Jnanadeepa:
Pune Journal of Religious Studies

Vol. 2 No. 1 January 1999

Contents

Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies

Jnanadeepa (="Light of Wisdom" pronounced as *Jñ¹nad»pa*) is a biannual interdisciplinary journal of religious studies from an Indian Christian perspective. It is closely associated with Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth: Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Religion, Pune 411014, India.

Jnanadeepa is published biannually in January and July. Views expressed by the writers are not necessarily those of the editors. Manuscripts submitted for publication should be original and cannot be returned. They could be sent (preferrably as a text or RTF file) in a computer diskette or through E-mail.

All correspondence (requests for subscription, manuscripts, books for review, exchange copies of journals, advertisements, etc.) to:

The Editor,
Jnanadeepa,
Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth,
Pune 411014, India

Tel (office): 0212-681968, Tel (residence): 0212-680169, 680497
Fax: +91-212-685801, E-mail: jdv@giaspn01.vsnl.net.in

Subscription Rates

Country	*For one year*	*For three years*
India	Ind. Rs. 80	Ind. Rs. 200
Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh	Ind. Rs.140	Ind. Rs. 400
South Asia	US $ 6	US $ 15
Other Countries (Air Mail)	US $ 20	US $ 55

Subscriptions could be sent from India either by Money Order or Demand Draft. For cheques add Rs. 10/- as encashment fee. From other countries International Money Order or Crossed Cheque is preferred. From Commonwealth countries it could also be sent by British Postal Order. All payments are to be made in the name of ***Jnanadeepa Journal.***

Printed at Amit Printers, Pune-14 (Tel: 681216) and typeset at JDV Computer Centre. Published by Kurien Kunnumpuram for Jnana Deepa Publications.

Editorial

Standing at the threshold of a new century, a new millennium, we wonder what the future holds in store for us. What will be the shape of things to come? What kind of a society is likely to emerge in our country and the world at large?

No one knows for certain what the emerging society would really be like. Bu it is probably true to say that different traditions and disciplines will make a contribution to the shaping of the society of the future. Hence, this issue of *Jnanadeepa* seeks to explore the possible contributions of various traditions and disciplines.

For more than a hundred years, two systems, capitalism and socialism, presented themselves as two alternative ways of organizing the socio-economic and political life of human beings in this world. The ideological conflicts between the proponents of these systems dominated the recent history of humanity. But with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the failure of the communist regimes of East Europe, capitalism seems to have emerged as the victorious social system. This raises some questions. Is capitalism, then, an acceptable model of society for all, especially for the countries of the Third world? What is the future of socialism? Two articles in this issue deal with these questions.

For us in India, it is Mahatma Gandhi who proposed a vision of a new society which is different from that of socialism and capitalism. There is reason to believe that the Gandhian vision has an appeal beyond the boundaries of this country. That is why one article discusses it. Closely connected with it is the vision of a new society implicit in Hinduism, since the Mahatma was deeply influenced by it. One article deals with the Hindu vision of society. There are three articles in the issue which develop a Christian perspective on the new society. They try to draw inspiration from the Bible and the Christian tradition in order to project the vision of a new society.

The two articles from the Islamic and the Jewish perspectives are quite significant. It is the contention of the author of the first article that Islam has to undergo certain changes before it can make a contribution to the development of the new society. And the writer of the second one believes that Israel, if it wishes to be faithful to its own religious tradition, has to work for a just and equitable solution of the Palestinian problem.

Psychology and philosophy are also concerned about the future of humanity. There is an article which, from a psychological point of view,

suggests a new model for India, which is also applicable to other countries which has a multireligious situation. Another one discusses the new society from a philosophical point of view.

Included in this issue is also an article on the new society from a feminist perspective. It is becoming increasingly clear that the neglect of women and their view-point has been harmful to humanity at large.

It is our fond hope that the articles presented here will stimulate a lively discussion on the kind of future society we need to envision and encourage people to work hard for the creation of the society of their dreams.

Kurien Kunnumpuram SJ

JPJRS 2/1 (1999) 5-18

Has Capitalism Won? A Critique

Walter Fernandes, SJ
Indian Social Institute, Delhi

Capitalism has won, is the verdict of many after the end of the cold war. For nearly four decades most economists and political analysts took for granted that the world options lay between capitalism and socialism. The virtues and shortcomings of the one and the other were debated and some tried to combine the two. Military blocs were formed around the countries that claimed to represent them. This bipolar world collapsed with the end of the cold war. A unipolar world was born. Many concluded that capitalism had won.

The present paper analyses these assumptions. I believe that for the global South (formerly referred to as the Third World), it was never a choice between the two. Both of them were based on the colonial mindset that the former colonies should look up to their colonisers for their ideology as well as political and economic organisation. In that sense, the cold war was in reality competition between the two blocs of the global North for the colonial control of the South, particularly Asia and Africa, both of them rich in natural and mineral resources. It was an economic cum military enterprise and an effort to control them. Ideology certainly played a role, but the colonial context was paramount. The North views the end of the cold war as the victory of capitalism. But for the South, it is the victory of one of the two colonial powers that were trying to control it. Besides, it may be only a temporary victory. New blocs are emerging. More importantly, events in Russia, East Asia and elsewhere have shown that the market economy is not the solution to the problems facing Africa and Asia. Some countries are searching for alternatives to it. That is the context in which we critique capitalism that has today taken the form of globalization.

Ideology and the Cold War

That ideology played a role in the cold war is beyond doubt. An example of its importance is the relations between Israel and USSR in the early years of its formation. Its economy was built around the kibbutzim (communes). So USSR perceived it as a socialist economy based on cooperatives, particularly since in those days most of its Arab neighbours had feudal rulers. So USSR supported Israel against them. Only later when the monarchy in countries like Egypt and Syria was overthrown and Israel entered into a very close alliance with the western bloc, was its relations with USSR soured. That established a new relationship between USSR and the Arab world .[1]

Ideology influenced also the economies and social systems in the

countries of the North. Specific to capitalism is its profit orientation. Inequalities are intrinsic to it. Economic growth is the criterion used to judge its success. In this approach, the poverty of the many is essential for the riches of the few. The repression of the working class in Europe during the Industrial Revolution went hand in hand with the exploitation of the colonies. The socialist countries too deprived their people of many freedom in order to protect socialism. But they had as their target meeting the basic needs of their people. They ensured employment, education and food at a low cost to every citizen.[2] But some think that in many cases these countries sacrificed economic efficiency and the profit motive completely in order to ensure employment to every citizen.[3]

Later, because of sustained struggles, the capitalist countries granted better working conditions to their working class. The workers also got many welfare benefits. But apart from their struggles, the birth of the welfare state in these countries was made possible also by direct colonialism at first, and continuation of the colonial system at a later stage. The world economy continued to be controlled by the rich countries. Their working class could get a share in the benefits because resources from the poor countries continued to flow to them. As a result, the poor in the South paid the price for the social security measures such as pension schemes and unemployment insurance introduced in Europe and North America. Many of them were further impoverished. However, in case of a conflict between economic growth and welfare, the capitalist countries have invariably sacrificed the latter.[4] Thus in the North, the social justice orientation of socialism stands out against the profit orientation of capitalism. Only in a few cases have the two been integrated fully.

The Cold War and Colonialism

In that sense, the end of the cold war in 1989 did mark the victory of capitalism, but only in the North. The situation changes substantially when one comes to the global South where capitalism was born in a colonial context. As such, one can call it subordinate or dependent capitalism. Basic to the formation of the cold war blocs is the Yalta Agreement of 1945 between Stalin and Truman on the division of the world. The USSR accepted the hegemony of USA over Latin America and Western Europe. USA in its turn recognised the supremacy of USSR over Eastern Europe. Most Asian and African countries were yet to gain independence. No agreement was entered into concerning them. They were to become an arena for an open contest for supremacy between the two blocs.[5] As a result one has witnessed proxy wars in Africa and Asia. The Vietnamese and the Algerians who fought for the liberation of France from Hitler's armies and the Indonesians who joined the Dutch in liberating Holland were told after the war, that they themselves had no right to be independent. When they rose in revolt against these double standards, they were called Communists. In order to gain independence, many Asian and African countries were forced to seek the assistance of the So-

viet bloc. Thus, their struggle for independence became one between the two blocs.[6] Even in Latin America, Fidel Castro was trying to free his people from poverty caused by the US multinationals, that, till 1958, controlled 48% of Cuba's land holdings and 80% of its industry. For sheer survival he had to join the Soviet bloc. The Brazilian President Bettancourt was likewise called a Communist when he attempted land reforms in favour of the poor, and was overthrown by the army with the assistance of North America.[7] Dictatorships were set up on the pretext of protecting the "free world".

In this conflict, the Soviet Union was in an advantageous position. Colonialism is a distinguishing feature of Europe, but its nature differed in its Eastern and Western halves. Historically, Moscow has depended on contiguous colonialism, i.e., conquering its neighbouring countries and turning them into the provinces of Russia or making their economies subordinate to its own. Western Europe, on the contrary, conquered and colonised territories in other continents by sending settlers, as in the Americas, Australia and New Zealand or through military and political control, as in most of Asia and Africa. During the cold war, these colonised continents were more interested in freedom from the west European type of colonialism than from its contiguous variety which they considered a territorial dispute. Hence, in most cases they sought the assistance of the Soviet bloc. Besides, the newly independent countries felt powerless in their relations with their former colonisers. They needed a friend in the North and many of them exploited division among those countries to their own advantage.[8]

Thus, while ideology was important within the North, of much greater importance were economic and military interests, when it came to the South. Where one began and the other ended is difficult to say. The two World Wars had given birth to a new world order. From a Euro-centric world, in which competition for supremacy was between London and Paris, one had moved to a world dominated by the USA on one side and the USSR on the other. Secondly, but for a few exceptions, direct political colonialism had come to an end. The colonising countries had transferred power to the local elite, after putting in place educational, administrative and political systems meant to continue the subordinate economy they had created. The elite, that took power after the colonialists left, had absorbed their values. They looked to the North for approval. Most of them thought that they had to choose between the two systems instead of evolving one of their own.[9]

One should add, however, that several leaders of the South did search for alternatives outside these systems. Among them was Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, who made an effort to develop a village-based economy and a grassroots version of democracy. One may add to the list the Pan-Arab nationalism and a local version of socialism as propounded by Gamal Abdel Nasser; the Indonesian, North and South Korean, Chinese and Taiwanese experiments in combining an industrial with a social infrastructure; at a later stage

the Malaysian *bhumiputra* policy, and a host of others. South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan are examples of capitalism modified to suit the needs of the South. Mainland China and Sukarno's Indonesia are cases of a version of socialism different from that of the Soviet Union. So be it, capitalism or socialism did not develop in the same manner in the North and the South. Some have called the Soviet model bureaucratic socialism. The Chinese version, while having a centralised planned component, is commune based. In 1991, for example, 60% of the industrial production of Mainland China came from the communes and much of it was consumed in the rural areas, thus indicating a high purchasing power in the villages.

Most such experiments were attempted in countries that had attained independence through a traumatic type of struggle, such as a war of liberation. As a result, a new class had come to power, different from the traditional bourgeoisie that had been further strengthened by colonialism. Many of these experiments have failed, some because of external pressures as in Egypt, others because the army was used to unseat their leaders, for example in Brazil in 1964 and Indonesia in 1965, or because the administration that was to implement them was formed within a colonial mindset, and as such geared more to the culture of a western system than to a locally developed alternative. That was the case of Tanzania. Others, for example the two Koreas and the two Chinas, succeeded to a great extent.[10]

But countries like India that attained independence peacefully witnessed only a transfer of power to the local elite that had enjoyed power for centuries.[11] Hardly any of them searched for alternatives outside these two systems. Their leaders had been reproduced in the colonial ideology and could not think of any local alternative. Some chose capitalism and joined the US bloc, while others opted for socialism and came under the influence of USSR; and yet others like India attempted a middle path of combining a western type of democracy with the Soviet form of centralised planning.[12]

Globalization and Capitalism

This background can help one to understand globalisation which is the present form of colonialist capitalism. How each country or region responds to it, depends on the pattern of development they opted for after independence. The East Asian countries were presented as show cases of capitalism while the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 is being presented today as the victory of capitalism. Many East Asian countries were able to resist the pressure of a single economy, because of the social base they had built by ensuring access to education, health, nutrition and other minimum needs to all their citizens. But the basis of their success has been tampered with by globalisation. While trade retains its importance in the present day single economy, much greater stress than in the past is laid on investment that often depends on foreign borrowing. East Asian countries have experienced pressure precisely in these areas and are fac-

ing major problems today. Massive borrowing by private parties resulted in their financial collapse in 1997.[13] Other examples of this situation are the Mexican crisis of 1996[14] and the 1998 economic crisis in Russia and East Europe. The situation of the last two is typical of a changeover to a capitalist economy after abandoning their socialist model. All the terms of capitalism were adopted and the gains of socialism abandoned. Production declined, foreign debt mounted and a balance of payments (BOP) crisis was caused. There are indications that poverty is increasing in India after liberalisation. The East Asian crisis may result in their abandoning their social infrastructure. In that sense, the 1991 economic policy has failed to solve the major problems of these countries. These failures should make one reflect on the assumptions of capitalism and globalisation, as well as on the system they represent.

Profit and Inequalities

To begin with, the moving force of capitalism is profit, and, linked to it, capital accumulation. In the South it is seen in the BOP crisis that many countries experience, as a result of decades of unequal trade relations. This reality has to be contrasted with the claims made by the proponents of capitalism and globalisation. The first claim is that the single economy is based on free trade and a free market and the economies of all the countries are interdependent. In practice it is *laissez faire* openness. The rich countries decide the nature of interdependence and the extent of openness required. It is freedom of unequals and is geared to the profit of a few. In practice, the 30 countries belonging to the Organisation of Economic and Commercial Development (OECD), in particular the 7 countries (G-7, now raised to 8 with the entry of Russia) control the world economy. The G-8 Presidents or Prime Ministers meet twice a year to take decisions about the economy of the whole world, and make rules for the rest of the world. Based on the principles of openness and interdependence they propound, they demand freedom to invest in any country.

Besides, trade too is not free. The latest initiative of OECD is the World Trade Organisation (WTO) that ensures the freedom of the rich countries to invest in any part of the world, without granting the same freedom to the workers from the South. Through its Intellectual Property Rights Agreement, WTO restricts patents to knowledge created by biotechnology owning multinational companies and deprives the communities, that have preserved biodiversity for centuries, of any legal right over their livelihood. It forbids subsidies on food and other basic needs though in countries like India many families manage to remain above the poverty line because of the subsidies.[15] To be considered fair, liberalisation should include free trade, free flow of capital and of labour.[16] But the G-8 demand only freedom to invest but put more and more restrictions on the workers and other citizens of the countries of the South travelling to the North. Thus, in the name of free trade, the North ensures the continuation of a system that strengthens the stranglehold of the rich countries over the world's re-

sources, and of the middle class in each country over the livelihood of the poor.

The OECD and G-8 countries are also the ones with a history of colonising and impoverishing the South. The system they created continues to our day. As a result, the South continues to get poorer. A sign of this impoverishment is the growing disparities between the South and the North and within the poor countries themselves. Official United Nations data indicate that in the late 1960s, 32.5% of the world's population accounted for 87.5% of its income.[17] A decade later, in 1978, global income was $8.5 trillion. But 7 trillion or 82% of it was monopolised by 25% of the world population of 4.5 billion.[18] Ten years later, in 1988, 984 millions or 15% of the world population of 5,101 millions, accounted for 78.2% of the total income of $17,135 billion .[19] According to recent estimates, 80% of the world's income is today enjoyed by 15% of the population living in the North.[20]

Income disparities are but one of its many features, and symbolise differential access to the world's resources. Capitalism is based on consumerism i.e. on created needs that over-exploit the world's natural and other resources to the benefit of a small class. The impoverishment of the majority is its offshoot. 17% of the world's population living in the North, consumes 70% of global energy, 75% of its metals, 85% of its timber and 60% of its food.[21] Similarly, in the total world trade of $2,730 billion in 1992, the share of the South was 920 billion or 33.7%. Most exports from the South are crude oil from the OPEC countries and finished products from the Asian Tigers. Most of the rest is accounted for by imports of manufactured goods from the rich countries, particularly by those depending on the export of a single agricultural commodity. That is the case with most Sub-Saharan countries. The prices of these commodities are kept artificially low, while those of the finished products these countries have to import keep rising. Thus, globalisation and capitalism, that are legitimised in the name of a free market, in reality intensify the inequalities that began in the colonial age.

Inequalities and the Foreign Debt Trap

A major consequence of this unequal economy is the balance of payments (BOP) crisis that many countries of the South face. In 1991, for example, India was left with two weeks of foreign currency. Amid this crisis, it was forced to change its economic policy through what is known as the structural adjustment programme (SAP) that the IMF imposes as a pre-condition for any loan. Its worst sufferers are the Sub-Saharan countries. In 1995, the foreign debt of the South as a whole totalled $2 trillion. 35 of the world's poorest countries owed $226 billion, 28 of them in Sub-Saharan Africa. In more than half of them, their foreign debt exceeded their annual GNP. Most of them, for example Mozambique, have been able to repay only 20% of the capital and interest due from them every year.[22]

The price these countries paid for their indebtedness in the 1980s is typi-

cal of what happens as a result of a BOP crisis. The G-8 impose on the defaulting States, a single economy, through the World Bank and the IMF. The conditions include reduction of or end to subsidies on food, agricultural inputs and the social sector such as education. Between 1980 and 1994, a virtually identical package entitled "economic liberalisation, stabilization and structural adjustment programme" (SAP) has been imposed on more than 80 developing countries.[23] Studies have shown that, though such restructuring of the world economy is presented as a mechanism to cope with the critical BOP crisis, in practice the foreign debt burden of these countries has grown instead of decreasing. In many cases, they are forced to change their agricultural practices. For example, in the 1980s the BOP crisis forced the Sahel and many other Sub-Saharan countries to shift from staple to exportable commercial crops in order to earn foreign exchange. As a result, their staple food production declined and starvation followed.[24] The Sahel famine of the 1980s is an example of a group of countries becoming bread basket cases as a result of the famine that ensued.

