticism: East and West”, *Going to the Roots*, Ed. By Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, (Bangalore: 2005), 127 – 153.

⁶ Georg Schmid, *Die Mystk der Weltreligionen* (Zürig: 1990), 31-34; R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (London: 1961), 177.

⁷ Compare the experience of St. Paul, (“Paul got up from the ground and opened his eyes, but could see nothing” Acts 9.8) and its intervention by Meister Eckehart. Josef Quint (ed.), *Meister Eckehart, Deutsche Predigten und Traktate*, (Zurich: Diogenes, 1979), 331f; Schmid, *Die Mystik der Weltreligionen*, 175-178.

⁸ Philip Almond , *Mystical Experience and Religious Doctrine*, (Berlin: 1982), 10

⁹ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, (London: 1958). 25.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 195.

¹¹ R.C. Zaehner, *The Catholic Church and World Religions*, (London: 1964), 21.

¹² For the history of Christian Mysticism see Gerhard Ruhbach and Josef Sudbrack (eds.), *Christliche Mystik, Texte aus zwel Jahrtausenden*, (München: 1989); For short bibliographies of Christian Mystics see *Ibid, Große Mystiker, Leben und Wirken*, (München: C.H. Beck, 1984); cf also Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Zur Ortsbestimmung Christlicher Mystik,” *Grundfragen der Mystik*, ed. by Werner Belerwaltes (Einsiedein: 1974), 37-71.

¹³ J. Chapman, “Mysticism (Christian, Roman Catholic)”, *Encyclopedia of Religiona dn Ethics*, Ed. By James Hastings, Vol.9 (Edinburg: 1908), 93; Cf. *Yoga Sutras* II. 29.53.54.

¹⁴ Cited by W.T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, (London: 1961), 103; cf. also Ruhback/Sudbrack, *Christliche Mystik*, 307-314.

¹⁵ Cited from the *New Seeds of Contemplation* by Zaehner, *The Catholic Church and World Religions*, 18f.

Reference Data: *Festschrift fuer Raul Fornet-Betancourt*, Ed. by Annette Meuthrath, Aachen, 2004. 145 - 153

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

A CRITIQUE OF DALIT TRADITION

(Conception of a Utopia for Dalits)

1. Meaning of Critique

The Dalits in India have remained as a group of people subjected to exploitation, discrimination and oppression since a few millennia due to historical exigencies, cultural hegemony and also due to the lack of a Utopia. Had they been presented with a utopia they would have probed into the root causes of their exploitation. They would have radically questioned who they are, in what condition they are and why they are in such a plight for so many years. But, nevertheless, they can ask now what they can and should do. They need at least now attempt to employ their capacities of demonstrative reasoning to deliberate the grounds of their present existential conditions and critically investigate the causes which converged to perpetuate their plight. But more than that they need to utilize the capacities of their persuasive reasoning which would question and inquire not only their present condition, but also the very structures, framework and the world-view to which they have been made to subjugate their lives. Persuasive reasoning would give rise to a new type of discourse, project a Utopia which will open up new horizons and make them create concrete goals for themselves which would lead them to strive after the possibilities of an experience of freedom, empowerment and prosperity. Persuasive reasoning does not hesitate to deconstruct even at the risk of exploitative hermeneutics the socio-cultural hegemonic structures and power generating belief systems and world views.

This process, we would like to call, the “critique” of Dalit tradition. It could go to generate Utopias which would impel them to radical action with noble ideals, with socio-cultural goals, with appropriate economic agenda, with definite pedagogical programmes and with political strategies (*poiesis* as against *praxis*). Critique is not merely ‘criticism’ of some aspects of reality, but a process of radically questioning the very grounds of reality that give rise, for example, to a ‘crisis’ situation. ‘Critique’ is related to the context of a ‘crisis’ : at the personal, political and cultural levels; at the personal level, for example, a depressed person going to a Counsellor for help. He takes up the role of a critic and diagnoses the

problem. Here, critique is the perception of the situation, providing a remedial action in the context of a personal crisis. The crisis could be at the socio-political context, for example, the context of law and order; here the politician as a ‘critic’ takes a decision to restore peace. Here critique is a process of assessing the situation where the rights and obligations of citizens are at stake. Finally, the critique can also have a cultural context: here the critique takes hermeneutical turn. The ‘critic’ interprets the context of a cultural object (e.g. a ‘text’) in crisis and provides appropriate meanings to it. This is the hermeneutic context of the critique¹. We shall try to apply these aspects of the critique to the subject matter of our study in the reverse order. As we take the role of a ‘critic’ here we try to diagnose the context of the Dalits and make an attempt to provide a solution for their problem by positively taking a stand on their behalf. Secondly, we may make the Dalit himself the interlocutor to explicate a particular hypothesis, that too only as a mode of literary style. Thirdly, we make use the term ‘critique’ to refer to the entire Dalit community which might give the impression that it is a homogenous reality; we do admit that Dalit Family is a very heterogeneous one and any reform should begin from the grass root level; but nevertheless, we need to note that only when there is a well defined “vision” or “utopia”, can any reform movement be initiated at any level.

2. The Hermeneutic Context of the Critique

We would begin with the hermeneutic context of the critique, by selecting a particular ‘text’ which has provided foundation to an unjust tradition in India. The text is from *Puruṣa Sūkta* hymn of the Ṛigveda X.190. 12² :

His mouth became the brāhmin, his arms became the warrior-prince;,
His legs the common man who plies his trade.
The lowly serf (Śūdra) was born from his feet³.

This is a “text”, which had an oral tradition before it was put into writing (and we observe that even today the text is transmitted basically through oral communication). The spoken word, as a direct communication, has a particular context which the written text transcends. The text again has its own autonomy, as it transcends from the biographical authorship to hermeneutic authorship: it is

available to every one to interpret. All of us become authors of this text as we interpret the meaning of it. Whatever be the context of its origin, it now speaks to us in our context.

Secondly, the addressee of the communication is transcended in the case of a written text. It is no more restricted to the particular dialogue partner. The text is addressed to every one and any one who can enter into discourse unfolded by the text itself. This is the universalization of the addressee. The text is applicable to all ages and to all times and available to all people who wish to approach it with certain competence.

The third moment of transcendence of the text is called ‘essentialization of reference’. The text represents a world, it is freed from particular context, setting or situation. It presents a world in its essentiality as it has transcended all contingencies. Both the author and the addressee undergo transformation. There is no hermeneutical place either for the author or for addressee⁴.

Coming to our text, it is available to us and to every one, but is also available to a *Śūdra*. It proclaims his identity to all of us. What should he do with the text? How a Dalit should apply hermeneutical critique to the above text? He cannot destroy the text – but he can reconstruct it, not for the sake of others but for his own sake. How can he do it even if it invites the wrath of the dominant class, is the question he has to tackle.

He should basically concentrate on ‘essential reference’ – namely, the cultural hegemonic structure perpetuated by the text. The hierarchy of human beings referred to by the text has become ‘essential,’ by giving to it a religious foundation. A socio-historical phenomenon has taken the form of a dogmatic belief, pushing him to periphery from generations to generations.

The Dalit can re-construct the text by de-constructing the ‘world’ it represents. The essential referents of the text are to be radically questioned. Now he is the hermeneutic author of the text, he should react to the text with violence and hermeneutically transcend the limitations of the context of the text. Why?

The text has perpetuated a hegemonic tradition stripping him of his human dignity and honour, it has perpetuated his exploitation and oppression. But before attempting a reconstruction, he has to subject the text to a critique and probe the grounds of hegemonic powers provided by the text to his oppressors. This is necessary to justify the reconstruction.

The above text is an attempt to give a theological foundation to human greed for power and to stabilize the dominating powers and authority of the powerful and to perpetuate the powerlessness of the powerless. It is also an attempt to provide an epistemological foundation through “testimony” (Śabda) of the Scriptures, to a human tradition by making it an article of faith, by giving a divine sanction to a human creation of the hierarchical principle. The divine “testimony” in Indian tradition is unquestionable and infallible as it is a revealed dogma.

Seen from another angle the hierarchical principle of mundane order is a projection of the hierarchical principle of celestial order. There is a double projection founded on a subtle dialectic here: the mundane hierarchy is a human creation, a sociological phenomenon which is projected on divine beings; in turn the same divine hierarchy is employed to human condition in order to justify the social hierarchy at the human level. Moreover, among the Gods there is not only hierarchy that places them one above the other but also the struggle to stabilize this hierarchy. The same principle is projected into the human order in order to justify its existence. There are not only constant celestial battles to establish supremacy among celestial beings but also a process to make divine beings weak and fragile, which gradually results in the elimination and disappearance of deities from the sphere of importance. The Brahmanic intelligence is so subtle, that it maneuvered the revelation such a way that the celestial phenomenon will not be repeated at the mundane level, depriving them of their supremacy by any movement that go to weaken their power. Hence the sacred hymn cited above (RV X. 90) is founded on divine authority. No one can dare to question Brahmanic status and power. The invention of Karma doctrine (whatever be the theories proposed to establish its origin) provided further foundation to this hierarchical nature of Hindu understanding of a human being by making ‘birth’ in a particular socio-cultural context as ‘the criterion’ that provides identity to a human person within the socio-hierarchical structure in a Hindu religious community. The ‘birth’ of a human being is something that transcends all human manipulation and is totally subject to the belief-patterns of the world-view one holds on to, and hence it surpasses all human questioning. Such a world-view provided permanent stability of power and authority to Brahmanic supremacy understood as eternal law (*sanātana dharma*) which makes the powerful ever powerful and the powerless eternally powerless. The “framework” that distinguishes and

determines the social category of people is so rigid, so strong and so stable, which we call 'tradition', that no cracks, no debilitating elements can touch the wall that divided one class from the other.

Such being the case, no future prospects can be envisaged which can eradicate caste system in India. Concretely it means that a Dalit will remain Dalit for eternity, being subject to the eternal law of transmigration (*samsāra*) of Hindu tradition. It is a "dogmatic structure of relationship", a cultural hegemony transmitted from one generation to the other.

What can be the response of a Dalit to this situation? He should revolt against his own receptive and humble consciousness that lasted so long. He needs to give birth to a new text, to a new myth, to a new story which he can narrate with dignity to the future generations. The text cited above describes his birth from the "feet" of the divine being and reduces him to a menial class and to a slavish condition, only to be kicked and stamped under the feet. In Indian tradition "feet" are symbolic of what is impure, mean, ignoble and immoral bereft of any dignity and honour .

He needs a new "symbol" which would bestow on him purity, nobility, dignity, moral excellence and social status, a symbol which would give him a new identity of a brave and self conscious personality that resists and declines vociferously to yield to any inhuman treatment.

As a sample for *ad hoc* discussion he can attempt to reconstruct the verse ten of the hymn as follows (RV X. 90. 10.):

From him (Puruṣa) were born the Great Elements: the wind, water, fire and the earth. Correspondingly were born from him the Brāhmaṇas, Rājanya, Śūdra and the Vaiśya.

The reconstructed verse proposes the birth of a *Shudra* from the divine being that corresponds to the great element 'fire' (*tejas*). Fire could become a worthy symbol for him now. Fire is a cosmic element and a cosmic symbol; it burns and begets energy; it is the primordial source of all power; it purifies, gives light, dispels darkness (the symbol of all evil); it transforms or destroys whatever is fed into it. The Dalit can now appropriate the symbol of fire for himself. Now he can claim that he is born of "fire" (*tejas*), namely, he is of a noble birth, He can appropriate for himself the energy and power, begetting from fire; he can

become a light bearer of the society; he can strive now to root out all evil, especially injustice, inequality and oppression at all levels. This symbol can give him a new self-understanding, an understanding which will highlight his dignity and rights. The new self understanding can bestow on him new responsibility, namely, that he has to “burn” his brains now, unfold his epistemic potentialities by appropriating the opportunities for growth and development; he can subject unjust structures to rational critique until they are ‘liquidated ’ and ‘eliminated’ through the fire of rational arguments. Fire dispels darkness, the new ‘self understanding’ can go to dispel his own low self image, and being fired by the new light he can project new structures founded on the principles of egalitarianism and universal human welfare. The fire projects itself and is most conspicuous by its presence. A Dalit can now be strongly “self-conscious’ of her/his identity and violently refuse to be treated as a ‘lesser’ human being in any manner.

The new self-image of the Dalit should result in the upsurge of a new consciousness leading him to dynamic, corporate, socio political activity.

3. Socio-political Context of the Critique.

Despite so radical a reaction of Buddha to Hindu hierarchical society and so enormous an influence of Jaina religion that propagated non-violence (*ahimsā*) with so much zeal grounded on the metaphysical doctrine of potential equality of all souls, the Hindu tradition of ‘social hierarchy’ persisted in India. The influence of Jainism could make the Brahmins to give up Vedic Sacrifices, which necessitated killing of animals, and embrace vegetarianism. But it did not succeed to bring about the social change of equality of all human beings and do away with the caste system. As a result the caste mentality pervades every aspect of Indian society even today.

As we attempt a socio-political critique, we need to ask first and foremost what is the ‘crisis’ in this context that can lead us to a critique? Basic crisis that we diagnose with reference to Dalits is the crisis of *poiesis*, namely, a crisis due to the absence of a political movement that could bring about the deconstruction of the “essential references,” the structures and frameworks which are determined, confirmed and transmitted as a ‘tradition’ through cultural hegemony. What can bring about the political unity among the Dalits and make them thoroughly restless, dynamic and passionate in order to pursue the ideal of self empowerment endlessly? Though various elements can converge together to

bring about such a needed political action, we would like to focus on one important ingredient of it, namely, the need to give birth to a new “symbol” which can unite them socially and politically. Politics understood as endless pursuit of an ideal can be realized only when all 160 million Dalits⁵ are united politically. A passionate attachment to a ‘symbol’ can help them a great deal to come together for a worthy goal that promises the fulfillment of their aspirations..

Where can we find such a symbol that can transform Dalit psychology? In fact, Dalits themselves should bring to existence such a symbol. One lasting and effective symbol that can unite all Dalits could be found in the Sāṅkhya System. One of the important doctrines of the Sāṅkhya System is its theory of evolution, namely, the Materiality (*prakṛti*) constituted of three strands or constituents (*guṇas*) evolves. These three constituents are *sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (darkness). (*Sāṅkhyakārikas* 11- 13) Among these the “rajas” is the principle of action, a principle that initiates all activity. The Dalits need to appropriate to themselves the constitutive element of Materiality (*prakṛti*), the ‘rajas’, the principle that initiates all activity, creates disequilibrium among the three constituents of Materiality, thus making possible the evolution of the cosmic order. It is an intentional symbol than can be ontologically charged with existential potentials. It represents human emotions and passions at the individual level, very specially the emotion of ‘anger’, that drives away lethargy and psychologically incites human persons to immediate action. An angry person is charged with energy and ready for immediate action; a righteously angry assembly of Dalits can initiate powerful activity to destroy ‘unrighteousness’ (*adharma*) and reestablish righteousness (*dharma*) in the society. What tremendous movement can be initiated if 160 million Dalits of India burn with anger at their own slavery and oppression? In a democratic context, so enormous an assembly of Dalits can send shivers into their oppressors, liquidate structures of oppression, and eliminate institutions (even religious) of exploitation. All this can be done never maliciously but always vigorously. *Tejas* (fire) and *rajas* (passion) if allowed to flare up in the heart of every Dalit, there is no need of any other agency to transform their socio-political condition. These two symbols can internally compel them to transcend the limitations of their concrete situational setting and incite in them an upsurge of consciousness resulting in dynamic, purposeful and result-oriented political activity.

Such a political activity is necessary because the contestants, they have to face, are mighty in power. The people who enjoyed the socio-cultural privileges will fight tooth and nail to preserve their interests through political manipulations and socio-economic influences. Not only they will resist the move of the subalterns but also assert their historically confirmed positions of power founded on hierarchy with all the means at their disposal. Only a horizontalisation and democratization of power structures through ruthless struggle of the Dalits can establish a society based on the principles of egalitarianism.

Again such a political activity by the subalterns is necessary because the noble principles like Liberty, Fraternity and Equality are not the realities which are readily and easily available only to be appropriated, but they are realities for which one has to fight for. Otherwise there was no need for the Declaration of Universal Human Rights. Mutual oppression and exploitation are ineradicable human realities which are bound to stay as long as this planet remains inhabited by the humans. Only as a well united corporate body can the Dalits defend against the violations of their rights. For this they need to be fully conscious of their identity and dignity and perpetually be prepared for political action within the democratic framework.

4. The Personal Context of the Critique

The Dalits need to volunteer to take up a critique of their own form of life which is a totality of internal relations. What is the crisis at the personal level that necessitates a critique in the context of Dalits? We would like to name the crisis in this context as the crisis of 'Dharma', understood as the restoration of the "moral subject" of the Dalits. It is true that the Dalits should denounce and renounce the Dharma imposed on them from outside, which was unjust and oppressive. But they have to regain the "subjective consciousness" for themselves in order to re-establish a strong corporate consciousness of '*sva-dharma*', namely, a Moral Law that give corporate self-identity to Dalits. Due to their subjugation to the mandates of the 'twice-born' (the higher classes) and passive compliance with the caste prescriptions imposed by the dominated, they have sacrificed their "corporate subjectivity". They have lost their sense of personal '*sva-dharma*', the sense of a free moral agent. Hence the crisis. They should through a 'self-critique' revive their 'self-consciousness' to act morally and daringly. They need to actualize their subjectivity through self reflection and self expression. This is possible when they

raise questions concerning their own identity: ‘who am I?’, why am I in this condition of misery ? ‘why am I considered as an untouchable and impure?’ who made me so?’ and the like. If this is done in a corporate context, there will be a corporate identity, leading to corporate expression of the Identity through denouncing in public the ‘dharma’ (caste prescriptions) imposed from outside. The expression of the identity should lead to actualization of the identity through activation of the individual and collective psyche leading to the definition of a “Dalit dharma” determined by Dalit themselves⁶. This should go on until they are able to collaborate with others, freely, at all levels and legitimately claim for their share in all socio-economic enterprises of the nation. Finally, they should on their own reject the so called ‘reservations’ having affirmed their socio-political equality.

The concept of Dalit dharma should help them to develop a form of life for themselves founded on concern for every fellow Dalit. A critique is necessary so that a new sense of dharma becomes incarnate in every Dalit. The contemporary democratic set up and the transformations in thought patterns due to post-modern trends have bestowed on Dalits considerable privileges and favours. This has resulted in a good number of Dalits enjoying political powers, and a fair number of them becoming economically powerful. This has, in effect, made some Dalits to grab for themselves as much power and wealth as possible at the expense of his own fellow Dalits – if this trend continues the dialectic of social hierarchy which we subjected to a critique will be repeated in another form internally among the Dalits. Hence the need for constant internal (personal) critique through a process of enquiry and re-examination of their commitment and the spirit of dedication to duty; their motivation to hard work by setting high goals in every aspect of life; their capacity to grasp every opportunity for personal and intellectual growth; their sense of concern for the fellow Dalits and towards the common welfare of the entire Dalit Family, so that none of their members suffer from the violation of basic human rights and dignity. They need to probe the presuppositions of the conditions of possibility of development so that these do not exclude any Dalit from the ambit of holistic growth. For this they need incarnate saviours who would dethrone *adharmā* (injustice) and enthrone *dharma* (justice). These saviours cannot come from outside but they should emerge from among the Dalit themselves⁷. Only a self critique born from the sense of a crisis could give birth to these saviours.

5. Concluding Remarks

A Utopia presents sum-total of possibilities awaiting actualization. It is basically a positive and glorious vision of a future society, a new consciousness of a new socio-political reality, a state of fulfillment of all just desires of a righteous person. Utopias can open up new horizons and provide fillip to human ventures and projects inciting from within concrete energized activity.

Dalit Utopia, in concrete, is the dawn of a new consciousness of their own future; it is the picture of total emancipation and empowerment of every Dalit in India, where their dignity is respected and upheld by all, the picture of a new horizon of immense opportunities of growth and development, the picture of liberty, freedom and equality fully realized, and an egalitarian society, in all its aspects, established. It is a picture of an emotionally charged and intellectually enlightened, ontologically transformed 'assembly of people' marching with determination towards the goals they have set for themselves.

To conclude, we have tried to highlight succinctly the existence of a tradition in India which has experienced throughout history the violation of its basic human rights. By subjecting such a tradition to a critique we have shown that 'affirmative action' is the only alternative available to them, as there is an evident process of polarization of caste interests within our society. Hence a social revolution that can annihilate caste system in India is out of question and the slogan of a homogeneous society has no takers.

This does not mean that the Dalits should isolate themselves from rest of the population of the nation by envisaging an esoteric community for themselves.. What it means is that there is need for horizontal way of living, thinking and communicating. It is also a question of creating situations where Dalits can dialogue with others as equal partners on principles of egalitarianism. Dalit empowerment can intensify dialogical relationships among people of all castes and creed leading to a new understanding of horizontal relationships and reverential attitude towards the otherness of the other. It is a situation where *I* and *thou* understand and respect the differences that make both different, but never fail to communicate as persons with a sincere intention to build up a new prosperous society of liberated people.

¹ Sundara Rajan, *Towards a Critique of Cultural Reason*. New Delhi : 2004, 12 f.

² Raimundo Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*, Delhi: 76 . Cf. also H.H. Wilson. (Trans). *Rgveda Samhitā*, Vol. IV. Delhi: 2001.

³ The Religious Law Books of the Hindus further elaborate the position and the menial nature of the Dalits. Cr. Georg Buehler, *The Laws of Manu*, . *Sacred Books of the East* Ed. by F. Max Mueller, Vol 25. Delhi: 1993. X .123-129.

⁴ Sundara Rajan, Op. cit. 34 f.

⁵ Prakash Louis, “The meaning of Subaltern: A Socio-Philosophical Discourse” in *Subaltern Perspective*, ed. by G. Thadathil, Bangalore : 2005, 59.

⁶ The term *Dharma* is actually untranslatable. It is equivalent to righteousness, law, duty, custom, order, etc. Though it is Aryan in origin, Buddhism and Jainism have employed it to elucidate their own philosophical perspectives. Only Dalits do not have a established, systematic conception of Dharma, which they should do as an immediate action plan. The term is used within the context of class system with the designation “*varnāśrama-dharma*”, namely, the duties and obligations particular to a class or caste. The Science of Dharma has elaborated the duties of each class and assigned only one duty to Dalits, namely “to serve meekly the other three castes” (*The Laws of Manu* I, 91). This is what is to be denounced by the Dalits now. While denouncing the dharma of the twice born, they have to affirm their own “*sva-dharma*”, which will provide them a strong identity arising from their self-understanding as a united family. The new dharma should uphold their dignity and empower them to relate as equal partners with other castes in Indian society. Cf. Wlehelm Halbfass, *India and Europe*, Delhi: 1990, 310 – 348.

⁷ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a great leader and prophet of Dalits who gave a fillip to the Dalit liberation movement through the slogan “educate, agitate and organize” that has motivated many Dalits to organize themselves and fight for their justice. Dhananjay Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, Bombay: 1981, p. 32..

Reference: *The Encounter of Knowledge and Cultures in the North-South Dialogue*. Ed. By Raul Fornet-Betancourt, IKO Verlag: Frankfurt, 2008; 109- 120.

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

THE CONCEPT OF *AHIMSA* (NONVIOLENCE) IN INDIAN TRADITION AND THE HUMANISATION OF THE WORLD.

1. Introduction

The movements and conceptions that go to make portraits of human beings in Indian tradition are numerous as India represents multicultural society with a known history of more than three millennia. A homogenous portrait is inconceivable; nevertheless there are streams and movements, traditions and systems of thought and praxis that produce a myriad of portraits which have shaped the human images through centuries. The intercultural interactions due to globalization has further complicated the already complex picture of human life in this part of the Asian continent. We shall attempt in this short essay at least to project a traditional portrait of human life and conception that can be adapted by the contemporary culture towards strengthening the process of humanization. It is the conception of human life conceived under the category of *Ahimsā*¹ (non-injury, nonviolence). Violence, in the form of war, terrorism, naxal attacks, exploitation, oppression and gender discrimination being on the increase we would like to look into this concept and see how its appropriation can go to humanize the world and the cultures.

The Sanskrit word “*Ahimsā*²” is a negative formulation³ of the positive word “*himsā* “ which means violence, injury, killing etc. The Sanskrit language abounds in negative expressions basically to represent ancient man’s conviction that human experience in its totality cannot be adequately communicated through language and speech.

2. *Ahimsā* in Jainism⁴

Ahimsā is basically an anthropo-cosmic concept, a philosophical perspective towards human life and all living beings in the religious tradition of Jains, the most ascetical of all religions in India. First of all, it considers soul whose essence is life (*Jiva*) as sacred and pure. *Jiva* (life) and *a-jiva* (non-life, matter) are two fundamental metaphysical categories of Jain tradition. Life being pure and sacred is to be respected, revered and preserved in all its purity and sacredness. Anything that goes to make it

impure will desecrate its own sacredness and hence considered as violence, “*himsā*”. The concept *Ahimsā*⁵ therefore means positively reverence to life (*Jiva*), practiced through an attitude of nonviolence, non-injury (*Ahimsā*).

Secondly, the Jain tradition recognizes basic cosmic homogeneity underlying all living beings as it considers all beings, from the blade of grass to the highest form of a liberated sage, are constituted of individual souls and hence to be revered universally. The attitude of *Ahimsā* (Nonviolence) should be all pervasive: namely, it has to be practiced towards all creatures and towards all beings. It is cosmocentric in its perspective. In its comprehensive meaning, the term means total abstinence from causing any pain or harm whatsoever to any living creature, either by thought, word or deed. Non-injury requires a harmless mind, mouth, and hand. The anthropological dimension of it is significant in the sense that the ‘soul’ can be liberated, that is, it can attain its original purity and perfection and thus become ‘absolute’ only while being born in the form of a human being. The doctrine of *Ahimsā* (Nonviolence) is made clear in the scriptures of the religious tradition:⁶

Earth, water, fire, wind (possess souls); grass, trees and corn; and the moveable beings, viz., the oviparous, the viviparous, those generated from dirt, and those generated in fluids Know and understand that they all desire happiness; by hurting these beings, men do harm to their own souls, and will again be born as one of them (Sūtrakṛtāṅga 1:7:1-2)

Earth, water, fire and wind; grass, trees and corn; oviparous animals, the two kinds of viviparous animals; beings engendered in fluids and in dirt, and plants. These six classes of living beings a wise man should know and treat tenderly, in thoughts, words, and acts; he should neither do actions, nor desire property, whereby he might do them any harm (ibid.1; 9:8-9)

The Jain monk’s vow⁷ of *Ahimsā* runs thus:

I renounce all killing of living beings, whether subtle or gross, whether movable or immovable. Nor shall I kill living beings, nor cause others to do it, nor consent to it. As long as I live, I confess and blame, repent and

exempt myself of these sins in the thrice threefold way: in mind, speech and body (ācārāṅga 2:15:1)

The vow of *Ahimsā* is broken even by showing contempt towards another person, by entertaining unreasonable dislike for or prejudice towards anybody, by frowning at, hating, abusing and speaking ill of another person; by uttering lies, or by ruining another person in any way whatsoever.

Thus all harsh and rude speech is *himsā*. Using harsh words to beggars, servants or inferiors is *himsā*. Wounding the feelings of others by gesture, expression, tone of voice and unkind words is also *himsā*. Slighting or showing deliberate discourtesy to a person before others is wanton *himsā*. To approve of another's harsh actions is indirect *himsā*. To fail to relieve another's pain, or even to neglect to go to the person in distress is a sort of *himsā*. It is the sin of omission. Therefore the Jain tradition invites us to avoid strictly all forms of harshness, direct or indirect, positive or negative, immediate or delayed and practice *Ahimsā* in its purest form and become divine. For *Ahimsā* and Divinity are one.

If you practice *Ahimsā*, you should put up with insults, rebukes, criticisms and assaults also. You should never retaliate nor wish to offend anybody even under extreme provocation. You should not entertain any evil thought against anybody. You should not harbour anger. You should not curse. You should be prepared to lose joyfully even your life in the cause of Truth. The Ultimate Truth can be attained only through *Ahimsā*.

3. *Ahimsā* in Buddhism

Buddha⁸ (536 – 483 B.C.) laid emphasis in his preaching on positive virtues like compassion (*karuṇa*) and Universal love (*maitrī*).⁹ He insisted on good conduct (*śīla*) from his disciples. He gave ten rules of conduct out of which five were obligatory both for monks and lay people: *ahimsā* was one of them. But being a person of the golden mean, he was not a strictly vegetarian like the Jains. He ate meat when it was offered to him. He gave the ruling that the monks could eat meat served to them, on condition that the animal was not killed expressly for them¹⁰. The Buddhist Scriptures vividly describe the last moments of the sage, Buddha, how he ate the dish

of meat made of pig's soft flesh¹¹ and died, suffering from dysentery. *Ahimsā*, in other words, was not the main tenet of Early Buddhism¹² but it was made popular in the Buddhist tradition by Emperor Ashoka¹³ (268-232 B.C), who affected by the enormous killings caused in the Kalinga war and may be also due to the many friends he had among the Jainists, propagated and popularized it among his adherents. It is said that the emperor showed himself to be much stricter than the monks in the practice of *Ahimsā*. In his edicts he repeatedly inculcates kindness to animals; we add here, in paraphrased form, a few texts from them¹⁴.