Reduction in the fiscal deficit to 5% of GNP is one more of SAP's conditionalities. In most cases it is done by cutting subsidies and by abandoning the social sector. For example, we have mentioned above that in the 1990s Mozambique was able to repay only 20% of capital and interest foreign debt repayment that was due from it. But even that represented more than what it needed for its health services, environment protection, education and other components of the social sector. As a result, today 60% of its estimated population of 16 millions does not have safe drinking water and one million children are out of school.[25]

Capitalism and Colonialism

Capitalism developed in the context of colonialism. Though legitimised in the name of "civilising education," the raison d'etre of colonialism was economic exploitation of the colonies in support of the Industrial Revolution of the metropolitan country. With this in view, the economy of the colonies had to be destroyed and they had to be turned into suppliers of capital and cheap raw material for the Industrial Revolution of Europe. India and other countries, that had a fairly well developed manufacturing sector, had to be de-industrialised in order to turn them into captive markets for the finished products of the Industrial Revolution.[26]

In globalisation, which is the present form of colonialism and capitalism, there is both continuity and change from the past. Continuity is through international bodies like the World Bank and IMF that were set up by the countries of the North after World War II to suit the needs of the North. Neither of them has joined the UN system that functions on a one country one vote basis. Instead, the financial institutions are based on the principle of one share one vote. Decisions in the World Bank, for example, require 80% of the votes. That is the percentage of shares the rich countries hold in it. They use this power to maintain the world's financial system under their

control. With the end of the cold war, these institutions are being used to impose a single economy on the poor countries.[27]

There is continuity also in the nature of capitalism itself. Its basic feature is capital accumulation achieved through what is called openness and interdependence. Both the features were demanded from the colonies already in the 19th century. In those days openness was mainly in trade. The raw materials in which Asia and Africa abounded had to be exploited for the benefit of Europe. So the colony had to be opened up through changes introduced in its laws and trade mechanisms. In this case openness and interdependence meant that the colony had to be ready to turn itself into a dependent economy. Trade was the basis of such capital accumulation to support the Industrial Revolution, and changeover to a dependent economy. Today too, capital accumulation remains a basic trait, but it is achieved through a combination of investment and trade. The latter is used as a tool to impose conditions on the type of production and investment beneficial to the North.[28] In case of a BOP crisis, IMF lays down its conditionalities, one of which is an end to subsidies and withdrawal of the State from the social sector.

Thus, the major issue in today's form of capitalism is the strengthening of the colonial forces and the further impoverishment of the already weak. The difference from the past is that today it is done through the financial institutions and apparently free negotiations between independent nations, while in the past it was through direct colonial occupation. But the relationship continues to be unequal. In the name of *laissez faire* and free trade, the strong continue to impose on the weak a system meant to safeguard their own interests. In that sense, the riches of some continue to depend on the poverty of others. This structural relationship between riches and poverty is intrinsic to colonialism. It is a one way imposition in the name of free access to capital. Thus, the basic facet of capitalism, i.e., inequalities and poverty for the majority, remains unchanged. But the method of protecting this unjust system to the benefit of the colonisers has changed substantially over the years.

Foreign Investment and Inequalities

Intrinsic to consumerism and the profit orientation of the present form of capitalism is foreign investment. As poverty grows, so does investment. It grew from $77 billion in 1983 to $200 billion in 1992 to $320 billion in 1995.[29] Because of its profit orientation, it introduces three major innovations. The first is focus on the production of luxury items, the second is portfolio investment and the third is labour saving technologies. One may add that as in the past, so also today, colonialism, be it internal or external, depends on local collaborators. It is not direct rule by a foreigner, but an outsider controlling the masses through local collaborators.[30] Globalisation depends for its effectiveness on the elite of the South and a consumerist middle class.

To begin with the first innovation, most foreign investment is on luxury

items meant for those who have much money to spend. As the price of these items rises, so does the income of this small minority. The latter is achieved by creating more money either directly, for example through high salaries, or artificially through credit cards and other means. But the basic needs of the majority are ignored and that has negative implications for the nutrition, health, education and housing of the poor.[31] In India one can see the effort to create more money, among others, by increase in the salaries of the government servants, teachers and others. The foreign companies are in India only for profit by exploiting a big middle class of around 200 millions. This class is being given more money. Since in this manner this class gets benefits such as a higher income and more and better consumer products, this process also ensures the collaboration of the middle class in the neo-colonial enterprise of globalisation.

This approach is easier in countries like India that have a large population and as a result a big middle class, than in smaller ones. But even some relatively small countries like the Philippines follow the same principle. Basic to it is the principle of betting on the strong. Those who can buy new products and increase the profits of industry are its beneficiaries. This is based on the concentration of wealth in a few hands. In India, for example, an estimated 10% of a much smaller population belonged to the middle class at independence. Today this class has grown to around 30% of a much bigger population and totals about 200 millions. This proportion is expected to decline since poverty has been growing in recent years. But it remains a substantial number. The multinationals are in India to exploit this market.[32] In the process the basic needs of the majority are neglected.

> Under the market friendly regime, the poor, the marginalised, who have no entitlements (land, other income-yielding assets, social securities, employment etc.) are kept out of the market. This leads to fragmentation of collectivities, communities and traditional support systems.[33]

This type of a consumerist economy is also natural resource intensive. The reference we have made above to the manner in which food, timber, energy and minerals are utilised should give one an indication of such over-consumption. What happens at the international level is repeated by the middle class in poor countries. Land is one such resource that is expected to be utilised much more than in the past. It is recognised by the Government itself. Among the promises made to foreign companies to attract investment is ready availability of land. At the time of writing this, the Government of India is in the process of amending the colonial *Land Acquisition Act, 1894*, to make land takeover easier. The total time between the first notification and the final land takeover is being reduced from three years to one. To ensure compliance, the few rights that the people had under the present Act are being further diluted. They are denied the possibility of approaching the court of law or of organising themselves against deprival of livelihood without their consent.

The situation is not much better even now. An estimated 300 lakh persons have been deprived of their livelihood since 1951, at least 40% of them tribals. Fewer than a third of them have been resettled even partially. The country does not have a rehabilitation policy or law.[34] And the Government, that is planning to expedite land acquisition, has approved the amendments to the law but has rejected the draft rehabilitation policy since industry opposes it, for fear that it will add to the cost of the project. That is typical of the profit orientation of capitalism that does not give value to the human being. That land requirement will rise enormously is clear from our own studies and those of others. For example, 23.66 lakh acres of land were acquired in Orissa, between 1951 and 1995, for dams, mines, industries, thermal plants, roads, railways and miscellaneous schemes. Of this, 1.06 lakh acres were for industries. But the future trend shows that around 2 lakhs acres will be acquired in that state during the next ten years for industries alone.[35] Preliminary data from other States show a similar picture.

A second feature of foreign investment in countries like India, that have over the decades developed an autonomous economy, is that most of it is portfolio investment i.e. to buy existing companies rather than to open new ones even for the limited purpose of producing luxury items. To limit ourselves to India, of the $13,679 billions that flowed into India between 1992 and 1997 in the form of foreign investment, as much as $7,153 billion was portfolio investment.[36] Initially it adds to foreign reserves. But it is only a temporary advantage. In the long run, it does not provide either the stability or the security that the country requires. Because it does not have a long-term stake in the country, it moves around the world financial markets where the highest profit can be made. Thus, it puts pressure on the local economy as we have recently seen in East Asia as well as in India.[37]

Liberalisation and Employment

The third feature of the profit orientation of capitalism, piously called liberalisation, is job loss. That is one of the reasons why, as we have mentioned above, the size of the middle class is expected to shrink. We shall discuss it in this section. An important way of joining the middle class is through a job in the formal sector. Job loss occurred also in the 19th century when the South Asian sub-continent was de-industrialised in order to create a captive market for the products of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. According to one estimate 35 million persons were deprived of their livelihood through these economic changes. Most of them were small manufacturers of textile and other products in the urban areas.[38]

Today the same situation is caused through three major inputs, viz., mechanisation, reduction or elimination of subsidies and portfolio investment. "Employment adjustment" is one of the SAP conditionalities. It is a pre-condition for loans from international agencies, in case of a BOP crisis in poor countries. In this imposition, the technological progress of the last two decades in the rich countries, gives to the industrial decision-maker many profit

oriented options, of which mechanisation of production is the most important. So industry often opts for it.

In India, in 1985, the year in which the process of liberalisation (formalised in July 1991) began, the formal sector employed 30 millions in a total workforce of about 300 millions. 23 millions of them were in the public sector and 7 millions in the private sector. By 1991, the number in the private sector had declined to 6 millions.[39] Since then, the GNP has grown at an annual average of 6 to 8 per cent but employment generation has been negative. Today the workforce in the formal sector is 28 millions. With every job lost in the formal sector, many more are lost in the informal. ILO estimates that 8 million jobs were lost in the formal and informal sectors in India between 1992 and 1994.[40] And yet, the country needs 10 million new jobs per year.

Such reduction is seen also in many concrete cases. For example, the T.N. Singh Formula 1979 stipulated that public sector mines and industries give a job each to every family they displace. This scheme was abandoned in 1986 because the public sector companies claimed that no unskilled jobs were available consequent upon mechanisation that began around 1985. One can see its consequences, among others, in the coal sector. Coal India displaced 36751 families between 1981 and 1985 and gave a job each to 11,901 (36.34%) of them. Mechanisation of the mines began in 1985, and so did job loss. For example, the 24 mines scheduled to come up in the North Karanpura valley in Jharkhand, will displace about 1,00,000 persons, two thirds of them dalits and tribals. Its first two mines displaced 6,265 families till 1992 but gave a job each to only 638 (10.18%) of them.[41]

Reduction or elimination of subsidies is one more SAP conditionality. That is another important source of job loss and of impoverishment. In many parts of India, subsidised fertilisers had functioned as a land substitute to the poor farmer. A farmer owning two acres of land could double production because of it. In 1992, the cotton export policy was changed to encourage its export. In the same year, subsidies on fertilisers were reduced. But subsidies on power and water that benefit mainly the big farmer remained unchanged.

A result of these changes is that cotton export increased four times from the previous year's 90,000 tonnes. The shortage for domestic use resulted in the suicide of many weavers, especially in Andhra Pradesh. On the other side, fertiliser prices rose by 30% in a year, and small farmers had to abandon their use. A large number of them fell below the poverty line. Others were encouraged by fertiliser and above all pesticide companies to switch over to cotton farming. They were promised easy loans for it and quick and high profits from it. Most of them had to borrow, in some cases lakhs of rupees, to change over to this cash crop. But they were deceived in the type of pesticides supplied. Besides, they were not aware of the manner of using some of the new inputs, as well as of the fact that the seed supplied to them was prone to disease. These factors combined with unusual

rains to destroy the crop. That explains the spate of suicides of farmers particularly in Andhra Pradesh in 1997 and 1998. More than half of the 120 farmers, who committed suicide in Warangal district alone, were dalits and tribals, all of them small farmers who had to abandon the use of fertiliser because of price rise, borrowed money and took to cotton farming with hopes of making a high profit.[42]

The third major source of job loss is portfolio investment. Though capitalism swears by competition, in reality it is based on the principle of might is right. The effort of each enterprise is to monopolise the market in its area of production. One can, for example, see that within a decade, the soft drinks market in India has been cornered by two multinational giants. Hundreds of small local producers have disappeared from the scene. Portfolio investment has been its main tool. While mechanisation results in the reorganisation of production, portfolio investment results in the reorganisation of ownership. It thus achieves the type of de-industrialisation of the small producer that the British achieved in the 19th century in order to support their industrial revolution. Studies in Goa, Bangalore and in some other places substantiate our contention that a large number of small industries have closed down because of monopoly control achieved through portfolio investment. Many jobs have been lost as a result.[43]

Capitalism and Impoverishment

It should be clear, then, that impoverishment of the already weak is intrinsic to the present system of capitalism that is called globalisation. In reality it is the control of the world economy that is being transferred to the hands of a few countries, in particular to the TNCs that they control. These companies wield enormous financial and political power. One can see it in the fact that 47 of the 100 biggest economies of the world are TNCs. They use this power for their own profit, and in the process further impoverish the already weak. One can see it in the fact that even according to official statistics, the proportion of families living below the poverty line (BPL) in India has increased from 37% in 1989-90 to 48% in 1992-93.[44] One does not have to add that the BPL population is composed predominantly of dalits and tribals.

It is clear from the analysis given above that capitalism, as it is experienced in the South, is against all norms of morality that speak of the human being as dignified and as created in the image of God. Its only motive force is profit. Human beings do not count in this quest. But many assume that the choice of the world continues to be capitalism or socialism as practised in the North and that the former stands for human rights and liberty. This paper has been an attempt to analyse these assumptions. Based on the experience of the countries of South, we can conclude that a system that devalues the human being in the quest for profit, one to which inequalities are endemic and intrinsic, cannot be accepted by those who uphold every human being's right to life with dignity.

Notes

1. Robert Bosc, *Guerres Froides Et Affrontements: Analyse et Prospectives Internationales de 1950 a 1980*, Paris: Aubin Michel, 1973, pp. 21-23.
2. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London: George Alllen and Allwan Ltd., 1976, pp. 143-146.
3. William Ebenstein, *Today's Isms: Communism, Fascism, Capitalism, Socialism*, Englewood Cliffs: Printice Hall, 1962, pp. 38-49.
4. Noam Chomsky, *Determining Democracy*, London: Vintage, 1992, pp. 81-85.
5. Peter Worsley, *The Third World*, London: 1973.
6. Robert Bosc, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-26.
7. Josue De Castro, *Geographie de la Faim: Tragique, Permanente, Accusatirce de la Faim*, Paris: Seuil, 1964, pp. 23-26.
8. Eric Gonsalves, "India's Foreign Policy in the New World Order", in *Social Action* 42 (1972, July - Sept.) 3, pp. 231-241.
9. Guy De Boschere, *Autopsie de la Colonisation*, Paris: Aubin Michael, 1967, pp. 65-67.
10. Miriam Ferrer, "Emulating Southeast Asian Development: The Neo-Liberal Tale of Two Studies", Paper Presented at the *International Conference Colonialism to Globalisation: Five Centuries After Vasco da Gama*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, February 1998, pp. 2-6.
11. David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamil Nadu*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1977, pp. 7-8.
12. Vinod Vyasulu, "The South Asian Model", Paper Presented at the *International Conference Colonialism to Globalisation: Five Centuries After Vasco da Gama*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, February 1998, pp. 2-6.
13. K.S. Jomo, "Emulating Southeast Asian Development: The Neo-Liberal Tale of Two Studies", Paper Presented at the *International Conference Colonialism to Globalisation:Five Centuries After Vasco da Gama*, 1998.
14. Kavaljit Singh, *A Citizen's Guide to the Globalisation of Finance*, New Delhi: Madhya Books, 1998, pp. 45-62.
15. Devinder Sharma, *GATT and India: The Politics of Agriculture*, Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1994, pp. 440-448.
16. C. T. Kurien, "Globalisation: What Is It About?", in *Integral Liberation* 1 (September 1997) 3, pp. 133-140.
17. Stanley Johnson, *Population Problem*, London: Newton John, 1974, p. 58.
18. Paul Demeny, "The North-South Income Gap: A Demographic Perspective", in *Population and Development Review* 7 (June 1981), pp. 297-310.
19. Michel Chossudowsky, "Global Poverty and the New World Economic Order", in *Economic and Political Weekly* 26 (November 1991) 44, pp. 2527-2537.
20. M. A. Oommen, "Transnational Capital, GATT/WTO and the Crisis of National Sovereignty", in Ajit Muricken (ed.), *Globalisation and SAP: Trends and Impact*, Mumbai: Vikas Abhyayan Kendra, 1997, pp. 21-44.
21. John Desrochers, "Complementary Insights on Colonialism", in *Integral Liberation* 1 (December 1997) 4, 1997, pp. 141-145.
22. John Cardinal Mahony, *The Foreign Debt Trap. Breakfawst Talk*, Los Angeles: the 7th November, 1997.

23. Utsa Patnaik, "Export Orientated Agriculture and Food Security in Developing Countries", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31 (Special Issue 1996), pp. 2429-2431.
24. Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *Hunger and Public Action*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
25. John Cardinal Mahony, 1997.
26. Walter Fernandes and Arundhuti Roy Choudhury, "Mercantile Colonialism: Destruction of the Economy and Subservience", Paper Presented at the *International Conference Colonialism to Globalisation: Five Centuries After Vasco da Gama*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, February 1998, pp. 2-6.
27. C. T. Kurien, *op. cit.*,
28. Kavaljit Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-7.
29. C. T. Kurien, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
30. Guy De Boschere, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
31. D. Narasimha Reddy, "Political Economy of Crisis and the Strategy of Structural Adjustment Programme in India", in M.A.Oommen et al. (eds), *Political Crisis in India: Studies in Political Economy*, New Delhi: Khama Publishers, 1995, pp. 196-219.
32. John Desrochers, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-202.
33. Ajit Muricken, "Globalisation: Overviews", in James David and John Desrochers (eds), *Dimensions of Globalisation*, Bangalore: Centre for Social Action, 1998, p. 11.
34. Walter Fernandes, "Development-Induced Displacement in Eastern India", in S. C. Dube (ed.), *Antiquity and Modernity in Tribal India: Vol. I: Continuity and Change Among the Tribals*, New Delhi: Inter-India Publishers, 1998, pp. 217-301.
35. Walter Fernandes and Mohammed Asif, *Development-Induced Displacement in Orissa 1951-1995: A Database on Its Nature and Extent*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1997.
36. Govt. of India, *Economic Survey 1994-95*, New Delhi: Ministry of Finance, 1995. Govt. of India, *Economic Survey 1997-98*, New Delhi: Ministry of Finance, 1998.
37. Jayati Ghosh, "Gender and Macro-Economic Policy in India", in *Women's Link* 3 (Oct.-Dec. 1997) 4, 1997, pp. 3-11.
38. Walter Fernandes and Arundhuti Roy Choudhury, *loc. cit.*, 1998.
39. Gopabandhu Pattanaik and Damodar Panda, "The New Economic Policy and the Poor," in *Social Action* 42 (April-June 1992) 2, pp. 201-212.
40. VAK Team, "The New Economic Path: Trends and Impact", in Ajit Muricken (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 151-180.
41. BJA & NBJK., *Social Impact: Piparwar and the North Karanpura Coal Fields*, Hunterganj and Champaran: Bharat Jan Andolan and Nav Bharat Jagruti Kendra. 1993, p. 36.
42. Alka Srivastava and Janaki Chundi, Forthcoming. "Globalisation and the Indian Farmer", in *Caritas Bulletin*, January 1999.
43. Ajit Muricken, *loc. cit.*, p. 10.
44. VAK Team, *loc. cit.*, p. 167.

JPJRS 2/1 (1999) 19-35

Socialism: Crisis and Hope

Paul Parathazham
Dept. of Social Sciences, JDV, Pune

Ten years ago when that dreadful symbol of communist tyranny, the Berlin Wall, came crashing down, it was widely assumed that Marxism has been buried under its debris once and for all. The industrialized West saw in the collapse of Soviet and East European socialism the definitive vindication of capitalism as the only valid and viable form of social and economic organization. In the centres of international capitalism, there was much euphoria. In the less developed nations which had adopted the socialist model of development, there was dismay and a sense of loss. Then for nearly a decade capitalism reigned unchallenged. Globalization assumed the status of a natural law; liberalization became the new economic *mantra*; privatization was prescribed as a panacea for all economic ills; state intervention in the economy was declared a taboo. The socialist idea, it seemed, has been definitively discredited. Capitalism was all set to march into the new millennium as the only viable, if not the most desirable, system of economic organization for humankind.

But a strange thing happened on the way to the millennium! In 1998, barely ten years after socialism was declared dead, on the 150th anniversary of the Communist Manifesto, the 'spectre of communism' returned to haunt the world. Unexpected developments in a number of countries across the world suggested that the obituary of socialism might have been written rather prematurely.

Russia's honeymoon with capitalism ended in disaster. Television images of restive Russian crowds, jostling to enter banks and withdraw whatever is left of their drastically devalued savings, told the grim story of how badly capitalism can go wrong. A decade of liberalization and free-market economy has left the Russian economy on the verge of bankruptcy. The Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, who dislodged the communists from power only a decade ago, was forced to appoint a communist, Primakov, Prime Minister in order to clean up the mess created by the country's fling with capitalism.