In the first major rock edict the emperor confesses that formerly in his kitchen, “many hundreds of thousands of animals used to be killed every day,” but after the present edict has been promulgated, only three animals were killed, two peacocks and one gazelle. Henceforth, however, even these would not be killed. It is said the king had done much good to bipeds and quadrupeds, to birds and fishes, especially by seeing to the preservation of their lives.

The fourth edict avows that in the past killing of and injury to living beings had been on the increase, but the emperor's reign has been characterized by abstention from killing and kindness towards living beings. According to the fifth pillar edict, in the twenty-sixth year of his consecration, Ashoka forbade the slaughter of a large variety of creatures, namely, parrot, maina, red-headed duck, swan, etc. In April 1957 there came to light from Kandahar in Afghanistan a Graeco –Aramaic bilingual inscription of Ashoka, which too deals with non-killing¹⁵. It is generally presumed that the Greek and Aramaic texts are translations made from one and the same original draft. The section on non-killing runs as follows in the Greek version:

And the king abstained from killing living beings. And the other people like huntsmen and fishermen of the king also desisted from hunting. And if some were intemperate, they have ceased from their intemperance as was in their power...

The Buddhist theory of *Ahimsa* became more prominent in its usage during the Later Buddhism (“*Mahāyāna*”¹⁶). It became more anthropocentric as it projected the ethical human virtues like compassion (*karuna* -) and

friendliness (*maitrī*), which are to be obligatorily practiced by all followers of Buddha in order to attain liberation (Buddhahood)¹⁷.

There developed another metaphysical theory during the Later Buddhism to propagate Nonviolence, which asserts that the essential nature of Buddha is identical with the ultimate universal reality. Hence in the process of transmigration each and every being has the possibility of becoming a liberated Buddha and hence every act of violence to any being is a metaphysical evil and hence to be avoided¹⁸.

4. Nonviolence in M.K. Gandhi,

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)¹⁹ known popularly as Mahatma Gandhi, considered the virtue of *Ahimsā*, “Nonviolence” as a commitment of faith. He professed nonviolence as his religion or an integral part of his religious belief²⁰. He believed that only a person who has faith in God can practice Nonviolence, as it demands a lot of courage which can come only through faith in God. Nonviolence is a power which can be wielded by every one, provided s/he has faith in God. According to him, Nonviolence in its essence and manifestation is compassion, toleration, fearlessness and selflessness.

He believed Nonviolence as the law of human race and violence as the law of the brute. Nonviolence is not merely a policy of life which can change, but it has to be pursued in the face of violence²¹. Nonviolence with a nonviolent person has no merit. Practicing tolerance with the tolerant is not a moral quality²². May be, it is not nonviolence at all. The reality of nonviolence becomes evident and conspicuous only when it is pitted against violence. Violence can never be a lawful activity, on the other hand, Nonviolence can never be unlawful

According to M.K. Gandhi, non violence does not work in the same way as violence. It works in the opposite way. An armed person relies upon his arms. A person who is intentionally unarmed relies upon the Unseen Force called God by poets, but called the Unknown by the scientists. But that which is unknown is not necessarily non-existent. Nonviolence without reliance upon that Force is a poor stuff to be thrown in the dust.

The movement of Nonviolence has to be understood with another important concept upheld and proclaimed incessantly by Gandhi, namely,

the struggle or striving for ‘Truth’ – *satyāgraha*²³. He considers his whole life as a striving after truth, an experiment with truth. He said Nonviolence is the means of achieving the goal – the ‘truth’. According to him these two cannot be separated, they are like the two sides of the same coin. Truth for him is God and he can find God only through non-violence.²⁴ He affirms that “Satyagraha is a kind of struggle in which there can be no defeat and no cause for regret. A man can only become stronger through the struggle.”²⁵

Volumes of literature is found on Mahatma Gandhi and on his movements of “Nonviolence” and “*satyāgraha*”. The movement as such is almost buried with his death in India. But certain non-violent tactics are in vogue in India everywhere: *dharana* (sitting on the earth for an indefinite time by a group of people demanding something) or “*gherāo*” (surrounding someone for hours together by a large crowd in order to demand something), and hunger strike are very common²⁶.

5. Criticism of Ahimsā

The movement of Nonviolence of Gandhi was vehemently opposed by both critics, British as well as Indian: to the former it was only a disguise, a pretence, camouplage and to the latter it was sheer sentimentalism. The British who judged Gandhi’s peaceful campaigns from the prism of European history and the radical Indians like Subahsh Chandra Bhosh and others who had browsed on the history of French and Russian Revolutions and also the Italian and Irish national struggles, considered it foolish to miss the opportunities and sacrifice tactical gains for reasons which are relevant only to sages/saints and not to the politicians. Even those who close to him were unwilling to take the doctrine to logical ends. After the Independence the Constitutions of the nations were framed not on Gandhian principles, but on the western parliamentary model and finally, his socio economic ideals were given a peaceful burial.²⁷

In he West, Leon Trotsky, Frantz Fanon, Reinhold Niebuhr, Ward Churchill and Malcolm X were fervent critics of nonviolence, arguing variously that nonviolence and pacifism are an attempt to impose the morals of the bourgeoisie upon the proletariat, that violence is a necessary accompaniment to revolutionary change, or that the right to self-defence is fundamental²⁸.

In the midst of violent repression of radical African Americans in the United States during the 1960s,,, Black Panther member George Jackson said of the nonviolent tactics of Martin Luther King, Jr.:

"The concept of nonviolence is a false ideal. It presupposes the existence of compassion and a sense of justice on the part of one's adversary.

When this adversary has everything to lose and nothing to gain by exercising justice and compassion, his reaction can only be negative." 29

Malcolm X also clashed with civil rights leaders over the issue of nonviolence, arguing that violence should not be ruled out where no option remained:

"Concerning nonviolence, it is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks." 30

A new generation of historians of the civil rights movement criticise nonviolence as a failed strategy and argue that armed self-defense and civil violence motivated civil rights reforms more than peaceful appeals to morality and reason³¹

Philosopher John Rawls devotes a section of his influential and controversial book *A Theory of Justice* to the problem of whether a just society should or should not tolerate the intolerant, and to the related problem of whether or not, in any society, the intolerant have any right to complain when they are not tolerated.

Rawls concludes that a just society must be tolerant, therefore the intolerant must be tolerated for otherwise the society would then be intolerant and so unjust. However Rawls qualifies this by insisting that society and its social institutions have a reasonable right of self-preservation that supersedes the principle of tolerance. Hence, the intolerant must be tolerated but only insofar as they do not endanger the tolerant society and its institutions³².

One of the possible reasons that such criticisms are levelled against nonviolence is that it tends to be a slow, gradual means of achieving political change, and thus the connection between action and effect is less apparent than for violence. Advocates of nonviolence have argued that many critics of nonviolence focus their critique on the moral justifications for nonviolence while neglecting to examine the practical political advantages

of nonviolence as a technique for social struggle. Some critics falsely tend to ignore the historical success of nonviolence against dictators and repressive governments³³.

Gandhi made it clear that he did not assume any compassion or sense of justice on the part of his adversary. His philosophy of nonviolence focused almost entirely on the changes that the oppressed should make in their behavior. Whatever changes the oppressor might make are beyond the control of the oppressed, he taught. Therefore the moral (or immoral) qualities of the oppressor are quite irrelevant. Gandhi also made it clear that the value of nonviolence is not found primarily in its ability to achieve political change. Therefore, he argued, those who criticize it for its lack of practical efficacy are judging it by the wrong criteria³⁴.

6. Conclusion : Nonviolence and the Humanization of Cultures.

1. We can no more speak of only ‘human rights’. Now it is the time to highlight the concept of cosmic rights. Even plants and animals have their own rights. The environmental catastrophes which are occurring in increasing number should beckon us to reconsider the conception of “rights”

- not merely founded on reason and human dignity but also on the concept of “respect for nature”. The concept of *Ahimsā* paves the way for “global ethics”, for a humane treatment of the nature and to extend ‘I-Thou’ relationship to all living beings.³⁵

2. All desire peace. Some affirm that peace can be established only through War. War, they say, is an instrument to achieve peace. Can we agree with these propositions? Has any war brought about lasting peace in the history of humankind? Can the violence itself be the predecessor to Nonviolence³⁶.

3. We would like to propose the concept of ‘dialogue’ as a ‘middle-path’ - in the spirit of Lord Buddha - between violence and Nonviolence. Dialogue is the Daughter of Nonviolence (*ahimsā*). Buddha characterizes it as “right speech” under the “eight- fold path”. (*ashtāṅga mārga*). The Jain theory of *Nayavāda* (theory of relative perspectives, to be understood with the *syādvāda*, the theory of sevenfold views) also promotes the dialogical approach in its epistemology. Dialogue while leading to an understanding of

opponents' perspective, minimizes the possibilities of violence and aims at harmony among the dialogue partners.

The Lord Mahāvīra (599-527 B.C) the great reformer and one of the founders of Jain religion, preached the doctrine of diversity of perspectives and how unity in diversity can be achieved. The method propagated by him is dialogical. The cause of all violence is conflict and cause of all conflicts is diversity of perspectives. The diversity is inherent in nature but diversities are at the level of qualities of things. Inherently there is unity amidst all external diversity, which has to be discerned and actualised. Lord Mahāvīra gave the example of fire and water which have natural antipathy. Both cannot subsist together as fire is hot and water is cold. Coldness destroys heat and water extinguishes fire. How harmony between the two is possible? Lord Mahāvīra says that both are matter. At the level of matter both have common characteristics and it cannot be the case that being essentially the same they are not interrelated. There is no absolute dissimilarity among the things of this world³⁷.

Applying this principle to human world, diversities and dissimilarities are mostly external, namely at the level of culture, language, gender, nationality etc. Moreover, there is no absolute dissimilarity that divides one from the other totally. All dissimilarities are relative. The humanization of the world is possible when we realize the relativity of perspectives and cultures. Dialogue is the instrument which helps people to bridge differences and diversities, and discover and discern the ways which will unite them. Violence begets when humans decline to speak as they see only dissimilarities and inequalities and refuse to see resemblances.

Intercultural dialogue is a process of bringing together people of diverse perspectives, languages, nationalities, religions and cultures together. It is an attempt to create global assemblies, where every one sees resemblance at the fundamental level of human nature and human world. Nonviolence is born when people start speaking with each other and refuse to hate each other and attempt to become a neighbour of the other. Two neighbours can fight and quarrel on silly matters. But there is another possibility that they can also become neighbours just by speaking to one another. Once the dialogue begins there is no scope for violence; but

dialogue should be endless and ceaseless only then people will realise that 'Nonviolence' is the truth and foundation of universal sister/brotherhood. Intercultural dialogue should aim at that – and if it becomes a reality it can go a long way towards the humanization of the whole world.

4. Humanization of the world demands nonviolent communication. On the one hand communication has tremendously increased with the rise in gadgets like mobiles, cell phones etc., which impel one to communicate more and more. But all this communication is mostly a monologue of sectarian nature, basically self-centered, and never a dialogue. People do not wish to meet partners of dialogue who have different perspective, who belong to another culture or religion because there is so much fear in the world. Ancient times people were afraid of wild animals in the forests and jungles. Now the forests have been replaced with concrete jungles inhabited by global guerillas in human form. Hence people do not feel secure. Security concerns give rise to defense tactics producing violence in turn. In other words life is in danger, because life is not respected. The basic conception of life as 'sacred' (as understood by the principle of *ahimsā*) has to be restored again through dialogical enterprises in order to humanize the world.

5. At the global level again there are problems of the nature of nuclear proliferation, global warming, terrorism, pandemics, energy scarcity so on. Added to that we are also in a world of competing nations each vying for power. How to humanize such a world?. Inter-cultural and inter-national dialogue is the primary solution. We need global institutions with basis at the grass root level which can conscientize people of all hues towards the process of humanization. This could proceed in three directions: First, there should be a global social service sector, providing health care, education, shelter, emergency services and the like. Second, there should be continuous political dialogue to arrive at common principles of action and common understanding regarding security concerns and welfare schemes. Third, there should be concrete steps taken up seriously for strengthening UNO by investing it with more powers so that it can effectively respond with greater responsibility to solve inter-national security problems³⁸.

6. Finally, we are speaking about humanization of the world where 80 % of the wealth is enjoyed by 20% of the people. I am coming from a city called Bangalore where a software engineer begins his career with a salary of INR 40 000/- per month and a primary private school teacher with INR 2000/- per month. India is only adding more and more to the list of the poor by increasing the gap between the haves and have-nots³⁹. More and more landless labourers or/and farmers with small holdings are shifting to the dirty slums in the cities, because nature and humans are both up against their lives. In India there are people who live like kings, but there are also people who “live like worms in the dirtiest conditions, eating dirtiest food, wearing almost no clothing, and dying of reasons which the children of the rich would not even imagine”⁴⁰. There are many in India who rightly demand laws to ban beggary, prostitution and child labour. But there is hardly any one to demand a law to ensure decent living with minimum economic capacity to eat, clothe oneself and afford a small shelter. There is enough wealth for every one on this earth to lead a simple and contented life

. But the problem is inequitable distribution. The richer a person becomes, lesser the humanity he manifests. The more we have, the more we ignore people around us⁴¹. We need a new Buddha to preach once again the principles of compassion (*karuna*) and friendliness (*maithrī*) and to proclaim the welfare of all beings (*sarve sukhino bhavantu*).

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Appendix One:

Mahatma Gandhi’s sayings on Non-Violence

1. Non-violence for me is not a mere experiment. It is part of my life and the whole of the creed of Satyagraha, non-co-operation, civil disobedience, and the like are necessary deductions from the fundamental proposition that non-violence is the law of life for human beings. (The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi: Published by the Director, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, Ind. Revised ed., 2000). Vol. 1-100. [Henceforth abbreviated as CWMG], Vol. 61, p.187:

2. CWMG, Vol. 80, p.207: My non-violence does admit of people, who cannot or will not be non-violent, holding and making effective use of arms. Let me repeat for the thousandth time that non-violence is of the strongest, not of the weak. It is a force mightier than violence, though radically different from it in quality and effect.
3. CWMG, Vol. 81, p.400: I would like the whole world, to accept non-violence as the law of life in every department, social, political and domestic. But there is no room for cowardliness. I would far rather that we all became violent than cowards.
4. CWMG, Vol. 81, p.428: Ahimsa with me is a creed, the breath of life. But it is never as a creed that I placed it before India or, for that matter, before anyone except in casual or informal talks. I placed it before the Congress as a political weapon, to be employed for the solution of political problems.
5. CWMG, Vol. 65, p.43: Non-violence is not a passive force nor so helpless as the correspondent will make it out to be. Barring truth, if truth is to be considered apart from non-violence, the latter is the activist force in the world. It never fails.
6. CWMG, Vol. 24, p.20: Non-violence is the most vital and integral part of non-co-operation. We may fail in everything else and still continue our battle if we remain non-violent.
7. CWMG, Vol. 24, p.161: Non-violence and truth are convertible terms. This seems to be the idea behind the saying, “One must speak truth, truth that is agreeable.” That is genuine truth which causes no pain, for that alone is non-violent.
8. CWMG, Vol. 24, p.378: Non-violence is the supreme dharma, there is no discovery of greater import than this.
9. CWMG, Vol. 46, p.27: Non-violence is the keystone of life.

Appendix Two:

Mahatma Gandhi’s sayings on Satyagraha

1. “Satyagraha, of which civil resistance is but a part, is to me the universal law of life. ‘Satya’, in truth, is my God. I can only search him through non-violence and in no other way and the freedom of my country as of the world is surely included in the search for truth”. Vol. 65, p. 8).

2. “It is a weapon which surpasses all weapons, all your clubs and other weapons, cling to it – therefore; it will never fail you in times of need”. (CWMG, Vol. 14, p. 223).
3. “Satyagraha is a kind of struggle in which there can be no defeat and no cause for regret. A man can only become stronger through the struggle. He suffers no exhaustion and at every stage he gains fresh strength. If truth be on our side, the Indian community will work harder this time and earn an even more glorious name”. (CWMG, Vol. 14, p.266).
4. “Satyagraha means fighting oppression through voluntary suffering. There can be no question here of making anyone else suffer. Satyagraha is always successful; it can never meet with defeat”. (CWMG, Vol. 16, p.438).
5. “Satyagraha is not physical force. A Satyagrahi does not inflict pain on the adversary; he does not seek his destruction. A Satyagrahi never resorts to firearms. In the use of Satyagraha, there is no ill-will whatever.

Satyagraha is pure soul-force. Truth is the very substance of the soul. That is why this force is called Satyagraha. The soul is informed with knowledge. In it burns the flame of love. If someone gives us pain through ignorance, we shall win him through love. “Non-violence is the supreme dharma” is the proof of this power of love. Non-violence is a dormant state. In the waking state, it is love. Ruled by love, the world goes on”. (CWMG, Vol. 16, p.10).

6. “Love transcends all animality and is never partial. Satyagraha has therefore been described as a coin, on whose face you read love and on the reverse you read truth. It is a coin current everywhere and has indefinite value.

Satyagraha is self-dependent. It does not require the assent of the opponent before it can be brought into play. Indeed, it shines out most when the opponent resists. It is therefore irresistible. A Satyagrahi does not know what defeat is, for he fights for truth without being exhausted. Death in the fight is a deliverance, and prison a gateway to liberty”. (CWMG, Vol. 20, p.41).

7. “Its root meaning is ‘holding on the truth’; hence, truth-force. I have also called it love-force or soul-force. In the application of Satyagraha I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one’s opponent, but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy.

Satyagraha differs from passive resistance as the North Pole from the South, the latter has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end; whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest, and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form”.

8. “Satyagraha is not excitement of the second variety. It dies in such atmosphere. It needs the development of calm courage that knows no defeat and despises revenge. (CWMG, Vol. 28, p.480).

Notes

¹ Statement of French Indologist Alfred Foucher : “All that I would like to state is that I have a vision deeply engraved in my memory, which has ever been present with me, and which accords with the inmost convictions of my heart. It is the destiny of the earth to be saved. It will owe its salvation to India. And, in India, to that virtue whose Sanskrit name you should agree to learn and retain, since it has no equivalent in other languages, viz. *ahimsā*!” Alfred Foucher, *Les vies antérieures du Bouddha d'après les textes et les monuments de l'Inde*. (Bibliothèque de diffusion 61, Paris 1955) p. 361. Trans. K.Luke, “*ahimsā*”, in *Indian Capuchin Research Forum*, I, Ed. by J Puthenpurackel, Bangalore : 1991, p. 139.

² Cf. H. von Glasenapp, *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften* (Glassnapp-Stiftung, 18, Wiesbaden, 1980, pp 368-371, 376. 601-2.; J . Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, (2 vols. Die Religionen der Menschheit 11-12, Stuttgart, 1961, 1963) 1, pp 216,246, 282.; M. Juergenmeyer, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, X pp 463-68.; B.Walker, *Hindu World, An Encyclopedic Survey* (2 vols. Ind. Repr. 1983, pp. 16-17: II,pp 671-73

³ The Negative represents a peculiar Indian way of thinking, namely a predilection for the negative. To express something incomprehensible they used negatives. Thus we have *a-vidya* (non-knowledge, ignorance; *aneka* : not one, many; *asteya*: non-theft. Cf. H. Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of the Eastern Peoples: India, China, Tibet, Japan* (Hawaii 1964., Delhi 1991), pp 52-59.

⁴ Jainism is a religious tradition of India which does not accept the authority of Vedas (hence called heterodox) and said to have been founded by 24 sages (*Tīrthankaras*) among whom the last one Vardhamāna Mahāvīra (599-527 B.C) by name is a historical figure. Cf. Helmuth Glasenapp, *Der Jainismus: Eine indische Erlösungsreligion* (Berlin: 1925), Tr. by Shreedhar Shrotri, (Delhi 1999) ; W. Schubring, *The Doctrine of the Jainas, Die Religionen Indiens*, (Die Religionen der Menschheit 13, Stuttgart: 1964) pp. 217-42.; E. Arbmman, “Untersuchungen zur primitiven Seelenvorstellung mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Indien,” *Le monde Oriental* 20 (1926) pp 85-226, 81(1927) pp 1-185. “Ahimsa is like a loving mother of all beings” M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature. II - Buddhist Literature and Jaina Literature* (repr. Delhi 1971). p. 589.

⁵ Purushottam Lal Bhargav, “The Jaina Concept of Ahimsa” *Contribution of Jainism to Indian Culture*, Ed. by R.C. Dwivedi., (Delhi 1975) p. 120 -121; D.N. Bhargav, “Some Chief Characteristics of the Jain Concept of Non- Violence”, *Ibid*, 122-126; M.G.Dhadphale, “Some Off-shoots of the Ahimsa as Implied in the Jain Philosophy”, *Ibid*,. 126-134.

⁶ The citations are from H. Jacobi, *Jaina Sutras*, The Sacred Books of the East vols. 22, and 45, Oxford: 1884, Reprint : Delhi 1973).

⁷ The Jaina monk made five main and seven supplementary vows. Among these twelve vows the most important and fundamental was the vow of *ahimsā* Hermann Jacobi, “Jainism”, in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol.7 (Edinburg: 1914), p. 470 f. Helmut von Glasenapp, *op cit.* p 202.

⁸ Gautama Siddhārtha, well known as Buddha, just like Jainism did not accept the authority of Vedas (hence Hindus consider Buddhism as a heterodox religious tradition) and preached a religion totally based on ethics of compassion and kindness and without belief in God, rituals and scriptures.. Cf. Oldenberg, *Buddha, His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*. Tr. By William Hoey, (New Delhi: 1992), pp 72 203; T.R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, London: 1955; Repr. 1968; Hiraakawa Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism ; From Sakyamuni to Early Mahayana*, trans by Paul Groner (Hawaii: 1990), pp 95-102.

⁹ N.H. Samtani, “Non-Violence vis-a- vis *Maitrī* : Buddhist and Jain Approach”, *Contribution of Jainism to Indian Culture*, *op.cit.*, pp. 135- 145; The word *Ahimsa* is used in Buddhist doctrinal text called *Abhidhamma*: Versus: 225, 261 and 271.

¹⁰ The ruling was given because of the criticism Buddha received from Jain monks for eating meat prepared only for him. The ‘Vinaya’ (a book of monastic disciplines) reports that one day when the teacher had gone to the house of the general Siha to take his meal. The Jain monks taunted him:

Today a fat beast, killed by General Siha, had been made into a meal for the recluse Gautama, and he has made use of his meat, knowing that it was killed on purpose for him, that the deed was done for his sake.

. Cf. K.Luke “Buddhavacanam; The Word of the Buddha” *Biblehashyam* 11 (1985) pp. 75-94.

¹¹ The whole episode is explained in the aphorism called, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra). It explains Buddha’s illness and death. Cf. E Waldschidt, “Beitraege zur Textgeschichte des (Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra”. *Schriften zur Geschichte. Literatur, Religion und Kunst des Indischen Kulturraumes* (Goettingen 1967), pp. 80 119; K.Luke “The Death of the Buddha.” *The Living Word*, 89 (1983) pp 127-55.

¹² The Chinese pilgrim Yuang-Chwang, visited India in the 7th century and observed that monks ate fish and the meat of sheep, stags and bucks. Cf. T. Waters, *On Yuang Chwang’s Travels in India* (A.D. 629 -649, Repr. Delhi 19730), p. 143; D.S. Ruegg,

“Ahimsa and Vegetarianism in Buddhism”, *Buddhist Studies in Honour of W.Rahula* (London: 1980), pp 234-41.

¹³ Akira Hirakawa, *A History of Indian Buddhism*, (Delhi: 1993), 99 95-102; Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism* (Japan 1980, Delhi 1987) pp. 90 – 96. E. Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, Trans. By Sara Webb-Boin (Louvain-la-Neuve: 1988). Ludwig, Alsdorf, *Kleine Schriften*, Ed. by Albrecht Wezler, (Wiesbaden, 1974), pp 414 - 90

¹⁴ For the texts of the Edicts Cf. R. Pandey, *Historical and Literary Inscriptions Chawkambha Sanskrit Studies* 23, (Varanasi 1962). Selected edicts in P.H.L. Eggermont-J Hoftijzer, *The Moral Edicts of King Ashoka*, Textus minores 29, Leiden 1982; Ludwig, Alsdorf, *Kleine Schriften*, Ed. by Albrecht Wezler, (Wiesbaden, 1974), pp 414 – 90.

¹⁵ G.P. Carretelli –G. Garbini, *The Bilingual Greece – Armaic Edict by Ahoka*. Serie Orientale 29. (Rome 1984). K.Luke “Archaeological news: Ashoka’s Inscriptions in Aramaic from Afghanistan”, *Biblehashyam* , 5 (1979), pp 239- 52.

¹⁶ Tachikawa Musashi, “Mahāyāna Philosophies”, *Buddhist Spirituality*, ed. by Takeuchi Yoshinori, (Delhi: 1995), pp 188 – 202.

¹⁷ Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, (New York: 1962), pp 78 ff .

¹⁸ “The theory is known as “the womb of tathāgata,” (tathāgata-garbha-), which states that the deeper, essential nature of the Buddha is identical with the ultimate, universal reality” Cf. D.S. Ruegg, “Prajñāparamita and Related Studies” *Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*, (Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series I. (Berkeley 1977) pp 283-312.; Michael Pye, “The Lotus Sutra and the Essence of Mahayana”, *Buddhist Spirituality*, pp. 171- 185; Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, op.cit. pp 229-233.

¹⁹ Jashwant Rao Chitambar *Mahatma Gandhi: His Life, Work and Influence* (Chicago: 1933).; Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: 1968); Dharendra Mohan Datta, *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* (Madison 1953). George Olivera, *Virtue in Diverse Traditions*, (Bangalore” 1998), pp.197-215.

²⁰ “Non-violence is the supreme dharma, there is no discovery of greater import than this”. M.K. Gandhi. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, (Director, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, Ind. Revised ed., 2000,) Vol. 1-100. [Henceforth abbreviated as CWMG] Vol. 24, p.378, Cf. also CWMG Vol.61, p.187; J.S. Mathur and P.C. Sharma Ed. *Facets of Gandhian Thought*, (Ahmedabad: 1975), 61; Dharendra Mohan Datta, op cit., 77.

²¹ M.A. Thomas, *The Struggle for Human Rights*, (Bangalore 1992), pp.55 f.; CWMG. Vol 80, p. 207.

²² Paul Hacker, “Religiose Toleranz und Intoleranz in Hinduismus”, *Saeculum* 8 (1957) pp. 167-179; *Kleine Schriften*, ed. by Lambert Schmithausen, (Wiesbaden: 1978), pp.376-388.

²³ M.K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiment with Truth* (Ahmedabad: 1966); T.K. John, "Theology of Liberation and Gandhian Praxis," *Leave the Temple*, Ed. by F. Wilfred, (Trichy 1996), pp 81-85, 89-94;

²⁴ "'Satya', in truth, is my God. I can only search him through non-violence..."
CWMG. Vol. 65, p. 8.

²⁵ M.K. Gandhi, CWMG Vol. 14, p. 266.

²⁶ "... non-cooperation, civil disobedience, and the like are necessary deductions from the fundamental proposition that non-violence is the law of life for human beings". M.K. Gandhi, CWMG, vol. 61, p. 187

²⁷ From his socio-economic ideals, see Suman Khanna, "*Gandhian Response to the Challenges of Poverty in India*". *Poverty in India*, ed. by J Murickan, (Bangalore ; 1988), pp 361 – 390.

²⁸ The Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* propagates self defence and approves war as a last resort:

"As long as the danger of war remains and there is no competent and sufficiently powerful authority at the international level, governments cannot be denied the right to legitimate defence once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted."
Vatican II, GS 79. But the question is to *how* to distinguish between an offensive and defensive war in a particular circumstance.

²⁹ Wikipedia "Nonviolence", p 7

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ The efficacy of nonviolence was also challenged by anti-capitalist protestors advocating a "diversity of tactics" during street demonstrations across Europe and the US following the anti-World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, Washington in 1999. American feminist writer D. A. Clarke, in her essay "A Woman With A Sword," suggests that for nonviolence to be effective, it must be "practiced by those who could easily resort to force if they chose." This argument reasons that nonviolent tactics will be of little or no use to groups that are traditionally considered incapable of violence, since nonviolence will be in keeping with people's expectations for them and thus go unnoticed

³² Similarly, continues Rawls, while the intolerant might forfeit the right to complain when they are not tolerated, other members of society have a right, perhaps even a duty, to complain on their behalf, again as long as society itself is not endangered by these intolerant members..