Close on the heels of the Russian debacle, the Tiger Economies of the East and South East Asia, the show-pieces of capitalist success, collapsed like a domino, threatening to induce a global economic crisis. There are already signs of Latin America becoming the next domino. "Even USA, whose booming economy once looked insulated from the typhoon hitting the world markets, is now feeling the blast – its stock markets have lost billions of dollars in market capitalisation" (Aiyar 1998, 19).

Meanwhile, there are unmistakable signs of a changing ideological climate in several parts of the world. In country after country in Western Europe, the Leftist forces have staged a remarkable come-back. "Germany is a Bonn-again pinko. It is only the latest country in Europe to have been so seduced. Italy and France have Socialist leaders; in Britain, Thatcherism has been replaced by the Third Way which is as much Left as Right. The Iron Curtain isn't about to fall once more over Russia, but Bleary Boris had to accept the communist Primakov as prime minister. Asian Tigers are licking the wounds inflicted by their passionate embrace of capitalism" (The Sunday Times of India, October 25, 1998, 13). There is wide-spread disillusionment in the World Bank-IMF inspired capitalist solutions to the economic woes of the world. Some feel that the belated award of 1998 Nobel Prize for Economics to Professor Amartya Sen, the foremost proponent of welfare economics, is a clear signal of which way the ideological wind is blowing (Sharma 1998, 13).

What do these developments portend for the future? Do they suggest that the world is taking a "Left" turn as it approaches the new millennium? This is a question that is being intensely debated today not only in scholarly discourses but also in political circles and the media. Predictably, the discussion is polarized along ideological lines. At one end of the ideological spectrum, there are those who believe that the recent events signal the demise of capitalism and the return of comrade Marx to the world stage, this time to stay. The leading British thinker, Eric Hobsbawm, for example, believes: " In 1998 Karl Marx came back . . . Ten years after the irreversible triumph of liberalism and the end of history had been proclaimed, here he is back in circulation to everyone's surprise, including the ageing family of the old Marxists . . ." (1998, 11).

Not surprisingly, those at the other end of the ideological spectrum read the current events differently. They feel that the present crisis does not pose any serious threat to capitalism. Leading Indian economist, Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar, is a representative of this school. He observes: "Many countries and companies are going bust, and a global recession may soon engulf us. Never mind. In capitalism recessions and bankruptcies are not aberrations; they are signals telling you something is wrong and needs rectification. They do not sound the death-knell of capitalism; they merely ring an alarm bell to signify it is time capitalism re-engineered itself once again" (1998, 19). A similar view is expressed by Chandan Mitra:

> The recent ascendancy of the neo-Left in Western Europe . . . does not amount to anything more than a minor course correction in the path of capitalism's agenda of globalization. Throughout history, the neo-Left has acted as the acceptable face of capitalism, introducing humane correctives at times when capitalism's unacceptable face – of rapacity and rampant exploitation – has threatened to cause a permanent fissure in society. With the collapse of the Socialist model in the erstwhile Soviet Union and its vassal states in Eastern

> Europe and the impending demise of China's delightfully hypocritical concept of 'market socialism', the soft correctives periodically offered by the reformed Left are an integral part of the capitalist world order (1998, 13).

It is too early to determine whether the current crisis represents the return of socialism or only a minor course correction in the path of capitalism. Be that as it may, it does seem evident that to the dispossessed and marginalised sections in society, capitalism as it functions today offers little hope for dignity and decent living. For them socialism still retains its relevance as a rallying ground for the struggle to build a better future for themselves and their children. It is from their perspective that this paper examines socialism's past and explores its possibilities for the future. This inquiry, therefore, is informed by the belief in the superior moral potential of the socialist ideal and by the hope it enshrines of a humane future for the wretched of the earth.

It is generally conceded by Marxists and Non-Marxists alike that the socialism of the future, if indeed it has a future, will have to be significantly different from the socialism of the past, both as a theoretical construct and as a political project. There is, of course, no agreement on the emotionally charged issue of the relationship between Marxism as an intellectual achievement and Marxism as a political movement. This is an issue that bears some resemblance to the question, for example, of the relationship between Christianity and the Inquisition. Critics of Christianity have asserted that the two are linked directly and inseparably; defenders have argued that any connection between the two is accidental, and at best indirect. While the exact nature of the relationship is a moot point, it is beyond doubt that the theoretical formulations of socialism did have an influence on the structure and dynamics of the socialist states. The first part of this paper will examine some of the ambiguities and distortions in Marx's theory, especially those which might have directly or indirectly contributed to the failure of socialism. The second part will highlight the lessons to be drawn from the vagaries of socialism in the past for the socialism of the future.

I. Marxian Theory: Ambiguities and Distortions

Marx's voluminous writings bristle with inconsistencies and ambiguities. Within the brief compass of this paper, it is not possible to review all of these in great detail. Here we shall focus on three aspects of Marxist theory, the materialist interpretation of history, the critique of capitalism and the vision of the socialist society.

1. Materialist Interpretation of History

Hegelian Idealism, the reigning philosophy of Marx's time, understood historical evolution as the progressive self-realization of the Idea. In Hegel's view "ideas 'create' history and determine its form, and history itself – that is, the human narrative – must be seen as the embodiment of ideas realized in events" (Heilbroner 1980, 63). Claiming to have stood Hegel on his feet, Marx proposed the materialist interpre-

tation of history, which he summarized in the *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* as follows :

> The general result at which I arrived . . . can be briefly formulated as follows: in the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitute the economic structure of society, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life-process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness (Selected Works 1, 1969, 503-4).

In this perspective, what gives meaning, thrust and direction to history is the actual engagement of human beings with their material circumstances, most importantly, the constant and indispensable activity of ensuring the reproduction of their subsistence. As Engels points out in *Anti-Dühring*, this implies that " . . . the ultimate causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in the minds of men, in their increasing insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the mode of production and exchange; they are to be sought not in the *philosophy* but in the *economics* of the epoch concerned" (Heilbroner 1980, 64.)

The materialist interpretation of history poses two difficult problems: *(a)* of defining exactly which activities fall under the *economic* category and *(b)* of determining the nature and degree of influence the economic base exerts on the superstructure.

The material base of a society presumably consists of those activities necessary to assure the survival and reproduction of its members. This includes its economic life, namely, the totality of those activities related to ongoing production and distribution of the goods and services necessary for the subsistence and survival of its members. However, these economic activities do not exist independently nor operate autonomously. The economic base can function only when a host of actions that are not 'economic' in the conventional sense are performed. There cannot be activity among men without social relationships that bind them; and these are as much political, legal and moral as they are economic. As Bober points out:

> A productive order cannot legitimately be presented as the primary and independent variable to which institutions seek to accommodate themselves. The mode of production is itself charged with institutional connotations without which it can have no content and no existence. It is permeated with attributes of property, inequality of possessions, status, contract and other arrangements. Religion, superstition, art, and taboos were an integral part of productive activities in early time; property and human relations, sanctioned by law, are in organic relation to such activities in more modern times; always non-economic institutions, conceptions, and

> mores are indispensable aspects, if not the very heart, of systems of production. The emphasis is to fall on interrelations and not on polarities (1965, 323).

The materialist interpretation of history presupposes a clear demarcation of the base structure from the superstructure, the economic sector from the non-economic sectors. However, the intermingling of economic activities with non-economic activities, the inevitable fusion of ideational and material elements throughout society, make it difficult, if not impossible, to clearly demarcate the material (economic) sphere from the non-material sphere. Therefore, according due importance to the role of non-economic institutions and ideational elements in human affairs without losing its distinctive materialist emphasis has always been a difficult problem in Marx's interpretation of history.

A second area of ambiguity in Marx's materialist interpretation relates to the relationship between the economic and non-economic sectors of society. This relationship has been variously formulated by Marx and Engels: that the base structure alone "explains" all the institutions and ideas of a given epoch; that definite social forms of consciousness "correspond" to the economic basis; and that the base structure is the "ultimate cause," the "great moving power," the "final cause," the "determining element in the last instance," in history.

These expressions clearly suggest that Marx and Engels meant to assert a causal relation between the base structure or the mode of production and the superstructure of institutions and ideas. The problem is in determining what kind of a cause the base structure is. Engels in a letter written to Joseph Bloch on September 21, 1890 has strongly refuted all attempts to interpret historical materialism as some kind of crude economic determinism:

> According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if anybody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure: political forms of the class struggle and its results . . . also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles, and in many cases preponderate in determining their form . . . (Selected Works, 3, 1970, 487).

If economy is not the one and only causal variable, the question remains as to what kind of a cause it is. The renowned historian and Marxist scholar Leszek Kolakowski in his magisterial three-volume study, *Main Currents of Marxism,* poses the problem sharply:

> We must ask then, what exactly is historical materialism? If it means that every detail of the superstructure can be explained as in some way dictated by the demands of the 'base', it is an absurdity with nothing to recommend it to credence; while if, as Engels' remarks suggest, it does not involve absolute determinism in this sense, it

is no more than a fact of common knowledge. If interpreted rigidly, it conflicts with elementary demands of rationality; if loosely, it is a mere truism (1978, 364).

The traditional way out of this unhappy predicament is to invoke Engels' conception of the economy as the "ultimately determining element in history." However, the meaning the phrase "ultimately determining" remains unclear. Engels probably meant that economy is the primary, the most basic, or the decisive causal factor in history. However, at any given time in any historical period a multitude of factors are interacting with each other; together they explain what is happening in the social system at a given point in time. It is not possible to determine with any scientific exactitude which factor is primary and which is secondary, which is proximate and which is ultimate.

A less rigorous interpretation of historical materialism is that the economy determines the superstructure in the negative sense of setting limits for the kind of sociopolitical arrangements that are compatible with it. This would mean, for example, that the superstructure of a slave society would be incompatible with the base structure of a feudalist or capitalist society, and vice versa; nevertheless, a given economic foundation can give rise to a variety of compatible superstructures.

Historical materialism, understood in either sense, cannot live up to its claim of being an all-embracing grand theory of history, which accounts for the past, analyses the present, and confidently predicts the future. One can hardly disagree with Kolakowski's conclusion: "Considered as a theory explaining all historical change by technical progress and all civilization by class struggle, Marxism is unsustainable. As a theory of the interdependence of technology, property relationships, and civilization, it is trivial" (1978, 369).

Nevertheless, as Kolakowski himself goes on to state: "All this does not mean that Marx's principles of historical investigation are empty or meaningless. On the contrary, he has profoundly affected our understanding of history, and it is hard to deny that without him our researches would be less complete and accurate than they are . . ." (1979, 369-370). Indeed, if today it is universally acknowledged that we cannot understand the history of ideas unless we see them as expressions of the lives of the societies in which they arose, it is largely the result of Marx's thought.

As a monistic theory in search of universalist solutions, historical materialism is of dubious value. However, as a method of analysis that takes seriously the insight that a community's spiritual and intellectual life is not self-contained and wholly autonomous but is invariably also reflections of its material interests, it offers an invaluable heuristic principle to the students of social life.

2. Critique of Capitalism

Paradoxically, the object of Marx's life-long attention was something that he loathed and wanted to see dismantled: the mode of production

called capitalism. The theoretical formulations of Historical Materialism were merely the premises from which he launched his life's project. His critique of capitalism boils down to the claim that it was inherently an exploitative, imperialistic and dehumanizing system, a system so rife with inner contradictions that its historical development will create the conditions for its own doom and pave the way for a socialist society.

"Marx defines capitalism as a system of society in which the instruments of production are operated for the private profit of those who own them by means of the labour of workers who are neither slaves or serfs but freemen" (Hook 1955, 28). Profit, according to Marx, is the *raison d'etre* of capitalism. To explain how profit arises and why it amounts to exploitation, Marx proposed the theory of value and its corollary, the theory of surplus value.

Marx suggested that what determines the exchange value of a commodity is the amount of *socially necessary labour* that has gone into its making. By *socially necessary labour,* Marx meant the average amount of labour that would be required to produce a commodity at a given level of technological development. Though different kinds of labour – skilled and unskilled labour, for example – are not directly comparable, Marx believed that it is possible to convert them into homogeneous units of simple labour. In capitalism, the worker sells his labour-power as a commodity in the market and the capitalist purchases it at its value like any other commodity. The value of labour-power is computed like the value of other commodities, that is, in terms the amount of socially necessary labour required to generate it. For example, the amount of socially necessary labour required to produce labour-power for eight hours would be equivalent to the money required to sustain the labourer and his dependents in good physical condition for a day.

Labour-power has a special attribute that sets it apart from all other commodities. It can create more value than its market value. That is to say, labour-power can create more labour that the value of labour-power. For example, a labourer who works for eight hours can produce the value equivalent to eight hours of labour in less than eight hours, say, in six hours, which would be the *necessary labour time*. The additional value yielded in the remaining two hours (*surplus labour time*) is surplus value or profit. "The value of labour-power will always be less than the value a capitalist will receive from the commodities that this labour-power will produce" (Heilbroner 1980,108). Labour, according to Marx, is the one and only source of profit in capitalism.

The worker is remunerated only for the value of his labour-power, and not for the actual value that his labour-power creates. Profit is unpaid labour. Therefore, when capitalism derives profit, it exploits. In such a system, the worker is alienated from nature, self, and society. This alienation in the economic base is reproduced in different aspects of the superstructure, such as politics, law, arts, science, religion, and philosophy.[1]

Capitalism is essentially an unstable system, according to Marx. The urge to make ever greater profit under conditions of intense competition will force the capitalists to continuously expand and mechanize production. Expansion will result in large-scale production (concentration), the rise of monopoly (centralisation) and the progressive decline of competition. Mechanisation will mean decreasing deployment of labour in the production process, and as the investment in machines and technology (constant capital) increases and proportion of labour decreases, the rate of profit declines. The falling rate of profit and the consequent pauperisation of the working class will plunge capitalism repeatedly into economic crises.[2] Crippled by recurring economic crises, it will finally be overthrown by a disillusioned proletariat in a revolutionary class struggle.

Marxian theory of value and surplus value is rife with difficulties. First, Marx's contention that labour is the only measure of value and that the varieties of human labour, mental and physical, skilled and unskilled, can all be reduced to homogeneous and comparable units of simple labour seems arbitrary and implausible. Second, the conception that labour is the only source of value, and that capital, machinery and other labour-saving devices do not add any value to commodities is open to question, as it does not seem to accord with the facts of exchange.

The law of falling rate of profit, as Kolakowski observes, "appears to be no more than an expression of Marx's hope that capitalism would be destroyed by its own inconsistencies. Only empirical observation, and not deduction from the nature of the profit rate, can tell us whether it does tend permanently to decline; and such observation is not found to confirm Marx's theory" (1978, 298). Similarly, Marx's theory of "increasing misery" (pauperisation) of the masses also has not been borne out by subsequent history of capitalism, if what he means is increasing physical impoverishment.[3]

Much more successful were Marx's predictions regarding the tendency towards concentration and centralization in capitalism. His predictions regarding business cycles, recurring crises and the necessity of imperialist expansion have also been vindicated by history. However, in hindsight, Marx failed to anticipate capitalism's resourcefulness to re-engineer itself to overcome its periodic crises, the power of organized labour to exact higher wages and better working conditions through bargaining, the role some states would play to ensure social security and a more egalitarian distribution of income, and the overall improvement in health and living standards of the population.

3. Vision of the Socialist Society

The dream of a socialist society and the struggle to realize it are the life-giving forces that sustain Marx's work. However, Marx's main preoccupation was the analysis of capitalism, to lay bare its inner contradictions which, when played out, would seal its doom and set the stage for the emergence of the socialist society. Therefore, he de-

voted very little attention to the structure of the socialist society that he assumed would succeed capitalism. Although Marx did not leave us a detailed account of the future society he envisaged, its basic principles are spelt out in the following passage from *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*:

> Communism is the positive abolition of private property, of human self-alienation, and thus the real appropriation of human nature through and for man. It is, therefore, the return of man himself as a *social,* i.e, really human being, a complete and conscious return which assimilates all the wealth of previous development. Communism as a fully developed naturalism is humanism and as a fully developed humanism is naturalism. It is the definitive resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man. It is the true solution of the conflict between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and the species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be the solution (Fromm 1963, 127).

Capitalism accomplished the conquest of nature; socialism represents the conquest of man. "Working class has conquered nature; now it must conquer man," (Marx in People's Paper, 18 March, 1854). In capitalism the workers are dominated and enslaved by their own products, a situation Marx characterized as the "fetishism of commodities." Socialism will create the conditions in which human beings are fully in control of their labour-power and creative energies, so that the products of their physical and mental labour can never turn against them and dominate them. Socialism is the rule of man over himself; he will no longer be ruled by the material forces that he creates. The "species-specific" character of labour as free, spontaneous, and self-directed activity will be restored. "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Selected Works, 1, 1969, 127).

In socialism, labour-power will cease to be a commodity that is bought and sold; the sale of labour-power will be abolished; all production will be geared to use-value, not exchange value. What is produced, how it is produced and how much is produced will be determined by social needs, and not by profit motive. Under such a system there will be no scope for exploitation of any kind. This does not mean that the worker will be directly remunerated for all his labour in the form of wages; part of the value he creates will have to be set aside for common needs, such as the support of those who create no value, but perform socially necessary functions; the care of those who are unfit to work; collective consumption like schools, hospitals and infrastructure; and the renewal and expansion of the productive systems. Directly or indirectly all value created by workers will accrue to society in the collective satisfaction of social needs. This would require collective ownership and control of the means of production as well as socially planned cooperative production to meet the needs of society as a whole and of each individual. In the

Critique of the Gotha Programme, Marx says:

> In a higher phase of communist society, after enslaving subordination of individuals under division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour, from being a mere means of life, has itself become a prime necessity of life; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more freely – only then can the narrow horizon bourgeois rights be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs! (Selected Works, 3, 1970, 19)

Socialism will inaugurate the era of complete humanization. It marks the arrival of the Total Man. Marx insists that human fulfilment consists not only in the satisfaction of material needs. The abolition of material poverty alone, therefore, will not bring about socialism. Nor is it simply a question of redistributing the "income produced in the same old way." Unlike the animals, for man work is not simply an activity that produces the means of subsistence; it is his *life-activity,* a means of self-expression and self-realization. The species-specific character of human work as the power of self-expression and fulfilment will be restored in socialism. This would entail the abolition of division of labour, which stifled human creativity and self-expression by condemning the worker to stultifying one-sidedness. In *German Ideology* Marx and Engels portray communism as a society, " . . . where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner . . ." (Fromm 1963, 206).

Furthermore, work will regain its social character as a means of fellowship and interpersonal communion. Marx writes:

> In my production I would have objectified my individuality in its uniqueness . . . in your enjoyment or use of my product, I would have had the direct satisfaction of the awareness of having satisfied a human need through my work . . . I would have had the satisfaction of having acted as an intermediary between you and the human species . . . Our products would be so many mirrors from which our being would shine out to us . . ." (Quoted in Heilbroner 1980, 151).