³³ The specific criticism that nonviolence is a form of passivity can be countered by noting that successful nonviolent campaigns have often centred around actively depriving a ruling regime of financial income (as in Gandhi's breaking of the salt tax), or the cooperation necessary to run industrial infrastructure. In this context nonviolence can be viewed as a form of attack on the command structure of a government or regime, rather than upon its personnel.

³⁴ Nonviolence has been a central concept in green political philosophy. It is included in the 'Global Greens Charter'. Greens believe that society should reject the current patterns of violence and embrace nonviolence. Green Philosophy draws heavily on both Gandhi and the Quaker traditions, which advocate measures by which the escalation of violence can be avoided, while not cooperating with those who commit violence. These greens believe that the current patterns of violence are incompatible with a sustainable society because it uses up limited resources and many forms of violence, especially nuclear weapons, are damaging for the environment

³⁵ In the Western tradition we have St. Francis of Assisi who fraternalized the creation through his well known 'Canticle of Brother Sun'. It is found in various manuscripts, particularly the *Assisi MS . 338, Speculum Perfectionis* (120) and in *Liber Conformitatum* (Analecta Franciscana V), pp 261-262. The Canticle praises God for Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, Sister Water, Brother Fire and Sister Earth. For English Text See. Habig, Marion, *St. Francis of Assisi, Writings and Early Biographies*, (Bangalore 1987), pp. 130 f.

³⁶ Pope John Paul II in Sao Paolo addressing the workers said: "Violence destroys what it intends to create whether it seeks to maintain the privileges of the few or whether it attempts to impose the needed changes. The Class struggle is not the way to a just social order, because it brings with it a risk of ruining the condition of the opposing parties by creating new situations of injustice" *The Pope Speaks* 25 (1980, p. 365. For a debate on "just war" see. George V. Lobo, 'The Church's Teaching on Violence', *Liberative Struggles in a Violent Society*, (Hyderabad 1990), pp 201 – 224.

³⁷ Acharya Mahaprajna, "Philosophy of Synthesis". *Deccan Herald*, (Aug 2, 2007), p.2

³⁸ David Brooks, "*A new Global Blueprint*", *Deccan Herald*, (June 28, 2007), p. 11; John Desrochers, and George Joseph, *India Today* (Bangalore: 1988), pp 86- 136.; Marshall B. Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication* (Dindigul: 2003), 15- 24.

³⁹ India has 836 million people below the poverty line. At the same time India claims fourth rank among the world's dollar billionaires and eighth rank among the dollar millionaires. Cf. Mani Shankar Aiyar, "Is rising India a just society? If not, what must be done?" *Hindu*, (August 15, 2007), p. 13; F. Franco, "The Structural Nature of Poverty in India", *Poverty in India*, op.cit., pp. 37-114.

⁴⁰ Sudha Narsimhachar, "What poverty means to us", *Deccan Herald*, (June 28, 2007), p. 11;

⁴¹ Pope Paul VI at the inauguration of the Second General Assembly of the Latin American Bishops (CELAM) on August 24, 1968 said: "We must encourage every honest attempt to improve the lot of the poor. We cannot be linked with the systems and

structures that cloak and foster serious, oppressive inequalities among citizens and social classes” *The Pope Speaks* 13 (1968) p. 256.

Reference: *Concordia*, International Journal of Philosophy: Aachen, Vol 48 (2008); 55 – 70.)

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

“Sarvodaya” and Good Life as Humanised Life from Indian Perspective.

1. Introduction

What is good life? How to characterize it? Who should determine what is good life? Am I entitled to define what is good life for myself? Will it be considered as a sheer subjective definition? If not, are there objective criteria to distinguish good life from bad life? The scope of this short paper does not permit us to describe and discuss all these questions. Provisionally we can say that the basic ingredients that make life ‘good’ are the human qualities in a living person. That too if we take human life from a holistic perspective without any dichotomies.

The next question is to see good life as humanized life. Here humanization itself can be considered as a criterion for good life. But the question remains, namely, what is ‘human’? The human can have different dimensions such as physical, moral, social, intellectual, psychological, physical and the like. All these aspects make the subject complex. One core question we need to resolve is whether it has a social or communitarian dimension. What is the interrelation or correlation between ‘my’ good life and the good life of ‘others’. Has my good life any significance to the society and vice versa. Does my good life contribute its share in the humanization of the world. What do we mean by a ‘humanized world’? We can without arguments affirm that “no man is an island” and “to be” is “to be with” and there cannot be a world where there is no human correlation or interconnectivity among human beings. Hence Ruskin in his work “Unto this Last” has affirmed: ”The good of the individual is contained in the good of all”¹. When all are ‘good’ and the individual is an ingredient of this all, s/he too should be ‘good’. If all live a good life then individual too should be considered as living a good life. If the world is humanized, then the individual too will be humanized. On the other hand every human being has his contribution towards the humanization of the world and to create a human world. In this world, the human person certainly is the supreme value, the measure of all goodness and happiness, wealth and prosperity. S/He is the norm and criterion for all political decisions and social welfare projects.

2. “Good life” from Indian Perspective

The Sanskrit word for goodness, happiness or general wellbeing is “*su- kha*”, as against “*duh-kha*” which means sorrow, pain, misery, ill-feeling etc., in other words, ‘bad life’, dehumanized life. Buddha (560 B.C – 480 B.C) made the latter as the starting point for his philosophy and preached the doctrine of “*sarvam duhkham*” , namely the doctrine of universal sorrow. He also provided means to eliminate sorrow from life and transform the condition of pain and sorrow into happiness and goodness through his doctrine of “eight fold path” (*ashtanga marga*). It means that the default human condition is not good, but it should be made good only through striving and continuous effort. Buddha also preached the doctrine of “welfare of all beings”. “*sarve sukhino bhavantu*” “ may all beings be happy” is the mantra of every follower of Buddha. According to this doctrine ‘goodness’ and happiness is to be aimed at not merely for human beings but for all living beings, it is cosmic in its character.

Another system of philosophy in India which made again “duh- kha” as the starting point of its philosophy is called the “Samkhya system” (3rd cent. B.C.), known all over the world through one of its schools called “Yoga”. In this system too the default human condition is misery and bondage which can be got rid of through strenuous effort. The yoga system has also provided : “eight fold Yogas” (*ashtanga Yoga*) in order to eliminate sorrow from life and to make life good, worth living, and meritorious. In both the cases ‘*sukha*’ (goodness and happiness) is not pre-given. It is because human being is basically in bondage, the goal of life is to liberate oneself from this bondage.

3. The Concept of ‘Sarvodaya’

The modern version of the “welfare of all beings” preached by Buddha is contained in the movement initiated by M.K. Gandhi known as “*Sarvodaya*”. The inspiration for such a movement is derived by him from a book² from John Ruskin with the title: “Unto this Last” which he read in the year 1904 as he journeyed from Johannesburg to Durban in South Africa. He translated the book in 1908 into Gujarati language and named it : “*Sarvodaya*”. He saw in this look a blue print for a “good life” for all Indians. He developed his political, social and economic doctrines for Indian context under the title of “*Sarvodaya*”³. The word means “Welfare/development/ goodness of All” or “The Rise and Progress of all” . The concept ‘*sarvodaya*’ is a combination of two terms: *sarva* = all, and *udaya* = rising, developing, progress in goodness and welfare. The origins of the concept are found in Buddha, Mahavira and in

other ancient Indian traditions. The contemporary application of the welfare principles in the Indian context is envisioned and given expression by Mahatma Gandhi in a very original and inspiring manner through the movement initiated by him and known as “Sarvodaya Movement”.

3.1. Good Life – what does it imply?

The Sarvodaya Movement first of all lays emphasis on the term “*sarva*”, which means “all”. The good life it propagates is all inclusive, comprehensive and holistic. It does not exclude any one, but includes all beings to the extent of embracing the total organic life. Humans cannot neglect the well being of other creatures and the nature. Man should even work for the well being of inanimate nature around him. It propagated the idea of humanization of the universe, namely, the entire world and even the nature.

Secondly, the Movement does not subscribe to the utilitarian formula of “the greatest good of the greatest number”. A votary of Sarvodaya is expected to work for “the greatest good of ALL and die in the attempt to realize the idea.

.... The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greatest number, and therefore, he (the votary of Sarvodaya) and the utilitarian will converge in many points in their career, but there does come a time when they must part company, and even work in opposite directions. The Utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. The absolutist will even sacrifice himself”⁴.

This is because the utilitarian may seek greatest good of greatest number, by excluding the remaining, actually it can mean happiness of the greatest number “at the expense of the remaining”. But the votary of Sarvodaya (Gandhi calls him absolutist) will never exclude any one rather give up his life so that ALL might have good life. The utilitarian principle, by excluding some, can promote injustice and discrimination. This in turn might make life for these miserable and hence “good life” if it is to be a humanized life, cannot exclude any one (any being). It cannot permit any person left behind as “dehumanized” as it is a contradiction to call ‘good life as humanized’ if it permits ‘dehumanisation’ in any form.

4. The Basic Constituents of Good Life in Sarvodaya Movement

4.1. Truth (*Satya*)

The Srvodaya Movement initiated by Gandhi views life as an organic whole as it makes no watertight compartments like social, economic, political, moral ,

material, spiritual, individual and collective. It never approaches life or its problems in fragments or segments. The primary constituent of a good life according to Sarvodaya is that it should be ‘spiritual’. Without a transcendental basis, life cannot stand on itself; in other words, the human is founded on the divine and integral part of it. It sees no dichotomy between the two, rather, the human is the expression of the divine and the divine is the basis of the human. But the realization of the divine in life demands relentless pursuit and effort after what Gandhi calls “the Truth”. His whole life was a pursuit after ‘truth’.

⁵ In Gandhian discourse Truth has threefold connotations, epistemological, ontological and axiological. Epistemologically, truth is considered as conformity of knowledge to reality. The ontological dimension of the Truth, “*satya*”, is derived from the origin of the word “*sat*” which in Sanskrit means “being” or “reality” or “to exist”. He wrote: “The word *Satya* is derived from *Sat* which means “being”. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth”.⁶ In this sense he affirms that “Truth is God”⁷ as it includes totality of reality from ontological perspective.

The third aspect of Truth is axiological, more particularly, ethical, which is very significant for us to explain the concept of “good life”:

“All our activities should be centered in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our being. When once this stage in the pilgrim’s progress is reached, all other rules of correct living will come without effort and obedience to them will be instinctive.. There should be Truth in thought. Truth in speech and Truth in action. To a man who has realized this Truth in its fullness, nothing else remains to be known because all knowledge is necessarily included in it”.⁸

Good life according to Sarvodaya Movement is a life dedicated towards the pursuit of truth as a spiritual foundation for all ‘goodness’. Truth⁹ characterizes the basic principle of good life for all Indians and for all people of the Universe. It stands for authenticity and purity of intentions and goals. Sarvodaya Movement presents a firm basis for good life as humanized life so that its votaries can withstand any storm or crisis and achieve their goal.

4.2. Non-Violence (Ahimsā)

Good Life and violence cannot go together. Good Life is bereft of all violence in thought and deeds. For Gandhi essence of violence is exploitation. He identifies harsh words, harsh judgments, ill-will, anger, cruelty, torture of humans and animals, the oppression of the weak, the hurting of their self -

respect etc. as violence (*himsā*). Gandhi declares: “In its positive form, *ahimsā* means largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of Ahimsa I must love my enemy.”¹⁰

Ahimsa is a metaphysical concept for Gandhi. As all life is fundamentally one, the force that binds everything together must be a cohesive force argued Gandhi, and that cohesive force he called non-violence or love. He explains this cohesive force of love in the following manner:

“We are all bound by the tie of love.... even as there is a cohesive force in blind matter, so must there be in all things animate and the name of that cohesive force among animate beings is love ... where there is love there is life, hatred leads to destruction “¹¹

What is unique or special about Gandhi’s advocacy and practice of *ahimsā*? What is its relevance to a “good life as humanized life?” The distinguishing feature of Gandhian *ahimsā* is the way he applied it to life. He insisted that *ahimsā* like Truth¹² must become all pervasive, and be a rule both in public and private affairs. In this he gave a new implication and a new meaning to this ancient doctrine of Indian religious tradition. He demonstrated that non-violence can become a way of life and a technique of action not merely for individuals but for the whole community if properly taught and trained. He presented it not only as the basis of personal life but also as a technique of fighting social evils and for bringing about desirable social changes. In other words it was a moral instrument of humanization of the world. It meant that while a votary of *ahimsā* shall not put up with injustice, he shall not, at the same time, inflict injury on the perpetrator of injustice. While resisting evil, he must also be ready to accept all the consequences of such resistance upon himself¹³.

Good life can be a heroic one, if one practices non-violence as Gandhi envisages. But as a principle of life one must accept the fact of violence in society and the way it dehumanizes life. Without basic attitude of respect for life and personality of the other no ‘good life as humanized life’ can be thought of. Hence the principle of ‘non-violence’ is a basic constituent of good life according to Sarvodaya Movement of Gandhi, which he thought can transform India and the entire humanity. No one can deny his doctrine as dehumanization takes place primarily through violence, exploitation and oppression. “Humanised life” is not pre-given, the world has to realize it through strenuous effort, like the practice of non-violence in a consistent manner.

5. Good Life as Humanized Life and its meaning to Society

Sarvodaya Movement proposes to battle against the evils of the present day dehumanizing society. When Sarvodaya emerged during the first half of the last century, the society in India was based on exploitation and violence and was organized hierarchically. In a hierarchical social order dignity of the human individual would be totally negated, and equality will be totally absent. . In such a social order it was easy to practice segregation and rationalized discrimination of various kind. Gandhi then identified seven major social evils and insisted that the humanization should mean the elimination of these evils: “politics without principles, education without character, science without humanity, wealth without work, commerce without morality, worship without sacrifice, and pleasure without conscience”¹⁴. He proposed a new Order through Sarvodaya Movement in order to humanize the society and highlight its meaning to the world.’

The Sarvodaya resurgent social order is based on the principle of oneness of life and its derivative non-violence or love. Gandhi believed that there is order in the universe because it operated according to a set of fixed laws and that beneath the flux of nature there was stability and continuity because of the law. If the law operating at the sub-human level was the force of gravitation, while at the level of human societies it was the law of non- violence or love, according to Gandhi. He wanted non-violence become the guiding principle in the organization of Sarvodaya society. He gave two reasons for this: one to maintain social stability and the other to be consistent with human evolution which he believed was from violence to non-violence.

The human society, according to him, is in a ceaseless growth, and that it is steadily, though slowly, progressing towards peace, non -violence and humanization. He narrated that our remote ancestors were cannibals. As time went on they gave up cannibalism and began to live on chase. The wandering life of the hunter gave place to agriculture. They settled down in fertile regions, established villages and towns and ushered in an era of civilization. This is progress in non-violence and humanization. He argues “had it been otherwise, human species would have been extinct by now, even as many of the lower species have disappeared.”¹⁵ The very fact humankind persisted showed that the cohesive force was greater than the destructive, the centripetal force greater than the centrifugal.

The humanized society according to Sarvodaya is egalitarian, classless, casteless in which there would be no segregation of any sort or hierarchical

divisions. The social philosophy of Sarvodaya was based on the metaphysical reality of oneness of reality. But Gandhi observed that monistic doctrine has not been realized in Indian society – instead of oneness there is division based on class, caste and colour. This has resulted in the perpetuation of heinous crimes and odious atrocities on large sections of people, especially on those stigmatized as the untouchables (dalits) and on women, the so-called weaker sex. Sarvodaya Movement determined to fight against these social evils. He called the untouchables as “Harijans” which means ‘men of God’ and relentlessly battled for their rights. He fought for their right to enter into the temples, their right to use common wells, public roads, and schools. The various Satyagraha campaigns for the removal of the evil of untouchability conducted under Gandhi’s guidance bear witness to the fact that he was uncompromising on his resolve to put an end to the obnoxious practice.

The ultimate aim of all these Sarvodaya programmes was to create a humanized society and make life worth living for all Indians. Good life is not possible where there is hatred, fights, wars and destruction. A peaceful society is not given ready-made, every one has an obligation to create it through his good life.

6. Good Life as Humanised life and its meaning for politics.

Sarvodaya Movement has a well defined political agenda in order to create a humanized world where good life is promoted without discrimination. It first of all proposes a stateless society as an ideal¹⁶, as state implies force and violence, that too in an concentrated and organized form¹⁷. As such stateless society, the golden ideal of politics, cannot become a reality, the Sarvodaya Movement proposes the gradual progression of the actual state towards the ideal of a predominantly non-violent society. Secondly, Gandhi is convinced, that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely”. Hence he proposes decentralization of the government so that the distribution of power among people can result in better service of the humanity. Self sufficient villages and autonomous village republics are the twin pillars on which the Sarvodaya Movement tries to build the edifice of Indian democracy.¹⁸ Power should devolved to the local units instead of concentrating it at the centre. Real democracy will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. True democracy has to be worked from below by the people of every village.

Thirdly, Sarvodaya Movement proposes ‘self- rule’, i.e. people should learn to rule themselves . Self Government means continual effort t to be independent of Government control whether it is foreign or national¹⁹. Political power for Gandhi is only a means - and not an end - enabling people to better their condition in every department of life. According to Sarvodaya, Democracy is the art and the science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources from various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all²⁰.

7. Conclusion : Dream²¹ Realised?

M.K. Gandhi through his Sarvodaya Movement relentlessly fought against two social evils in India, namely, untouchability of the Dalits and discrimination against women. On the day we concluded this paper i.e., June 3rd, 2009, the first woman, that too a Dalit woman, Meira Kumar by name took oath in the Indian Parliament as its ‘Speaker’. We have another Dalit woman who rules the largest State in India i.e., Uttar Pradesh, as its Chief Minister. This abundantly bears witness to the fact that the dream of Gandhi to make life happy and to provide ‘good life’, and a ‘humanised life’ to Dalits and women has become a reality in India to a great extent. The Dalits are provided with ‘reservation’ in all state departments for employment and educational institutions for studies, and one can see in India the Dalits are no more ‘untouchables’ but enjoy good positions in the society and in government offices.

Another dream, namely, decentralization of power through the creation of ‘autonomous village republics’ is far from realization in India. There are hundreds of villages, where civilization has not yet reached in the full sense of the word, as they go on without proper approach roads, power supply, health care and educational facilities. “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely ’ repeated Gandhi often, and it remains a dark reality in India today. Power and wealth has corrupted millions in India. Corruption is the greatest social evil in India today, which makes lives of millions of poor Indians far from “good and humanized”. The Sarvodaya Movement has no more any significance in Indian Society. At present hardly any one in India speaks or refers to it. It is almost a dead movement with the death of the few surviving disciples of Gandhi, like Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan. With no prophetic spokesperson to denounce and question the corrupt leaders, India has

to go on limping with the social evils like corruption and discrimination. “Good Life” as a “humanized life” remains still a dream for millions in India.

Notes

¹ M.K. Gandhi Autobiography, 1948 .iv,

² The book was offered to Gandhi by one of his associate as he boarded the train in Johannesburg railway station. Gandhi writes: “The book was impossible to lay aside, once I had begun it. It gripped me. Johannesburg to Durban was a twenty – four hours journey The train reached there in the evening. I could not get any sleep that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book.” M.K.Gandhi, *My Experiment with Truth,*” p. 224.

³ The word was found in the Jain Scripture by Acharya Samantabhadra who lived around two thousand years ago.

⁴ M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 9-12, 1926

⁵ So much so he named his autobiography as “*The Story of My Experiment with Truth*”.

⁶ From *Yerwada Mandir*, 1945, p. 2-3. Cited in *Sarvodaya*, op.cit. p.8

⁷ Dr. Radhakrishnan defined God as Truth, but Gandhi reversed it and said “Truth is God”. Truth like God is the Ultimate Reality: all comprehensive, being and existence. Even atheists, even though deny the existence of God, pursue after truth. Truth therefore is the foundation of ‘good life’. It embodies all moral and spiritual principles.

⁸ Yerwade Mandir, p.2.

⁹ For Gandhi Truth has a wider significance in his quest : “ The Satyagrahi’s course is plain. He must stand unmoved in the midst of all cross currents. He may not be impatient with blind orthodoxy, not be irritated over the unbelief of the suppresses people. He must know that his suffering will melt the stoniest heart of the stoniest fanatic” *Young India*, 4-6-1925. Cited in *Sarvodaya*, p. 82

¹⁰ *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, (4th ed.) p.346

¹¹ *Young India*. Vol. I, p. 734.

¹² “Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. ... Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so Ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later.” *Yerwada Mandir*, 1945, pp 7-9. Cited in *Sarvodaya*, Op cit., p 8f.

¹³ “Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the pitting of one’s whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for the empire’s fall or its regeneration “ *Young India*, 11-8-1920. Cited in *Sarvodaya*, p. 82

¹⁴ M.P. Mathai, *Mahatma Gandhi’s World- View*, New Delhi: 2000, p.158

¹⁵ “Man as animal is violent, but as Spirit is non-violent. The moment he awakes to the Spirit within he cannot remain violent.” Harijan Aug 11, 1940. Cited in *Sarvodaya*, op.cit, p. 9-10

¹⁶ *Young India*, 2-7-1931 cited in *India of My Dreams*, p. 79

¹⁷ *The Modern Review*, 1935, p.412; cited in *Sarvodaya*, p. 74

¹⁸ *Harijan*, 26-7-1942; 4-8- 1946, 10-11-1946; cited in *India My Dreams*, pp. 96- 99.

¹⁹ *Young India* 6-8-1925 cited in *Sarvodaya*, p. 75; *Young India* 1-12-1927 cited in *India of My Dreams*, compiled by R.K. Prabhu, Ahmedbad : 1947, Reprint 2004, p. 2004. P. 7-12.

²⁰ *Young India*, 2-7.1931, cited in *Sarvodaya*, p. 73-74

²¹ ““If we would see our dream of Sarvodaya i.e., true democracy realized, we would regard the humblest and the lowest India as being equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the land, .Everybody would regard all as equal with oneself and hold them together in the silken net of love. No one would regard another as untouchable....” Harijan, 18-1.'48. *Sarvodaya*, Ed by Bharatan Kumarappa, Ed by Bharatan Kumarappa, p 5.

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Vincent Gabriel Furtado

Cosmotheandric Paradigm of Knowledge, Spirituality and Justice.

1. The Concept of Alternative Paradigm

The phrase alternative paradigm presupposes an incumbent or an already existing paradigm and a brief elucidation of it is indispensable in order to comprehend the alternative paradigm we propose to delineate. The existing almost global paradigm of knowledge according to our perspective is hegemonic, dominating and all pervasive resulting in asymmetries between the “haves and have nots”, while making the wealth and treasures of the planet available to only a portion of humanity, the remaining portion is languishing in penury just struggling to survive and make both ends meet. The knowledge in this paradigm is understood as “know-how”, a utilitarian model making one expert in transforming knowledge into mercantile phenomenon. In this paradigm the most important type of knowledge is that of technological and commercial, which transcends the boundaries created by oceans and nations, claim to enlighten the cognitive faculties with scientific rationality, objectivity, accuracy and potentiality to be productive. This knowledge is guided and directed by two factors of commerce: “the market and the profits”, both promise people heaven on earth, make life powerful, comfortable and hedonistic. Here knowledge becomes aggressive, bullish and hegemonic.

In this *weltanschauung* any mundane enterprise can become ‘*summum bonum*’ provided above objectives are achieved. Even spirituality becomes a marketable commodity, promising to raise people to the zones of *sanctum sanctorum* overnight, provided one has capacity to pay. Peace, joy and happiness are sold in Yoga, Zen, TM shops, for competitive prices. The sacred Indian philosophical traditions like *Vedanta* and *Patanjali* have been appropriated by the Corporates and multinationals sometimes even managed, streamlined and directed by fake gurus. What can we say then concerning justice in this paradigm? The Justice is misrepresented and misinterpreted as its ethical principles are kept at the disposal of the powerful Corporates and politicians to defend their rights by making their privileges superior to human rights. The custodians of justice, the honourable judges of our legal system are influenced more by their pecuniary cravings in exercising their noble profession than the principles of fairness and righteousness. No poor person can aspire to get any

justice in this notoriously corrupt legal system. Finally there is no certainty left that this paradigm can instil any hope in the realisation of a glorious future for humanity; it appears to lead the planet inhabited by humans to the regions of hades.

What are the factors and principles that direct and guide this paradigm? By far the most, it is the epistemology that gives rise and stabilises a particular paradigm; it is again the epistemology of this paradigm which divides humanity and decimates reality. The paradigm explicated above is founded on a particular epistemology whose logic operates on the principles of classification and exclusion, thus every person in the world is classified as Asian, African, European, American from one perspective; as a Christian, a Hindu, a Buddhist/Muslim/Jain etc., from another perspective, so on and so forth. The formal structure of categorical reason is such that it functions on contrary principles such as thought and object of thought, consciousness (thinker) and object of consciousness (what is thought)¹. There is once again differentiation between the objects of consciousness themselves. What makes a thing what it is, is its difference from other things. This differentiation gives the object its identity. Predication too is grounded on differentiation. To be a particular predicate P, it has to be differentiated from non-P. This is the logic of *sic et non*, either/or. ‘A given subject S cannot both be P and non-P (at the same time and in the same respect) Or a given subject must be either P or not-P’. This is the epistemology of the dominant paradigm, which classifies and divides humanity, society and reality itself. Hence the need to project an alternative paradigm which can unite humanity, create social symmetries, and bring about equilibrium between the divine, human and the cosmic realities. What could be the characteristics of such an alternative paradigm? How can we present it in this competitive world so that it becomes acceptable to the *hoi poloi* as well as to academia.

The alternative paradigm that we attempt to delineate aims at transforming the bull into a lamb, aggressive and competitive humanity into a humanised society. Knowledge here becomes less utilitarian and more humanitarian, less empirical and more transcendental, less mercantile and more spiritual, nay, it bound to effect a fusion of epistemology and spirituality and create a just world. Knowledge guided and directed more towards enlightenment and self-realisation and less towards “know-how” and skills; even when the latter is necessary, it is made to play a secondary role, upholding the primacy of the former as supreme. The knowledge in this paradigm is primarily self

transformative directed towards the emancipation of individuals and humanisation of the society.

This in concrete means propagating not a single, universal paradigm but exploring the possibilities of multiple regional paradigms in which the indigenous cultural values are given prominence, respecting the socio-cultural diversities of all hues. The societies all over the world are becoming more and more heterogenous, with movement of people from one end of the world to the other; this is all the more enhanced due to such phenomenon as outsourcing human resources and migrations under duress and persecution. We experience now globally mixed societies of pluriform languages, perspectives, customs, eating habits and religious beliefs. Hence we call upon the academic organisations to give fillip to multiple alternative paradigms so that they not only bloom and prosper, but also attenuate the influence of the dominant incumbent paradigm even if they do not succeed to replace it. With this end in view we propose an Indian paradigm of knowledge, spirituality and justice which could be considered as taking a seminal step towards making a leap from the incumbent hegemonic paradigm to an alternative cosmotheandric paradigm.

2. Cosmotheandric Paradigm

The incumbent paradigm is founded on historical consciousness and hence it is basically bipolar but the new paradigm we propose transcends all bipolarities between transcendence and immanence, material and spiritual, nature and history, divinity and secularity, sacred and profane and the like. The new paradigm is founded on cosmotheandric intuition which is an epistemological comprehension of the totality of Reality that embraces ‘Theos, Kosmos and Anthropos’ in an inviolable and constitutional interrelationship

The proponent of the cosmotheandric paradigm, Raimon Panikkar puts it as follows:

“The cosmotheandric intuition expresses the all embracing indissoluble union, that constitutes all of Reality: the triple dimension of reality as a whole: cosmic-divine-human. The cosmotheandric intuition is the undivided awareness of the totality.”² “The cosmotheandric intuition is the totally integrated vision of the seamless fabric of the entire reality... the undivided consciousness of the totality”³.

According to Panikkar, openness to the three realities, namely openness to the world, to the Transcendence and also to other human beings in harmonious communion will lead the humanity to cosmotheandric intuition. He proposes not merely a scientific approach towards reality but intuitive, introspective and mystical, so that the dualistic and bipolar methods of rationalisation is overcome and a new vision is created within the human consciousness that embraces wholeness of reality without epistemological prejudices.

This paradigm has no centre, in the sense neither divine, nor human nor cosmos constitute the centre of reality, but all three realities are interrelated and intertwined essentially and constitutionally. None of them can be considered in isolation as they can never be separated. All three co-exist and interrelate and function unitedly; even though hierarchically their functions vary, teleologically they fulfil goals specific to them. A mechanical paradigm bound to face roadblocks and loss of meaning making reality just an absurd phenomenon. The cosmotheandric intuition instils sense in life, harmony in society, respect for the otherness of the other on the horizontal level, and on the vertical level it inspires new attitudes: ecological integrity, environmental balance and frugal use of cosmic entities on the one hand and a reverential and symbolic approach towards the Divine on the other.