The transition to socialism will be the result of a class struggle, in which the proletariat, the universal class, overthrows the bourgeoisie, the dominant class in capitalism. Although Marx and Engels suggest, especially in their early writings, that the class struggle would be a violent and bloody confrontation, they do not exclude the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism through the ballot box in countries where democracy is the form of government. [4]

When the proletariat seizes power, the classless society does not come into existence right away. First, there will be an intervening period of social transformation, which Marx

termed the *dictatorship of the proletariat* . During this transitional period, the ruling proletariat will dismantle, using force if necessary, the capitalist institutions, agencies, and mechanisms, and institute in their place socialist structures and processes. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a dictatorship only with regard to the bourgeoisie; for the proletariat it is a democracy. When its historical mission of laying the foundation of the socialist society is completed, the proletarian state will, in Engels' words, *wither away.* [5] According to Marx, the state is "the organized power of one class for oppressing another" (*Manifesto*). In a classless society, the political state, as a power opposed to the people, has no place; it will be abolished.

Marx repeatedly characterized his theory as *scientific socialism* in order to distinguish it form other socialist theories of his time, which he derided as *utopian socialism.* Nevertheless, the fact remains that the idyllic vision of the socialist society which Marx painted, too, is utopian in several respects, his protestations notwithstanding.

Marx was so consumed by his indignation for the evils of the status quo, that he give little thought to the possible perils of the post status quo which he envisaged. Marx failed to consider the possibility that under the system of collective ownership, controlled as it is by a single overarching agency, the workers might be exploited just as equally as they were in the capitalist system. "He overlooked the demonstrable truth that under socialism the degree of political democracy which prevails is of far greater importance than the degree of economic collectivism. For without democracy, a collectivized economy becomes at best a tool of benevolent despots and bureaucrats, and at worst, the most terrible instrument of oppression in the history of mankind" (Hook 1955, 44). His belief that a change in property relations will automatically eliminate all differences in power and prestige and every form of exploitation has turned out to be utopian.

The principle of socialism, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need," has great appeal as an ideal. However, the problems in translating this principle into practice are intractable. Needs are subjective, indefinite and potentially unlimited. What yardstick can one use to prioritize the varied needs of a multitude of individuals and groups in a large country? Even the notion of *basic needs* is historically and culturally conditioned. Similar difficulties of practical application surround the concept of *ability*, which is supposed to be the basis for determining the amount of work that would be expected from an individual in a communist society.

The socialist society which Marx envisaged is an extended family, a form of social organization in which relationships between individuals and groups will approximate the bonds that unite a loving family. Marx hoped that the spirit of an ideal family, where the needs of the members are gratified out of love rather than according to the principles of justice, could be extended to include

the whole society. But as Hook has observed: "The whole society can never become one family, not all families are free of conflict, and even in loving families love is not always enough" (1955, 45).

II. Lessons for Socialism of the Furture

We have so far analysed the central notions of Marxist theory of history, where perhaps some of the answers for the failure of the socialist experiments are to be found. It seems clear that, if socialism has to have a future, it has to be profoundly transformed. The socialism of the future has several lessons to learn from its past. It is to these lessons for the future that we now turn.

1. From Dogma to Science

Marx came on the scene as the self-styled theoretician of "scientific" socialism. His brand of socialism, Marx insisted, is a science unlike that of the utopian socialists, which he scoffed at as nothing but a "pious hope". Yet, despite repeated claims to scientific status, over the years Marxism came to be regarded as an infallible dogma, intolerant of dissent and criticism. Marxist orthodoxy persecuted critics and dissenters in a manner reminiscent of the way religious orthodoxies dealt with heretics. Socialism of the future must rediscover its original purpose of providing a scientific analysis of social evolution, an analysis that subjects itself to ongoing criticism and revision. For, as Kappen points out " . . . revisionism is not an aberration, but the only guarantee of true historical praxis" (1992, 32). Socialism must take advantage of its disintegration and revitalize itself. It must unpack the inherited ideology, reject the received wisdom of antediluvian verities, and reconstitute itself by incorporating insights from historical experience.

2. From Class Struggle to People's struggle

Marx viewed proletarian class struggle as the instrument of transition from capitalism to socialism. The socialist hope that the workers of the world will unite as one class, aware of its interests, conscious of its destiny and committed to the cause of building a new society, has been belied by history. The *Manifesto's* clarion call, "Working men of all countries unite," has fallen on deaf years. The expected polarisation of the world into two opposing camps never materialized. Other loyalties of family, caste, race, religion, nationality, etc. effectively prevented the crystallisation of working class solidarity.

Today there is hardly any doubt that class struggle can play only a limited role in the construction of the future society. The socialism of the future must take into account other struggles too, which are based on caste, race, ethnicity, sex, religion, and nationality. Such struggles have their own autonomy and dynamics, and cannot be reduced to class struggle. The society of the future will be shaped by the combined impact of the struggles for emancipation of different groups like women, Dalits, Blacks, Tribals, and indigenous populations. Socialism cannot remain

a prisoner of the concept of class struggle. The socialist agenda must encompass people's struggles of every kind. The notion of proletarian revolution must be replaced by the concept people's revolution (Kappen1992; Danenberg 1993).

3. Participatory Democracy

Writing on the death centenary of Marx, V. M Tarkunde, one of the best known communists in India, bemoaned: "Marx himself was a passionate lover of freedom. Yet the philosophy founded by him has led to the negation of freedom in different parts of the world" (1983, 1). It is one of ironies of history that socialism, which Marx extolled as the "perfection of democracy" and "man's leap into freedom," gave rise to totalitarian regimes of the worst kind.

Against this background, the role of the party as an agent of revolution need to be reassessed. "The Soviet experience proves that no party can accomplish revolution for the masses. Were a party to undertake the task, revolution *for the masses* will invariably turn out to be a revolution *for the party*" (Kappen 1992, 36). The party claimed to exercise power on behalf of the proletariat. But in the absence of inner-party democracy and accountability of the leadership to the people, the vaunted dictatorship *of* the proletariat easily degenerated into a dictatorship *over* the proletariat. The socialism of the future must take corrective steps to avert the subversion of human rights by the party and the state apparatus under the guise of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It must find a way of combining political freedom with economic emancipation (Karat 1990).

4. Decentralization of the Economy

In the absence of clear guidelines from Marx about how to build the socialist economy, socialism came to be associated with state ownership of the means of production. Marxian concept of social ownership was distorted to mean state ownership. And when political and economic power came to be vested in the same hands, it gave rise to a new power elite no less exploitative than the propertied classes. The state ownership of the means of production resulted in new forms of estrangement between the unseen owners of the property and the workers who made use of it but who had no powers of ownership and little say in management (Kurien 1993). The socialism of the future must decentralize the economy and bring the means of production under the control of the people. Democratization in the sphere of production would involve the transfer of ownership, planning and management of production from the State to the cooperatives at the local level. Only then, will Marx's dream of a society " . . . in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (*Manifesto*) will become a reality,

5. Critique of Science and Technology

A child of the scientism of the 19th century, Marx adopted a soteriological view of science and technology. He was an admirer of the nature-conquering mega-technology, which he believed

will provide solutions to all the problems of humanity and usher in a new era of peace and prosperity. It is hardly surprising that his analysis offered no critique of the productive forces, especially science and technology. Instead, he advocated large-scale industrialism as the economic strategy of the socialist society. Large-scale industries, he believed, would increase the productivity of labour and at the same time ensure the social character of production (Ghosh 1990).

Socialism, with its triumphalist view of science and technology, nature-conquering ethos and mindless promotion of large-scale industrialism, has been no less responsible for the ecological disaster that threatens the world today. The socialism of the future must provide a critique not only of capitalism but of modernity as well, especially of the ecological problems caused by the injudicious use of science and technology in production. Mahatma Gandhi's trenchant critique of modernity, notably his call to eschew the cult of technology-driven mega-industrialism and to return to small-scale production that is in harmony with nature, must find an echo in the hearts of the socialists of the future.

6. Need for an Ethic

"Socialism's profoundest failure was its inability to craft the Socialist Man" (Mitra 1998, 13). The Socialist Man, whom Marx describes in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, is a *"social being"* who has overcome the conflict between man and nature, man and man, and man and the species. This view of human nature is the basis of Marx's sanguine optimism about the socialist society. Marx believed that the socialist man, with spirit of genuine altruism born of a community consciousness, would emerge spontaneously once the new economic formations of the socialist society have been put in place. This was perhaps the most fatal miscalculation of Marx. The socialist society arrived without the socialist man. The faith that political revolutions will automatically bring about revolution of consciousness was proven to be false.

True socialism requires a conversion of heart on a massive scale. This is hard to achieve without an ethics of selfless love. But, "(I)n the entire theses of Marx there is no place for anything like ethics . . . Marxism is a variety of atheism without ethics. Marx deliberately bypassed ethic, without giving any thought to the possible consequences of this omission . . . In discussing this crisis I would say that all the consequences are contained in the total negation of the cognitive and creative role of love in Marxian epistemology" (Nagarajan 1990, 39). Since the Marxist orthodoxy maintained that consciousness is itself is a product of the material conditions of existence, all efforts were focussed on the transformation of economic structures; no importance was attached to psychic-cultural transformations that would sublimate man's overly materialistic acquisitive instinct with a superordinating ethical imperative of love and selfless service. As Ghosh observes:

> Without a place for it (love), the communist movement came to be domi-

nated more by hatred for the propertied classes than by love for, and the preparedness to share the lives of, working people. Whereas a Gandhian or a Catholic sister of Charity, inspired by a deep love for the sufferers, tends to share their lives amid squalor, most communists of the present generation quieten their conscience by merely clenching their fists to expropriate the vested interests. When you omit love as a trait to be cultivated, fights even between comrades can break out on the slightest pretext. When hatred against the rich becomes the dominant passion, this hatred, with all its negativism, becomes internalised. It is not surprising, therefore, that Marxism failed to give birth to a humane society. That Marx himself was a very humane person is a different matter" (1990, 32).

Mao Tze-dung realized this lopsidedness of Marxism. That is why he issued the following instruction to the comrades: "love the cadres, love the people, serve the people and struggle against self" (see Nagarajan 1990, 39). Mao, who was a product of Marxism and Taoism, could not have failed to see the affinity between the socialist psyche and the disposition of the Tao, who, in the words of the Chinese Taoist saint Ch'an Ch'un, "procreates without possession, works without holding, and promotes without commanding" (Nagarajan 1990, 41). Class action alone, without a concomitant cultural revolution that transforms people's lifestyle and outlook on life, cannot establish a truly socialist society .

Conclusion

No secular thinker in our age has aroused such passion as Karl Marx. The fervour of his analysis, the vehemence of his indictments, and the apocalyptic grandeur of his constructions are perhaps unparalleled in history. It is no wonder, then, that for nearly a century Marx's name polarised the hopes and hostilities of humankind. His analysis of social dynamics, even his detractors would admit, contained some profound insights, which have radically changed once and for all the way we understand social reality and human existence.

However, as the forgoing analysis shows, Marx's grand theoretical synthesis, when taken as whole, seems to be logically and empirically untenable. Marx will be remembered not so much as a great theoretician of history as a prophet of a brave and bright new world.

Today, with socialism in crisis, the dream of a better future for the underprivileged and the marginalised appears more distant than ever. Yet, the current crisis in socialism is also a reason for hope for those who, like this writer, cherished the socialist ideals, but abhorred their distortions in the so-called socialist societies. For it offers an opportunity to the band of sincere socialists all over the world to correct the deformations that beset socialism in the past, and to reconstitute it as an ideology of hope for those who dream of a new humanity.

Notes

1. For a detailed analysis of the concept of alienation see Eric Fromm (1963, 43-57) and Richard Schacht (1971, 65-114).
2. For a discussion of concentration, centralization, falling rate of profit, and the increasing misery of the masses, see Bober (1965, 203-231).
3. This concept has been interpreted to mean different things: absolute physical impoverishment, relative physical impoverishment vis-a-vis the capitalist's growing income, or absolute spiritual and psychological impoverishment. For a discussion of its various meanings, see Bober (1965, 213 - 221)
4. For a discussion of Marx's views on the role of violence in class struggle, see Bober (1965, 261-268).
5. See Mendel (1965: 111-120) for an analysis of the concept of the *withering away* of the state.

References

Aiyar, Anklesaria Swaminathan S. 1998. "Is Capitalism Slowly Dying?," in *Sunday Times of India*, Mumbai, September 20.

Bober, M.M. 1965. *Karl Marx's Interpretation of History*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

Danenberg, Ton. 1993. *Crisis in Socialism*, Manila: Socio-Pastoral Institute.

Fromm, Eric. 1963. *Marx' s Concept of Man*, New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company.

Gosh, Sailendra Nath. 1990. "Towards a Synthesis", *Seminar*, 373 (September) pp. 31-37.

Heilbroner, Rbert L. 1980. *Marxism: For and Against*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 1998. "Markets, Meltdown and Marx," in *Indian Express*, Pune, October 21.

Hook, Sidney. 1955. *Marx and the Marxists: The Ambiguous Legacy, New Jersey: Van Nostrand Company.*

Kappen, Sebastian. 1992. *The Future of Socialism and the Socialism of the Future*, Bangalore: Visthar.

Karat, Prakash. 1990. *Seminar*, 373 (September), pp. 22-25.

Kolakowski, Leszek. 1978. *Main Currents in Marxism*, Vol. 1, New York: Oxford University Press.

Kurien, C. T. 1993. "The Future is Yet to Come", *Seminar* , 407 (July), pp. 16-19.

Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. 1969 & 1970. *Selected Works*, Vols. 1, 2, & 3, Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Mendel, Arthur P. 1965. *Essential Works of Marxism*, (ed), New York: Bentam Books.

Mitra, Chandan. 1998. "Marx Belongs to the Jurassic Park and Will Stay There," in *Sunday Times of India*, Mumbai, October 25.

Nagarajan, S. N. 1990. "The Correctives", *Seminar*, 373 (September), pp. 38-41.

Schacht, Richard. 1971. *Alienation*, London: Allen and Unwin.

Sharma, L. K. 1998. "Europe is Getting Pinker and Asia Is in the Red," in *Sunday Times of India*, Mumbai, October 25.

Sunday Times of India. 1998. "On Your Marx, Get Set, Go," Mumbai, October 25.

Tarkunde, V.M. 1983, "The 'Ism that Failed", *Sunday Review, Times of India*, March 13.

JPJRS 2/1 (1999) 36-46

Gandhian Social Vision for the Twenty-First Century

George Pattery, SJ
Dept. of Philosophy, Visva-Bharati, Calcutta

Millennial thinking was not particularly Gandhi's cup of tea. To his rational mind, any time, any place and anyone could be equally significant. To reflect on the coming century in Gandhian terms may not be quite Gandhian. However, even those, who attribute all the ills of modern India to Gandhi and his failed experiment, would like to add a volume on Gandhi, at least to prove that Gandhi was not relevant to modern society, let alone for the 21st century. Such is his hold on post- modern mind.

Indeed, Gandhi had a vision. He visioned, not because he was close to another century, nor because he was called upon to do it. At a time when colonial expansion was the 'vision' of the day and anti-colonialism was the immediate task ahead, Gandhi dared to envision a way of life and a model of society that was relevant both to the colonizers and the colonized, and that remains a challenge for us today, even if in a de-constructive way. That we need a vision in order to engage the immediate and the most practical has been amply substantiated from the conceptual, pedagogical, and psychological points of view. [1] Leaving aside the epistemological function of 'vision' in the reconstruction of societies, we shall for a while attempt a hermeneutic of Gandhi's 'envisioning'. We shall dwell on the features of his social vision only in so far as they are relevant for an interpretation of the pedagogy of 'Gandhian envisioning' of the future.

1. The Encircling Visions

In order to enter upon such a hermeneutic, we need to locate Gandhi within his time and place. What is particularly disconcerting is the fact that he envisioned a way of life and social model amidst so many conflicting social theories and national ideologies of his time. The Indian intellectual renaissance, and later the independent struggle, prompted the birth of 'indigenous social visions' and national discourses. Movements such as the *Brahmo Samaj* (founded in 1830) in Bengal, *the Prarthana Samaj* (1867) in Maharashtra, the *Arya Samaj* (1875) in Punjab, the Theosophical Society (1875), the *Ramkrisha* Movement, and dynamic leaders such as Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), Swami Dayananda (1824-1883), Mahadeva Govinda Ranade (1842-1901), Swami Vivekanada (1863-1902), Madame Blavatsky (1831-1891), and Annie Besant (1847-1933) articulated the Indian social concerns against the background of the political institutions of the day. Echoing the social, moral and spiritual vigour of the renaissance, most of

them strongly 'believed in India's power in delivering an important message to the West and even to the whole of humanity'.[2]

With the establishment of Indian National Congress in 1855, there emerged another set of socio-political visions for India. Both the 'moderates' and the 'extremists,' such as Vishnu Krishna Chiploonkar (1850-1882), Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1898), Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), Surendranath Banerjee (1845-1925), Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915), Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932), Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928) and Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950), resonated with the indigenous thinking and nationalistic sentiments of different types.[3] They varied from 'nation-building' to *Swadesim*, all sharing the genius of Indian social organization and at the same time partaking of the western concept of nation-state. A variant note is heard in the Nehruvian vision of society (1889-1964), where a more definite 'economic and social content' is added to nationalism, whereby 'the backward, orthodox and divided society could be transformed into an industrialized, secular, liberal democracy'.

The marxists in India sought to build up a classless society in line with the Marxian-Leninist analysis and found Gandhian experiment and Indian independent struggle reactionary. Much of the early marxist analysis held that Gandhi and his independent struggle were bourgeois and transitory in nature, and underrated the role of colonialism (a wrong perception indeed as was proved by later events and is acknowledged by Indian marxists today), and worked for an international classless society as per the rules of marxist analysis.

At the international level, industrial economics and colonial politics was the fashion of the day. More industry, greater production and consumption, and rapid expansion of technology were the dictates of the day. The industrial vision dominated the day. The colonial politics of the time insisted on few industries, low production and low consumption and backward agriculture in the colonies as 'protectionist methods'. Colonies supplied 'raw material for industry' and provided markets for industrial countries. This mainstream economic and political thinking was already opposed by Tolstoy, Ruskin, Saint-Simon, Proudhon, Edward Carpenter and others

2. The Gandhian Envisioning

It is interesting and significant to note that Gandhi dared to envision amidst these numerous ideologies and visions; and he was original in his thinking, challenging the existing visions. We shall briefly dwell on the distinguishing features of the Gandhian vision in order to spell out the hermeneutical principles that could be significant for envisioning society for the coming century.

Prompted by the exposure in England and challenged by the enthusiasm of his English friends, Gandhi took to learning the *Gita* and the Hindu traditions more seriously while he was in England. Through his struggles and

questions of 'self-identity' as an Indian, Gandhi discovered that 'tradition' has much to do with one's way of life. Later in S. Africa, while searching for a methodology of struggle against the racial discrimination and injustice, he looked into 'traditional' (Indian) methods and ways of resolving conflicts. In both cases he learned the resilience of 'tradition' in creating a way of life and as a method of conflict resolution. Early in 1909, in the seminal tract *Hind Swaraj,* he articulated a social vision taking fully into account 'tradition' as the bed-rock of his vision. His was an attempt to reconstruct India's past for our times because he too felt that India had a 'civilizational role' to play to the modern world. In this he was of one mind with the religio-social movements that we mentioned earlier. He edged them out in that attempt because he unearthed the traditional, cultural and human values that were the strength of India's ancient culture. Culture and tradition constituted importnt categories in Gandhi's social vision.