The purpose of this present essay is to explicate cosmotheandric paradigm from Indian perspective, namely, how Indian civilisation from its inchoate stage has grasped and understood reality from cosmotheandric perspective in so far as it can be shown from the revealed scriptures (shruti), namely, the Vedas and Upanishads. This does not mean that India has remained faithful to this paradigm throughout the history. We cannot deny the fact, that India is succumbing to the dominant paradigm elaborated above in the recent decades making technological, and mercantile paradigm as the *summum bonum* of the nation, disseminating the concept of a 'digital India'. India should recapture its original paradigm, in order to make its future exemplary among the world civilisations.

3. Cosmotheandric Intuition in Indian Scriptures:

The cosmotheandric intuition is highlighted in the Vedic tradition in India by rigorously striving to establish correlation between macrocosm and microcosm. The interrelation between divine, human and cosmic realities is

evident from the inchoate stage of Vedic civilization and it reaches its climax in the Upanishads or Vedanta literature.

3.1 The Correlation between the microcosm and macrocosm

The myth depicting the origin of the cosmic and microcosmic realities in the process of the sacrifice of a cosmic person is well known and oft quoted to establish correlation between microcosm and macrocosm (Rigveda 10:90)⁴. The hymn describes that the sun came out of eye of the cosmic person, the moon from his mind, Indra and Agni (fire) from his mouth, wind (Vāyu) from his breath, the air from his navel, the sky from his head, the earth from his feet, and so forth. The same theme is found in Aitareya Upanishad 1-4, which narrates not only the interrelation between the divine and the cosmos but also the cosmic and the individual human being. “The bodily parts of the cosmic person are correlated with the functions of the individual person. So, in the sequel of the Aitareya account, fire became speech and entered in the mouth of the individual; wind became breath and entered in his nose; the sun, sight in his eyes; the quarters of heaven, hearing in his ears; plants and trees, hairs in his skin; the moon, mind in the heart; semen in the generative organ”⁵.

If the above texts explain correlation from the aspect of genesis of the world and the human person, the following cremation hymn highlight the correlation from the perspective of the end of human person, namely, death: The Cremation Hymn of the Rig-Veda (10. 16. 3) narrates correspondence between four parts of the bodily self and of the world in which the deceased is addressed : ‘Let thine eye go to the sun, thy breath to wind’, The notion of dissolution at death recurs more fully in Brihdāranyaka Upanishad: “The voice of a dead man goes into fire, his breath into wind, his eye into the sun, his mind into the moon, his hearing into the quarters of heaven, his body into the earth, his soul (ātman) into space, the hairs of his head into plants, the hairs of his body into trees, and his blood and semen into water (3.2.13).”⁶

What does this mean? Divine, human and the cosmos cannot be separated but they are to be conceived in one totality as all the three realities are not only interrelated but also conceived as constitutionally homogenous, united in bestowing life and existence with a stable and powerful teleology. All three promote and animate life making it meaningful and dynamic, purposeful, globally and individually useful and fruitful. The paradigm is a result of intense seeking that lasted for ages, a point to be elaborated below.

4. Fusion of epistemology and spirituality in India.

Even though human beings exist in a world where sky is above, earth is below and people all around, the cosmotheandric perspective is unfortunately not pre-given and also not immediately evident to the human consciousness but it has been appropriated only through arduous reflection and a relentless process of interiorization. Hence the Indian sages took considerable time to arrive at cosmotheandric intuition through a relentless striving lasting for several generations involving intense epistemological investigations of speculative nature. What is readily available is the knowledge centered on subject-object dualism (*dvaita*) at the empirical level. To transcend this dualism and to reach non-dual (*a-dvaita*) conception of the reality demands preparation, discipline along with continuous meditative commitments of regular and systematic nature conditioned by serious mental and ethical formation. The knowledge thus attained is of a transcendental nature and can be characterized as mystic. The following text makes clear the distinction between people who have attained mystic knowledge and those who have not attempted it at all:

‘The mystic sees not death,
Not sickness, nor any distress.
The mystic sees only the All,
Obtains the All entirely’. (Chāndogya Up. 7. 26. 2.)

On the other hand the non-mystic is embroiled in the diversity and multiplicity of empirical knowledge transmigrating from birth to birth (or death to death):

There is on earth no diversity.
He gets death after death,
Who perceives here seeming diversity. (Brihadāranyaka Up. 4: 4. 19)

The eminent commentator of the Upanishads Sri Shankara-Ācārya⁷ makes therefore two levels of perceiving or encountering the reality. The first level is called transcendental perspective (*adhyātmika*) and the second level is called empirical (*ovyāvahārika*) viewpoint. The two perspectives are mystic and non-mystic and founded on the following texts of the Upanishads.

“There are two perspectives to Being, : the ‘formed’ and the ‘formless’, the mortal and the immortal, the stationary and the moving, the actual (*sat*) or yonder (*tya*)”. (Brihadāranyaka Up. 2. 3.1). The ‘formed’ leads to an understanding of the Being from **cosmic** perspective and the ‘formless’ gives an understanding of

it from **acosmic** perspective which can be expressed only in negative terms. The table below summarizes some of the citations to elucidate this point:

Text	The Cosmic Perspective of Being	The Acosmic Perspective of Being.
Maitri Up. 6.3 : There are two perspectives of Being.	The formed - the unreal	The formless – the real.
Mundaka Up. 2:2,8; Prashna Up 5,2 SvetāshetaraUp . 1, 13	Lower Being (<i>apara</i>)	Higher Being (<i>para</i>)
Mundaka Up. 1,1, 4-5	The lower knowledge (empirical knowledge of the world)	Higher knowledge of the Imperishable. (<i>akshara</i>)
Maitri Up 6: 15 There are two forms of Being	Of Time i.e. temporal – conditioned by time. (<i>kāla</i>)	Timeless - eternal. (<i>a-kāla</i>)
Maitri Up 6, 22 Verily there are two Beings to be meditated upon.	Sound : heard in the flow of rivers, brazen vessel, croaking of frogs, rain, etc. (<i>perceptible world</i>)	Non -sound : the unmanifest Being, Supreme Being.

Further explanation of these two perspectives of epistemology is necessary. The cosmic or the “formed”, which means objective encounter with Being is temporal, can be expressed in perceptible descriptive language that explains the mundane level experiences of the reality. This knowledge is dualistic, empirical, scientific, contingent, finite and practical, so much so all the ‘know-how’ described in the incumbent paradigm is a direct outcome of this knowledge. This knowledge is powerful, in the sense of “knowledge is power”, namely, knowledge willy-nilly leads to hegemonic tendencies when applied to socio-cultural world as evidenced in the evolution of Indian society. The educated class in India mastered the language and the scriptures, monopolized the religious phenomenon, created a theology of hierarchical social structure (the *varna* theory), concocted the divine myth of creation (Rigveda 10: 90) which provided theological basis to the human social hierarchy. The class or caste

system thus created would last forever because it is divinely willed and sanctioned by the providence. The unjust structure was later on confirmed by the canons of the religious law⁸ drawn up and propagated by the higher class to keep the low class people in their plight for eternity. This is an effect of the empirical knowledge (*ovāvahārika*) which creates hegemonic structures and easily creates asymmetries when applied to socio-cultural spheres. The question therefore is, why the empirical knowledge invariably creates asymmetry and how to deal with it? Can the paradigm we proposed, the cosmotheandric intuition attenuate the influence of empirical scientific knowledge in the world? The Upanishads clearly affirm this knowledge is “lower” (*apara*), on the other hand the transcendental knowledge is “higher” (*para*); does this mean that empirical knowledge should be subjected to the higher knowledge, if so, in what way?

The transcendental perspective of Being, on the other hand, is the knowledge of Being itself, which is really real (*satyasya satya*), the Ultimate Supreme Being, the Brahman. This knowledge is spiritual, mystic, intuitive and transcendental. The Being grasped is ineffable, imperceptible, incomprehensible in terms of rational categories and could be expressed only through negative language, “not this, not that” (*neti neti*). The Upanishads are replete with negative characterization of the Supreme Being. The *Brihdāranyaka Upanishad* is a classical example of these characterizations:

It is not coarse, not fine, not short, not long, not hot, not cold, without shadow, without darkness, without air and without space, odorless, tasteless, without eye, without ear, without voice, without wind, without energy, un-aging, undying, immortal, stainless, without measure, without inside and without outside.” (3:8,8; cf also 2. 3. 6 ; 3. 9. 26).

The question we need to ask is whether this knowledge is really spiritual and what is the correlation between knowledge and spirituality? This knowledge as understood during Vedic times, was spiritual because it was not only transcendental and noumenal, but also led the ancient sages to the experience of self-realization and God realization.

‘By knowing Him only, a wise Seeker should get for himself intelligence.’ (Brihdāranyaka Up. 4. 4. 21.)

Verily, with the seeing of, with the hearkening to, with the thinking of, and with the understanding of the Ātman (Soul), this world-all is known’ (Brihdāranyaka 2. 4. 5, see also 3.7.1). ‘This is the knowledge the Seekers

know. Thereby I know what is to be known' (Brihadāranyaka Up.5. 1. 1 and cf. also 2. 4. 7-9).

This noumenal perspective of Being finally led to the fusion of knowledge and spirituality, because it was considered as experiential and intuitive i.e., 'to know is to become'; to know or to have authentic knowledge of reality means to know the Ultimate Being, Brahman and become Brahman. Hence the affirmation: "He who knows that supreme Brahman becomes very Brahman" (Mundaka Up. 3, 2,9)

The fusion of knowledge and spirituality is emphatically and explicitly pronounced in the statements (*mahāvākyas*), which we can affirm as emerging from the 'kairological consciousness' of the sages: "I am Brahman"⁹ and "That thou art"¹⁰. In these two statements the self realization of the seers is given an verbal expression. In the latter statement 'that' stands for Brahman, and both the statements express identity between the self and the Supreme Being, which also includes the 'not-self', the world or the universal Atman. The unity experienced is in the consciousness and the consciousness of Unity is the unity of the self, not-self and the Transcendent Being. It is the cosmotheandric unity of the Divine, human and the cosmic. The following text confirms this unity.:

'As all the spokes are held together in the hub and felly of a wheel, just so in this Soul all things, all gods, all worlds, all breathing things, all selves are held together' (Brihadāranyaka Up. 2. 5. 15).

The Vedic seeker overcame the dualism or dichotomy between transcendence/immanence, nature/history, materiality/spirituality, divinity/secularity in the kairos consciousness of the unity of the tripolar structure of cosmotheandric vision of the reality. In the place of duality they experience unity and oneness between the tripartite aspects of the reality- divine, human and cosmic -through intense interrelationship of dependence, surrender, peace, joy and inner bliss.

5. The Correlation of Knowledge and Spirituality with Justice

This brings us to the question, how can we correlate knowledge and spirituality with Justice within the cosmotheandric intuition? We said above, that empirical knowledge has created social asymmetries in the Indian Society, but when we come to cosmotheandric intuition, we see that these asymmetries are transcended as knowledge becomes noumenal and mystic. The ancient Indian spiritual heritage presented four stages of life for a human person¹¹ in the world.

The first stage is student life (*brahmacārin* or *brahmacarya*) during which one is educated in scriptural, cultural and spiritual heritage from empirical perspective, then comes the second stage called householder (*grhastha*), during which he practices religiosity with all the prayers and rituals and builds up a family with wife and children and then during the third stage, he is led to the forest life (*vānaprastha*), during which he becomes a “forest dweller” along with or without his wife abdicating all empirical religious practices like rituals, sacrifices and family duties. The atmosphere being conducive, he is called to commence seriously meditation and contemplation oriented towards the experience of the Ultimate Reality; when he is inebriated with the experience of Supreme Being, he becomes a sage or seer or a monk and with this begins the fourth stage, called *sannyāsa* (ascetic life). During the last two stages one attains the cosmotheandric intuition in a gradual manner and embraces the cosmotheandric paradigm of life vision. The habitat of *Sannyasin* or the sage in the forest is called “Ashram”¹² (Hermitage) which is an open space without boundaries, open to all people, men and women, rich and poor, high caste and low caste with no distinctions of status or position of power, but all are equal, all have same rights, all are respected with dignity and reverence, all having only one goal of seeking the experience of the Supreme Being. This can be called a ‘satellite’ village of people inhabiting in peace and harmony having intuited the cosmotheandric totality of Reality. We see here justice fully realized, where every one’s dignity is respected, human rights are upheld, principles of righteousness are perfectly practiced resulting in social harmony and human accord; it means the concepts of social hierarchies are totally banished giving rise to a miniature of just society.

The appropriate Indian word for justice is ‘*dharma*’¹³, which is pregnant with multifarious nuances of meaning but for our purpose we use it in the sense of justice, righteousness, and a sense of duty. It refers not merely to an empty concept but also to an existential context, like a just nation, a just situation, a righteous and just person, a just policy, just law, and a just universe. It has a cosmic meaning, in the sense all celestial beings and objects must follow *dharma* (or *rta*, as in Vedic times), namely, they should observe the path assigned to them. It has a divine connotation, in the sense that its abode is in Supreme Being, and hence it is personalized when it functions as an agent to abolish lawlessness (*adharma*) and restore law and order (*dharma*). In the cosmotheandric vision *dharma* can refer firstly, to an existential condition of harmony and peace among human beings, secondly, it can also mean perfect cosmic order and beauty, thirdly it can mean the Truth, the Supreme Being. The totality of Reality in its condition

of perfect harmony and peace points to *dharma* and hence it is an essential aspect of cosmotheandric vision.

6. Conclusion: Practical proposals.

6.1. Semestral/Annual break in the curriculum for spiritual rejuvenation.

We explicated above the two types of epistemologies, the empirical, lower (*apara*) and the transcendental or higher (*para*), both of which are not exclusive of each other but one should lead to the other. The cosmotheandric intuition is a paradigm that does not prohibit the humanity to integrate both, but ordains that the “higher” knowledge should play a more prominent role at global level guiding and directing all planning and undertakings all over the world for the welfare of the humanity. For this purpose all nations should set in order the training and formation of all its citizens so that every one is offered the opportunity in the academic curricula to imbibe the cosmotheandric paradigm and inculcate it in their consciousness that will gradually and by degrees manifest in the global human behavior and decision making process. For this we propose that all the university students all over the world should be given a break for a semester or for a year, during which all support is to be offered to inculcate cosmotheandric intuition through a season of intense introspection and reflection. This is done through regular and systematic practice of meditation and interiorization of spiritual values by deepening the belief in the transcendence. In meditation one can transcend rational categories by attaining a trans-categorical (non-dual) rationality. The meditative consciousness is the deepest level of consciousness where a dynamic self transformation of the categorical reason can take place. When a person concentrates on the object of meditation for a long time in an attitude of surrender, the distinction between the subject and the object disappears i.e., the logical space between the subject and the object of consciousness vanishes and as a result there occurs a union between the two. This union is a unity of experience, an experience of non-identity and non-difference (*advaita*), which is a cosmotheadric experience, a discovery of the interrelation between the ‘Theos, Kosmos and Anthropos’.

In the passivity of meditation the functions of the active categorical reason are brought to rest. The object of consciousness is no more something that stands opposite to me but it is just part of me. Meditative reason then becomes intuitive, and the intuitive consciousness perceives the reality in its wholeness; this in turn reveals also the relativity of particular objects and the particular world-views. It

means that within the unity of the whole each cultural tradition obtains a unique place and they no more stand in conflict and in contradiction to one another but in the uniqueness of their own relative position. There results a widening of the horizon in which no world-view is either annihilated or made to merge with another but each civilization and cultural tradition and its world-view is confirmed and a correlation between them is perceived at the background of the experience of unity¹⁴. This unity is a conception of the totality of Reality, a cosmotheandric intuition where one discovers interrelation between divine , human and cosmic and overcomes all conflicts and contradictions of logic of the empirical world-view.

6.2. Proposal two: Formation in Value Education

We affirm that epistemologies create asymmetry while justice promotes equality. As we know that knowledge - understood as empirical and scientific or inauthentic - is power, and power is invariably hegemonic and dominating. ‘To know’ here means to be in the possession of “know-how”, be familiar with the pragmatic and the operational, productive and the technical skills to manipulate and transform reality. When this attitude of manipulation is employed at the human level, one can get impregnated with power : political, economic and social with resultant enhancement of status. Those who have no opportunities for acquisition of “know-how” remain powerless. As a result the society gets divided between the powerful and powerless, the former invariably exercising their power over the latter creating oppressive structures. This is the existential global reality that we are faced with in our times.

But no one can banish empirical epistemologies developed in the course of human history lasting some millennia, but one can change perspectives and attitudes and channel the power derived from knowledge in the right direction and aim at creating humanized societies. Even the incumbent paradigm explicated in our introduction cannot be eliminated but it has to be integrated with the new cosmotheandric paradigm, but how to do it is a challenge. The procedure we propose is to introduce from the very beginning of the academic life of a child i.e., from the kindergarten onwards a curricula for “value education”. Values become ‘my values’ when they are chosen and appropriated by me, and to choose I need to distinguish between the variety of values available to me, and to distinguish between them I need to be enlightened and trained from the very beginning; only then can I make right choices of life-values, values that promote justice and social harmony. The training should be oriented towards building up

a humanized and harmonious society, respect for all cultures, respect for different perspectives and religious practices. No doubt, this constitutes the practical dimension of knowledge, justice and spirituality; then there should emerge a movement to train and form younger minds through value education so that they become mature in the use of epistemological functions. Cosmotheandric paradigm needs regular and lasting education in order to become a global life vision and universal *Weltanschauung*.

In this paradigm a definite equilibrium is sought between the human, divine and the cosmic by assuming cosmotheandric unity of reality which could project social equity, cultural symmetry and religious harmony. This equilibrium seeks to balance the mercantile endeavours of humanity by subordinating market and profits to principles of justice and socio-political concerns of holistic human development, which certainly demand an inculcation of spiritual motives and authentic human goals .

The very first sentence of the Isha Upanishads (1:1) proclaims that “whatsoever moves in this moving world is pervaded by the Divine.” The concept of life is dynamic and hence all living beings in this world move; the science has confirmed that the earth moves, so also the billions and billions of galaxies move endlessly in this borderless universe. The Upanishadic vision is that all these are pervaded by the Divine. The humanity should capture in its consciousness this dynamic vision of the universe and the paradigm that represents this dynamic vision of universe is cosmotheandric paradigm. Let not the world then resent to propagate and disseminate this dynamic cosmotheandric paradigm so that it can succeed to attenuate the hegemonic influences of the incumbent paradigm to begin with and then finally succeed to replace it totally; ultimately spirituality should shine and reign supreme in the hearts of all human beings, knowledge should enlighten their lives, and justice should create a humanised society in which all people enjoy harmony and peace.

¹ Ahok K. Gangadean, “The Hermeneutics of Comparative Ontology”, in *Religious Pluralism and Truth*, edited by Thomas Dean, Delhi: 1997, 234 ff.

² Raymon Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man*, London and New York: 1975; p. 74 f

³ Panikkar, Raimon. *The Cosmotheandric Experience*. Delhi. 1998. Also Cf. “Philosophical Pluralism and the Plurality of Religions” in *Religious Pluralism and Truth*, edited by Thomas Dean, Delhi: 1997 ; *Intra-Religious Dialogue*, Bangalore: 1984; Isaac Parackal, “Cosmotheandric Vision – A Call to Integration: A Tribute to Raimundo Panikkar, *Jnanadeepa*, Vol. 14, No.1, 2011. pp. 150 – 176.

⁴ As Panikkar explains the Vedic and Upanishadic texts with a short commentary from cosmotheandric perspective, we prefer to refer to the English translation of the texts made by him. Cf Raimundo Pakikkar, *Vedic Experience, Mantramanjari*, Delhi; 2001. Also cf. *Rigveda Samhita*, tr., by Satya Prakash Saraswati and Satyakam Vidyalkar, 13 Vols., 1977-86.; *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, tr., by R. T. H. Griffith, ed., by J. L. Shastri, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna, Madras, 1973, (R. 1986).

⁵ All the English translations of the Upanishadic texts are from Robert Ernest Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, Delhi: 1921, Reprint 1983. The present citation is on page 24; Cf. also Deussen, Paul (transl.): *Sixty Upanishads of the Veda*. Transl. By V. M. Bedekar and G. B. Palsule. 4 vols. Delhi 1980. Cf. Deussen Paul, *The Philosophy Of the Upanishads*, New York: 1966; p. 2 – 10; S.K. Belvalkar and R.D. Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy, The Creative Period*, New Delhi, 1927 (reprint 1974.), p. 229 f.

⁶ *Brihadaranyaka Up.* 3. 2. 13, Hume, *Ibid.* p. 110. The word ‘Upanishad’ is abridged as ‘Up.’

⁷ Moti Lal Pandit, *Shankara’s Concept of Reality*, New Delhi 1981; p. 1-13; Paul Deussen, *The System of the Vedanta*, Trans. By Charles Johnston, Delhi: 1912, Reprint 1972, p. 3 – 46.

⁸ The Hindu Religious Law was codified by Manu; cf. George Buehler (Trans), *The Law of Manu, The Sacred Books of the East, Ed. By Max Mueller*, Vol. XXV, , Delhi: 1970. Cf. Nos. 1: 88, 90,91, and 123.

⁹ *Aham Brahmāsmi*: Brihadārānyaka Up. 1.4. 10.

¹⁰ *Tatvam asi* : Chāndogya Up.6: 8 - 16

¹¹ Gerard Pushparaj, “Ashrama” in *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Ed by. Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, Vol. 1, Bangalore : 2010, p. 107 -111.

¹² Sebastian Painadath, *Ashrams a Movement of Spiritual Integration*. In: *Concilium* 1994, p. 36-46.

¹³ The term *Dharma* has equivocal nuances and uses in Indian tradition. Nevertheless, it correctly represents the reality of justice. Cf. Mess H. Gualtherus, *Dharma and Society*, Delhi: 1986, p. 3-49 and 158; Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe*, Delhi: 1990, p. 310- 348.

¹⁴ Gangadean, *Religious Pluralism and Truth*, p. 240

Reference: Journal of Indian Theology, Vol. XI. No. 3 (2018), pp. 51- 69.

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A PROLOGUE TO ASIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

The need for a fresh impetus towards Asian Christian Theology is evident to all people interested in the subject. The present theological trend demands that any renewal of theology should primarily pay attention to two basic principles of indigenization and contextualisation, which means the Christian message need to be expressed in national and cultural patterns with liturgy, church music, catechetics, doctrinal discourse etc., highlighting national and regional features. Regarding Asia this cannot be done unless one is familiar with a deeper knowledge of Asian cultures and religions. The plurality of religions in Asia for example has been a difficult nut to crack even for Christians. Often the Christians in Asia are perplexed as they encounter so many different religions surrounding them with diversity of belief structures and outlooks. Questions like the following surge up: “Why so many religions? Which is the true religion among all these? Is there any false religion? Which religion is really true religion?” Often these questions are not answered satisfactorily to those who raise them. Of course these are not easy questions to find adequate answers. Despite this the Christians go on confessing and affirming what they believe even though they are not adequately equipped to explain reasonably well what they believe to their friends from other religions. This article tries to delve into these questions and attempts to provide an adequate explanation to the above questions from interreligious perspective. It also highlights the need for interaction between different religions through authentic dialogue and finally provides some reflections on Asian Christian theology and its characteristics.

1. The Question of Plurality¹

Asian continent is ‘multi-religious’, meaning different world religions co-exist in correlation and constant interaction with one another in spite of the diversity of outlooks and belief structures. It is a common sight that within a given neighbourhood, families professing faith in different religions live together for centuries and interact daily sharing their life world. Should the plurality and the diversity, whether philosophical, social, cultural, political or religious, be rejected, contradicted, ignored or to be accepted, asserted and if possible to be integrated within one’s own world-view, is a question that we need to inquire. Regarding the plurality of religions in Asia, most important point is to respect the

autonomy of each religious tradition, with all the rights of the believing community to practice and propagate its faith. If not, there cannot be a true and positive intercultural or interreligious interaction and harmonious co-existence. The consequences of unilateral standpoint are visible all over the world for all of us to see and experience. Why there is so much of fanaticism, fundamentalism, terrorism, violence and hatred in the world that too in the name of religion? Ultimately all theologies and all intercultural interactions should aim at building a humanitarian world, so that this planet becomes a secure, safe and sound place for all persons to live with sufficient space to express their being, realise their goals and attain their ideals in life.

The treatment of our short study would propose three points:

- (i) An explanation for plurality of religions and theological perspectives in Asia.
- (ii) Interreligious or Interfaith dialogue and universal sister/ brotherhood, aimed at creating a more humanitarian world culminating in harmony and peace among all religions.
- (iii) A short prologue to Asian Christian Theology and its characteristics.

That Asia is a home for several world religions is a well known fact: Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism and Islam are the religions professed by a vast majority of population and then there are other religions with lesser following in Asia like Christianity, Jainism, Sikhism and the like.

To begin with, let us just clarify what do we mean by plurality of religious traditions and what are the characteristics that make a religion autonomous. For a particular religion its autonomous character is a primary postulate, namely, it assumes freedom to affirm an autonomous world-view (*weltanschauung*) with its own belief structures, moral code and cultic practices. These elements bind the followers with cords that cannot be broken and preserve them into a believing community. On the one hand the truth propositions or beliefs of a religion are binding to all the members of the community and on the other they are accepted as such unconditionally, freely and wholeheartedly by the entire believing community. The truth contained in the truth-propositions is considered as ‘ultimate or final’ by them and hence they could be characterised as ‘ultimate communitarian truths’ within the world-view of the religious tradition. If a particular member rejects the beliefs or the truth-propositions or questions them, then s/he is said to lose faith and s/he becomes an outsider. To the extent the beliefs are wholehearted, they become convictions of life – the ‘subjective

ultimate truth statements' for the individual. The 'communitarian ultimate truth proposals' along with the 'subjective ultimate truth proposals' or 'existential convictions' give a religious tradition its autonomous character and shower on it the claim to be a unique religion with its own identity.

1.1. The Ground of Religious Plurality

Why there are so many religions? Where is their source? From where they have emerged in the history of humankind? Has the science of religions an answer so that we can have an adequate explanation for the existence of variety of religions on this earth? Secondly, why every religious tradition claims autonomy? Why it distinguishes itself from other religious traditions and affirms its uniqueness and its own identity?

Without denying the fact that there could be a variety of answers to the above questions from different perspectives, we for our purpose state that from our theological perspective the source of a religion is to be traced in the possibility of human-divine encounter. Human consciousness is a complex phenomenon, for, on the one hand, human beings have a sense of scientific or noetic consciousness, ethical consciousness, aesthetic consciousness and religious consciousness; and on the other, they can know that they can develop their consciousness and make it sharp, acute and sensitive. All the sciences have developed enormously, making scientific consciousness most prominent of all. Similarly, the understanding of aesthetic, moral and religious consciousness had perceivable growth in the history of humankind. For us what is important here is the sense of religious consciousness, which means that human beings have a pre-reflective awareness of the Divine and the Holy and also a capacity to develop it and make it more intensive and explicit. All the religious seekers and sages in the history of humankind have sought to experience the Divine through enhancing the capacities imbedded in their religious consciousness. As the seeker opens himself to the Divine, s/he makes her/himself amenable to the self-manifestation of the Divine. This self-manifestation is sometimes characterised as mystical experience, in which the seeker claims a direct encounter with the Divine, may be a glimpse into the Divine consciousness resulting in the transformation of her/his own self-consciousness.

This experience of the Divine is unique to each one and in reality it cannot be transmitted or imposed on the other. But one can assist the other to evoke the same experience by helping her/him to create conditions or dispositions, so that s/he too can make the experience of the Divine for her/himself. Since the

experience made by a person is unique, it is also different in each case. What one experiences is not the whole of the Divine Reality but only a glimpse or just an insight into the Truth of the Divine Reality, called “faith” or “religious experience” or “God-experience”. It is an unfathomable, indescribable experience, characterised by Rudolf Otto as ‘tremendous’ (*tremendum*) and ‘fascinating’ (*fascinosum*)². This can truly be a moment of “enlightenment” (*Kairos, jivanmukta, nirvana, kaivalya*), a moment to obtain an intuition into the nature of the Divine. This experience can be lasting, inspiring, transformative, giving rise to the dawn of a new vision, a new awareness and of a new mission.

We said, that this experience in itself is ineffable, incommunicable, inexpressible, and non transferable. For that matter no experience is factually communicable. One cannot communicate the pain s/he feels in her/his body, but s/he can only communicate through crying, yelling etc., that s/he is experiencing intense pain in her/his body. Only the body language gives a glimpse into the experience of pain undergone by the patient.