Gandhi definitely shared the nationalist sentiments of his time, and was unambiguous in his opposition to colonial rule, and rejected it 'lock, stock and barrel'. However, he defined nationalism not in terms of nation-state, or territory, or rulers but in terms of 'the people,' the masses, the illiterate, rural and rough selves; the people rich in 'humanity' and abounding in a sense of 'the beyond'. He converted the Indian National Congress into a people's party, and the national struggle into a mass movement. His vision of India cannot be divorced from his perception of and identification with the Indian masses. Envisioning a future social order derived its rationale from a people's perspective.

The Nehruvian socialism and Marxian classless society worked to a plan. Gandhi was opposed to and differed from both. They analyzed and worked out a theory that would definitely determine the future. Gandhi went back to the rural structures based on the wisdom of the ages and helped them to evolve into a national and global vision. His was not the logical conclusion of an analysis, but the result of a synthesis that has been happening through the wisdom of people from time immemorial. This wisdom sought '*swaraj*' (total liberation), beginning with individual selves, villages and society at large, in an ever-widening circle. The wisdom of the people became in his hands a scientific instrument in evolving a system or vision.

Economics and other social sciences were coming of age, forming themselves into independent sciences with 'data-based objective analysis'. Emotion-free, value- free, and objective analysis claimed to produce 'scientific' results. However, Gandhian pedagogy and vision questioned the veracity of these methods taken in themselves. He introduced 'human affections' into economic thinking, not for emotional reasons, but for economic reasons. Human affections need not be non-productive; on the contrary, human affections in economic calculations can contribute to greater productivity, provided such products contributed to 'healthy human living'. Value-free science is not necessarily scientific. Gandhian vision edged out of 'this-worldly concerns'.

The nationalists wanted to create a social vision independent of the colonialists, and the colonialists attempted to create a world-order marginalizing the colonized. Gandhi spoke of a society of interdependence. Such 'interdependence' was a more comprehensive term (beyond the immediate agencies of Britain and India); he referred to the very nature of the interdependence of all creation; of an interrelatedness of all and sundry on 'free status'. He was not interested in creating a society based on equality; rather people of his society were committed seekers after 'Truth'. They had 'multiple identities' in relation to nature, family, nation, society, and to the ultimate. Gandhian vision embraced these multiple identities of peoples.

At this stage let us stay for a while with two critical dimensions of Gandhian social philosophy that have far reaching hermeneutical implications: first, Gandhi introduced a sort of urban-village polarity in social thinking; secondly, he was a social anarchist placing the individual in contrast to the society. Gandhi's fascination for villages and village style of life has invited much criticism, probably rightly so. Much of the criticism is provoked by his pronouncements. Gandhi did not elaborate his philosophy in a systematic and logical way, though he was quite rational in his thinking and acting. However, his statements were often cryptic and needed much explanation. He did explain himself when asked but not otherwise. A creative and intuitive thinker that he was, he saw more, and ahead of his time, and his statements represent such a visionary outlook. One could not expect the crowds to understand the implications of his intuitions, nor could one expect a full explanation from Gandhi as he was engaged full-time in national struggle.

Why this fascination for villages? Positively it was the practical aspect of *Swadeshi*, and negatively it meant to check the menace of technology that centralizes and overpowers the human. These are inter-related. Villages were being impoverished and cities were thriving. Villages are impoverished for the sake of city life. The city-centred life in turn is dependent on technology. Technology centralizes. Unlike Marx, Gandhi did not believe that exploitation is due principally to the capitalistic system. In the so-called post-communist era, we might probably understand better how and why Gandhi was right in his perception. The globalization and the multi-nationalization of economies are possible due to 'technology's centralizing tendencies'. For Gandhi competitivenes, consumerist greed and standardization were all basically due to a technology centred way of life. Technologization implied 'indefinite multiplication of wants, and endless gratification of these wants by material means'. Gandhi was not opposed to technology, science or towns. In fact Gandhi was very 'experimental ' in life; he wanted to test and verify everything. He was, however, opposed to the 'alienating aspects' of technology that brings dichotomy between villages and cities, between the ancient and the modern, between *swadeshi* and *videshi.* He envisaged an interdependent way of life. He himself was experimenting with all kinds of technology that would suit the

villages and help maintain the traditional and healthy way of life of the villages. He wanted rural industries that would be non-polluting, non-alienating and non-centralizing. In today's idiom, we would call it 'appropriate technology'. Interrelatedness, cooperation and inter-dependence were the vocabulary of his philosophy. The key word was. *Swadeshi,* 'where one is rooted in one's immediacy of time, place and traditions'. Gandhi's was an 'encompassing vision,' (to use a Jasperian term). It envelops all aspects of life: material, spiritual, personal, social, immanent and transcendent. The ecological thinking of our time helps us to understand some of the 'Gandhian idiosyncracies'.[4] There are thinkers today who would argue that modern technology will find other sources of energy if the present source of energy reaches an optimal point; that technology will find non-polluting technologies, and that science is capable of solving the problems that it creates. The debate continues. However, it is generally accepted today that scientific rationality remains scientific when it includes intuitive, interrelated thinking in its fold.[5]

Gandhi was a 'social anarchist'. He envisaged a minimum role for the state. 'That Government is the best which governs the least'.[6] He distrusted both centralized socialistic states and 'mobocracied' democracies. Both systems centralize and homogenize, and replace human autonomy. Gandhi wanted to safeguard the 'autonomous spirit of the humans'. In this he belonged to the best of Indian traditions, which treat the human as the embodiment of the Ultimate, as the self in the Self. All systems, governments and laws, and above all the State tend to be bound by rules and regulations that are man-made, where the soul is lost. He introduced the soul-force by which conscientious individuals, fired by the spirit of satyagraha, strive after truth relentlessly. Concerning the individual's freedom and autonomy, Gandhi was an absolutist. The quest for Truth would dictate all, and the individual's well-informed conscience would be the ultimate arbiter. 'Individual freedom alone can make a man surrender himself completely to the service of the society. If it is wrested from him, he becomes an automation and society is ruined.' True freedom on the individual's part involves selflessness. In the final analysis it is the individual himself who will protect his freedom. The State is incapable of protecting the individual's freedom. Gandhi thus introduced a non-academic term 'soul-force' into the discussion about society. The vision of building up a society depends not only on economics, politics and science but also, perhaps primarily, on the soul-force. Gandhi preferred the 'enlightened anarchy' of the truth seeker to the established order of a 'conformist'.

The concept of the nation-State did not occupy a priority in his thinking. Neither did he believe that the parliamentary form of Government was devoid of defects. His remarks on the British parliament were harsh. He said: 'That which you consider to be the Mother of Parliaments is like a sterile woman and a prostitute'. One of the insightful readings into this remark is found in Amlan Datta. It is like a prostitute because it allows itself to be ruled

over by any party, not due to its selfless service, but because of victory in power struggle; it is like a sterile woman because no lasting improvement is possible simply by legislative enactment. Parliament operates on paper legislation, and it is ineffective unless the conscience of the people is prepared.[7]

The primacy given to the individual and his conscience is the most radical statement made on the role of the institutions. In a memorial lecture on Ranade delivered at Pune in 1943, Ambedkar argued that 'rights are protected not by law but by the social and moral conscience of society'.[8]

The Gandhian critique of the nation-state concept, of democracies of his time, and his insistence on the moral conscience of the people highlight the fact that he brings 'ethics' into political discourse, and politics into ethical vocabulary. The moral question cannot be left out of politics or out of the consideration of any social vision. It is to the credit of Gandhi that he brought ethics and politics onto the same platform. The two terms of '*swadeshi* and *swaraj*' provide the hermenutical keys. In these two concepts, the prefix - swa - is vital. It refers to the self, to being at-home with oneself and one's immediate surrounding, to the 'Self' that rules and decides. In Gandhi's vision, 'self (SWA)' is capable of ruling , and feeling at home, when it is the self in the Self. This self is the Self in search for Truth. Truth is *Sat-ya:* the whole of existence. The self is in pursuit of Truth; the selves are in pursuit of Truth, and it is in that search and it is on that path they meet, relate and are inter-dependent. For Gandhi this quest for and experiment with Truth brings peoples together, a kind of 'UR-Religion' in the Gandhian scheme. In this primordial religiosity all can be brought together, irrespective of religions and cultures. From his own life-journey, we learn that Gandhi came to social commitment and vision as a result of and in pursuit of the Truth that began when he was a boy refusing to oblige the teacher in the class room. To understand Gandhian social vision, we need to grasp his religiosity, his search for truth. It is *Satyagraha*, 'holding onto Truth at all costs,' that brings about *swadeshi and swaraj.*[9]

3. Hermenutical Significance of Gandhian Social Vision

Tradition, *Swadeshi* and *Swaraj* constitute the three components of Gandhian social vision. All three are tied up with the hermeneutical key of *Satyagraha* religiosity.[10]

3.1. Tradition as the Unfolding of Truth

What is the role of TRADITION in envisaging society for the 21st century?

Modern western history until now was defined by the spirit of enlightenment with a definite trust in rationality, abounding confidence in the success of science in solving human problems and above all asserting rational logic. Christianity has claimed these factors for itself, saying that it is Christianity's influence that gave the West these factors, even if the claim is made in an apologetics against liberation theology. However, today there is an evident de-

cline of the old Kantian, Cartesian and Hegelian rational certainities, manifested in the continuing malaise of the political and social institutions that are products of enlightenment rationality. The Marxian crisis is also the crisis of the spirit of enlightenment. The postmodernity responds to this malaise by deconstructing the enlightenment edifice, and building on the role of 'Tradition' in constituting the meaning of the present. Heidegger, G.Gadamer and P. Ricouer broadly represent this trend by their interpretation of the text, the present, in reference to the tradition. Heidegger spoke of tradition as '*uberlieferung*' understood as the active inheritance of the past as an open possibility, not as a rigidly determined and determining schema.[11] Truth is seen here not as a proposition that corresponds, but as an endless network of references constituted by the multiple voices of the *uber-lieferung*. Such multiplicity resists all attempts at unity or rigid system, but discovers multiplicity of cultural universes that are inherited.[12]

Taking the discussion further, Gadamer speaks of the operativeness of the past in the present. 'The present is seen and understood only through the intentions, ways of seeing, and preconceptions bequeathed from the past'. Gadamer's hermeneutics and his critique of historical consciousness assert that the past is not like a pile of facts which can be made an object of consciousness, but rather is a stream in which we move and participate in every act of understanding. Tradition, then, is not over against us but something in which we stand and through which we exist: for the most part it is so transparent a medium that it is invisible to us 'as invisible as water to fish'.[13] In envisioning a society for the future, one need to attend to tradition, not as thing of the past but as stream flowing into the present and taking us to the future. This stream or this *parambara* goes back to the roots of our existence. Gandhi called our attention to this factor. His attempt to reconstruct India's ancient social institutions could be better understood in the light of post-modernist critique of the present social institutions.

3.2 Swadeshi as Cosmic Relatioship

Gandhi has been maligned for being 'parochial' in his thinking and outlook because he advocated 'indigenous' thinking, acting and seeing. *Swadeshi* that he advocated is not an anti-west nor anti-modern stance. *Swadeshi* as a hermeneutical principle implies that we adopt a 'cosmic outlook on life'. It believes that reality is inter-related, and that there is wonder and beauty in the 'here and now'. It is a kind of mystical perpsective that lets us glory in 'small things and in the immediate neighbourhood'. It finds wisdom in one's own culture, people and place. There is enough wisdom given by nature to each people and culture. We need to explore this wisdom of the 'local' in solving our problems and in becoming fully human and holistic. *Swadeshi* is eco-pedagogy; it is a way of being at home with one's own. It is the theology of the microcosm. It believes in dependency on one's self for one's immediate needs, and self-sufficiency in the neighbourhood. It believes that the wisdom of the

cosmos is given in the 'here and now', and *swadeshi* tries to unearth this wisdom. As Gabriel Marcel once said: 'The true function of the sage is surely the function of linking together, of bringing into harmony ... the sage is truly linked with the universe'.[14] *Swadeshism* is a world view that goes beyond egological thinking to the eco-logical way of being.

This cosmic consciosness invites one to engage the present and the immediate because the whole cosmos is contained in it. Our social vision for the future, therefore, should mean a way of life that enables us to be rooted in the here and now. The temptation is to take off. Modern communication and transportation facilties can place many more on wheels, always going somewhere but reaching no-where. It is interesting to note that in one of the studies done on communal conflicts in India it was said that communal riots were the creation of 'urban people,' and that they were mostly instigated by 'rootless people looking for identity' in an alienated city life. [15] The challenge of the 21st century society is to be 'rooted in'.

A new organization is surfacing on the horizon. The indications of that development are already present. People have started discovering that they prefer to live in small cottages in dispersed settlements rather than in multistoried buildings in the middle of a huge metropolis. Kitchen gardens attached to cottages can supply much of the domestic needs and more should be possible with experiments in scientific gardening. Despite Gandhi, spinning will not perhaps become a household industry. But it will be possible to weave on hobby looms and make gifts to our friends of what we weave, and receive similar gifts in return. It will be possible to produce in the basements of our cottages most of the furniture we need. Houses can be built with prefabricated materials, depending on little else but our own designs and family labour, almost in the same spirit that children make toy houses. It is possible today, and will become more so tomorrow, to practise self-help in all these and other ways. Some of these indications are clearer among the richer countries and communities than among the poorer. But this only shows what people will do when they are free to choose.[16]

Jonathan Porrit has emphasized it from the perspective of the Greens:

To avoid writing the earth's obituary we must cease to see the future simply as an extension of the present, and we must think as much about what should be, as about what actually is. We must think again of the links between ourselves and the earth, and of the way the earth speaks to us through an ideal of life. We must seek ways creatively to disintegrate the economic and industrial constraints that are turning our world and our lives into a wasteland. Above all, we must learn to blend our concern for people with our respect for the earth through the post-industrial politics of peace, liberation and ecology: the politics of life.[17]

A new earth and a new heaven is shaping up from the small peoples of the localities. The task of envisioning the 21st century includes quickening the pace of this logic of the God of 'small

things,' and hasten the formation of micro-cosmic living and mutually supporting family circles.

3.3. Swaraj as the Power of Self-giving

Soul-force was the non-academic concept that Gandhi introduced into political discourse and into social visioning. Starting with the British war-hero Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, almost everybody felt uneasy with this most 'common and readily available weapon,' introduced by the naked fakir. The indomitable nature of the human formed the basis of Gandhi's political struggles. What is real power? Who wields power, and how and when is power exercised? In any vision of society, one has to define the nature of power and the means to deal with it. When power is defined in terms of 'soul-force,' it is assumed that such power is available to all humans. Every human being has the resources of power within him/her. This power consists in reaching out, transcending oneself to realize oneself. It implies the prophetic power to act, to resist injustice, to struggle against the demons; it includes the mystical power to see, to behold and 'listen to Being,' as Heidegger would say.

In this paradigm, politics and spirituality are about power and empowerment. It interferes with power structures, power ideologies and power toxins residing in the souls of each of us. Soul-force is about power structure of a different kind: it consists in the power of letting go, of self-sacrificing love, of simple living, of harmonious dwelling within the universe, of resisting evil to the point of death, of a sharing and caring that embodies a mother's love, of being fully alive and present to the here and now. This power is not foreign to any but the mighty and the rich. This power is available to anyone who is ready to wrestle with the self within. It implies that 'political economy' derives its power not from a competitive edge, but from human affections; it means that real political power is not the result of a power struggle but an outcome of service to the community. There is a paradigm shift here. Does the progress of post-modern society indicate a trend towards such a paradigm shift? The scene is ambiguous. There is on the one hand the menacing grip of the multinationals on the life and philosophy of every society, where their economic terms dictate and alienate relationships at the inter-national, national and domestic levels. There is the tendency towards a 'standardization of cultures' dictated by the globalizing agents. There is the consumerist discourse dictated by 'greed' and marketed by the liberals. On the other hand, the opposite trend is also visible. There is today a shift towards a new consciousness-culture where 'energy' is defined and found in the relationship marked by original blessings; there is a move towards life that is simply and authentically lived in communities of peoples; there is a search to grow towards a greater consciousness that touches upon the transcendent; there is a search for an appropriate technology that harmonizes. Who will advance this pace? Where do we find such communities of new power-relationships? These are the real religious questions of the day. But

the traditional religions are engaged in the same power struggle of economics and politics where success, status and statistics count.

4. Encompassing Vision and Christian Pedagogy

In Gandhian hermeneutics, traditional-cosmic-self-giving ways are effected by an encompassing vision which is also at the same time a pedagogy. In Gandhian terminology *satyagraha*, holding onto Truth at any cost, provided such a vision and a pedagogy. The end and the means are intrinsically related. Truth refers to sat = existence. It is commitment to existence, to the whole of it, to the entire spectrum of life. In pedagogical terms a commiment to existence (Sat) is at the same time an invitation to be rooted in and to stand beyond, to EK-SIST - in Heideggerian terms. Any existence (sat) that does not have an eksistent dimension (Sat), cannot be authentic. This ability to 'stand-out' (*ekstasis*) means to transcend our own situations, to get outside of ourselves in time and space. This enables us to function as moral agents, allowing us to see ourselves in the guise of those upon whom we act.[18] Such *ek-stasis* was traditionally confined to the fields of art and religion; Gandhi brought that into public and political discourse.

Post-modern society calls for an encompassing vision and pedagogy. The strength of traditional religions and societies was that they provided, or at least claimed to provide, an encompassing vision and pedagogy, however faulty. Today religion ceases to be the sole agency to provide such an encompassing vision; science and technology are trying to occupy that place by means of technological arms which have the capacity to reach every corner of the world with a uniform style of living. However, an encompassing vision should be distinguished from a 'homogenizing ideology'. An encompassing vision will have room for alternate models of living.

Christian faith is a pedagogy and a movement of 'ultimate concern'. The Church is an ecclesia, a gathering of peoples who can provide space for 'alternate, counter-cultural and creative models' of living. 'Tradition' is an important component in Christian pedagogy as well. Tradition is translated as 'memory'. Christianity is a memorial celebration, feasting on memories and creating new memories; tying up different memories and building up peoples. Memory brings peoples together, enables them to break bread together and to form communities of sharing and caring that grows into cosmic compassion.

It is the memory of 'the Incarnated One'; an incarnated memory is a localized memory, a swadeshi memory that resonates with the earth and the water around; memories of the sages, rishis, prophets and saints, the rulers and the ruled of the local; not a pyramidal memory, but memory in an ever-widening circle; it is the memory of the 'adivasi,' the one who named the mountains, rivers and the fields; memory of the 'lilies of the fields and birds of the air'.

It is the memory of the 'crucified' - the one who attained *swaraj* through total self-giving, against the logic of

greed, of 'power, pleasure and plenty'. The memory of the crucified, of *swaraj*, does not enslave; does not bind up. It is a liberated memory that liberates others. Memory does not bind us to a piece of land, to an object of worship, or to an agent of power. The incarnated, crucified memory lives on in the memory of all *satyagahis* who dare 'an encompassing vision'.