Nevertheless, throughout the history of humankind all sages and saints have attempted to communicate their experience to others. When they did it, they could do it within the categories of conceptual schemes of their thinking and within the cultural context of their existence. The apophatic way of ‘not this not that’ (*neti neti*)³ is very important here; then there is the analogical, metaphorical, symbolic and also the positive way of speaking about the Divine. In doing this each religious tradition gets rooted in a culture that becomes an integral component of the belief-system. The original experience of the Divine is sometimes called, ‘faith’, and truth-statements formulated in a particular conceptual categories are called ‘beliefs’. As the experience of the Divine is unique in each case, the faith content too could be different in each case. The faith experience filters down into beliefs and truth propositions giving rise to a particular religious tradition. The different religious traditions or world religions are nothing but the expressions in particular cultural and historical contexts of the **different** human-Divine encounters had by sages, religious founders and reformers. We can assert that the different religious experiences are the hall mark of plurality of religions as they explain why one religion is different from the other.

The self manifestation of the Holy certainly is the ground of all religious experience and it is characterised as the Being, the One, the Holy, the Transcendent, the Absolute and the Ultimate Reality. Can we ask whether all

religious experiences or human-Divine encounters point at the same Absolute or Ultimate Reality? Is what we call the Divine or Holy, ultimately the same for all those who have experienced it. Is it the One? In other words, do all religions admit an Ultimate Reality, the Ground of Being, the Absolute?⁴ Though almost all the religions admit the Divine, the Holy, but all do not characterise it in the same way – as it transcends all categories of thought and speech. The apophatism is to be recognised as quite natural as the Absolute can only be expressed negatively as ‘not this not that’, ‘*neti neti.*’ (Upanishads). But religions also refer to it in positive names, as God, Yahweh, Allah, Brahman, Nirvana/ Tathatha, Tao⁵, etc. Rightly therefore the Vedas declare that the “The Being is One but the sages call it by different names”⁶ (*ekam sat, viprā bahudā vadanti*). Faced by polytheism, the Vedic believer wanted to give expression to his faith that ultimately the devotee worships and believes in only one God.

1.1.1. The Question of Truth in Different Religions

The question of Truth being a bone of contention among the religions, we need to clarify at this point that there is ultimately one Ultimate Truth, the Absolute Truth, the Absolute and Eternal Existent. The Divine Encounter of the seekers makes them possible to have some intuitive experience of this Truth in a partial manner taking into account the contingent nature of their being. All religions nevertheless have the right to claim Absolute Truth as the Ultimate Reality⁷. When they affirm what they believe is absolutely true, they actually express their Faith in the Ultimate Ground of their being and not the total knowledge of the Absolute Truth in itself. Hence the truth propositions or belief statements are nothing but the conceptualised and linguistically expressed formulations of their faith content or the limited experience of the Absolute Truth. Moreover, the truth statements are limited to the community of believers and can rightly be called as “communitarian ultimate truth propositions”. They are ‘absolutely true’ only for the believers of a particular religious tradition as they have to accept them unconditionally. When they personalise these truth-statements as soteriological and bear witness to them – even to the extent of martyrdom – they become their “existential or subjective ultimate convictions”, which constitute their faith and to which they commit themselves wholeheartedly and with all their being.

1.1.2. Transmission of Faith

The meaning of plurality therefore is grounded in the unique character of the experience of the Divine in each case by the founder of the particular religion

or by the community to which God manifested or revealed himself as a response to their striving to have religious experience. This is the faith of the community. This faith is transmitted from generation to generation and in the process gets systematised in terms of doctrines, moral codes and cultic practices. When faith is expressed in a particular language it receives a linguistic mantle and when it gets rooted in a culture, it obtains cultural garb. It gets particularised and gradually becomes autonomous reality within a definite world-view. All this explains the pedagogy of plurality of religions.

What are the conclusions we can draw up from our explanation of plurality of religious traditions? We would like to formulate three important conclusions: (i) Every Religious tradition has its right to affirm its identity based on its primordial encounter with the Divine, its beliefs or truth-propositions, its freedom to formulate them in the form of doctrines, teach them, propagate them and create internal institutions to interpret them. (ii) no one who is not a member of the community of believers has the right to interfere, condemn or pass value judgements on their belief systems and practices. On the other hand every religion has the right to be recognised and respected by others. (iii) Any coercion, force or violence exerted from outside to forbid or intimidate the believers from practicing their religion can be considered as unlawful and unethical.

1.1. 3. A Metaphor for Plurality of Religions

A metaphor from the sports world could offer us an insight into the plurality of religions. If one desires to be a global icon of the game, s/he should engage in it whole heartedly, with total commitment focussing all the energies towards mastering the game. It demands regular practice, perfect knowledge of all the rules and norms, willingness and determination to observe all of them meticulously etc. etc. The game can be compared to the religion one follows and the players are the believers. The believers should be committed to the religious doctrines and the practices to become good religious persons accepted by the community. S/He should manifest that through the observance of all the laws and norms of the particular religion, s/he can intensify her/his religious experience.

A player, though expert in one game, need not ignore or reject the others. He can take interest in other games, be a good spectator or even sometime play and participate in the game in order to show fellowship with the other players. Similar is the case in religions. Through study and dialogue believers can show interest in religions other than theirs by showing respect, recognition and by

relating freely with people who belong to them. This sort of understanding we need to promote between different religions.

We would like to make a distinction between plurality and pluralism. When plurality gives greater scope for interreligious interactions, pluralism promotes building of borders around each religion providing scope for fundamentalism and relativism. Pluralism can lead to the affirmation of the identities to the extent of either exclusivism or inclusivism. Pluralism can also become competitive, each one claiming, “my religion is the only true religion”.⁸

The concept of plurality posits no fixed borders between the religions; it gives scope to remain open to other religions, admits that each religion is ‘different’, encouraging interaction and dialogue between them. It finds no difficulty to respect, recognise and accept the identities and autonomy of other religions. It takes the attitude of “live and let live”.

2. Interreligious Dialogue⁹ and Creation of a Humanised World

If each religion is autonomous entity with its own ultimate truth propositions, then why there should be interaction among them and what should be the nature of this interaction? Religious consciousness as we delineated is one dimension of the human consciousness along with others like scientific, ethical and aesthetic. Human life is to be seen in a holistic perspective, and intercultural and interreligious interactions too are to be seen as partial dimensions of the existence of human beings. No man is an island. Social interactions are integral part of human existence. Being-in-the world is correlative to being-with. The other is given to us primordially. Human engagement in the world is connected with the human affairs, which include social, political, cultural, academic and religious.

The religious experience, if genuine, can only promote humanisation of the world. Having experienced the Divine, every believer is sent forth in to the world to rebuild and recreate the human world, through human interactions. We deal here with two dimensions of Interreligious Dialogue: the practical and the theological. The former should precede the latter so that it can create an atmosphere for discussion on more complex issues connected with theological discourse. It is not necessary to elaborate the global phenomenon of dialogue in every aspect of human activity in the contemporary world. Regarding interreligious dialogue we have the succinct expression of Hans Kueng which

summarises its significance in establishing a human world where peace should reign supreme at all times:

There can be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There can be no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions. There can be no dialogue between the religions without research into theological foundations¹⁰

We believe that practical dialogue can go a long way in establishing peace among the nations and also among the religions, which in turn can give a fillip to theological dialogue.

2.1. Practical Dialogue and Humanization

The purpose of all interreligious dialogue is humanisation or creation of a more human world, where the ties of universal sister/brotherhood are strengthened and deepened in an atmosphere of peace, security and freedom. Believers come together to fulfil their task to enrich life on earth and make it meaningful for everybody. There is no other force that can do it so efficaciously as the teachings of the sages and founders of religions. No founder has ever preached to hate one another; mutual love, collaboration, concern, care and understanding are the primary teachings of all religious scriptures. Humanisation means creating a human world where every one is a good neighbour, every one feels accepted, respected, forgiven, and appreciated¹¹.

Such dialogue can start through what Habermas calls, ‘communicative praxis’¹², namely, making our relationships more intense at all practical levels of daily life, so that the persons with whom we live no longer remain as strangers but become my good neighbours. Present day society is becoming more and more pluralistic with people of different cultures and religions forming ‘neighbourhoods’ resulting in more and more interactions in daily affairs like travels, work environments, encounters in business and marketing. These unorganized, spontaneous interactions, considered as ‘life dialogue’ could be made goal oriented through the formation of “base human communities.” What should be the incentive for people to come together purposefully? The incentive could be to form ‘neighbourhood communities’¹³ where each one not only ‘lives’ as a neighbour of the other, but intentionally feels and interacts as a neighbour to the other. This could be made possible through common sharing. What will they share or what could make the ball rolling? What one eager to share is his own human experience and the most significant human experience in each ones

life is the experience of 'suffering' in its various forms: ill-health, pain, oppression, exploitation, injustice, rejection, discrimination etc. When people come together to 'share' the stories of their own experiences of suffering in the context of a listening partner, there should certainly be formation of closer ties of friendship resulting in mutual concern and care.

The second step in the process of 'communicative praxis' is discovering 'solutions' to the situations that bring about suffering. The religion can certainly have a role to play here. Every religion claims to liberate humanity from its plight of suffering; every religion attempts to alleviate human experience of pain through its own 'soteriology'. No one can deny the fact of a 'soteriological core' in any world religion. The proximate goal of dialogue at this level is to work out strategies that will bring about liberation from human sufferings. These stories of soteriology shared by the partners of dialogue need not be in agreement with each other, they may even contradict one another. But that should not matter for the effectiveness of dialogue and building up deeper relationships.

The next step of practical dialogue could be to engage in some concrete action plan which will alleviate the sufferings and bring about some experience of liberation to partners of dialogue in particular and to humanity in general. Wonderful are the welfare programmes organized by the different religions all over the world. But hardly any attempt has been made where leaders of different religious traditions coming together to plan a common venture of the nature of social service of any hue. The practical dialogue should in future produce fruits through humanitarian engagements by the representatives of different religions. Ultimately the religions could play a supreme role in wiping out from the face of this earth all the causes which generate violence, hatred, oppression, exploitation and inequality. They can attenuate the sufferings of humankind making this planet more human where interrelationships become *de facto* cordial. All this is possible if through dialogue we build up mutual trust and confidence.

The effects of 'practical' or 'life' dialogue could be multifarious: it can break down the artificial wall of suspicion and hostility that separates one religious community from another. It can demythologize the religious stereotypes through which we attribute our vague mental impressions and prejudices to a whole group of people. It can open new channels of communication at personal and group levels resulting gradually in the elimination of unexamined religious stereotypes. Practical dialogue finally can prepare people socially and psychologically to relate with one another as friends. The ties of friendships

could become stronger through deeper and deeper levels of sharing making dialogue as the most effective media not only for resolving conflicts but also for building up strong 'neighbourhood communities' where people come together to share, to discuss matters of concern and even to pray.

What can really obstruct dialogue is the tendency to pass value judgements regarding the belief systems, truth proposals and practices of other religions. Certainly the doctrinal foundation of each religion might be subjected to critical examination but passing of value judgements should be carefully avoided. This is because every religion has the right to formulate and defend its beliefs; secondly, the basic assumptions of one religion cannot be easily interpreted from the standpoint of another. Evaluative judgements can give rise to misunderstandings and lead to sterile controversies, thus hampering the progress of dialogue.

2.2. Theological Dialogue

The Theological Dialogue is an outcome of practical dialogue that attempts sincerely to get the first hand experience of the belief structure of other religions. "It should be initiated with courage and sincerity, with the greatest freedom and with reverence"¹⁴ What could be the purpose of such a dialogue? There could be three-fold goals for it: (i) a sincere effort by partners of dialogue "to purify their knowledge of religions other than their own from all prejudices, misunderstandings, and distortions";¹⁵ (ii) a combined effort of persons belonging to different systems of belief to arrive at a working consensus on conceptions of transcendental and human values, (iii) to discover complementarities and overlappings in the belief structures of different religions through scientific and critical comparative studies which can promote peace and harmony through better interreligious understanding.¹⁶

The dialogue at this level is an intellectual discussion among the experts regarding the fundamental issues of religious beliefs and a rigorous analysis of the religious convictions held by the representatives of different religions. Such a theological dialogue presupposes a certain openness and receptivity to the religious beliefs and practices characteristic of religions other than one's own. If the dialogue is conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust, it will have a paradoxical effect: it can deepen one's own faith and commitment and can also make one understand the differentiation which separates one religion from the other. It can also give rise to a change of attitude toward the beliefs and practices of other religions. This implies that representatives of various religions, without

denying their religious affiliations and denominational loyalties, should be able through theological discussion, to relate to each other in non-sectarian terms. The practical and theological types of dialogue are analytically different but empirically closely related, each of them performing complementary function, but both proceeding simultaneously.

One question needs to be answered, namely, the nature of religious belief is such that it demands a total commitment from its adherents. Can this fact of wholehearted commitment to one particular world-view be an hindrance to theological dialogue? Such a commitment need not necessarily be an obstruction for dialogue if dialogue partners entertain desire to understand the other and also to be understood by the other. On the other hand such a commitment could even be considered as a precondition for theological dialogue in the sense that it can make sharing more genuine coming out of deeper convictions¹⁷.

Finally, we need to stress that the theological dialogue has its inherent shortcomings and limitations. The ultimate propositions of communitarian truths we elaborated above are non-transferable from one worldview to another worldview. The truth statements or beliefs of one religious tradition are meaningful only in so far one can accept the faith content of the tradition. The belief in Transmigration among the Asian religions and the belief in the Resurrection in the Christian tradition, for example, can never be changed or transferred from one tradition to the other. Dialogue can help to understand what the Transmigration **means** in Asian religions and what Resurrection **means** in Christianity. The purpose of dialogue here is only to understand the other and to be understood by the other. This highlights the principle of plurality of religions and the autonomy of belief structures.

But there can be a deeper understanding of another religious tradition at the level of experience. Swami Abhishiktananda, a Christian French missionary (H. Le Saux) came to India and sought throughout his life the *advaitic* experience of Vedanta tradition, had achieved his goal and appropriated the experience of “I am Brahman” (aham Brahmasmi)¹⁸, at the same time continued to be a Christian till the end of his life¹⁹. If this experience could be explicated into Asian categories of thought, there could be the dawn of Asian Christian Theology sooner than later²⁰.

3. Towards Asian Christian Theology

Christianity was brought to Asia by Western Missionaries and it is just a minority among other religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism etc., with 2.27% including the Christians in Philippines and only 1.47% if we exclude Philippine Christians²¹. As long as the colonial powers ruled Asian nations the Christians tacitly enjoyed a privileged position, but once they left, the indigenous governments took over the baton to rule the nations and they became suspicious of Christianity. Christians they declared have double allegiance, one to their religion whose sacred sanctuaries are abroad; and their allegiance to the nation is only secondary, hence the doubt regarding the patriotism of Christians. The strong example for this is to be seen in India, where V.D. Savarkar founded a movement called Hindutva to propagate cultural nationalism. He wrote:

“Christians and Muslims had potentially “extraterritorial loyalties” , as their “holy lands were outside the territory of India, and they could not be counted as Hindus. they could not be true Hindus, as they never would devote themselves fully to India because they had chosen to have another “holy land”. If on the other hand, they gave up their “alien” belief they could be admitted back in the Hindu fold as true Hindus”²² .

Such being the attitude present almost in all the countries of Asia, the Christians in Asia have a challenging task of bringing about a radical mutation among compatriots in their attitude toward Christianity through authentic life witness and this is necessary for their very survival. The two important means for this are interreligious dialogue and inculturation; the latter is to be considered as an important component of the former as it should outgrow from the former if it is to be efficacious among compatriots and lasting. The interreligious dialogue, as we delineated above should become the life line of communication and should go on ceaselessly among all religions. Interreligious Dialogue is necessary for Christian Theology but it is also an integral dimension of interaction between all religions. Sometimes an impression is created that only Christians hanker after interreligious dialogue and other religions hardly pay any attention to it. This impression certainly is incorrect as dialogue is a must for the very survival of humanity and religious dialogue should become the universal phenomenon among all religions in order to create a human world where every person and every community can express culturally and religiously their aspirations and beliefs. Hence we treated the topic of dialogue just after the question of plurality of religions to underscore the fact that the religions do not

form independent islands but coexist with other religions in mutual interaction and constant dialogue. It is essential for Asian Christian Theology, because it is a basic instrument of living and witnessing Christian faith in Asia such a way that the people of other faiths accept them as committed citizens who contribute towards the wellbeing of all people.

3.1. Asian Theology and Inculturation

It is evident that the Christians in Asia should with all seriousness continue the process of inculturation²³, begun so enthusiastically after the Vatican II²⁴ but then the initial euphoria visible aftermath of Vatican II is almost extinct. What may be the reasons? One important cause is the faulty pedagogy followed. Inculturation can never become successful if it is worked out by few theologians from the ivory-tower of isolation;²⁵ it should be initiated on the other hand from the grass root level as a movement from below with intense catechesis on culture and faith, explicating what the components of each are and what way the faith we profess and live can be implanted in any culture without losing its essence but making it more meaningful and intelligible to the adherents.

What is the pedagogy to be followed for inculturation? The first step should be a thorough catechesis of indigenous culture and faith simultaneously at every parish and every primary school level, starting from the very first standard of primary schools and continuing up to adult catechesis. One, the indigenous cultural and religious symbols, second, the adapted theological nomenclature, should penetrate every Christian family, fully understanding their meaning from Christian perspective. Only then they could become part of the training of clergy and that of official doctrinal pronouncements and finally enter into the cultic practices.

An example of this can be seen in the history of religions; when Buddhism was transferred from India to China by the Buddhist Monks, the Buddhist doctrines were explained in terms of Chinese conceptual categories so that they become intelligible to people of China and were readily acceptable to them. It gave rise to Chinese Theology of Buddhism at the end²⁶. Similar process should have been followed by the Missionaries when faith was brought to Asia in the 16th century but the Missionaries had identified Christianity with European (Graeco-Roman) culture and hence their endeavours were hardly successful to implant Christianity in Asia, on the contrary, even those who became Christians were westernised.

It means that the Christianity that we have in Asia is a westernised Christianity. Hence to think of Asian Theology, first of all, the Christians in Asia must de-westernise themselves²⁷. This is easily said than done, as it is more difficult to undo something than to do it afresh. The process is doubly difficult because of all pervasive globalisation, due to which the western influence is seen in all aspects of life all over the world. The dress people wear, the music, the dance, the entertainment and even the architecture etc. have almost transcended the borders of indigenous cultures and taken a global hue. For example, when all in the assembly wear western dress, how can the celebrant of the holy rites wear indigenous dress, that too only within the precincts of the sanctuary, and call it inculturation?

Inculturation at the level of Theology poses still greater difficulties. Most of the theologians in Asia go to Europe for their higher studies and return fully impregnated with western categories of thought and even life style. How can they transform themselves to think in Eastern Categories and develop an Asian Theology? If Asian Christians are serious about developing Asian Christian Theology, they should then master the scriptures of Asian Religions in the original languages and transform their thinking patterns. Secondly, there cannot be much progress if it is done by a handful of theologians. All the theologians of every nation should come together and launch into the venture fully supported by the hierarchy and the results of their research should percolate and filter down to the grass root level of catechesis at the level of parishes and primary schools giving birth to a mass movement of Asian Christian Theology. For this we can only hope for the birth of future messiahs and visionaries who being fired by the zeal of the Gospel rush into a well thought of systematic project called, 'Asian Christian Theology'.

3.2. Few Characteristics of Asian Christian Theology.

One can finally ask the question. "what should be the main characteristics of Asian Christian Theology?". We understand that a single person just cannot formulate and dictate the 'Characteristics of Asian Christian Theology', but it should be a cumulative endeavour of all theologians and custodians of faith²⁸. Nevertheless, to present a few stray ideas on this point just for reflection, we can enumerate the following characteristics for the consideration of the persons engaged in this task.

The Christianity being a global religion, the theological movements in various continents should be interconnected in their hermeneutical solidarity. The

Asian Christian Theology can allow itself to be inspired by the methodological segments of Latin American and African theologies. Meanwhile the coherence in the proclamation of one Christian faith is to be emphasised, retaining and confirming its catholicity.

The Asian Christian Theology should be less androcentric, and to do this, it should orient itself towards eliminating gender asymmetry from the very beginning. It will not be an exaggeration if some label Asian Religions as more androcentric than others. As an instance we can cite the High Court verdict of Bombay dated 30th March 2016 which declared that the access to women into the temples is a human right issue and ordered them entry into the sacred precincts. This is only a legal position, but in practice women are not allowed to visit sometimes even the premises of sacred shrines in many places of worship in Asia. First of all the interreligious dialogue should eventually create an attitude towards the elimination of all androcentrism in the Religions of Asia. Secondly, the Asian Christian Theology that we envisage should take into account this gender asymmetry in Asian Religions and create a new theology with firm scriptural foundations which promotes the welfare of both genders on symmetrical equations.

The Asian Christian Theology should drink abundantly from the mystic springs of Asian Religions. Though Christian Tradition has a strong mystic and contemplative spirituality, the Christianity propagated by the western missionaries have not integrated this contemplative tradition in the living practices of Christian faith in Asia. They have taught us to 'say prayers' and 'sing hymns', but never taught the faithful how to practice silence or stay in a contemplative posture opening the heart to the Spirit of God. Hardly any Christian family devotes any time for meditation; It will not be an exaggeration if we say that Christian prayers are mostly an exercise in verbosity or a display of sheer noise. Silence and Contemplation appear to be the privilege of only monks and nuns in the monasteries and not that of Christian families. But Asian Religions have a strong family tradition of meditation. We observe family members of Asian Religions setting aside time for silence and meditation in a fixed posture to re-capture the original experience of human-Divine encounter. The emerging Asian Christian Theology should encourage and build up a tradition of silence and contemplation in the Christian families.

Much is spoken of already by many theologians regarding the praxis of emancipation and liberation as an integral part of Asian Christian Theology. This to be seen in the context of Catholic population: in India more than 50% of Catholic population is from Dalit tradition. They were baptised with the assurance that they will be freed from all exploitation from higher castes; they will be provided a real existential experience of the Christian sister/brotherhood and the like. But discrimination is far from absent even in Christian Churches, with assignment of separate seating arrangement for higher and lower castes during liturgy, spatial allocations according to the caste hierarchy in the cemeteries, so forth and so on - to quote a few instances. The Asian Church should liberate itself from all these anti-Christian practices. The universal sister/brotherhood is the supreme doctrine of the Gospels inculcated in the spiritual heritage of the Christianity, but sometimes ignored and overlooked deliberately by the young Churches of Asia. A Christian Church that does not listen to the cry of the poor, the suffering, exploited and oppressed is *de facto* unchristian. No Christian Theology worth the name can emerge within Asia if it fails to strive hard to do away asymmetries and discriminations within its fold.

Asian Christian theology should finally be truly Asian in spirit and fact, which means it should integrate Asian cultures and socio-political and mercantile realities on the one hand and constantly remain open and porous to other Asian Religions. It should positively uphold the principles of plurality of religions delineated above and never be afraid to accept and integrate within its theological thinking what is good in them, so that Christian Theology of Asia grows and spreads its attractive wings in efficacy and influence not through any false propaganda and coercion but through the radiations of love that warms up the hearts of the believers of other faiths.

3.3. The Exercise of De-theologisation in Religious Traditions.

As a conclusion we would like to propose the exercise of de-theologisation in religious traditions which is a need for all religious traditions and to be considered as a process of renewal and purification as well as contextualisation of its theologies remaining always open to the world and also to the aspirations, needs and existential exigencies of believers. It can be seen from two different perspectives, *ad intra* and *ad extra*.

De-theologisation *ad intra* can be delineated as:

- (i) A sincere striving to recapture the original experience of the human-Divine encounter and attempting to renew constantly the faith observances and teachings, having read the signs of the times.
- (ii) Basing on the above, to make attempts to reinterpret the scriptures and restate the belief statements, moral codes and cultic practices.
- (iii) To transmit the spiritual heritage of the religious tradition from generation to generation and for this purpose to respond to the historical exigencies and living conditions of the community of believers.

Secondly, de-theologisation *ad extra*, means the openness of a particular tradition to other religions traditions, its correlation and collaboration and appreciation of the people of other faiths as co-pilgrims marching towards the same goal. For this all religious traditions need a sense of humility to accept its own limitations and inadequacies to comprehend the Absolute in its totality and accept it as a Mystery just to be contemplated. This should give rise to an understanding that a particular religious tradition cannot grasp the entire plan of salvation for the entire humanity envisaged by the Divine Mystery. No religious tradition can claim absolute knowledge of the Absolute, nor can it claim to be in possession of the Absolute Truth in itself. The salvation of humanity is in the hand of God and it is His prerogative. No religious tradition can claim that it is in possession of the full plan of God to save humanity. Each religious tradition remains in total indebtedness to the Supreme Mystery which has revealed its plan of salvation in accordance with the divine will to it, but never in a perfect manner. This affirms the fact of the spacio-temporal contingency of religious traditions as well as that of every believer. Acknowledging this each religious tradition should collaborate and cooperate with other traditions to build up a humanity where peace and harmony prevails so that the different religious traditions do not exist as rivals but each attempts to probe into the inscrutable Divine Mystery and responds to the revelation granted to each religious tradition within the historical and cultural exigencies.

This actually means the shedding off of the superiority of 'faith-complex', lurking within the tradition. In the metaphor of games explained above, we see there is no objective criterion to determine the hierarchy of their superiority. The players play the game they have chosen to the best of their ability and commit themselves to it. The believers live their own religious faith to the best of their ability and commit themselves to it. There is no neutral point from where one can judge superiority of one religion over the other.

If any religion confesses that their theological perspectives hinder them to participate in the interreligious dialogue, then that religion should de-theologise itself, so that it divests itself of all theological obstacles to interreligious dialogue, and actively engages to create a humanised world. The religious isolation is a mark of fanatic mind-set, which can prove very pernicious to humankind. If the religions fail to de-theologise themselves, there will be only conflicts and violence in the world.²⁹ Religions too will become the cause of destruction and annihilation. Instead of propagating peace and harmony they will propagate only hatred and vengeance.

Asian Religions have a prominent role to play in the global milieu of contemporary national and international enterprises towards the creation of a new humanity of mutual solidarity, cooperation and understanding. Asian Christian Theology too can affirm its stand towards inculturation and interreligious dialogue upholding the Gospel principles of universal sister/brotherhood. The ultimate goal is to create a humanised global society where every one experiences freedom, mutual acceptance and peace.

Notes

¹ Cf. Raymond Panikkar, "Philosophical Pluralism and the Plurality of Religions" in *Religious Pluralism and Truth*, edited by Thomas Dean, Delhi: 1997, 33-43; Harold Coward, "Religious Pluralism and the Future of Religions", *Ibid.*, 45 – 63; Jacques Dupuis, *Religious Pluralism*. Anand, Gujarat: 2001, 386 – 390; Michael Amaladoss, *Beyond Dialogue*. Bangalore: 2008, 234 – 238.

² Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige*, Breslau: 1917; *The Idea of the Holy*. Trans. John W. Harvey. Oxford: 1923; 2nd ed., 1950.

³ Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 2, 3, 6; 3,9,26; 4,2, 4,; 4,4,22; 4.5.15; In Christian Tradition this is called *via negativa*. cf. Beatrice Bruteau, "Global Spirituality and the Integration of East and West", *Cross Currents*, ed. By William Birmingham, New York: 1989, 201 f.

⁴ At least there is congruence among the prophetic religions on this point: "Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is One Lord" Deut. 6:4; ref. also Is 45:5; Is 43: 11; MK 12:29-30; Mt. 22:37-38; Quran affirms same doctrine: "Our God and your God, is One" Surah 29:46; "There is no God but one (*illa ana*)" Surah 16:2; 21:14; In Vedanta tradition we have the expression "One-without-a-second" to refer to the Ultimate Reality: "ekam eva advitiam" Chandogya Upanishad 6, 2, 2; Brahman is also called 'Supreme Being' "satyasya satyam" Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 2, 1, 20; In Buddhism we have the concepts like Nirvana, Sunyata, Tathata; similarly the concept of Tao in Chinese Religions; Cf. John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: The Challenge of other Religions*, Oxford: 1989, 293-95, 375-76.

⁵ These are homeomorphic way of expressing the same reality, namely, they function homologously within the respective religion and culture. Raimundo Panikkar, *Intra-Religious Dialogue*, Bangalore: 1984, 70ff,

⁶ Rig Vea 1, 64, 46. Concretely in our case it means "one God, many Religions/Theologies". The statement upholds diversity and plurality of perspectives in theological thinking.

⁷ Amaladoss, op. cit. 239-41;

⁸ Amaladoss, op. Cit., 193 – 244.

⁹ Henry O’Thomson, (Ed.) *World Religions in Dialogue*. Delhi. 1993; Raimon Panikkar, *Intra Religious Dialogue*. Bangalore 1984; Dupuis, op. cit., 360-84. Schreiter, Robert Schreiter, “Theology, Culture, and Dialogue in a New Millennium”. *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, 13 (2003), 30-40.