Notes

1. Manheim Karl, *Ideology and Utopia*, NY: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966; Cf. The section on "Faith, Utopia and Political Action" , in Gutierrez Gustavo, *A Theology of Liberation*, London: SCM Press, 1988, pp.135-139; Freire Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, NY: Herder & Herder, 1970; Redfield James, *The Celestine Prophecy*, Hoover, Ala: Satori Press, 1993.
2. S.P.Udayakumar, "Maping the 'Hindu Re-making of India", in *Gandhi Marg* (Jan-March, 1998), pp. 443-444.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 444.
4. Jonathan Porrit, *Seeing Green*, Oxord: Basil Blackwell, 1984, pp. 25-90.
5. Cf. Calude Alvares, *Science, Development and Violence*, Ashis Nandy, *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopia*, Delhi: University Press, 1987, pp. 130-131; I. Illich, *Deschooling Society*, NY: Harper & Row, 1971.
6. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, VII*, N.Delhi: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt of India, 1958-1990, p. 305. Henceforth cited as *CW*. H.Thoreau, whom Gandhi admired, said: 'That Government is best which governs not all'. Cf. *Life without Principle*, Palo Alto: Stanford University, 1946, p. 1.
7. Amlan Datta, *The Gandhian Way*, Shillong: NEHU Publications, 1986, pp. 34-35.
8. *Ibid.*, p.35.
9. *CW*. VII, pp.72-73, 148, 220-1, XIV, p.272. Cf. Also G. Pattery, *Gandhi the Believer*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1996, pp. 15-17.
10. *CW*. VII. pp.72-73, 148, 220-1, XIV, p.272. Cf. Also *Gandhi the Believer, op.cit.*, pp. 15-17.
11. See specially ch.5 in M. Bobnola, *Verita e Interpretatione nello Heidegger di 'essere' e tempo'*, Editione di Filosofia, Turin, 1983.
12. R.E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*,'Evanston: Northwestern University, 1969, pp. 176-177.
13. Cf. Vattimo Gianni, *Beyond Interpretation,* Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 90-91.
14. Marcel Gabriel, *The Decline of Wisdom*, NY: Philosophical Library, 1955, p. 42.
15. Kakar Sudhir, "Reflections on religious Group Identity", in *Seminar,* (Feb. 1993), pp. 50f.
16. A. Datta, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-19; cf. Also. F.E Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, London: Abacus, 1974.
17. J. Porrit, *op.cit.*, p. 235.
18. Cf. Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, California: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 341-342.

JPJRS 2/1 (1999) 47-59

Lokasangraha: The Welfare of the Whole World

A Hindu Vision of a World Order

Francis X. D'Sa, SJ
Dept. of Systematic Theology, JDV, Pune

Introduction

The phenomenon of Hindutva might give the impression that it belongs to the canonical part of the Hindu traditions. Not only does it not belong there; even the word Hindu finds no place there. By no stretch of the imagination can they be understood as belonging to the same category. Whereas Hindu has functioned as a Sangam for a class of traditions that share in some common or similar beliefs, doctrines, attitudes and values, Hindutva is a label that stands for a communalistic, fascistic and fundamentalistic movement that uses religion, religious deities, customs, and places apparently for promoting religion and its interests but in actual fact for sheer power political purposes. Hindu and Hindutva are as different as religion and politics. Hindu still belongs to the world of religion and religious experience; Hindutva has not only nothing to do with authentic religion, it is in essence anti-Hindu both in style and in substance. Admittedly, Hindu is a late arrival in the consciousness and self-consciousness of the traditions in question but it has been so accepted by all of them that it has now become part of their identity. Not so Hindutva. The latter, a recent phenomenon, has emerged from a social and political situation that is very new. That of course is no reason for rejecting it. The reason why it cannot enter the Hindu canon is that it goes against the very grain of Hindu spirituality and religion.

Sadly, the difference between Hindu and Hindutva is slowly but surely being glossed over, not only by the fanatics, not only by some well-meaning but misguided faithful from these traditions, but, alas, also by some insecure "non-Hindus". Hindutva, for these, is gradually coming to refer to a cap that fits all "Hindus". This is dangerous. Fortunately, at least for the time being, the cap does not fit the vast and overwhelming majority. The "non-Hindus" cannot afford to overlook, neglect or forget this important fact. If they do, then the consequences could be tragic. Something of this is in the air at the moment. We have in Maharastra the Shiva Sena that unashamedly champions Hindutva and its coalition partner, the Bharatiya Janata Party, that shamedly supports Hindutva. The latter who are ruling at the Centre are now being forced to show their true colour because of symbiotic relationships with the Hindutva hinterland of the Sangh Parivar.

The effect all this is having on the gullible public is that subconsciously

the impression is being created that what these rightist political movements are projecting is a genuine Hindu vision of society.

As we shall see from what follows, nothing could be farther from the truth. The Hindu traditions are based on insights into the reality of the world that, in my view, are still very valid today. We shall briefly sketch these insights on the basis of which the Hindu vision of an ideal world could be worked out. The underlying argument is this: The insights from which the world vision is being presented is such that all the traditions that call themselves Hindu would accept it without any condition. Indeed any tradition that would repudiate it would run the risk of excommunicating itself from the common fold.

The world order that is being referred to here is really a vision and, like any vision, it cannot be reduced to a formula, much less can it be articulated definitively. That is the reason we find that it has been repeatedly reformulated and reinterpreted, differently at different times and in different situations. A world-vision is not a description; it is a symbolic world that refuses to be encapsulated in any one expression. A symbolic world is just that, symbolic; it is symbolic of a world that is experienced and understood differently from diverse perspectives. Such a world is neither purely objective nor merely subjective. This factor makes description impossible. Symbols are worlds within worlds where only the language of metaphor, not the language information, is operative because it alone is at home there.[1] A world that is whole and holistic cannot be described because the describer is also part of the whole. The real cannot be described, precisely because the describer is part of the real whole. The real is symbolic of the whole; or the other way round, the whole is symbolic of the real. Real and whole are mutually inclusive expressions.

1. Yajña: The Sacrifice of Reality

Yajña in the Vedic world stood for what we Moderns call reality.[2] For anything to be real, it had to be part of the cosmic Yajña. For heuristic purposes we can translate Yajña as sacrifice but inevitably that will tend to create a misconception, especially in Judaeo-Christian circles where sacrifice is understood in the context of the belief in a personal God. But we could just let sacrifice stand as a working-hypothesis with the caution that it could possibly be misleading. We need, however, to complement it with another [more relevant] translation, namely, reality. However it must be noted that the word reality has the disadvantage that it does not evoke the image that Yajña connotes, an image that is indispensable for a correct understanding of the direction of its meaning. If we take Yajña as sacrifice and connect it with the added meaning of the real, then we are less inclined to misunderstand what Yajña is, means and stands for.

Yajña refers both to world-process and to world-reality. A world-process is a world that is a process, and only what is part of and promotes the world-process is real. Whatever is not part of and does not promote the world-process is not real.

The image that is used for the world-process is that of sacrifice. The sacrificial fire consumes and creates. Because it consumes it is also able to create; and it creates in as much as it consumes. Destruction is one side of the coin of sacrifice; the other side is creation. Concretely, the world of Yajña is one in which things die and are dissolved, but it is also the world in which things are born and grow. Birth and death, creating and consuming are, in this view, interdependent. If there were no death, there would be no birth, and if there would be no birth there would be no death either. The idea of recycling is but a modern secular version of Yajña. Energy cannot be destroyed; it only takes on a new form! Energy is changed from one form into another. The happening of reality is a sacrifice, the sacrifice of one form in order to give birth to another.[3]

In other words, the invaluable insight of Yajña is this: Yajña is a world where everything is interconnected, interrelated, and interdependent.[4] Interconnection, interrelation and interdependence are different aspects of all that is real (*sat*). Whatever is not interconnected, interrelated and interdependent is not real (*asat*). The real, in this world view, is relational, the related.[5] To try to break up relations is to attempt to become less real; the more and deeper the relations the more real one becomes. Realizing one's relationships (not only to the world of persons but also to the world of things) is to become more and more real, that is, really real. ("From the unreal lead me to the real!".) The really real then is the whole that is wholesome. Sanskrit *sarvam* is etymologically connected with the Latin *salvum*![6]

The Yajña insight enlightens us about the fact that all reality is indeed interconnected, interrelated and interdependent.[7] Whatever world-order we may dream of or proclaim, it cannot afford to overlook the insight that all reality is a relational reality, that is, if the respective world order is to be built on rock, not on sand.[8] Any system that ignores this fact carries within itself an in-built bug that is bound to cause the system to crash sooner or later.

The first Sutra for a sound world order is this: All beings emerge from the one source and therefore are relatives; and so every thing and every one is related.

2. Purusha: Consciousness is the Atma of the World

Yajña, the word that the Vedic age employed for reality, received in the course of time an intensification when another name came to be connected with it, namely, Purusha[9]. If Yajña highlighted the fact that everything is related because it is real and that it is real because it is related, the image of the Purusha now drew attention to two aspects which appeared to be neglected in the metaphor of Yajña: one, the interrelation obtaining in reality is of the nature of an organism, and two, the organism is vivified and animated by an omniscient consciousness. The image that Yajña projected lacked these two characteristics, and so it is understandable that in course of time it came to be complemented by the image of Purusha, which supplied what was missing. The

image of the Cosmic Purusha, that is, the Cosmic Person, brings in the components of the cosmic body and the cosmic consciousness. The Cosmic Person's body is said to be only one fourth of the whole reality, three fourths being invisible. This is probably the Vedic way of stating that the invisible aspect of reality is actually much larger than the visible aspect. The interesting thing about the cosmic body is that the whole universe including the past, present and future and the whole of human society is said to emerge from the sacrifice of the cosmic body. The notion of sacrifice is brought in in order to stress the original idea of the interrelationship of every single thing and happening within reality. The cosmic sacrifice is the basic structure of reality that is constituted by the interrelationship between creating and consuming, between birth and death.

To complement this the overarching concept of consciousness is added. The whole cosmic body, that is, the cosmic sacrifice (that is, reality!) is not the primary aspect of Purusha. The primary aspect is the all-pervading consciousness that is really the essence of the metaphor of Purusha.[10] In Indian anthropology it is the body that is in the Atma, unlike in Western anthropology where the soul is in the body. For us the implication is that it is the Atma that is the directing principle: the Atma directs the organism and not the organism the Atma. In the metaphor of Yajña there was no clarity as to the directing principle; with Purusha this doubt is set aside. Within reality Purusha directs the world-organism. Behind the interconnection, interrelatedness and interdependence operates the World-Atma. Reality is not a blind reality, an "It," but one that is *anima*-ted by the Atma, by an absolute "I".

Hence our second Sutra: The source of all relations is the absolute "I", the Purusha, the World-Atma.

3. Dharma: The Network of Holistic Relationships

It is interesting to note how the Indian mind has travelled from Yajña to Purusha, that is from the external to the internal and from there to a Dharma, that is, to a level which is a combination of the internal and the external. Dharma makes thematic the ontological relations that obtain between the myriad aspects of Yajña/Purusha. Here ontological does not refer to metaphysical but to that level of reality where being and consciousness (but not self-consciousness) form one continuum, a continuum where to be is to be conscious. The Dharma of humans refers then to the mode of relationships that are both organic and conscious. Integrated humans, for example, are those who far from being alienated from their bodies are in fact in touch with their bodies. Such beings have reached the state of the real because they have realized their Dharma relationships. In the case of humans such relationships go beyond merely the physical and the psychological; the appropriation has to take place also at the ontological level.

Abstract as this may sound, the aspects of Dharma make us aware that to be really real such relationships have to come into their own and reach fulfillment. This happens only when

they become part of the conscious (not self-conscious) world. This of course is an ideal but a necessary ideal if the relationship between the absolute "I" and the rest of reality is not to turn into an "I"-"It" relationship. That is to say, Dharma introduces an element that was not apparent in the metaphor of Purusha, namely, the "You" aspect of reality. In Indian anthropology, humans do not have an "I" consciousness (though of course they have an ego-consciousness, the Ahamkara). What characterizes humans is the "Self" (Atma), the Self-consciousness. Humans are in a privileged position where Dharma is concerned. They are not like the relationships that exist between trees and rivers and mountains and valleys. Humans are humans because they inhabit a world, and it is part of their Dharma that this relationship enters their conscious world. But their relationships can come into their own and reach fulfillment only when they become part of their conscious world. Humans have to relate to the world in a conscious way if their own sense of identity is to become integrated.

Alienation occurs when humans ignore or neglect the world they inhabit and act like subjects that focus on mere objects. When this happens the real world is neglected and an illusory world is projected. In order to overcome alienation humans have to realize their relationship to the world they inhabit. Realization of this relationship implies that humans are not mere subjects. They are part of a world, but not like a part of a watch but in a unique way where the whole is reflected in the part and the part in the whole. Such consciousness cannot be the absolute "I" consciousness of the Purusha but at the most a reflection of it. Humans cannot create their consciousness. They participate in a stream of consciousness which they modify every time they participate in it. Obviously the primordial consciousness is the "I" consciousness; the consciousness that suffuses humans is only a "Thou" consciousness. The absolute "I" alone can transform humans by addressing them as a "Thou", a "You", a Self. The Dharma of humans is to recognize this and realize that their very being-and-consciousness is wholly constituted by the "Thou"-ing activity of the absolute "I". This of course is not the end of the story because a human is not a mere "Thou", but an incarnated, incorporated, em-body-ed "Thou". In the case of humans then Dharma brings out, albeit indirectly and implicitly, the "Thou" aspect of reality. This aspect comes into prominence in the Bhakti movements. And it is in the light of this development that the above reflection has been worked out.

Accordingly our third Sutra is: Human experience of reality is a rainbow of I, You and It consciousness.

4. Lokasangraha: The Welfare of the World

Yajña, Purusha, Dharma are the foundation on which the house of Lokasangraha, the welfare of the world, the welfare of all beings, stands. Lokasangraha is the logical, or more precisely, the Dharma-logical outcome of this trinity which does not, indeed cannot, permit any other alternative. In a world vision where Yajña and Purusha

are co-terminous with reality, and Dharma spells out in detail the interrelationships of all things, welfare cannot be any thing other than the welfare of all. Lokasangraha refers to the welfare of all the Lokas, that is, all the universes. The Hindu traditions do not and cannot have any other ideal. Because their world vision is cosmocentric, not anthropocentric, welfare is not restricted to humans alone, much less to some class of humans. Holiness in these traditions bears the hallmark of universal openness to all beings. (Ahimsa is to be understood within these parameters.) Anything and any one who promotes or propagates a narrower vision cannot remain part of the Hindu world vision. On the other side, holiness for the Hindus is an expanding universe that keeps on opening itself up to embrace ever more layers and levels of beings.

The expression Lokasangraha appears first in the Mokshadharma section of the Mahabharata and in the Bhagavadgita. What is of relevance to us is that it is associated with those who have reached the heights of Yoga. Only such Yogis are the practitioners of Lokasangraha. This is of a piece with the world vision in which Lokasangraha is to be found. Here holiness has to do with those who are in touch with reality, those who know reality as it is: the Tattvadarshins are the holy ones, they see things as they are (Bhagavadgita 2:16, 4:34). Seeing reality as it is means seeing not only the interconnectedness of all things but also realizing the source (Purusha) of this interconnectedness. The Tattvadarshins experience all reality as interrelated. That is why they work for the welfare of all.

What is particularly striking in the Gita, for example, is that it speaks consistently either of the All (sarvam) or of all beings (sarvani bhutani), rarely of humans as such. The wise, the discerning, the real Yogis are, for example, those who have no enmity towards any being (11:55), or they see all beings in the Atma and the Atma in all beings (6:29), or perceive the divine mystery everywhere and all beings in the divine mystery (6:30) [because the divine dwells in the heart of all beings (15:15; 18:61)], or work ecstatically for the welfare of all beings (5:25; 12:4).

Thus, inclusivism, not exclusivism, is an important characteristic of the Hindu world vision. That is why Moksha like Bandhana is not an individual phenomenon but a world phenomenon; both Moksha and Bandhana affect all because every thing is interconnected. Just as attachment spoils the whole enterprise of life, so too detachment saves the whole enterprise.

Our next Sutra could be formulated thus: Liberation, the experience of wholeness (objective genitive), is an experience of the whole (subjective genitive). And its corollary: An Individual is as much an illusion as individual liberation.

5. The Vision of a New World [Order]

Up till now what we have been reflecting upon is the way the Hindu traditions understand reality and ultimate liberation. The latter is intimately connected with the former. If we do not understand the real nature of reality we shall never reach ultimate liberation.

Our present world order sets on the pedestal modes of thinking and acting that instrumentalize the world. The result is that the values that are incorporated in its structures make it almost impossible to discern the chaff of illusion from the wheat of reality. Understandably then, to succeed in this world one has to function on the level of having, not on that of being. But this is to build on sand. For a world order which neglects or does not care about reality will itself vanish into nothing but not before causing a lot of unnecessary suffering. We are witnesses of this happening today: our epochal sicknesses (cancer and aids), our economies built on the arms industry, the ever-increasing number of the powerless and the poor, the redefinition of key values like peace (as the product of deterrents), love (as something that *we make*), progress (as the one-sided development of consumer goods), etc.

Conversely, the efforts to take serious note of the interrelatedness of all things is the path to a just and harmonious future. Today we are realizing as never before that justice and harmony cannot focus merely on humans; the world is equally, if not more, important. The self-understanding of humans is gradually progressing a step forward with the deepening awareness that humans cannot be humans without their world; the world is an integral part of their identity. The instrumentalization of the world which up to now we have been pursuing relentlessly is at long last making us have second thoughts about our science and 'scientific' temper. Whatever be the validity of scientific methods and however good its intentions, science cannot be taken as the path to salvation. We are realizing today that it has a limited task; it cannot be taken to be the criterion of real knowledge. The real, as our reflections from the Hindu traditions have shown, is a matter of religion because it focuses on wholeness and wholesomeness, not that of science because science deals with only an aspect of the real.

That is the reason why genuine Yogis alone are the Tattvadarshins. Accordingly, a new world order must have in-built structures that promote a more *real*-istic approach to life, an approach that is founded on be-attitudes. Real-istic means taking the real in all its dimensions and responding to it accordingly. Reality is not merely an "It" but an organic trinity of "I", "You" and "It".[11] A world order that ignores or does violence to one or other dimension is surely not moving in the right direction.

Admittedly, the Hindu vision does not put before us a blue-print of how a world can be constructed, but it does offer insights that are as relevant today as they were when they were first formulated. A new world order cannot afford to leave out of consideration any aspect of reality, given the interdependence of all aspects of reality. Furthermore, the myth of the emanation of all beings from the Purusha proffered an insight that has been neglected till today. We are not just humans, not just earthlings, but, in the words of Thomas Berry[12], we are worldlings. We have emerged from the world reality. Our real sense of identity will be short-circuited if we do not take cognizance

of this fact. The history of humans cannot be really written without the history of the universe; we cannot really understand humans if we do not understand the fact that humans have emerged from the same stuff as the rest of creation. Accordingly humans cannot anymore behave as if they were the crown of creation. A new attitude, a be-attitude, not a have-attitude of possessiveness, will have to animate humans. Detachment is not just a moral virtue but an ontological state of affairs which needs to be retrieved. As beings that are related, our possessiveness has to be exorcised because it does not take seriously our ontological state of relatedness.