¹⁰ Hans Kueng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*, London: 1991, 105

¹¹ S, Devaraj, “M.M. Thomas - A New Humanity at the Encounter of Religions and Secular Ideologies” *Spirituality of Dialogue*, ed. by. Augustine Thottakara, Bangalore: 1994, 159 - 168.

¹² George Warnke, “Communicative Rationality and Cultural Values” in Stephen K. White, *Habermas*. Cambridge, 1995, 120-142; Donald Moon, “Practical Discourse and communicative ethics,” I bid. 143-165; Cf. also Mary Ann Stenger, “Gadamer’s Hermeneutics as a Model for Cross-Cultural Understanding and Truth in Religion” in *Religious Pluralism and Truth*, Edited by Thomas Dean, Delhi: 1997, 151 - 170

¹³ M.D. Thomas, “Dialogue of Religions – A Field of Approach”, *Kristu Jyothi*, Vol.18, No. 4(Dec. 2002), 352 f.

¹⁴ *S.U. Humanae Personae Dignitatem*, 28, 1968, II.1.

¹⁵ Dupuis, op. cit., 358 -84.

¹⁶ Cf. Joseph Moelleur, “Troeltsch, Comparative Theology and the conversation with Hinduism; Toward a comparative Systematic Theology,” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, 11 (2001) 2, 133- 47; Hendrick M. Vroom, “Keith Ward’s Comparative Christian Systematic Theology”, *Studies in Interreligious Dialouge* , 11(2001) 1, 93-99; Alfred De Souza, *Op cit.*, 21; Bruteau, *Op.cit.*, 193 – 215.

¹⁷ Cf. Abhishiktananda, “Depth-Dimension of Dialogue” *Vidyajyothi*, 1981. 45 (1981), 202 – 21.

¹⁸ *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 1, 4, 10; The same experience is also expressed through the phrase “*tattvam asi*” ‘that thou art’ *Chandogya Upanishad* 6. 8.7.

¹⁹ Amaladoss, op.cit, 146-148; Abhishiktananda, *Saccidananda: A Christian Approach to Advaita Experience*. Delhi: 1984; *The Further Shore*, 2nd Ed. Delhi 1984;

²⁰ Dupuis, op.cit., 268 -78

²¹ S.J. Emmanuel, “Asian Churches for new Evangelization: Chances and Challenges”, *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 36 (1999), 252 – 275.

²² V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva*, Bombay: 1969, 115; Cf. also Thomas Bloom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*, Oxford: 1999, 67 f. ; Yvon Ambrose, “Hindutva’s Real Agenda and Strategies”, *Hindutva, An Indian Christian Response*, Bangalore : 2002, 11- 102.

Anderson W.K. and S.D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron, The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, New Delhi: 1987; M.S. Golwalkar, *We, or Our Nationhood Defined*, Nagpur: 1947; M.S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Bangalore : 1966.

²³ Jacques Dupuis, “Inculturation and Interreligious Dialobue in India Today” in *A Universal Faith? Peoples, Cultures, Religions, an d the Christ*, ed. C. Cornille and V. Neckebrouck, Louvain: 1992, 27- 47

²⁴ Cf. Also *Nostra Aetate* : 1 and 2; *Lumen Gentium* : 16; *Gaudium et Spes*: 22; *Ad Gentes* : 9 and 11; *Dignitatis Humanae*: 2 and 3; Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, (1964), no. 63; Dupuis, *Religious Pluralism*, 161-169; Ruokanen Miikanen, “The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions According to the Second Vatican Council”, *Studies in Christian Mission* , Vol. 7, Leiden, New York, 1992; Sebastian Painadath, “Christ, Church and the Diversity of Religions.” *Jeevadhara*, XXVIII, NO. 165.

²⁵ The best example of failure in inculturation is the Indian Rite Mass, which was worked out by a few theologians integrating only the Sanksrit Sruti tradition, and introduced without providing time for incubation and without any grass root level catechesis.

²⁶ Cf. Hajime Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India-China-Tibet-Japan*. Honolulu:1964, 175f.

²⁷ “Asians do have a right and a duty to question and challenge the validity, relevance and suitability of a theology formulated in Europe and imposed on Asia as the one and only theology”, S.J. Emmanuel, op.cit, 270.

²⁸ Around eighty theologians came together in Seoul and formulated four guiding principles for the growth of Asian Christian Theology. (1) "The Bible, not theologians, is to speak in our theology. (2) Jesus Christ, the only incarnate Son of God, is unique. (3) Mission centered theology aiming to communicate the gospel to the lost is the best protection against syncretism. (4) Love should be the essential part of an Asian Theology". Cf. <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txo/asian.htm> .

²⁹ Vincent Gabriel Furtado, “Intercultural Conflicts from Asian Perspectives”, in *Intercultural Philosophy from Indian Perspective*, Bangalore: 2004, 25- 48.

Reference: Published under the title “Perspectives of Asian Theologies”, in *Topologik, Special Issue*, No. 19 (2016), 140 – 158. (The first part of this article has been re-edited.).

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

The Concept of Power in Hinduism

Power is defined as “capacity to effect change”¹, “the ability to move reality”², and “being actualizing itself over against the threat of non-being”³. Power can be compared to the concept we have of energy – boundless and dynamic – but with the difference that power becomes ‘human’ as it exists in human beings and integral to human act. It becomes an observable phenomenon only when some one makes uses of it. It is intimately related to human decision making process which give direction to power, nay, the power is exercised and made effective through the human decisions. It is also directly involved with means as well as with goals⁴ of human activity.

Power in its very essence comprises of a process of dialectic interaction between the one who possesses it and the one on whom it is exercised upon. Exercise of power, seen from one perspective, means an interaction between one who dominates and one who is dominated. It can be used to oppress others and to exercise domination over others; but it can also be used to serve others, to work for their welfare and thus can have positive effects in its exercise. But power invests one with authority to take decisions and to execute them. Exercise of power means action and dynamism.

We can conceive of political power, economic power, intellectual power, moral power, religious power and the like. But in all these, some aspect of ‘politics’ is present. The basic principle of politics being an interaction between people and policies through the medium of power, the presence of political elements in the exercise of power is inevitable. Exercise of any power means dealing with people and policies of action and politics is the science of governance concomitant with the exercise of power based on certain principles and norms. This explains the interaction between the exercise of power and the politics of any sort.

Regarding the question of religion and the politics of power, in principle, one can speak of ‘secularism’ and a politics divested of all religious implications, namely, of an ideal situation where politics has nothing to do with religion and neutral regarding any religion and the

government insulating itself from any influence from any religion. But such a situation is hardly evidenced anywhere in the world at any period of history.

Coming to Hinduism, one can evidently prove that it is not an exception to the general rule. A study of the concept of power in Hinduism bring to the fore the fact how desire for power is intermingled with religious observances from the very beginning. Subtle political motives too are tacitly present, in the sense of manipulating religion to acquire power.

The study of the concept of power in Hinduism is certainly a complex affair as it involves going back into its history of more than three millennia. The earliest Vedic literature available to us, depicts more of the religious dimension of Hinduism and very little of cultural and socio-political aspects of Hindu society. But the analysis of Vedic literature gives us some clues regarding the power structures active in the Vedic society. We analyse below the power structures during the Vedic period and see how these power structures influence the contemporary political scene in India.

1. The Vedic Priest and His Power.

When one reads Rgvedic hymns⁵ what strikes immediately is the sense of devotion of the vedic man towards innumerable gods, most prominent being Indra, Agni, Soma and the like⁶. When one critically investigates the hymns with hermeneutical tools with the intention of seeking what underlies the devotional literature, one can without difficulty draw certain conclusions without doing any violence to the poetic genre. The gods are considered to be powerful due to their capacity to control natural phenomena. But from where do they derive this power? The vedic priest with his own hermeneutic ingenuity gives an answer, namely, from the sacrifices. But it is actually the priest who controls the sacrifices and thus the gods are made to depend on the priest for the offerings and oblations. It is said of Indra, that he goes about hungry pleading for sacrifices and rejoices over the cake offered as oblation when he actually receives them⁷. As the time passed, what became more important for the priest is to make the sacrifices effective so that what is asked for is obtained invariably and the praise and glory of the gods through oblations and hymns was relegated to secondary

position. Priest is there primarily at the service of the humans to fulfill their needs and only secondarily to give bring glory to gods. Nay, gods are to become gradually insignificant before the power of the priest. Hence the question, what makes sacrifices fruitful? The power to make the sacrifice effective cannot be something that is external to it. It should be something that is very integral to itself. What is an integral part of the sacrifice is the mantra, known as 'Bràman' meaning 'prayer', (with accent on the base, bràh -, which constitutes an action known with neuter gender). But who is the one that actually utters this 'Bràman'? Certainly, it is the Brahmàn, the priest (with accent on the prefix - mèn, which constitutes an agent noun with masculine gender.) the member of the first class in the society. The power of the sacrifices thus came to be concentrated in the "priest", which he can manipulate as he wants and thus remain supreme in the society. All in the society, including the kings and nobles are at his control, as it is he who grants them what they want through the sacrifices over which, again, only he has supreme control.

An important feature of the Vedic period was the division of priests into two main groups, the sacrificial priests⁸ (Rtvij) and the household priest (purohita), consequent rise of the latter to prominence. The purohita was called the administrator of the sacrifices as he has to supervise the performance of the rites by the Rtvij priests and judge their validity. But then he became an adviser to the sacrificer (yajamana), namely, one who orders the sacrifice and those who order the sacrifice being the kings and lords, he took over the function of 'adviser' to the kings. The custom became gradually an obligation; accordingly every king 'had to' appoint a 'purohita' as his adviser and counselor for "gods do not eat the food of a king, who has no Purohita. If a king has to sacrifice, he should appoint a Brahmana as Purohita so that the god can eat his food."⁹ So we see a subtle dialectic of power working here. God's owned the powers and the kings participated in these powers and depended on their help and protection. The gods can be gracious only if sacrifices are offered to them– and to offer sacrifice Brahmins are necessary – because it is Brahmins who composed the scriptures and laid down that gods do not eat the food offered by others. So the Brahmins became indispensable. By degrees the purohita became actually more powerful than the king himself as he

controlled the king himself. So much so the relationship between the king and the Purohita is compared to a marriage. In the appointment of Purohita, the same mantra prescribed with which the bridegroom holds the hands of the bride, and says: “I am that you are, you are that I am; I the heaven, you the earth; I the melody of the song, you the word of the song. So let us make the journey together”¹⁰ In the old manual of statecraft, called Kautilya Shastra, we read

“He (the king) should follow him, as the pupil the teacher, the son the father, the servant the master”¹¹ Thus the purohita stands close to the king in glory and riches. He is well versed in law and administration and at the helm of all affairs of the state. All royal sacrifices and other cultic and magical acts begin with him¹².

The Purohita being a Brahmin and as per the Shastras only a birth within certain families alone qualifies one to supervise the cultic/cultural affairs, the Brahmin class became most powerful and came to control every aspect of life during the Brahmana and Atharva Veda period. The “caste laws were laws of spiritual eugenics, designed to promote the evolution of a higher race. That the priests, once placed in the peculiar position of the guardians of the holy treasure, and now armed with the power which their mastery over the mystic charms and incantations gave them, should have arrogated to themselves more and more of the same power is what was to be expected. In the later Veda the apotheosis of priesthood had just commenced: its real bloom was in the subsequent period.”¹³

2. The Priest and the Magical Power.

Another element that consolidated ‘power’ into the hands of the priests was the magical understanding of prayer and the sacrifice. In this case the priest fulfilled more often the role of a magician than a priest. The word “Brāhman” also meant a spell and magically empowered formula, hypostatized as ‘power’ itself. It is hardly difficult to distinguish real prayer and the spells in the Vedas. When the aristocratic society offered sacrifices, the ordinary hoi polloi were merged in magical rites and a priest was available to both, provided he received his fees.

The art of Magic was a way of coercing the gods to get what the priest wanted. It consisted in producing through one’s own strength a

concatenation of causes and effects corresponding to the laws of magic. The priest claimed 'power' over gods and made them powerless, by making himself powerful through magic¹⁴. He acquired the magic prayer to create rain, and used it in a sacrifice. Earlier gods had to give rains in mercy. Now the priest began pouring it himself by the magic power of his sacrificial act¹⁵.

The vedic rites depict complete patterns of diverse kinds of magic going back to remote antiquity. Magic was not something that was objectionable and superstitious, but as effective as the sacrifices and whoever could use magic, actually made use of it. What is important for us to note is that use of magic too made Brahmins powerful in the society. Magic too was a means to control people and affairs of the society.

3. The Conception of Hierarchy in the Vedas

Another dimension of Vedic thought is the conception of Hierarchy of reality, a conception that has pervaded presently every aspect of Hindu society. In its inchoate form the conception was applied to gods in an attempt to grade them as per their power, greatness and glory. The so called 'henotheism' is an intermediary stage in the vedic man's attempt to grade the gods.

The habit of grading divine realities in a pyramidal structure of hierarchy was applied gradually to human realities. We see very often in the Upanishads the custom of enumeration of psychic principles as per their superiority:

Higher than the senses are the objects of senses.
Higher than the objects of sense is the mind
And higher than the mind is the intellect
Higher than the intellect is the Great Self (atman)¹⁶

The thinking gave rise to conceive man too hierarchically and the application of it at the sociological level resulted in the origin of caste system. The rise of Brahmin class as the most powerful among all people made the procedure simple and came to be grounded on a firm tradition. The Brahmins gave a theological basis to the class or caste system so that it becomes a 'religious' belief and surpasses all human queries. Thus we have the revealed text in Puruṣa Sūktā X.90. verse 11 and 12 which reads:

When they divided up the man
His mouth became the Brōhmin, his arms
Became the warrior – prince, his legs
The common man who plies his trade.
The lowly serf was born from his feet.

Thus hierarchy of society is theologically established with Brahmin at the top of the ladder and made the supremacy of Brahmin caste unquestionable. Another important aspect of the dynamics of power is that it invariably yields to the phenomenon of inequality. What differentiates the powerful from the powerless is the inequality that exists between them. The foundation of hierarchy itself is the concept of inequality of power, manifested in a historical context by holding some office that gives status and authority or by acquisition of wealth and temporal assets. Thus greater the status and higher a person climbs in the society, greater will be the inequality between him and the others, and greater will be his capacity to yield power.

The more one becomes powerful, greater will be his attempt to stabilize it through laws, customs and conventions and religious beliefs. That is what we see in the historical growth of Hinduism in India.

4. Conception of Power in the Laws of Manu.

The tradition of supremacy of the priest is transferred later on from *shruti* to *smṛti*. In the Manava-dharma-shastra¹⁷ we have several instances where the supremacy of Brōhmins upheld and their authority is divinised; they have been presented almost as demigods, supra-normal humans and all powerful.

The very birth of the Brahmana is an eternal incarnation of the sacred law; for he is born to (fulfill) the sacred law, and becomes one with Brahman (DS 1.98)

As the Brahmana sprang from (Brahman's) mouth, as he was the first – born, and as he possesses the Veda, he is to be rightly the Lord of this whole creation. (DS. 1.93)

But in order to protect the universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms , thighs and feet. (DS. 1.87)

To Brahmana - teaching and study of Vedas, sacrifice
Kshatriyas: to protect people, bestow gifts, offer sacrifices, and study Vedas (DS. 1.88)

Vaishyas to attend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifice, to study Vedas to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land (DS. 1.90).

One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Shudra, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes. (DS. 1.91)

The sacrificial string of a Brahman shall be made of cotton (shall be twisted to the right (and consists) of three threads, that of a Kshatriya of hempen threads, (and) that of a Vaishya of woolen threads. (DS. 2.44)

Know that a Brahmana of ten years (of age) and Kshatriya of a hundred years stand to each other in the relation of father and son; but between those two the Brahmana is the father (DS. 2.135).

Even Soteriology too is determined as per caste, namely, a belief was formed that only a Brahmin will be saved:

Having studied the Vedas, in accordance with the rule, having begat sons according to the sacred age, and having offered

sacrifices according to his ability , he may direct his mind (to the attainment of) final liberation (DS. 6.36).

A twice born man who seeks final liberation, without having studied the Vedas, without having begotten sons, and without having offered sacrifices sinks downwards.(DS. 6,37)

On the other hand the *shudras* are considered not even worthy of practicing any virtues (DS. 4. 79).

5. Power and Oppression

As we said the power can both be used for the welfare of ones neighbour as well as for his oppression. The history of Hinduism is a history of oppression of *shudras* by the Brahmins and other higher classes. They have been bestowed the right of oppression by religious law:

No accumulation of wealth must be made by a Shudra, even though he be able (to do it); for a Shudra who has acquired wealth, gives pain to Brahmanas. (DS. 10.129)

Thus in Hinduism the divinely ordained, sociologically sanctioned and legally permitted oppressive structure of caste system empowered the higher caste Brahmins with all the powers, religious as well as political, to perpetuate the unjust system without prick of conscience and with perfect moral justification.

6. The Conception of power in Arthayōstras:

The Brahmin lobby lasted through the centuries in India never permitting the Kshatriya to become an autonomous entity. Even the Artha-shastra by Kautilya (known also as Chanakya), which delineates the statecraft in India, was a document composed by a Brahmin.

One can hold the view that Kautilya gave supreme value to the state and the welfare of the people¹⁸. But he not only made King to follow the Dhrama-shastras but also made it obligatory to appoint a Purohita and consult him daily¹⁹ and to pay the highest salary.

Thus even the greatest of Hindu emperors were guided, and controlled by the Brahmins. It shows that the Ruler in India never had total autonomy of power which fact may be a reason why India could

not resist the invasions by the Muslims at the beginning of second millennium and that of Europeans during the latter part of it.

7. Resurgence of Power Consciousness in Hinduism.

The twentieth century saw the awakening of new power consciousness among the learned Brahmins. This was an offshoot of modern nationalism emerged in the Western Europe in the second half of eighteenth century realized in India at the basic level in the political and administrative unification, and also in socio- religious reform movements. The Brahmanic nationalism with religious overtones represents a reaction to the Romantists' interpretation of oriental thought in the 18th and 19th centuries by the western scholars²⁰:

“ In the romanticist view , India was an object of fascination, a locus of spirituality, of imagination and mysticism as displayed in ancient Indian philosophy. Most attractive was the spiritual holism which, according to the German idealists philosopher and linguist Schlegel was the defining characteristic of Indian culture²¹. Holism entailed collapsing the spiritual and material world into oneness, and eradicating the cleavage between the objective world and individual consciousness through incorporation into an all pervasive Spirit.

Hegel endorsed the view that India was essentially Hindu, understood as pure spirit, but spirit of the imaginative (soft, feminine) sort, thus of a lower logical order than the rational (masculine) spirit of the West. To Hegel this predominance of imagination precluded the emergence of reason, which explained the feeble socio-political structure of the Indian states. In the absence of reason, India could only produce dispersed communities and people, never a viable state²²

The visionaries of Religious Nationalism reacted to this view tooth and nail and proposed the ideal of Hindutva representing Brahmanic power consciousness symbolized in the male characteristics of rationality, physical strength and a strong nation founded on racial, cultural and geographical unity. The first visionary of this movement was Dayananda Saraswathi (1824-1883) who founded an organization in 1875 called Arya Samaj (Society of Aryans) in order to bring about social and religious reforms based on ancient Hindu scriptures, the

‘Vedas’, and gave a clarion call to all Hindus to go “back to the Vedas” which would give a position of supreme power again to Brahmins.

8. Hindutva ideology and the concentration of power:

Sarvakar, being inspired by the ideal of a unitary state from the writings of Giuseppe Mazzani²³ and Golwalkar, the great admirer of “the German Race-spirit, have both proposed the ideal of Hindutva whose principles can be elucidated as follows:

1. Hindutva aims at recapturing power to the Brahmins by replacing qualities of imagination which are feminine in character by those of reason, which are masculine in nature. Power denotes strength. The first priority of Hindutva should be to get invincible physical strength. The Hindus are to be so strong that no one in the whole world will be able to overawe and subdue them.²⁴
2. Hindutva aims at geographical unity, racial unity , religious unity , cultural unity and linguistic unity. In this world view the Muslims and Christians “deserve no privileges, far less any preferential treatment – not even citizen rights”²⁵ . The Hindus should feel that they are a “jōti, a race, bound together by the dearest ties of blood and therefore it must be so.”²⁶
3. The Hindus should organise themselves and for this purpose they founded an organization known as RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh : Association of National Volunteers) in 1925.²⁷ There are 34 well knit affiliated institutes under RSS to cater to different strata of people: teenagers, youth, University students, women, professionals (like advocates, scientists, professors, social workers, Farmers, Labourers, etc. etc.). Besides RSS, how there is the Vishwa Hindu Parishat with its militant affiliate Bajrang Dal which are radically communal and criminal in their orientation.

4. RSS aims at dissemination of Hindutva ideology and Hindu Nationalism through the use of media: print, audio and video.
5. The Political wing of RSS, the BJP has already acquired power at the centre which has thrown the principles of secularism to the winds and shown explicit bias towards Hindus and very particularly to the Brahmins in its governance.

9. Concluding Remarks:

1. The above narration brings to the fore one important point, namely, that the Brahmins always were at the top of the ladder of the hierarchy in Hinduism possessing greatest clout of power. Though they were politically at a low ebb during the second millennium when the Muslims and British ruled India, nevertheless due to a new self understanding on their part they are emerging as a group bent upon consolidating power in their hands.
2. Prior to Muslim Invasion for a period of nearly two millennia, the number of powerful kings who ruled Indian subcontinent is very low, compared to any other civilizations of the world for the same length of time. May be, the priestly class all the time dominating the rulers and controlling them, might have resulted in such state of affairs.
3. The present strategy to consolidate power by the Brahmins in general and Hindus in particular due to the new awareness of their identity is irrelevant and not suited to times, though fundamentalism and fanaticism are the offshoots of globalisation all over the world due to the new awareness of ethnic identities. It appears that they are trying to repeat or resuscitate the European power structures of the middle ages in India at present. All the societies all over the world are becoming multicultural with intercultural interactions being on the increase. The Hindutva ideal appears as an attempt to swim against the current.
4. What is actually wrong in the Hindutva ideal? Is it wrong to affirm and propagate one's own cultural and religious values? In so far the Hindutva stands to affirm and propagate Hindu religious values and cultural ideals no one can find fault with

them. But along with that they are negating even Indian citizenship to minorities. This is a clear instance of the violation of the human rights and unethical use of power that promotes injustice. It is also an instance of how injustice can make the use of power immoral.

5. The dialectic of the power is such that no human rights can be claimed and asserted without the power. In South Africa Apartheid existed for so many centuries because the exploited were powerless. For three millennia the Brahmins exploited the Dalits because the latter were powerless. The minorities in India will become the objects of exploitation by the majority, unless the minorities unite themselves and consolidate enough power to resist exploitation. The unethical principle, "Might is right" cannot be fought without power and equivalent might. It is already high time for the minorities to unite and make themselves powerful to assert their rights and resist exploitation.
6. India claims itself to be the largest democracy of the world. It has withstood all the crises and the ballots have always manifested as more powerful than the bullets. We need to reassert the democratic principles and traditions. Without sound ethical principles no democracy can survive anywhere. We need ethical principles that respect the rights of the 'other' and permit him to live and let live in freedom and peace.
7. Herewith, we can propose a hermeneutic of power for its right and just use, called an analogical hermeneutics. It can be delineated by highlighting the four dimensions of the right use of power²⁸: 1. My self-consciousness of the power that I possess and the rights that I have. 2. My consciousness and interpretation of the power possessed by the 'other' and his rights. 3. Other's self-consciousness of the power possessed by him and the rights that he has. 4. Other's interpretation and consciousness of my possession of power and my rights.

All these four are to be set in constant dialogue that sincerely seeks not only to be understood by the other but also attempts to understand the other. A mutual understanding can break the barriers of misunderstanding and conflicts. Human beings, being what they are, conflicts at personal, cultural and

political level are only to be expected. But reason should be made to prevail in order to commence a critical discussion of human relationships at all levels by means of dialogue. “Dialogue has its life in the many contradictions which permeate human relationships and therefore implies the recognition of both our differences and our common ground.”²⁹

9. Still another conceptual alternative to the resolution of the problem of the asymmetry of power is to undertake what Betancourt³⁰ calls the deculturalisation of culture understood as deconstruction of the definition of culture itself. One cannot approach a multicultural and multireligious situation from the stereotype definition of culture which tends to fix the patterns of a culture, often manipulated by the dominant, hegemonist social group. This way of defining culture again tends to consecrate certain traditions as “one’s own” while excluding the others as “inauthentic’. In other words deculturalisation means liberating a culture of its dominating “image” calling attention to the asymmetry that it reflects. It also takes steps to overcome the tendency to make culture the space where certain traditions are worshipped and while others are hated. No more there can be one definition of culture which is applied to every people and every epoch.

Deculturalisation works with the hypothesis that it is not necessary to search for interaction as the interchange between “culture blocks,” separated by the diversity of their fixed traditions. On the contrary it calls for concrete dialogue between individuals, groups and sectors, institutions and so forth that are recognized as live “representatives” of their respective cultures and religions. These can transmit their cultural differences in all their ambivalence and historicity. “Understood this way, the interaction between cultures could be the best method to understand and experience cultural differences as variable qualities and not as static properties.”³¹

10. Finally, some questions should disturb us: How is it that well motivated Hindus can so easily be manipulated into acting violently, hurting people with unethical deeds, which have been condemned by it as evil?³² Is this not a method of amassing power in an immoral way, through *adharma*?

We can surmise that it is possible to revert by forming a counter movement to enlighten true Hindus and unite them against the misuse of their own religion, to show to them that Hinduism cannot be authentic if it becomes intolerant, to prove to them that a strong nation can be built only by uniting all people of all cultures, religions and languages and a strong India should be multicultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual. This is a Herculean task, but it has to be undertaken in order to keep the country united in inter-religious and intercultural harmony. Can we the philosophers become the effective agents of **this** counter force that will unite all men of good will in India?

Notes

¹ H.Cox, "Power", *Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, p. 265.

² R. Guardini, *Power and Responsibility*, (Chicago: 1961), p. 2.

³ P. Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice*, New York, 1960, p. 47

⁴ Thomas McMahon, "The Moral Aspects of Power," *Concilium*, 1973, pp. 51-65 ⁵ Rgveda Samhita, tr., by Satya Prakash Saraswati and Satyakam Vidyalankar, 13 Vols., 1977-86.; The Hymns of the Rgveda, tr., by R. T. H. Griffith, ed., by J. L. Shastri, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna, Madras, 1973, (R. 1986).

⁶ Cf. Hermann Oldenburg, *The Religion of the Veda*, trans. Shridhar B.Shrotri. Delhi. 1988. (first print : Dharmastadt 1894).

⁷ RV XIV 6.8.

⁸ Rtvij priest fulfilled in any particular sacrifice a definite priestly role prescribed for every sacrifice. Purohita did not play any actual role in the Sacrifices. He was just a supervisor. Cf. Oldenbeg, 209

⁹ Aitereya Brahmana VIII 24; Satapatha Br. IV 1,4, 5,6.

¹⁰ Aitereya Brahmana VIII. 27.

¹¹ Kautilya *yōstra*, I. 5.

¹² We also see that when gods do badly in their battle against the demons they turn to purohita . God Brhaspati says: "Find out for us a sacrificial act, by which we can get victory over the demons" (Oldenberg, 211).

¹³ Belvalkar and Ranade . 13

- ¹⁴ The priest captivated the gods through a sort of a magic coercion and subjugated him to the sacrifice. It is said: RV VIII 2, 6 “ While other men than we with kine chase him as groups (of hunters) chase with wild animals, inveigle him with their milchkin” According to Geldner vedic sacrifices is like a ensnaring net in which the priest catches the gods. Cf. *matapatha Br. II.2.2.6.*

¹⁵ RV. X.98

¹⁶ KaŸha Up. 3.10 f; Cf. also Chand. Up. 1.6-15; *µvet. Up. 3. 7-10; 6. 5-6.*

¹⁷ G.Buehler (Trans), *The Law of Manu, The Sacred Books of the East, Ed. By Max Mueller*, Vol. XXV, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi: 1970. Abbr. DS.

¹⁸ Arthashastra I.7. 6-7. (Abbr. AS)

¹⁹ AS I.19.31-32. Cf. Augustine Thottakkara, “Religion and Politics in Ancient India: Kautilya’s Arthashastra: Its Relevance Today” in *Religion and Politics in Asia Today, Bangalore : 2001, 17- 42.*

²⁰ Cf. David Ludden, “Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge” in *Orientalism and the Post colonial Predicament*, ed. By Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, Philadelphia: 1993, 250 – 78; Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, Oxford: 1990, 90 –96.