We are all relatives, says Berry. In the Hindu vision of a new world order this means that there can be no second class citizens, no second class nations. Justice and equality among persons and nations will be the hallmark of such a world, precisely because we are relatives. Such a world should have no place for one nation to dominate the other and no place to exploit the other. All this will imply that there cannot be the kind of market forces that are biased in favour of some at the expense of the other, the kind of economies that are based on an arms-industry, the kind of agriculture that encourages monocultural products.

The family spirit, the cosmic family spirit, will turn the cosmic house into a home. It is the Cosmic Spirit which is [to be recognized as] the source of all relationships. Whether religious or secular, the world order cannot allow itself to be overcome by hybris, that is, overconfidence, that induces the belief that humans can do anything, and that there is no limit to their capabilities. Dependence is the quality of all beings. To disregard it will spell disaster. Acknowledgement of one's dependence leads to an acknowledgement of interdependence of all. Interdependence requires sensitivity to the other so that the other may be free enough to be as much at home as the members of the household. The cosmic home has to be a home for all.

The relationships between different beings are not monotonous or monochromatic; each is specifically different according to whether the pole of relationship is an "I" or a "You" or an "It". However, no pole exists in itself or by itself; it is always related to another pole. The trinity of "I", "You" and "It" always go together. One does not exist without the others. A liberative experience is an integration of this trinity.

Such an experience cannot be merely "individual"; it has to be communitarian. A communitarian experience that is liberative presupposes that the [world-] community and its structures are liberative, personally, societally and cosmically. In a vision where every thing and every one is interrelated, the notion of an "individual" does not make sense. Though humans behave like individuals, they are ontologically persons, that is, they are constituted by relationships, whether they are aware of it or not. There are no limits set on the journey towards personhood which is an ever-expanding universe. The more one realizes one's relationships the deeper one journeys into the realm of personhood.

Finally, liberation is not only an experience of wholeness; the whole too has to experience liberation. Only then is liberation truly liberation. In other words, the process of liberation has its focus not so much on the individual (because there is no such thing as an individual) but on person. Now person is an organic part of a community, both cosmic and human. Liberation of a person presupposes liberation of all persons and this presupposes liberation of all creation.

Is all this a pipe-dream, a fantasy exercise? These are only the implications that are drawn out from the insights of the Hindu traditions. That these traditions have taken their insights – to some extent – seriously is shown by the fact that they have worked out a spirituality that is in keeping with this vision. The Bhagavadgita is a clear example of this. The way the Gita thematically exposes the different aspects of Yoga, the path to liberation, leaves no doubt about its vision of humans, the world and the Divine.

6. Jnanayoga: The Yoga of Insight and Wisdom

The goal of Jnanayoga is to mediate an insight into the two aspects of reality: the impermanent and the imperishable. Applied to the world reality of Yajña/Purusha Jnanayoga makes one aware that impermanence is undergirded by the imperishable, and that the values of the one are not to be mixed up or reduced to those of the other. Action and activity are not everything; both have to be led by the light of wisdom (*jñana-deepa*). Only insight into the nature of reality, its interrelation and interdependence is in a position to determine the right type of response. From the objective of this study, Jnanayoga is the path to viewing reality from a holistic perspective. "Whoso shall strive to win release from old age and death, putting his trust in Me, will come to know that Brahman in its wholeness, – as it appertains to self, the whole [mystery] of works, as it appertains to contingent beings, and to the divine, – and Me [too] as I appertain to sacrifice. And whoso shall know Me [thus] even at the time of passing on, will know [Me] with an integrated mind." Bhagavadgita 7:29-30[13]

7. Bhaktiyoga: Loving God in all Things

This Yoga is even more cogent where wholeness is concerned. It focuses on the ontological relation between the part (*bhakta*) and the whole (*sarva*), in our terminology, between Thou and the I. Real devotion (*bhakti*) consists in acknowledging this relationship and appropriating it on the self-conscious level of freedom and love. "Who sees Me everywhere, who sees the All in Me, for him I am not lost, nor is he lost to Me. Who standing firm on unity communes-in-love with Me as abiding in all beings, in whatever state he be, that athlete of the spirit abides in me." Bhagavadgita 6:30-31

8. Vibhutiyoga: Finding God in all Things

Closer still to our enterprise is Vibhutiyoga wherein one discovers the

One-who-is-the-All in each and every thing. The mystery of wholeness is to be found operative in every thing, giving it support , substance and style. "Of this whole universe the origin and the dissolution too am I. Higher than I there is nothing whatsoever: on Me this universe is strung like clustered pearls upon a thread. In water I am the flavour, in sun and moon the light, in all the Vedas [the sacred syllable] Om, in space [I am] sound, in men [their] manliness am I. Pure fragrance in the earth am I, flame's onset in the fire: [and] life am I in all contingent beings, in ascetics [their] fierce austerity. Know that I am the primeval seed of all contingent beings: insight in men of insight, glory in the glorious am I. Power in the powerful am I, - [such power] as knows neither desire nor passion: desire am I in contingent beings, [but such desire as] does not conflict with righteousness." Bhagavadgita 7:6-11

9. Karmayoga: The Yoga of Service and Commitment

The clearest of all the Yoga aspects is that of Karmayoga where one is called upon to work selflessly for the welfare of all. Both these attributes ensure that every sign of attachment to any group or ideology is weeded out. The least trace of any clannishness or sectarianism militates against the very essence of this Yoga. "Do works for Me, make Me your highest goal, be loyal-in-love to Me, cut off all [other] attachments, have no hatred for any being at all: for all who do thus shall come to Me." Bhagavadgita 11:55

10. The Challenge of a Vision

Unfortunately, the votaries of Hindutva appear to be ignorant of such a vision from their own traditions. But fortunately a vision like this cannot be restricted only to any group. Besides, it is relevant to any person of good will. Any vision when interpreted literally turns into an ideology. This is the contribution that fanatics make. A vision projects a world of symbols which can be kept alive not intellectually or merely through good intentions but through the practice of a Yoga like the one we have briefly referred to. The path of Yoga is not strewn with recipes; there is no guarantee that even after following faithfully the standard directions one's efforts will bear fruit. For in this area, it is in the last analysis a matter of grace and not merit. But there is the assurance of the Gita: "Thinking on Me you will surmount all dangers by my grace; but if through selfishness you will not listen, then you will [surely] perish" (18:58). The implication seems to be that the practitioner of Yoga has to keep one eye on his effort and the other on divine grace in order to reach the goal.

Working for a new society is also a kind of Yoga where human effort alone will not suffice. True, there has to be method in one's madness, but more than that there has to be in addition openness to the unknown and the unknowable. This acts like a horizon that keeps on receding as we approach it. A vision is the knowable side of such a horizon. The more we assimilate it the more remains to be assimilated. Though we can never exhaustively realize a vision its power to attract remains inexhaustible. Those who allow themselves

to be attracted by a vision are on the path to becoming Tattvadarshins, those who see reality as it is. Humans of the future will either have to be Yogis of the Tattvadarshin type or they will not be at all.

Notes

1. See F. X. D'Sa, "Re-Searching the Divine. The World of Symbol and the Language of Metaphor," in *Interrelations and Interpretation.* Philosophical Reflections on Science, Religion and Hermeneutics in honour of Richard De Smet, S.J. and Jean de Marneffe, S.J. Ed. Job Kozhamthadam, S.J. (New Delhi: Intercultural Publications 1997), pp. 141-173.
2. Shatapathabrahmana III, 6, 2, 26: "All this, whatever exists, is made to share in sacrifice." And Rig Veda I, 164, 35: "This sacrifice is the navel of the world."
3. See R. Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience. Mantramanjari.* An Anthology of the Vedas for Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration. Edited and translated with introductions and notes. (Pondicherry: All India Books 1976), pp. 348: "At the origin of every being there is a sacrifice that has produced it. The texture of the universe is sacrifice, which is the act par excellence which produces all that is."
4. A modern nuclear physicist F. Capra has the following to say in his *The Turning Point. Science, Society and the Rising Culture.* (Fontana Paperback, 1983), pp. 285-287: "The new vision of reality we have been talking about is based on awareness of the essential interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena - physical, biological, psychological, social and cultural... The systems view looks at the world in terms of relationships and integration. Systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller units... Every organism - from the smallest bacterium through the wide range of plants and animals to humans - is an integrated whole and thus a living system... All these natural systems are wholes whose specific structures arises [sic] from the interactions and interdependence of their parts. The activity of systems involves a process known as transaction - the simultaneous and mutually interdependent interaction between multiple components... Although we can discern individual parts in any system, the nature of the whole is always different from the mere sum of its parts."
5. See Panikkar, op. cit., pp. 352-352: "Sacrifice is that which preserves the universe in existence, that which gives life and the hope of life. The universe in its totality does not repose on the shoulders of any extracosmic reality; if it did, it would not be the whole universe, but only an appendix to it. Reality has to include all that of which we can be aware. Neither God nor the Gods can be excluded from it. Now this universe is neither reposing on another Ground, nor reposing on itself, as it were must a 'mechanical' or 'automatic' Being, as if freedom – and thus the freedom to cease to be – were not at the very core of reality. The universe does not repose on anything other than itself and its own structure. This ultimate structure is not to be regarded as 'another' or 'deeper' 'thing' or substance; it is in fact sacrifice, which, is precisely, the internal dynamism of the universe, universal *Ṛta*, cosmic order itself. This order, this sacrifice, obviously cannot be a static result of an already performed action. Sacrifice is the act that makes the universe. It does it, not through an external agent, but by the self-cooperation of the universe itself. Men alone cannot accomplish this, and the

Gods left to themselves are equally impotent. The highest God, the supreme Being, is equally incapable of perform this act alone, for he is not God for himself but for the 'creatures'. In point of fact he is never alone; he is relational and belongs to reality, in spite of all the provisos and distinctions that a thinking philosophical and theological mind is bound to make in order not to fall into an oversimplified monism or an unsustainable dualism."

6. J. Gonda, "Reflections on *sarva* in Vedic Texts," in *Selected Studies II*, Leiden 1975, pp. 1-31.
7. Thomas Berry, a self-confessed "Geologian" says this in his *The Dream of the Earth*. (San Francisco: Sierra Book Club 1998, pp 163-165): "The universe expresses itself in the blazing radiance of the stars and in the vast reaches of the galactic systems. Its most intimate expression of itself, however, is in this tiny planet: a planet that could not exist in its present form except in a universe such as this one, in which it has emerged and from which it has received its life energies. The planet presents itself to us, not as a uniform global reality, but as a complex of highly differentiated regions caught up in the comprehensive unity of the planet itself. There arctic and tropical, coastal and inland regions, mountains and plains, river valleys and deserts. Each of these regions has its distinctive geological formation, climatic conditions, and living forms. Together these constitute the wide variety of life communities that may be referred to as bioregions. Each is coherent within itself and intimately related to the others. Together they express the wonder and splendor of this garden planet of the universe... The air and water and soil and seeds that provide our basic sustenance, the sunshine that pours its energies over the landscape – these are integral with the functioning of the fruitful earth. Physically and spiritually we are woven into this living process. As long as the integrity of the process is preserved, we have air to breathe and water to drink and nourishing food to eat."
8. Thomas Berry's remark is pertinent here (*The Dream of the Earth*, pp. 194-195): "Our immediate tendency is to seek guidance from our cultural traditions, from what might be designated as our cultural coding. Yet in this case our need seems to be for guidance that is beyond what our cultural traditions are able to give. Our cultural traditions, it seems, are themselves a major source of our difficulty. It appears necessary that we go beyond our cultural coding, to our genetic coding, to ask for guidance.

   We seldom consider going to our genetic coding for guidance in our cultural development because we are generally unaware that our genetic coding provides the basic psychic and physical structure of our being. Our genetic coding determines not only our identity at birth; its guidance continues also in every cell of our bodies throughout the entire course of our existence, a guidance manifested through the spontaneities within us. We need only to listen to what we are being told through the very structure and functioning of our being. We do invent our cultural coding, but the power to do so is itself consequent on the imperatives of our genetic coding.

   Beyond our genetic coding, we need to go to the earth, as the source whence we came, and ask for its guidance, for the earth carries the psychic structure as well as the physical form of every living being upon the planet. Our confusion is not only within ourselves; it concerns also our role in the planetary community. Even beyond the earth, we need to go to the universe and inquire concerning the basic issues of realty and value, for, even more than the earth, the universe carries the deep mysteries of our existence within itself.

We cannot discover ourselves without first discovering the universe, the earth, and the imperatives of our own being. Each of these has a creative power and a vision far beyond any rational thought or cultural creation of which we are capable. Nor should we think of these as isolated from our own individual being or from the human community. We have no existence except within the earth and within the universe."

9. See the Purusha-Sukta, Rig Veda X, 90.
10. The Purusha-Sukta begins thus:
    A thousand heads had Purusha,
    A thousand eyes, a thousand feet:
    Encompassing the earth on every side
    He exceeded it by ten fingers' [breadth].
11. See Panikkar's remarks on this in endnote no. 5 above.
12. See *The Dream of the Earth*, pp.132-133: "The story of the universe is the story of the emergence of a galactic system in which each new level of expression emerges through the urgency of self-transcendence. Hydrogen in the presence of some millions of degrees of heat emerges into helium. After the stars take shape as oceans of fire in the heavens, they go through a sequence of transformations. Some eventually explode into star dust out of which the solar system and the earth take shape. Earth gives unique expression of itself in its rock and crystalline structures and in the variety and splendor of living forms, until humans appear as the moment in which the unfold universe becomes conscious of itself. The human emerges not only as an earthling, but also as a worldling. We bear the universe in our beings as the universe bears us in its being. The two have a total presence to each other and to that deeper mystery out of which both the universe and ourselves have emerged... The most notable single development within science in recent years, however, has been a growing awareness of the integral physical-psychic dimension f reality."
13. The translations are from R. C. Zaehner, The Bhagavad-Gita. With a Commentary based on the Original Sources. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1969).

JPJRS 2/1 (1999) 60-67

Islam in the Twenty-First Century

Asghar Ali Engineer
Director, Institute of Islamic Studies, Mumbai

We are preparing to enter the twenty-first century not only physically but also intellectually. One may ask if it matters whether we enter the twentieth or twenty-first century. But if we reflect deeply we will realise that it does. We had entered the twentieth century a hundred years ago with revolutionary developments both in the world of politics as well as that of knowledge. The countries of Asia and Africa came under colonial rule during the nineteenth century and we entered the twentieth century as colonized countries.

But colonial rule with all its shame, loot, exploitation and plunder also opened new horizons of knowledge. It jolted us out of the slumber of centuries. We were initiated into the world of science. Our attitudes towards everything changed forever. We also began to imbibe new values and democratic structures both in the social and political spheres. Our sense of humiliation and subjugation was compensated to some extent by entry into this new world of knowledge. We never looked back since then. However, progress was not linear. It never is.

The developments in the world of Islam in their era were quite complex and interesting. The nineteenth century developments in the Islamic world assumed great importance because it is the largest after the world of Christianity. There was yet another factor which invested the world of Islam with great importance. Before Western colonialism assumed a dominant position, it was the Islamic world which dominated the world. The Muslim empires were the greatest empires, dominating the whole world.

The nineteenth century, however, brought about a dramatic reversal, and the Islamic world came to be subjugated by the Western colonial powers. This created, as could be expected, highly adverse reactions among the Muslim intellectuals. But it was far from being uniform. The 'Ulma – the tribe of theologians – reacted most adversely. For it, Western systems and Western knowledge were totally alien and hence to be rejected. They naturally condemned all that was associated with the West very strongly. Another reason for their hostility to the West was that they (i.e., the 'Ulma) lost the dominant position. The Western judicial system almost sidelined them. Thus, they vehemetly condemned it. But there were honorable exceptions among them too, e.g., theologians like Muhammad Abduh who lived for some time in the West (i.e., France). He welcomed Western science and rationality and issued refreshingly new fatwas.

However, the reaction of secular intellectuals was somewhat different. This was because most of them stood to benefit from colonial rule. Many of them welcomed the new changes. Also, it meant liberation from autocratic feudal rule. They were quick to imbibe democratic values. They launched struggles for liberation from colonial rule on the one hand, and from the authoritarian feudal set up, on the other. Thus, they adopted a rational approach and began to see Islam and its teachings in a new light. Sir Syed, a liberal intellectual from India, wrote a commentary on the Holy Qur'an with this new approach. Maulavi Mumtaz Ali Khan advocated sexual equality under the impact of new ideas about women and their personal dignity. Many more examples of this genre can be given. Thus, the Muslim world stepped into the twentieth century with a radically different mindest. Acceptance and rejection of rationality and scientific developments interacted in a complex social behaviour pattern. The Islamic world has gone through, like others, a continuous process of change ever since.

As stepping into the twentieth century ushered in a qualitative change in the social, cultural, political and economic life of the Islamic world, stepping into the twenty-first century will bring about even greater qualitative changes. The scientific developments on the threshold of the twentieth century were quite tantalising for those in Asia and Africa. These developments had given them a new worldview. The developments on the threshold of the Twenty-first century are no less significant. The information highway has pushed the world to the edge of new breakthroughs. It is, however, unfortunate for the Asian and African countries that they have contributed very little to the fresh scientific developments. The West has been leading all the way.

The world of Islam is also facing a great dilemma on the eve of the twenty-first century. It is proud of professing the religion of Islam and its Islamic identity. It still cannot reconcile itself to the idea of Western superiority. For a variety of reasons not to be discussed here, the world of Islam has gone through several political and intellectual turmoils in the last hundred years but has still not stabilized. At the base of all these turmoils is the continuing Western domination. This Western domination is not only continuing but is also increasing. And this domination, to be sure, is on account of its scientific and technological superiority.

This technological domination also results in the political hegemony of the West. Thus, it remains a running sore for the Islamic world. This Western hegemony has also resulted in a deep division within the Islamic world. The Gulf countries led by Saudi Arabia have allied themselves with the USA. The radical countries like Iran, Libya and Iraq are, on the other hand, in favour of a confrontation with the West. However, neither has made much headway. While the former are looked down upon by the Muslim masses as survile to the Western powers, the latter are seen as impotent though valiant in their efforts.

The USA has tried to crush radical Islamic countries ruthlessly. It did

what it could to crush the Islamic revolution in Iran though it did not succeed. Earlier, it tried to crush Libya under the leadership of Ghaddafi, again unsuccessfully. It is supporting Israel to the hilt to break the back of Palestinian radicalism. Thus, American hegemony and the helplessness of the Islamic world fuel the anti-Western feelings especially among the youth and a section of the clergy. They react to this situation rather aggressively and resort to violence. The Western media has coined a pejorative term for this from its own experiential context, i.e., fundamentalism. This term is now being used against militant Islam globally. Violence perpetrated by extremist Muslims is generally blamed on Islam. Thus, Islam has come be projected as violent, and Muslims as 'fundamentalists' and fanatics. And to top it all, Prof. Huntington of Harward has theorised that there is a clash between Western and Islamic civilization. It is very unfortunate that such academics also betray their ignorance by floating false theories and project a clash of political interests as 'clash of civilizations'. This has become such a deep prejudice in the West particularly in the USA, that any violent attack on any governmental or non-governmental organization is thought to have been perpetrated by militant Islamic groups. When there was a violent attack at Oklahama by some extreme Christian sect, it was not only immediately blamed on Islamic extremists, but President Clinton himself appeared on T.V. to make a statement to that effect. However, it was later discovered that no Muslim organization was involved in it.