²¹ Sheldon Pollock, “Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power beyond the Raj”, *Orientalism and Post Colonial Predicament*, p. 76- 133.

²² Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*, Oxford: 1999, 67 f. ; Cf. also J.W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Trans. By J. Sibree. New York: 1956, 160 f.

²³ Mazzani had tremendous influence on Indian political leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, His works have been translated into several Indian languages. Cf. E. Fasana, “From Hindutva to Hindu Rashtra: The Social and Political Thought of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, The 3rd Modern Conference of Modern South Asian Studies, Toulouse: 1994.

²⁴ Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Bangalore : 1966, 65

²⁵ Golwalkar, *We, our Nationhood Defined*, Nagpur: 1947, 52 – 56.

²⁶ *Ibid* , 89.

²⁷ Founded by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925. Cf. Anderson W.K. and S.D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron, The Rashtriya Swayam sevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, New Delhi: 1987; Thomas Blom Hansen, “RSS and the Popularization of Hindutva.” *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28(16 October 1993), 2270-72; Tapan, Basu and others. *Khaki Shorts Saffron Flags*, Hyderabad: 1993; Richard D. Lambert, *Hindu Communal Groups In Indian Politics*, in Richard L. Park and Irene Tinker, (eds), *Leadership and Political Institutions in India*, Princeton: 1959.

²⁸ Ram Adhar Mall, *Intercultural Philosophy*, New York, Oxford, 2002. pp. 3, 13-24.

²⁹ Tobias J.G. Louw, “Democracy in an Ethical Community” *Philosophy and Democracy in Intercultural Perspective*, Ed. By Heinz Kimmerle and Franz M. Wimmer, Amsterdam, 1997. p. 212.

³⁰ Raul Fonet-Betancourt, "Philosophy as Intercultural", *Vijnanadipti*, Vol.4 No.2, (2002), pp. 137-151.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

³² Cf. Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in North India*, New Delhi: 1990; K. N. Panikkar, *Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture*, Delhi: 1991; Lise McKean, *Divine Enterprises. Gurus and the Hindu Nationalist Movement*, Chicago: 1996.

Reference: "The Concept of Power in Hinduism". *Concordia, International Journal of Philosophy*. (71) 2017; 55- 68

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

UNIVERSITY: A DOMAIN OF SPIRITUALITY?

Part one : Global context

1. Formation as growth of human consciousness

‘Growth and Development’ being essential components of evolutionary process, we perceive that every being flourishes and grows and blooms under suitable conditions unfolding its potentialities into new horizons of possibilities. This is witnessed in the case of human beings in a unique way, as they unfold themselves not only at the level of physical and empirical spheres but also in the realm of human consciousness. No much explication is needed to show the complicity of the phenomenon of human consciousness¹, which is constituted of noetic² or scientific, aesthetic, ethical and spiritual dimensions. The primary function of all education or formation is the holistic growth of human personality which means actually the development of every aspect of human consciousness. Noetic consciousness grows when a child is formed academically, aesthetic consciousness develops when a person is trained to cultivate sensitivity to beauty and harmony, ethical consciousness is evolved when a human person learns to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong. Similarly spiritual consciousness is articulated when one experiences the sense of holy, divine and sacred. If any aspect of consciousness is not trained or not formed, it remains dormant, thus we have illiterate, unethical, vulgar, and secular personalities, who have failed or ignored the opportunities to evolve their consciousness holistically or deliberately formed their consciousness negatively and dehumanised themselves. The fundamental and primary task of all educational systems is to create structures to promote a holistic growth of consciousness³.

To the extent the educational structures fail to do this, they become one sided and partial, we need to revamp them and restructure them. We cannot therefore assume or presume that education and spirituality are incompatible, contrary to one another; on the other hand they form the integral dimensions of human consciousness and there could generally be concord and harmony between the two. Hence the scientific quest and the spiritual quest have been the two great quests of humanity, the former quest is to discover the order in the external world of space, time, energy and matter; the latter quest is to discover order in our

consciousness. But both are complementary and not contrary. Every university should promote both these quests unambiguously, and if they do, they will not be far from becoming the domains of spirituality; if not, they will be failing in their very goal and mission.

2. Are our universities the domains of spirituality or the centres of dehumanisation?

Having said this, a short reflection on the role of universities in the process of the humanisation of the world is in place. Are universities the domains of spirituality or centres of dehumanisation? What is the state of affairs of the universities and the temples of learning all over the world? The universities compete with one another with all energies to propagate the knowledge of sciences. Each science is growing in leaps and bounds and the students strive to attain epistemological excellence in the particular field of their pursuit. But why there is so much threat to human life all over the world? Why ‘terror attacks’ all over the world? Why innocent people are targeted? Why a tiny nation like North Korea threatening the entire world of exploding hydrogen bomb and vociferously declaring to annihilate the Island of Guam? Where did the country obtain the “know-how” of production of a hydrogen bomb? Why powerful nations never cease to manufacture and market deadly weapons of destructions to tiny nations and war mongers like ISIS⁴? What is going wrong in this world?

Where is the source of all knowledge of production of these fatal war instruments. The universities disseminate all knowledge, it is in the university laboratories the destructive epistemologies, scientific know-how, procedures of production of the weapons of genocide are meticulously taught and propagated. It is in the lecture halls of universities the theories and methodologies of hegemonies and power acquisition are learnt assiduously by the students. Universities have become Institutions that represent more powerfully the doctrines of dehumanisation than spirituality and personality development.

3. Make the university a domain of spirituality.

How can we make universities the domains of spirituality? The question certainly demands a distinct formulation. The universities all over the globe are relentlessly pursuing epistemologies of all hues with single minded devotion. How can we basically characterise these epistemologies? What is their orientation and what they are striving after? The purpose of all epistemologies can be characterised in two ways: first, the knowledge pursued has a definite utilitarian

purpose; second, the knowledge is deliberately and consciously attained to enhance power so that the adage, “knowledge is power “ is perfectly realised.

Coming to utilitarian dimension, the knowledge here has a concrete symbol, namely the “market”⁵, knowledge results in productivity and productivity results in profit; it is the market that determines the profit and income. When profit is realised the goal is reached, fiscal potential is magnified and one circle of the goal of university education is completed. The second circle is that of power, which can wear different masks: political, professional, military, terror and war. Knowledge should enhance the potential for hegemonic behaviour patterns, so that one person can consider more powerful than the other, one nation can declare itself more powerful than another. The acquisition of power firstly, enhances self esteem, pride and status before the world; secondly, it strengthens the potential to control the ‘other’. Having achieved the submission of all the subordinates and having brought them under control, the other circle of knowledge also becomes complete.

Now to make universities the domains of spirituality, the previous circles, if not eliminated, at least to be made concentric with other circles which promote complementary humanistic epistemologies. The first circle of utilitarian and hedonistic goal, should be surrounded by the circle of humanitarian knowledge. ‘welfare of all beings’ is the basic teaching of Buddha. “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13: 34) is the new commandment of Jesus Christ. The integration of both conceptions means that the utilitarian goal is to be complemented with the goals of a just and humanitarian society, where egalitarianism is consciously pursued by the rulers. Similarly the circle of power and hegemony is to be complemented with the circle of spiritual ideals of universal brother/sisterhood, respect for human rights, protection for the marginalised and a sincere striving for self realisation and God realisation. How this can be done? What is the methodology to attain a holistic integration of these complementary ideals in our educational system. We suggest here two concrete proposals.

(i) Recognise and enhance the complementarity between noetic and spiritual consciousness.

The university curriculum, whatever be its field of specialization and research orientation, should take into account the basic structure of human personality and human consciousness. The undergraduate and graduate programmes which are generally objective, conceptual and rational in their content, uphold the noetic

and perceptual dimension of human consciousness; they should also in principle disseminate the intuitive knowledge of the self, so that the students enhance and deepen their own self understanding and self awareness. The more a person deepens his self-understanding the more he realises his own **contingency** and existential finitude which in turn impel him to take a leap into the transcendence. The realisation of contingency brings to the fore the incompleteness of all scientific and rational knowledge, which can beckon him again to revert to transcendence. This we call is the movement towards spiritual consciousness, which can only be complementary to noetic consciousness. Both noetic and spiritual dimensions of the consciousness need to go hand in hand with all our university engagements, academic and/or otherwise.

(ii) The education towards cosmotheandric intuition.

A university can become a domain of spirituality, if it relentlessly trains its inmates in a gradual manner the process of appropriation of cosmotheandric intuition⁶. Even though human beings exist in a world where sky is above, earth is below and people all around, the cosmotheandric perspective is unfortunately not pre-given and hence not immediately evident to the human consciousness but it has to be appropriated only through arduous reflection and a relentless process of interiorization. From kindergarten stage of education the children are to be trained not only to explicate their analytic, rational and conceptual potentialities but also to enhance their capacity to intuit reality habitually. This demands a training in contemplative gaze at the reality in silence and solitude. The value of silence and introspection should become an integral part of our educational process. To look at a blooming rose with a contemplative gaze and wonder is to perceive the totality of reality in all its dimensions – cosmic, mystic and personal/human - and this is nothing else but an instance of cosmotheandric intuition because the depth of awareness of reality in its totality is an awareness in cosmotheandric intuition. The analytic thinking of dividing reality as human, divine and cosmic should be transcended in the contemplative gaze in the depth of silence and introspection. A university can be converted into a domain of spirituality if these aspects of human consciousness are highlighted and deepened.

Part two: Indian context

1. Vitiating climate in the universities.

The integration of spiritual values in the university campuses in India and to transform them into domains of spirituality can only be an arduous uphill task if we analyse the current socio-political climate of India in general and that of the universities in particular. The fanatic, fascistic, and right-wing movements and organisations are becoming so strong since the present dispensation took over the rule of the nation in 1914, it appears that the urgent need of the nation is a secular dose of ideology rather than a religio-spiritual discourse and blueprint at the university level.⁷ Let us give some concrete examples to elucidate the point:

Example one : the case of a Dalit research student of Hyderabad Central University Rohit Vermula by name, who committed suicide on 17 January 2016 with following note:

“My birth is my fatal accident The value of a man was reduced to his immediate identity and nearest possibility. To a vote. To a number. To a thing. Never was a man treated as a mind.”

The ruling political party, called BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), has its student wing called ABVP (translated as ‘All India Student Wing’) which aggressively began propagating its Hindutva⁸ ideology in the universities. Rohit Vermula wrote a critical article against such ideology which was reported by ABVP to the party cadre, resulting in the suspension of his monthly allowance for research and hostel facilities. Unable to endure the discrimination he opted to commit suicide. The suicide note continues:

“May be I was wrong, all the while, in understanding world. In understanding love, pain, life, death. There was no urgency. But I always was rushing. Desperate to start a life. All the while, some people, for them, life itself is curse... Let my funeral be silent and smooth. Behave like I just appeared and gone. Do not shed tears for me. Know that I am happy dead than being alive. From shadows to the stars,”⁹

Example Two: The arrest of Kanhaiya Kumar, the President of Student Union at Jawaharlal National University (JNU), Delhi on 22 February 2016 on the charges of sedition became a national issue of confrontation between the ruling dispensation and the university student community. Just because he spoke during a cultural event against the capital punishment and the State’s autocracy he was declared as anti-national and accused as a traitor.

Both these incidents gave rise to riots, protests throughout India challenging the establishment and their narrow definition of nationalism. Slogans of freedom against fascism, casteism, communalism, feudalism and all sorts of inequalities echoed in the air. The funeral of Verma was far from silent, his death was interpreted as “institutional murder”. The movement developed into a full fledged student struggle against the ruling party and its affiliates. The values of secularism, socialism and egalitarianism were highlighted by the protesters. Finally, the education minister at the centre had to be divested of her portfolio and a truce is being worked out by the new incumbent.

But the agenda of Hindutva was nevertheless continued to be propagated by the Government. The new National Education Policy¹⁰ drafted by the drafting committee proposing obligatory study of Sanskrit and Vedic sciences as well the introduction of the ancient *Gurukula*¹¹ system of education, was adversely received by the academicians of the nation. When Indian society is made up of four predominant cultural traditions: Aryan, Dravidian, Tribal and Indigenous (*Ādivasis*)¹², highlighting only one (*Āryan*) culture excluding all others shall never be tolerated. The NEP draft is rejected as it attempts to impose uni-culture and uni-dimensional history and tradition; a new commission has been announced to draft another text.

This being the current academic climate in the country, what sort of spirituality can we propose which can create a more human, more democratic and more pluralistic society in India. In the previous section we considered the problem of overemphasis on noetic aspect of knowledge and the neglect of the spiritual and the sacred dimension of human existence. In India the hegemonic and dehumanising forces are wearing religious masks in order to hold on to power and might, creating an intolerant atmosphere¹³ that arrogantly defies even basic human rights. Political and secular monsters spoken of in the previous section have taken demoniac form here, but we affirm that both are equally vicious and hence the temples of formation and education should restructure themselves so that human values are highlighted, esteemed, taught and transmitted assiduously.

May be we need to rethink and reformulate the very concept of spirituality, first of all by dissociating it from the established hegemonic religious traditions in India. One can argue that both religious and spiritual values are conceptually as well as traditionally interlinked and appear inseparable as both look so

congruent that one remains incomplete without the other. It can also be argued that no spirituality can have autonomous conceptual existence, it exists always as a sort of 'parasite' clinging to a religion.

But if we go deeper we can make a clear distinction between religious traditions and spirituality, as Religion is intertwined invariably with cultural, structural and social, ingredients, but spirituality can transcend all socio-cultural and empirical nuances, can become in its purest form only an aspect of the Spirit, which is trans empirical and immaterial. Thus a person can be deeply spiritual even if he does not claim to belong to any religious tradition; he can even dissociate himself from all religious affiliations.

In this sense, we can propose a concept of spirituality suitable for Indian Universities, a spirituality suitable for Indian multi-cultural, pluralistic socio-political situation. Such spirituality should propagate a set of spiritual values which highlight human dignity, human personality and human perfection and happiness. We need to explicate, develop and propagate a "humanitarian Spirituality" that embraces and enhances the human personality and aims at creating a society grounded on the principles of fraternity, liberty and equality/equity. We propose a universalistic concept of spirituality propagated from some three millennia in Indian soil, and finally formalised into few succinct "formulae or aphorisms (*sutras*)" by Patanjali, one of its fifth century protagonist¹⁴. According to this tradition, known as Samkhya- Yoga tradition", all formation, all education is teleological, oriented towards "enlightenment", which can be characterised by a state of illumination, a perfect state of self realisation, in which the self experiences a union and a stable unity with the Transcendence. This union is called Yoga¹⁵, which presupposes a spirituality which need not be associated with any established religious tradition.

Though Buddha revolted against Vedic Religion and in its inchoate form established a humanitarian, anthropocentric spirituality, but down the ages it has become a well structured religion. Yoga spirituality on the other hand is independent of all religious traditions, integrates both the noetic and spiritual dimensions of consciousness and hence one can adhere to Yoga spirituality with or without commitment to a particular religious or faith tradition. It has an added advantage of being already accepted among all cultural sectors of Indian society as it has been already propagated, at least in its external, accidental features in our educational institutions. The philosophical and moral teachings of Yoga¹⁶

can filter through all academic and intellectual engagements pursued in our universities making all of them true domains of spirituality.

The salient features of Yoga Spirituality¹⁷ could be delineated as they can create an authentic humanitarian spirituality suitable for Indian society and universities. Yoga spirituality is founded on firm philosophical anthropology as it lays emphasis on the developments of both corporal and intellectual perfections equally; it integrates both rational and intuitive faculties of mind; while its epistemology is founded on rational faculties, its ethics is grounded in the intuitive training of the mind (*citta*); the rational analysis of empirical realities is complemented with intuitive experience of the Transcendence; it defines the existential reality of human person as a bondage replete with sufferings, but never divides the society on the principles of caste, status, culture and community affiliations; it tacitly upholds the principles of fraternity, liberty and equality, promotes ethical principles of non-violence (*ahimsā*), human rights and human dignity; it speaks of no genealogical affiliations and social designations and titles, nor discriminates one person from the other on the basis of caste, material welfare, status and/or human achievements. It rightly disseminates the existential condition of contingency, the accidental historico-spatial exigencies of life, which beckon a righteous human being to intuit the spiritual and the transcendent and tread the path of self-realisation and spiritual perfection.

What needs to be done at the national level is only to integrate the great philosophy into academic curriculum at all stages of educational training from kindergarten to university studies. It is necessary to create and propagate social and ethical values commensurate with the global technologies of digital world we are living in.

It is to be deeply regretted that when India can claim to be in possession of so noble, so ancient and so fabulous a spiritual tradition, some of our leaders and self proclaimed prophets are pursuing the path of division, violence and fanaticism by inflaming the passions of *hoi polloi* through unprincipled eloquence based on caste and creed. If one can desist from divisive cultural and religious ideologies and single-mindedly strive after creating a society founded on the principles of humanitarian spirituality, India can become a strong and united nation and its universities authentic centres of spirituality.

Notes

¹ John B. Chettimattam, *Consciousness and Reality*, Bangalore : 1967; pp.97 – 105.

² Cf. “The *noema* is nothing but generalisation of the concept of sense (Sinn) to cover all acts”. Edmund Husserl, *Ideen III § 16*), The Hague 1952; Cf. *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and phenomenological philosophy*, The Hague, 1982 ; Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Edmund Husserl’s Phenomenological Psychology, Duquesne Studies*, Pittsburgh, 1967, pages 190 – 208; Seppo Sajama and Matti Kamppinen, *A Historical Introduction to Phenomenology*, London/New York, p. 79 – 88.

³ Cf. S. N.Sharma, *Philosophical and Sociological Foundations of Education*, New Delhi: 1995; V.R. Taneja, *Educational Thought and Practice*, New Delhi: 1990, Eighth edition : 2001; Mathias T.M. , *Educational Perspectives in Modern Age*, Delhi. 1987.

⁴ “ISIS” is the acronym for “Islamic Nations of Iraq and Syria” – a radical, violent movement that organised terrorist attacks in major international cities like Paris, London etc. Cf. Jacob Poushter, “In nations with significant Muslim Population, much disdain for ISIS”, *Facttank*, November 17, 2015.

⁵ Cf. B.N. Banerjee, *Multinational Scramble for New Markets*, New Delhi: 1996.

⁶ “The cosmotheandric intuition expresses the all embracing indissoluble union, that constitutes all of Reality: the triple dimension of reality as a whole: cosmic-divine-human. The cosmotheandric intuition is the undivided awareness of the totality.” Panikkar, *The Trinitiy and the Religious Experience of Man*, London and New York: 1975; p. 74 f; “The cosmotheandric intuition is the totally integrated vision of the seamless fabric of the entire reality... the undivided consciousness of the totality” Panikkar, Raimon. *The Cosmotheandric Experience*. Delhi. 1998.

⁷ In India there are 750 Universities, 35 000 colleges and 30 million students. They can certainly play tremendous role in changing the very fabric of the society.

⁸ V.D. Savarkar is the main proponent of Hindutva ideology that asserts cultural nationalism which is communal and aggressively anti-Muslim and anti-Christian. To be a Hindu and a citizen of India one should follow one of the religious traditions that originated in India. V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva*, 1969; M.G. Chitkara, *Hindutva*, New Delhi: 1997; Thomas Bloom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*, Oxford: 1999

⁹ Ajoy Ashirwad Mahaprashata, “A Year of Jai Bheem and Laal Salaam: Student Resistance in 2016”, in <https://thewire.in/90571/student-resistance-universities-jnu-hcu/>

¹⁰ The first National Educational Policy (NEP) was formulated when Indira Gandhi was prime minister in 1968, which laid emphasis on national integration, and cultural and economic development. The second NEP was formulated in 1986 when Rajiv Gandhi was prime minister, which highlighted the education of women, inmates of schedule tribes and schedule caste. The third attempt to renew NEP is being made by the incumbent government – a draft has been prepared and circulated which was almost rejected by the society and hence a new commission has been formed. Cf. <http://mhrd.gov.in/nep-new>

¹¹ The Gurukula (*guru* means teacher, *kula* means family, house) During Vedic times after the Sacrament of Initiation the children (aged between 8-12 years) of higher castes went to the Gurukula, existed generally outskirts, for 12 years of Vedic education. It was only for higher castes family members, who had to undergo Vedic Education before they married. They lived with the family of the teacher and served him. The methodology followed was

that of listening, memorising and chanting. The training included the inculcation of social, moral and spiritual values as well as contemplation. P.L. Rawat, *History of Indian Education*, Agra: 1956, Eighth Edition 1981, Reprint 1989, pages 3- 35.

¹² It is surmised that the creators of Indus Valley Culture (2500 B.C.) were Dravidians who were conquered by the Aryans who migrated from Central Asia (present Iran) and established Aryan population whole of North India. The Dravidians settled down in the South. The Tribals mostly lived in forests areas and the Adivasis were the low castes people who always served the higher castes. All these cultural segments make India multicultural and pluralistic society. Cf. Swaminatha R. Aiyar, *Dravidian Theories*, Delhi: 1987; Anil Kumar Singh, Editor, *Tribes and Tribals*, 3 vols. New Delhi: 1996.

¹³ “The Hindutva agenda is being burnished into textbooks”, (Cf. “Saffron Agenda overpowers edu”, *Deccan Herald*, December 15, 2017, p. 10) . Besides, during this year (2017) itself the nation has witnessed the public lynching and killing of at least 22 people on the suspicion that they were transporting cows to the slaughter house by the so called Cow Vigilantes. The appointment of Vijay Bhatkar , an ideologue of Hindutva movement, as the Vice Chancellor of Nalanda International University is seen as a step to propagate the Hindutva Agenda internationally.

¹⁴ Woods, James H, *The Yoga System of Patanjali*, *Harvard Oriental Series* Vol 17, ed by Charles, R. Layman, Delhi: 1914 and 1977; Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Unsterblichkeit und Freiheit*, Trans by. Inge Koec, . Frankfurt: 1985; Dasgupta Surendranath, *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion*. London: 1924, Delhi: 1978; Jayaswal, Dowsett *Yoga and Education*, *Integral Education Series* Vol.6. ed. By Norman C Dowsett, Pondicherry: 1976.

¹⁵ The term ‘yuga’ is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘yuj-‘ which means to harness, to join and used generally for harnessing of the yoke to animals to discipline and control them. Later on the word came to mean ‘control’, the control of mind and mental modifications. It is also used in the sense of ‘union’ within the yoga liberation theology, and hence can mean union between the empirical soul (*buddhi*) and the universal consciousness (*purusha*), which is transcendental.. Vincent Gabriel Furtado, *Classical Samkhya Ethics*, *Religionswissenschaftliche Studien*, 21, Wuerzburg: 1992, pp 173 - 186; Georg Feuerstein, *Yoga: The Technology of Ecstasy*. Los Angeles“ 1089; V.M. Bhat, *The Yoga Powers and God Realisation*, Bombay: 1964.

¹⁶ Yoga depends for its philosophical conceptions on *Samkhya*, cf. Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, Ed.s *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, s Vol IV General Editor: Karl Potter, Delhi 1987; Sastri, Suryanarayana S.S. *Sankhyakarika of Ishvarakrishna*, Madras, 1973; Karel Werner, *Yoga and Indian Philosophy*, Delhi: 1977; Garbe Richard, *Die Samkhya Philosophie*, Leipzig: 1984; Erich Frauwallner, *Geschichte der indischen Philosophie*, 2 vols. Salzburg: 1953, Trans. By V.M. Bedekar, Delhi: 1984.

¹⁷ Karel Werner, *The Yogi and the Mystic*, London: 1989; Thomas Matus, *Yoga and Jesus Prayer Tradition*, Bangalore: 1992; J.M. Dechanet, *Yoga and God*, London:1974; Paulos Mar Gregorios, *Enlightenment: East and West*, New Delhi: 1989.

Ref: *Concordia, International Journal of Philosophy*, Vol 71 (2017); 55 – 68.

Vincent Gabriel Furtado

“*Karuṇā*”: Compassion in Buddhist Tradition and the Comprehension of Asian Culture.

1. Introduction

The two human realities constituting opposite poles, namely, violence and non-violence, have shaped the history of human civilization and culture to a very great extent from the very beginning of the genesis of human species. These two ingredients of human encounters have caused either welfare or disaster, growth or nemesis of great human civilizations throughout the history of human kind. If non-violence promotes the welfare, peace and prosperity, its opposite, namely violence, brings down and gradually even destroys and annihilates human relationships and social harmony. There are communities which nurtured non-violence, toleration, and compassion and as a result their culture bloomed and the radiance of their goodness shone brightly giving rise to happiness, prosperity and cultural development. It goes without saying that the opposite reality of violence has resulted in hatred, wars and annihilation of cultures. This paper is an attempt to investigate how the Buddhist doctrine of compassion has given rise to a culture of non-violence in Asia which accounts for the growth and development of human and cultural ingredients of human correlations, political strategies, moral uprightness, spiritual depth and epistemological principles which resulted in constructive pacific philosophical streams in the Asian context.

That Asia is a continent of diversities with multifarious languages, cultures, religions and nationalities is an undeniable fact. If there is anything that unites Asia or at least the major nationalities and cultures of Asia, it could certainly be the Buddhist movement, which has a pan-Asian character¹. Buddhism, again is a diverse cumulative tradition which can be labelled as a religion, a philosophy, a civilization, or a culture. Historically Siddhartha Gautama (ca. 583 -463 BCE) is the founder of the movement. He is called “Buddha”², means ‘one who has awakened’, which is a honorific title in the tradition and given to an individual who is enlightened. As a teacher, he “set in motion the wheel of *dharma*” and organised the movement during 45 years of his itinerary, building up a community of monks, nuns, laypeople.

1.1. Three branches, three pillars and three jewels:

The historical development of Buddhism is so complex that it is not easy to demarcate the different stages of it. Generally in India the Buddhism found in the earliest Pāli scriptures is called “early” Buddhism (or *Hinayāna*³ tradition), which is continued even today by the schools belonging to this tradition, most important among them being *Theravāda* (School of the Elders). It is known to be conservative in its perspective and centred on monastic tradition. The suffix “-yāna” in Buddhism means a ‘vehicle or ship’, as it considers life as a journey in the ocean of pain and misery, and liberation is a process of reaching the other shore of peace. Buddhism is the vehicle or ship that ferries the believers to the other shore of enlightenment.

A new branch sprung up around the first century common era due to the demand of the lay people devoted to Buddha, who called themselves as Mahāyāna Buddhists. Mahāyāna means great/big vehicle/ship which can carry greater number of people - than Hinayana, the small vehicle - to the other shore⁴. During the 7th century common era Buddhism spread into Tibet and there came up the third main branch called *Vajrayāna*. *Vajra* means diamond which is sturdy, hence cannot be easily destroyed. *Vajra-yānists* declare that they are in an “indestructible vehicle”. It is imperishable because it is perfect, and they vouch for a perfect, indestructible *dharma* (righteousness)⁵.

The sum total of all teachings of Buddhism are called *dharma* and these are divided into three parts and called three pillars of Buddhism or trilogy of monastic doctrines which consist in the practice of wisdom (*prajna*), morality (*sheela*) and meditation (*samadhi* or *dhyana*).⁶ “Through wisdom one acquires a full vision of *dharma*, and through meditation one nurtures *dharma* within oneself⁷” The three jewels (*tri-ratna*) again has *dharma* as its constituent, but it means here the universal truth appropriated by Buddha consequent to his enlightenment. The other two jewels are Buddha and the Community (*Sangha*): Buddha is the teacher, the revealer and the embodiment of *dharma* and Community (*Sangha*) is the group of followers of Buddha who make *dharma* as their supreme norm of life⁸.

1.2. The conception of *karunā*: compassion in Buddhism

The term *karunā*⁹, rendered into English as compassion can also be translated as ‘love’, ‘empathy’ and ‘mercy’. A vast majority of treatises make mention of the term in various passages. But its usage is more frequent in

Mahāyāna¹⁰. Without hesitation one can assert that it is basic for the entire Buddhist movement. In this paper an attempt is made to elucidate the concept in the Buddhist tradition and see how it has influenced the different cultures of Asia as Buddhism has a pan-Asian character. In the first part of the paper you see the explanation of the concept in the early Buddhism with a short reference to the philosophic literature of early Scripture¹¹ called *Abhi-dharma* (pure or supreme dharma; Pali *Abhi-dhamma*), then in the second part a succinct reference to the concept in Mahayana, specially how Bodhisattva, the saintly figure of Mahāyāna, is said to appropriate the virtue of compassion to tread the path of enlightenment. In the third part an elaboration is made, how the concept influenced various cultures in Asia and how they can be comprehended.

2. Part One: Understanding of compassion in Early Buddhism

The conception of compassion in Buddhism is a complex topic, as it is not merely a virtue forming a part of its ethics, nor is it only an emotion making it the integral part of its psychology, nor is it merely an attitude of the mind to be cultivated and ingrained into the personality through meditation. It encompasses whole of Buddhist altruistic spirituality as it is cultivated through constant meditation, made an integral part of its teachings on wisdom (*prajna*) besides giving a noble orientation to its ethics.

Whether a monk or a lay person, meditation is an integral life- style of a follower of Buddha. How does he ought to cultivate for example the virtue of compassion? He should preferably choose a place like hill-top, sit with a steady posture (*āsana*) and observe his surrounding intensely and pass on the vibrations of compassion to all creatures within his vicinity: the people working in the fields below, the animals grazing around, the birds flying high on the sky and to all the trees and plants surrounding his vista. So we have the statement in the Scripture: “One should then sit cross-legged on a comfortable mat and generate a compassionate awareness of enlightenment, expressing the desire to liberate all living beings¹²”.

2.1. Compassion in the Abhi-dharma

We elucidate the concept of compassion as understood by the early disciples of Buddha. The main philosophical work we refer to is *Abhi-dharma or Abhi-dhamma* in Pali¹³.

Compassion is a human experience, which consists in being aware of or grasping of current facts that are just present and given to our consciousness. Here the present situation or the present context is important as experience depends on alertness to the present. The first book of Abhi-dhamma affirms: “When a

healthy conscious attitude , belonging to the world of sensuous relatedness has arisen....”¹⁴. Compassion is a conscious attitude. What is an attitude? Attitude is an end product of all factors which can influence and produce certain psychic operations (called “affects”). What is its function? It determines an action or creates a stimulus in a definite way. The factors which produce affects are called ‘*dharmas*’ which constitute the intrinsic nature of reality. The *dharmas* or factors are dependent upon manifold conditions, but have no fixed individuality of their own¹⁵.

The term ‘sensuous relatedness’ (*kāma*) can be termed as ‘perception’, which has two aspects : object and emotion¹⁶; emotion means passionate desire, and object means anything external to the subject or anything given in consciousness. The union of emotion and object is sensuous relatedness. If we apply this to the case of a monk who is in meditation to cultivate the state of compassion, it means that he sees a living creature in a state of frustration or suffering and consciously creates empathy towards it. What makes him to create empathy is the wholesome or healthy attitude (*kushala*). Hence *Abhi-dharma* insists on healthiness (*kushala* wholesomeness) of attitude . Wholesomeness is an achievement on the part of the disciple. He should train himself to create healthiness or sound perspectives towards the reality. *kushala* has the method of cutting off those factors which are called ‘unhealthy / unwholesome’. It also means knowledge that curtails, reduces, and eradicates that which is base. It also cuts the emotions both in their “actual manifestation and in their latent potentiality¹⁷”.

2.2. The context compassion in the Scriptures

In the early Buddhism the elucidation of compassion is found everywhere within the doctrine of “*brahma-vihāras*¹⁸”; the term *brahma* means here ‘divine or sublime’, and *vihara* means, ‘a mental state, an abode, consciousness, or even behaviour’ and the phrase is translated as ‘sublime state’ or ‘divine behaviour’. There are four¹⁹ *brahma-vihāras*: (i) *maithri* (Pali *mettā*) friendship or loving kindness, (ii) *Karuṇā*, compassion. (iii) *muditā* gladness/sympathetic joy and (iv) *upeksha*, equanimity or impartial outlook. These are sublime states or divine behaviours to be cultivated through regular meditation as they lead one to the state of enlightenment. They are also said to be boundless or measureless²⁰. We need to underline that these states are cultivated by Buddhists during meditation. Hence they are mental states or psychological attitudes. One should impregnate himself with the attitude of compassion in the course of constant and steady meditation so that he becomes a compassionate being.

The most important commentary on *Abhi-dhamma*, by Buddhaghosha, called *Visuddi-magga* (Path of Purification), elaborately explain the four sublime states and insists on a definite procedure, that all the four are pedagogically interrelated. The first one friendliness or loving kindness (*mettā*) has to be cultivated before one proceeds to compassion²¹. Because if one's being is vitiated by attitude of hostility, hatred and other negative qualities, he cannot practice compassion, in other words, the first one prepares for the second²².

“Since without love nothing is possible, it is essential that a person whose temperament is one of antipathy, hatred, malice and ill-will, first of all should learn to love²³.” The Friendship is possible where there is no ill will and good will prevails. It desires and wishes welfare of the other. Buddhism basically believes that good will always prevail over the evil. It looks at man optimistically and affirms that good is stronger than evil.

What is the pedagogy of meditation on *mettā*? The meditator should have a supporting object – in this case a person with whom he desires to be friendly. He can begin with his teacher, then a neutral person, and after that a hostile person. He should cultivate love as a way of warding off hatred and developing patience and feelings of affection.

How do you know that you have grown in loving kindness? That meditator becomes mature and equanimous with all. He overcomes emotional preferences for one or the other. He can treat everybody with equal friendship. Love becomes impartial and passionless, understood as an act of the will. It encourages benevolence, natural kindness and interest in the happiness and well-being of others. This is expressed in the well known Buddhist adage: “may all beings be happy²⁴”

2.3. Explanation of Compassion

Once a person has learnt to love every body with equanimity he will be fit to start meditations on compassion. It makes *metta* more active, more expressive and more viable²⁵.

“Compassion makes the heart of good people beat more quickly when they see the misery and plight of other fellow -beings, and so it attempts to dig out the roots of misery that it may be destroyed forever. In this way compassion is like a stream that turns to all who are afflicted and like rain pours relief on them. Compassion is therefore a steady current which carries all misery away with it. It is a feeling which enables to bear the misery of others and it manifests itself in such a way that no annoyance can befall people. Thus the basis on which compassion operates for the well-being of sentient beings is

an awareness of helplessness and desolateness of all those who are afflicted by misery²⁶.”

Compassion is thus love for all sentient beings, love understood as unselfish, non-egoistic and non-possessive, but authentic concern for the others, often compared to the love of a mother.

“just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so one should cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings.²⁷”

How does one begin cultivating the sublime state of compassion? Buddhaghosha, the commentator affirms “One who wants to develop compassion should begin his task by reviewing the danger in the lack of compassion and the advantage in compassion²⁸”.

A meditator should be compassionate first towards a hostile person, then to a neutral person and then a person who is dear to him, namely opposite of that which followed in friendliness. In other words a definite order is proposed in creating sublime state of compassion. The hostile person should be made first the object of meditation. Then the unlucky or unfortunate person, then dear ones, then oneself. When these preliminary meditations are completed, then the meditator can go to show compassion to those who are unlucky , unfortunate ones and to the wretched ones. The wounded, forlorn, homeless, helpless, should also get his compassion. Finally all beings should be receive the meditator’s compassion²⁹.

Karuṇā also has its negative sides. One can drift away from the right direction and go to create defiled states of mind instead of divine or sublime states. These are named as enemies of compassion, the proximate and remote ones. The proximate one is that of depression,³⁰ namely, one can surrender himself to depression seeing the misery and sufferings of all living beings. One cannot permit himself to be buried under sadness, but be courageous in order to extend compassion to suffering people. The remote enemy is the cruelty, in the sense that the compassion normally makes one nonviolent and tolerant. If he drifts away, he will be caught by the enemy, the cruelty. Hence the test of compassionate state is the nonviolent, tolerant conduct of the meditator.

Finally the commentators of *Abhidharma* speak of the main characteristic or purpose of sublime state of compassion and declare that it is nothing but to uproot sufferings, pain and misery in the world. Every living being one way or the other, one time or the other experiences unhappiness and frustration. The

Buddhist through his meditative practice should cultivate compassion and sympathy to these people and aim at the attenuation and elimination of misery in the world.

2.4. Compassion and five precepts (*panca-sheela*)

Compassion in Buddhism is basically a training to develop the innate quality to a high conscious level by the development of the mind through meditation. The consequence of this is a higher moral life, a philanthropic attitude and an other centric ethics, which naturally gives rise to positive social values and bring about social harmony if practised on a communitarian level. Compassion therefore is not only an integral part of *Brahma-viharas*, but also that of eight-fold path³¹, specially that of right speech, right action and right livelihood. Though Buddhist ethics is prominently centred on monks, the lay people are not simply left out. Buddha said to have insisted that the laypersons should follow the ‘five precepts’³² (*panca-sheela*), which have been handed down by Theravada tradition and practised by all lay persons wherever Buddhism existed, as they defined a Buddhist as a follower of Buddha. The five precepts are five restraints expressed negatively as prohibitions but they have also positive counterparts.

The five precepts are “abstinence from killing, from stealing, from sexual-misconduct, from lying, and from intoxicating drugs and drinks”³³, which entail positive virtues of compassion, generosity, faithfulness in marriage, honesty and responsibility in maintaining good health as counterparts. The abstention from killing has been interpreted presently as restraint from capital punishment, suicide, abortion and euthanasia. In the early Scriptures, we see the overlapping of morality with meditation. Compassion is an innate quality in human beings which when made conscious, generates its corollary, the virtue of non-violence (*ahimsā*), the first among the five precepts.

3. Part Two: Karuṇā in Mahāyāna tradition

In the interpretation and practice of the teachings of Buddha during the early period of its growth, one sees an overemphasis on monastic ideal and as a result the alienation of *hoi polloi*. There arose as a reaction to this a new group of disciples who in their concern for lay people produced innovative scriptural interpretations which gave rise to a new group that called themselves Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle) in the first century common era. They also coined a new term namely, “Great Compassion” (*Mahā-karuṇā*), and it was regarded as the essence of Buddhism. They affirmed “The Buddha -Mind is nothing but Great

Compassion”. We see the virtue of compassion very much highlighted in Mahāyāna Buddhism; they even affirm that compassion is a prominent characteristic of Mahāyāna.

This branch of Buddhism gave rise to a new category of saintly monks called *Bodhisattvas* who remain central in all Mahāyāna texts. “To those whose intelligence is excellent and who aspire to benefit living beings out of Great Compassion the Way of Bodhisattva is taught”³⁴.

A Bodhisattva is envisaged as a compassionate personality who postpones his own liberation and desires to be born again and again until even the last person in the world is liberated or enlightened. In other words, he embraces voluntarily sufferings out of compassion for the misery of people. Compassion becomes the predominant virtue of a Bodhisattva. The vast majority of Buddhists being Mahāyānists, the virtue of compassion became the guiding principle of Buddhism that enriched Asian civilization and culture.

“A Buddha is distinguished from other beings by his deep and great pity, love , mercy and compassion for all beings. (*karuṇā*). A Buddha is endowed with *mahā-karuṇā* , the adjective *mahā* being prefixed in order to emphasise the importance of this attribute. He loves all creatures as his children..... He pities all beings, because they are enmeshed in various sins, errors, dangers and calamities”³⁵

So Mahāyāna exhorts to its followers that to save all creatures from the cycle of births and rebirths (*samsāra*) and to liberate oneself from consequent misery, one should resolve to become Bodhisattva and attain the divine state of compassion along with love, mercy and pity.

Hence the solemn and public vow of the Bodhisattva:

“I shall not enter into final Nirvana before all beings have been liberated.”³⁶

“ All have the same sorrows the same joys as I, and I must guard them like myself.I must destroy the pain of another as though it were my own, because it is a pain; I must show compassion to others, for they are creatures as I am myself I will frame a spirit of helpfulness and tenderness towards others.”³⁷

The vow disposes a Bodhisattva to suffer the torments and agonies of all beings for innumerable aeons, so that all may attain enlightenment.

The following famous simile sums up a Bodhisattva's ideal of *karuṇā* .

“the earth , with its forests, great mountains and oceans, has been destroyed a hundred times by water, fire and wind, at the close of the aeons; but the great compassion of a Bodhisattva abides for ever”.³⁸

The Buddhist teacher, Arya -Shura teaches that *karuṇā* is really the sum and substance of ethics and religion, as wickedness and corruption will be eliminated when all men learn to love others as their kinsmen³⁹.

Another teacher Shanthideva says that Bodhisattva need not be a learned person, provided he cultivates the sublime state of *karuṇā* , which makes him the master of all principles and attributes of Buddhahood. As all the activities of humankind depend on the sun, even so all the principles which facilitate Enlightenment, are born and developed under the aegis of *karuṇā* . Truly, it is the basis of religion and religious commitment⁴⁰.

Karuṇā philosophically seen has two perspectives: first, realising the equality of oneself with others, (*paratma samata*), second, practising the substitution of others for oneself. (*paratma parivartana*). This is well expressed in the following aphorism (*sutra*) :

“As I am so are they. As they are, so am I, comparing others with oneself, one should not harm or cause harm.”⁴¹

When Bodhisattva overcomes the ideas of “mine and thine” when he cultivates the virtue of considering others as equal to himself. He identifies himself with others in their joys and sorrows, and declines to prefer his own happiness to that of others. He shows concern for others and protects them as he takes care of himself and protects himself. He is ready to sacrifice his own happiness in order to participate in the miseries of others. He lends a helping hand even to those who offend him and never takes revenge. He opts for the poor and lowly and prefers them to himself. Compassion should lead the Buddhist to realise that he is not different from others and a Bodhisattva should mentally substitute others for himself.

4. Part Three : Buddhist conception of compassion and comprehension of Asian cultures

4.1. Buddhism and Asian civilization

Though during the first two centuries after its origin Buddhism existed only in India as a sectarian religion, it did not remain so very long. With the

emergence of King Ashoka (ca. 270 -232 BCE), who established a pan-Indian empire through military conquest, but got converted to non-violence (*ahimsā*) and embraced the principles of righteousness (*dharma*), begun to propagate Buddhism not only throughout his kingdom but also to Sri Lanka, Burma and North-West up to Afghanistan by sending missionaries, transforming Buddhism into a civilizational religion. It gave rise to a sophisticated high culture that transcended the boundaries of local regions and politics. In the first century of the common era it made inroads into China from the northwest via Silk Road using the caravan route, and by third century common era it became a dominant force throughout China and Southeast Asian Countries⁴². In the sixth century common era it made its entry into Japan through China, and in the seventh century common era into Tibet. By 9th century common era Buddhism became pan - Asian movement of civilization. One point we need to underscore emphatically, that with Buddhism its perspective of compassion and altruistic philanthropical activity transformed the cultures and mind sets of people who embraced the *dharma* of Buddha. “The evolution of Buddhism in Asia and its spread throughout the world are, from a Buddhist point of view, none other than the unfolding of *karuṇā* in history”⁴³.

The period between 2nd to 9th century CE was saturated with immense creativity and tremendous influence for Buddhism. From 4th to 7th century there were hectic movements of monks from China to India as organised pilgrims to visit sacred shrines and monasteries who made it a point to collect manuscripts and scriptures. Great monks like Fahsien, Hsuan-tsung, I-ching wrote chronicles of travels providing lot of cultural data. It is said libraries of books on Buddhism were translated into Chinese, and Chinese language became third important language of Buddhist scriptures besides, Pali and Sanskrit⁴⁴.

The Mahāyāna believed in multiple Buddhas and Bhodhisattvas, as a result art and architecture as well as paintings advanced in leaps and bounds since they propagated devotion to these Buddhas. Most of the principal monasteries were situated in the capitals of the Buddhist kingdoms and these functioned almost like universities. These became centres of learning not only on religious and philosophical literature but also topics like medicine, grammar and technology.

4.2. Compassion and the comprehension of Asian cultures.

History bears evidence to the fact that Buddhism in general and the virtue of compassion in particular has mellowed down the rough warrior races of Tibet and Mongolia, and almost wiped away all traces of their original brutality. The

statistics show that in Japan the cases of murder are much less in districts where Buddhism is strongly represented. This is because the natural disposition of people undergoes gradual transformation through the attitude of compassion, which specially characterised the Zen Buddhism in Japan. The Zen Buddhism in China never used the word compassion but when it reached Japan the compassionate actions were given high priority. Wherever Buddhism became strong, the spirit of tolerance and the virtue of compassion prevailed and expressions of deep hatred were very much diminished. As a result cruel punishments disappeared in Buddhist kingdoms. During the Heian period in Japan Buddhism became the state religion and the capital punishment was abolished for three and half centuries⁴⁵.

When Buddhism entered China, the ideal of compassion was wholeheartedly embraced by people and emperors alike. This was evident through altruistic activities. The Emperor left the education of children to monks in the monasteries and some of the monasteries became well-known educational hubs. The monasteries were also connected to health centres and people came there for medical treatment and the poor found relief from their ailments.

“In the T’ng dynasty (618 -907 A.D.), the system of temple-hospitals was established, and institutions for the poor, the sick, and the orphaned were built . In times of famine, Buddhist priests and nuns devoted themselves to the relief of the people. As the organ of monetary circulation for the common people , a pawn house called “Wu-chin-tsang (the limitless storehouse) was founded in the Six Southern and Northern dynasties. Besides these activities , Buddhist priests endeavoured to build bridges, plant trees, dig wells, and construct rest-houses⁴⁶.”

Buddhism and its strong influence on the world, particularly in south-east Asia and especially so in China, prompted Hu Shih the former Ambassador of China to the United States of America to say “India conquered and dominated China culturally for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her border⁴⁷”.

5. Application of *karunā* to contemporary context

Does *karunā* has any significance in our times? Can it influence current cultural and socio-political situation? What is the importance of *karunā* in contemporary Buddhism? Do they give any primacy to the concept in their practice and propagation of the Buddhist movement? How can we propose its

application to our contemporary human situation? Can it play any role in the humanisation of our present society at the global level.

5.1. *Karuna and panca-sheela (five precepts)*

The practical corollary of the conception of compassion, namely the “five precepts”, which were the foundation of Buddhist morality for lay people from its very beginning have been proposed by Asian countries as the foundation of new institutions during the post-colonisation era. In 1945 Sukarto from Indonesia acclaimed the five precepts should become the foundation of his independent country and in 1949 Indonesia obtained independence. India and China acknowledging the utility of the precepts in building up relationships between them drew up a India-China Treaty on 28 April 1954⁴⁸. In 1955 there took place a Asian-African conference in Bandung which highlighted the five precepts (panca-sheela) of Buddhism in building up international relationships. They expanded the principles into ten points and agreed upon an amplified doctrine of ‘five precepts’ for international relations. On the same principle in 1961 the ‘non-aligned movement’ was founded in Belgrade.

The India-China treaty was valid for eight years and it could not be renewed because of India’s decision to provide refuge to Dalai Lama in 1959. Though there was war between the two nations in 1962, now again since 1970 the dialogue has been resumed and the Doclam crisis of 1917 could be provisionally resolved because of these principles being put forward as the basis for the dialogue. The five principles, which China calls as five principles of mutual co-existence are: (i) Mutual respect for each others territorial integrity and sovereignty (ii) Mutual non-aggression. (iii) mutual non-interference in each others internal affairs. (iv) Equality and mutual benefit. (v) Peaceful co- existence⁴⁹.

5.2. *The five precepts and human rights.*

Some modern Buddhist scholars argue affirming the similarity of five precepts with the human rights, and hold the view that they are universal in nature. The Cambodian Institute of Human Rights acquiesce in the opinion of the scholars. Hence following comparisons have been drawn up : First precept of abstention from killing to the right of life. second precept to right to property, third to the rights of individuals and the rights of society, fourth precept to the right of human dignity, and the fifth to the right to individual security and safe society.

Cambodian human rights advocates are of the opinion that without individual morality no human rights could be implemented as they constitute integral aspect of human development.

6. Conclusion:

6.1. Compassion is an innate human quality

The four *brahma-viharas* or sublime states explained above are to be considered as inborn or innate qualities ingrained in all human beings. These are not something to be appropriated from ‘outside’ of one’s being. They are within and interior, innate and inborn qualities which lie concealed in the depth of every human personality. These need to be made explicit by bringing them to the level of our conscious activity so that they become guiding principles of our thoughts, words and deeds. Compassion or *karunā* thus is not exterior quality to be internalised but an interior quality of human being which awaits to become manifest and explicit. But this process of making explicit demands conscious striving and intentional struggle which every Buddhist is obliged to undergo through a spiritual pedagogy characterised by numerous methods of meditations. A Bodhisattva can become a compassionate being to the extent that very fibre of his being and every life cell of his gets concentrated with the quality of compassion and for him to act otherwise becomes an existential inability. This explains the power of meditation in the Buddhist tradition. The cultural growth of Asia has been definitely affected by these compassionate saints who empowered the population with spiritual energy to create societies that excelled in high moral values.

6.2. The correlation between affectivity, knowledge and human body.

The modern philosopher Spinoza and the German philosopher Nietzsche have highlighted the correlation between affectivity, knowledge and human body which have analogical correlates in the Buddhist doctrines of compassion, mindfulness and wisdom. While denouncing the ascetic negation of human body in the philosophical endeavours of the Greek philosophers, they asserted the mind cannot simply get out of the body while philosophising, but it remains integral part of the body and hence all experiences, including the experience of knowledge, are the perspectives of the body, which is an abode of affects. “Knowledge” they assert “is the most powerful affect. The question of knowledge is thus the question of the composition of our affective relations.”⁵⁰ In Buddhism experiential knowledge culminates in the enlightenment and

compassion is the affect that augments the path to enlightenment. Compassion is basically related to wisdom (*prajna*), and both are innate human qualities in the human personality which remain tacit until through meditative process they are made actual and explicit. The process of actualisation involves the awareness or the mindfulness of the affectations of the human body. Compassion is a way of affecting and be affected until the whole body transforms itself into a compassionate being, thus making the human personality a reality that remains open to perceive people who are affected by the world in a negative way. The compassionate personality, the Bodhisattva, radiates affective relations towards sentient beings of all hues, creating a culture of toleration and joy. This makes “the encounters in the world into ‘euphoric’ experiences”⁵¹ transforming cultures into nonviolent, friendly, kind and affective relations of humans living in a humanised world.

Notes

¹ *The Dhammapada*, 14: 179-195, Trans by Max Mueller, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. X. part 1, Delhi: 1973, p. 49 – 52; Frank E. Reynolds and Charles Hallisey, “Buddhism, an Overview” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (henceforth ER), Ed by Mircea Eliade, Vol 2, New York: 1987, p. 334 – 351.

² He is also called Shakyamuni, the sage of the Shakyas. “Buddha”, *Ibid.*, p., 319- 332.

³ The term has a pejorative connotation hence rejected by the Theravadins. ‘*yāna*’ means vehicle, Hina can mean small or even inferior. This title is attributed by the reformists, the Mahāyānists to the conservative Buddhists. Andre Bareau, “Buddhists Schools, Hinayana Buddhism”, ER *Ibid.*, p. 444 -456.; Cf. Hajime Nakamura, *A Comparative History of Ideas*, Delhi; 1992. P. 373.

⁴ Hajime Nakamura, “Mahayana Buddhism”, in ER. Vol 2, p. 457 – 472.

⁵ Luis O. Gomez, “Buddhism in India”, ER. Vol. 2, p. 376-379.

⁶ Noble Ross Reat, “The Historical Buddha and His Teachings”, in *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies* (henceforth EIP), Ed . by Karl H. Potter, Delhi: 2011, p.51.

⁷ Ernst Steinkellner, “Dharma”, ER, Vol.4, p. 333.

⁸ Harivarman, *Tattvasiddhi*, trans. By Karl H. Potter, EIP. Vol. VIII, p.256 -258; Cf. Gomez. Op.cit, ER Vol.2. p. 354-56.

⁹ Taitetsu Unno, “Karuṇā ”, ER ed. by Mircea Eliade, vol. 8, p. 270.

¹⁰. Nakamura, *A Comparative History of Ideas*, p 274; Taitetsu Unno, “Karuṇā ”, ER, *Ibid*, vol. 8, p. 269 f.

¹¹ The earliest Scriptures of Buddhism are called *Tipitakas* (three baskets) written in Pali language; Skt *Tri-pithakas*, three baskets, *Sutta* (Skt *Sutra*), *Vinaya* and *Abhi-dhamma* (Skt: *Abhi-dharma*) *Pitaka*.

¹² *Madhyamakaratnapradipa*, chapter VII. Cf. EIP, Vol. IX, p 455: “He should seat himself comfortably on a well-prepared seat in a secluded place.”, Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhi Magga*, ‘*The Path of Purification*’ trans by Bhikku Binamoli, IX: 1; Kandy: 1975, p. 321.

¹³ Belongs to *Tipitaka*, its main commentary is *Visuddhimagga* Path of Purification by Buddhaghosa.

- ¹⁴ P.V. Bapat and R.D. Vadekar, Editors, *Dhammasangani*, p.21; cited by Herbert V. Guenther, *The Philosophy and Psychology in the Abhidharma*, Delhi:2974, p.4.
- ¹⁵ Pratap Chandra, *Metaphysics of Perpetual Change*, Bombay:1978, p.24f.
- ¹⁶ Guenther, Op.cit., p.6
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p.7.
- ¹⁸ *Path of Purification, op.cit., IX 1-124. P. 321-353; Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy (henceforth EIP) edited by Karl H. Potter, Vol. IX, New Delhi: 2008 (reprint); p. 115.f.*
- ¹⁹ *Path of Purification, IX, 105 – 107.*
- ²⁰ Ibid., IX, 110f.
- ²¹ “Mettasutta”, in *Sutta Nipata, Uragavagga, 8; 1-10, Sacred Books of the East*, (henceforth SBE) Ed. By Max Mueller, SBE. Vol X, Part 1, Delhi: 1973, p. 24f.
- ²² EIP IX, p. 125 f.
- ²³ Guenther, Ibid., 106.
- ²⁴ Abhidhamma, III, 50; “May all beings be free from enmity, affliction and misery and live happily” *Path of Purification, IX, 9.*
- ²⁵ Atthassalini III . 414, cited by Guenther, p. 107.
- ²⁶ Guenther, *Ibid.*, 108.
- ²⁷ *Sutta Nipāta*, verse 148. EIP VII, New Delhi: 1999; p.51.
- ²⁸ *Path of Purification, IX: 77.*
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, IX:78.
- ³⁰ *Ibid*, IX: 99.
- ³¹ *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta , The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness, 1-20, Buddhist Sutras*, Trans. By T.W. Rhys Davids, SBE, Vol. XI, Delhi: 1973, p. 146 – 155.
- ³² Here the Sanskrit term *panca* means five and *sheela* means virtue; together the word means ‘five virtues; Cf. *Digha Nikaya*, 1: 251; *Majjhima Nikaya* 1: 351; Noble Ross Reat, “The Historical Buddha and His Teachings”, EIP, edited by Karl H. Potter, Vol 7, p. 49 f; Karl H. Potter, “A few early Abhidharma Categories”, EIP, Vol 7, *Ibid*, p. 59.
- ³³ *Ibid*. Cf. Also „DhammikaSutta“, in *Kulavagga, 14:18-29, SBE, Vol X, Part 1, Delhi: 1973: p.65f.*
- ³⁴ Hajima Nakamura, *A Comparative History of Ideas*, p. 374. Bodhisattva ideal can be understood well only against the background of a saintly, serene, but inactive, disinterested, and indolent ideal of Arhat in the monastic tradition of Theravada (Hinayana). Cf. *Path of Purification, VII:4-5.*
- ³⁵ Har Dayal , *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, Delhi: 1932; reprint 1978. p. 23f .
- ³⁶ Edwin A Burtt, *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha*, New York: 1955, p. 139.
- ³⁷ Har Dayal, *op.cit.*, p. 61
- ³⁸ Arya -Shura, *Jataka Mala, 155:18* edited by H. Kern, Boston: 1891, cited by Har Dayal *Ibid.*, 178.
- ³⁹ Arya-Shura, *Jataka Mala, 174: 9*, Cited by Dayal, *Ibid.* 179
- ⁴⁰ Shantideva, *Shiksha, 286:8ff.* cited by Har Dayal, *Ibid.*, 179.
- ⁴¹ *Sutta Nipāta*, verse 705, 45; cf. EIP Vol VII, (New Delhi: 2011, reprint), p. 48.
- ⁴² Burma, Thailand, Vietnam. Laos, Vambodia. Cf. Donald K. Swearer, “Buddism in Southeast Asia”, ER, Vol. @. P 385 – 400/
- ⁴³ Taitetsu Unno, “Karuṇā”, ER, vol. 8, p. 270.
- ⁴⁴ EIP Vol 2, “Buddhism as Civilizational Religion”, p 338 – 342.
- ⁴⁵ Hajime Nakamura, *A Comparative History of Ideas*, p. 178.

⁴⁶ Hajime Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India-China-Tibet-Japan*, Honolulu: 1964; p. 249f.

⁴⁷ K. Kasturirangan, “Preamble”, *National Education Policy- 2019 – Draft*. Delhi: 2019. P. 26.

⁴⁸ “The Five Principles” dated 2004/06/14 ;
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⁴⁹ Rup Narayan Das, *India -China Relations, A New approach*, New Delhi: 2013. P. 42- 63; Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy and Trade*, Honolulu: 2003, p 1-14.

⁵⁰ Stuart Pethik, *Affectivity and Philosophy after Spinoza and Nietzsche: Introduction*, Hampshire and New York: 2015; p. 4-5.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p 18.

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