One has to deeply reflect as to why some Muslims are resorting to violence whenever they do so. Is it inherent in Islam or does their situation compel them to do so. It is also necessary to reflect whether only Muslims resort to violence or whether others also do so, whether it is inherent in human nature or only in Islam. Any human community or group, whatever religion it professes, pressed by circumstances, would react violently. The example of LTTE from Sri Lanka is worth considering. Many more examples can be given. It is not only in such circumstances that violence is resorted to; it is also resorted to by groups trying to maintain their supremacy such as in Bosnia. The violence perpetrated in Bosnia by Serbs defies all human logic.

This is, however, not to defend violence being perpetrated by some Muslim groups in different Muslim countries. What is happening in Algeria, Afghanistan, Egypt and other places cannot be condoned. However, a general condemnation will not do. Each situation will have to be understood in its specific context to be effectively dealt with. It is sociologically important to note that generally militant youths come from lower middle classes who suffer most due to unemployment, inflation and other forms of economic adversities. It is extreme forms of frustration which lead them to resort to violence. It is also significant to note that in most of the Islamic countries feudal authoritarianism still prevails. There is no democratic form of governance in these countries, be it Egypt, Algeria or Afghanistan. Democratic forms of protests are not available to the frustrated youth.

In Algeria, for example, much bloodshed could be avoided if the election results had been respected by the military authorities, and 'Muslim fundamentalists' who had won the elections had been given power. But that was not to be. Egypt is undergoing a serious economic crisis. Husni Mubarak is far from being democratic. There are high rates of unemployment. The ruling elite is seen to be utterly corrupt and devoid of all morality, and hence the existence of 'Islamic violence' which often takes extreme form. Violence has its own logic and becomes more brutal the more you resort to it. One can hardly expect moderation in violence.

The situation in Afghanistan has its own logic. The CIA played a prominent part in supplying arms and monetary resources to the Afghan 'mujahidin'. In their game to defeat the Soviet Union, the CIA armed these mujahidin to the hilt. And once the Soviet Union was defeated, the CIA completely disowned the mujahidin and began to depict them as terrorists. Now in Afghanistan, the Taliban rebels are being supported by Pakistan to serve its own ends. Iran, Saudi Arabia and USA, all have interests in Afghanistan because of its nearness to the Central Asian oil fields. Left to themselves, the Taliban would collapse in no time.

On the threshold of the twent-first century, what is needed is the promotion of democracy in Islamic countries. But the dilemma is that the USA, which apparently never tires of talking about human rights, props up the most authoritarian regimes in the Islamic world. Be it the Saudi monarchy or the Gulf Sbeikhs, all owe their existence and 'political stability' to American support. And in turn, as pointed out above, it stifles democratic protest and encourages violence. This, as part of a vicious circle, results in suppression of these groups, leading to blatant violation of human rights.

It is a known fact that it was the CIA which spurred Saddam Hussain of Iraq to invade Iran in the early eighties, resulting in a long drawn war between Iraq and Iran. The same Saddam later invaded Kuwait, and is now facing the wrath of the USA, and the USA refuses to lift sanctions to crush Saddam, causing intense suffering to the people of Iraq. Thousands of children are dying every year for want of nutrition and medicines. Thus, it will be seen that most of the problems and violent struggles in Islamic counties are due to the political interests of the USA in this region. And despite this, it is Islam which is blamed for violence. And Huntington, tongue-in-check, talks of a 'clash of Western and Islamic civilization,' and it is so readily accepted by the academia.

What are the most important issues in the Islamic countries on the eve of the twenty-first century? These are, priority-wise, 1) democracy; 2) human rights; 3) women's rights (though this can be considered as part of human rights, woman's rights in an Islamic context has its own specificity); 4) scientific outlook; 5) tolerance of other religions and thought systems, in other words freedom of conscience.

We will deal with these issues here from the Islamic perspective and see whether Islam is an obstacle in anyway

in realising these goals. The answer to this question depends on one's outlook or one's mindset rather than on Islam *per se*. The orthodox may have reservations about these goals, dubbing them 'western agenda'. Mr. Mahathir, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, even describes human rights as purely a Western concept, where the individual is at the centre, and quite unsuitable for Eastern countries, where community has central importance. The rulers of many other Islamic countries have supported this contention.

To me the crucial question is: is Islam by itself responsible for such an attitude or the ruling classes? I think it is the ruling classes, who enjoy immense privileges in the prevailing authoritarian structures in the Islamic countries, that are mainly responsible for the denial of human rights.

If Islam is responsible for the denial of individual rights because the community is at the centre, the Qur'an, which is source of moral and legal behaviour for Muslims, should state it clearly. But in the Qur'an it is the individual who is fully accountable for all good and bad deeds, and not the community or *ummah*. It is an individual who will be rewarded or punished, not the community. This concept is very central to the Qur'an. The Our'an was revealed in a milieu in which tribal collectivism was breaking down and individualism was emerging on the social scene. In fact the Qur'an attacks the very notion of tribal collectivism and emphasises individual responsibility.

It is important to understand that the message of a scripture is always interpreted in the given cultural and political milieu. No interpretation should be absolutised. The Torah, the Bible, the Gita and other religious scriptures have been differently interpreted by different people in their own sociocultural and political milieu. Vivekanand's and Gandhiji's understanding of Gita has been very different from that of orthodox brahmin priests over the centuries. The interpretation of the Bible by the liberation theologians of Latin America has been radically different from that of Western theologians. It is so because their social and political needs and sensibilities are very different.

The rulers and the ruling elite in the Muslim countries, particularly in the Middle East, still cling to a feudal social structure. The Saudi society is still semi-tribal. Their social and political sensibilities are very different. Their understanding of the Islamic scripture is naturally conditioned by their own needs, requirements and privileges. But the problem does not lie there. The problem is that they absolutise their understanding.

A human rights culture can evolve only in a democratic culture, and the democratic culture is conspicuous by its absence in the Islamic world today. To expect the Islamic countries to abide by human rights is to put the cart before the horse. To spread the human rights culture in these countries, it is necessary to create conditions for democratisation; and democratisation will come only with modernisation. There is an integral relationship between the two though not in a mechanical sense. The Saudi society, to be sure, has been con-

siderably modernised. Not only Jeddah, but the two holiest cities of Mecca and Madina also are highly modernised in terms of planning and city infrastructure. The very milieu of the cities of Mecca and Madina, if one ignores the mosque area, is that of a modern Western city. Also, consumerism is quite rampant.

But such changes at the base do not automatically result in superstructural changes by themselves without conscious intervention by democratic forces. The western countries led by the USA are interested in maintaining the political status quo, which is in their own interest.

Even then pressures are building up among the people although success may still be far off. The leader of the human rights movement in Saudi Arabia had to flee to the U.K. The Saudi monarchy is not only as yet unprepared for democracy, it is not even implementing the Qur'anic concept of *shura* (i.e., setting up a consultative council). Kuwait, on the other hand, has a limited democracy in which women cannot vote. Women were at the fore front of the liberation struggle at the time of the Iraqi invasion and were promised enfranchisement after the liberation, but the promise was not kept. The Kuwaiti women are still struggling for their enfranchisement.

But Islam *per se* is neither opposed to democracy nor human rights.

There are enough statements in the Qur'an which legtimise both democracy and human rights. It gives complete freedom to human beings to do good or bad, but holds him/her accountable for what he/she does. This is the foundation of democracy and human rights. Some Muslim countries had refused to sign the Human Rights Declaration of the United Nations in 1948 (though other Muslim countries like Pakistan had readily signed it) on the grounds that it gives freedom to an individual for conversion to another religion. The leaders of these Muslim countries argued that a Muslim is not free to convert and, if he does, will be punished by death. There is no such statement in the Qur'an. It is the Muslim jurists who stipulated this, fearing sedition from the converted. The state was closely identified with Islam. The Qur'an, on the other hand, gives complete freedom ("There is no compulsion in religion" and "For you is your religion and for me is mine").

The Qur'an also lays great emphasis on social justice, human welfare, egalitarianism and condemns concentration of wealth. Though it does approve of entrepreneurship and initiative, it does not uphold the doctrine of market forces. But none of the "Islamic" countries has ever laid emphasis on these aspects of Islamic teachings. They have laid emphasis on the ritualistic aspects of the shari'ah. Distributive justice and human welfare which are quite primary in Qru'an is pushed to a secondary position or not regarded as worth implementing at all. In all "Islamic" countries there is high degree of concentration of wealth. Authoritarianism along with concentration of wealth is quite common in these countries. Nothing much seems to be changing in this regard even on the eve of the twenty-first century.

The Qur'an lays great emphasis on the dignity of the human person ("We are honoured children of Adam"). It is also the central doctrine of the charter of human rights. But this dignity can be ensured only in a democratic set up, where freedom of conscience is ensured. As already pointed out, in all those formally Islamic countries there is neither a democratic set up nor any respect for human dignity. Only Shari'ah formalism is stressed.

The Prophet of Islam had shown great respect for the rights of religious minorities and described them as *'dhimmis'* (i.e. those whose protection and well-being is the responsibility of Muslims). He is also reported to have said that He would accuse those before Allah on the Day of Judgment who did not look after the *dhimmis*. Through this *hadith* we can understand the profound concern the Prophet showed for the well-being of religious minorities. However, very few Muslim countries can boast of respecting the rights of religious minorities. In this respect Muslim countries are hardly better than other countries. Religious intolerance has become the order of the day in most of Muslim countries. As truly Islamic countries, they cannot boast of superiority over other countries. Religious tolerance has been accorded the highest priority in the Qur'anic teachings, but it is conspicuous by its absence in these countries. Most non-Muslims think Muslims to be quite intolerant. It is a matter for deep reflection for Muslims why there is such a gap between the Islamic doctrine and Muslim practice.

The record of Muslim countries in respect of women's rights is also very poor. Modern scholars have shown conclusively that the Qur'an accords equal status to both the sexes. Women have been given all those rights which men enjoy. Not only the right to property and the right to work has been given to them but also the right to education. The Prophet of Islam has made seeking of knowledge obligatory for both men and women. But what the Taliban rebels are doing in Afghanistan in the name of Islam is, to say the least, shameful. It brings disgrace not only to the Taliban but to Islam. They have not only put women in strict purdah but have also forcibly stopped them from working even as teachers and doctors. Of course what the Taliban rebels are doing reflects the backwardness and ignorance of these Afghan leaders who have had a very rigid and orthodox education in Pakistani *madrasas*.

The Qur'an makes no distinction between men and women in respect of their rights as human beings. It accords equal dignity to men and women. The Our'an does not mention anywhere that women must cover their face; all it requires is that they dress in a dignified manner so as not to provoke sexual aggression, and this strict sexual conduct is imposed both on men as well as women. Unfortunately the medieval Islamic thinkers imposed more restrictions on women and made it appear a divine law. In fact, it was their own thinking. Thus, on the eve of the twenty-first century it is highly necessary that women's rights be given top priority in Muslim countries.

As pointed out before, in Kuwait women still cannot vote and in Saudi Arabia they cannot drive or go out unless accompanied by a close male relative. Such rules have nothing to do with Islam. Such restrictions were imposed by jurists in medieval ages in their own cultural context. These rules cannot be considered divine commandments. Women should be free to vote, free to hold political offices, free to carry on their own business and free to look after their own affairs autonomously. Women should not be debarred from any office. Early Islamic history tells us that women even took part in battles and fought with great bravery. The Qur'anic injunctions in respect of women's rights were far ahead of their time and in keeping with what is needed in this respect on the eve of the twenty-first century. However, the thinking of the ruling elites in Muslim countries is still located in the Middle Ages.

Muslim countries are developing a consumerist culture without any constraints of conscience. No Muslim country has ever hesitated to opt for liberalization and globalization. The Muslim clergy, always in the forefront curtailing women's rights in keeping with 'the shar'ah', never agitated against liberalization of economy, though it results in large scale unemployment, rising the prices and mass poverty on one hand, and spreads the consumerist culture and ostentatious living on the part of upper classes, on the other. This is in gross violation of the Prophet's pronouncements and practice. The Prophet had strongly denounced ostentatious living and even prohibited men from wearing silk and gold ornaments. The 'Ulama in Muslim countries have become part of the ruling establishment and justify all this in the name of free enterprise and enterpreneurship. The Shari'ah has put severe restrictions on profiteering and hoarding and never allowed unrestricted market forces to operate. The Shari'ah doctrine clearly accords priority to welfare of the common people (*maslihah 'amma*) over free market forces. One is yet to hear protests form the orthodox 'ulama against free market operations, causing severe economic hardships to the common people though such free market operations are in gross violations of the Shari'ah laws.

The 'Ulma lose no time in protesting against laws which accord priority to human and women's rights, and even issue death fatwas against conscientious objectors but keep silence when Shari'ah laws are openly flouted by the ruling elite to usher in economic measures to their benefit. This shows how sincerely concerned these theological doctors are about the welfare of the common people. The Prophet was extremely sensitive to economic misery and poverty and exhorted Muslims to give away excess wealth to the needy and the poor. The wealth should not circulate among the rich, the Qu'ran says.

Thus, it is seen that it is highly necessary to re-think many issues in Islam on the eve of the twenty-first century. A radical change in Islamic thinking in keeping with the true Qur'anic spirit is highly necessary. New sensibilities must be respected and new challenges met. A new human rights culture and democratic ethos should evolve in the Islamic world.

JPJRS 2/1 (1999) 68-79

The Boundaries of Our Destiny
Mapping Oslo and the Future of the Jewish People

Marc H. Ellis
Dept. of Religion, Maryknoll School of Theology

In December of 1997, just months before the official celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Israel's independence, I boarded a plane for Germany. This was my fifth trip to Germany and my third lecture tour of that country. As a Jew, each time I travel to Germany I feel the intensity of its history. Usually my visits last ten days and by then I am drained and wanting to leave for home. Because of the Holocaust and the historical propensity toward violence, at least in Germany's modern appearance as a state, many of those who guide my tours and who talk to me about their own family's involvement during the Nazi years seem almost paralysed with fear. I have never been to a country where the most thoughtful citizens had a fear of their own state, their fellow citizens, and perhaps even of themselves. The recent reunification of Germany is a case in point. What many in the world celebrate is also feared as the beginning of a new era where the sins of the past might be forgotten and repeated.

My first substantive meeting in Germany came in 1986. During my travel I spent several days with a small group of Christians associated with Pax Christi who had dedicated their lives to remembrance of the Holocaust and atonement for what their own people had done to Jews. It was an amazing time for me, as I had sought contact with Germans to see if the deep, almost unimaginable wound brought forth in the Holocaust could be healed. We spoke for days without once changing the subject from these horrible years and without excusing, explaining away, or in any way minimizing German responsibility for the Holocaust. It was the first time I had contact with Germans who consciously live in the shadow of the Holocaust as a judgement on German history.

On my second trip to Germany in 1990, I was invited to introduce my book, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation,* which had been published in America in 1987. I had discussed the central themes of this book with the Pax Christi group in my earlier visit; the question of remembrance and the need to apply its lessons to the present was received well by the group. I specifically raised the question of the use of Jewish power after the Holocaust, especially in relation to Israel and the Palestinians. Our discussions, as did the book itself, predated the Palestinian uprising, which started in December 1987 and became a full-fledged revolt in 1988. Still, the occupation of Pales-

tine had already taken on a permanence over two decades, with no abatement in sight and, while the brutality seen on television screens around the world during the early days of the uprising were not yet broadcast, the patterns of the Israeli state and their consequences on Jewish history were already becoming evident.

If on the first visit to Germany I left with a feeling of dread, as if the cries of the Holocaust victims continue unanswered, I left the second time with a sense that the dead, while remaining as witnesses, were becoming more distant. The cries of the Jewish dead were no longer alone and the tears of the Palestinian mothers, whose young sons I visited in the hospitals and graveyards, were also present to me. In Germany there was little need to remind me that the scope and ferocity of the assault on Jews was quantitatively and qualitatively different than that which the Palestinians were suffering today. But the connection between the two was of a different order: I had to ask if the victims of the Holocaust would sanction what was happening to the Palestinians or, as relevant, whether I, as heir to that generation of victims and to Jewish history, could sanction their dislocation, beating and death. When I left Germany this time, my sensibility, which in my earlier visit had placed an emphasis on the past to address the present, was shifting to view the past from the contemporary situation. I discussed the Jewish dead, but I could feel that the Palestinian dead were becoming as important to me as a person and as a Jew. In Germany, and I felt this even more keenly in my subsequent visit in 1996, Jews were largely seen as dead and in need of commemoration. For me, however, the overwhelming sense of my people as living – as thriving and, in the case of Palestinians, abusing others – came to the fore.

Between my visits in 1987 and 1996, of course, much had happened. The uprising had come and gone, to be replaced by the Oslo process initiated in 1993. The possibility of a common and ordinary life lived by Jews and Palestinians in some kind of equality was introduced, at least symbolically, by the famous handshake on the White House lawn and dashed by the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin less than two years later. What would have happened if Rabin had lived or Peres had won the political battle to succeed Rabin we do not know. But by the time I travelled to Germany in December of 1997, the map of Oslo was clear. The hope of a just and equitable peace was vanquished; so, too, the building of mutual respect necessary to pursue such a path. Even the possibility of a separation of Jews and Palestinians in two states was no longer tenable. More and more land was within the control of Israel and therefore less land was available for a Palestinian state. The resources that Palestinians needed for their own independence were all to be utilized and controlled by Israel and the settlements, with their military, economic, and transportation infrastructure, made a mockery of any real independence for Palestinians.

As I boarded the plane for Germany in December, I wondered what I would experience this time. The fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of the

death camps was behind us and now the fiftieth anniversary of Israel was ahead. The first anniversary had been commemorated as it should have been, but the anniversary ahead was supposed to be a celebration. With the situation in the Middle East as it was, and with the map of Oslo becoming more definitive and ominous, would such a celebration actually take place? Could we celebrate what appeared to be a permanent displacement of the Palestinian people by a state that claimed as its moral and political basis the suffering in Jewish history culminating in the Holocaust? Could the map of Oslo define the boundaries of the Jewish state and, even more important, the boundaries of Jewish destiny? With such a map, how would the victims of the Holocaust be remembered? Recently, Daniel Goldhagen, the Holocaust historian, had been in Germany reminding Germans that it was their "eliminationist anti-Semitism" that had brought about the destruction of Jewish life in Europe. Would he listen to a similar lecture by a Palestinian who accused Jews of pursuing a course of "eliminationist anti-Palestianism"? On the day of my departure, I picked up several newspapers for reading on the transatlantic flight. Pondering my travel schedule, I browsed these papers and came across an article in the *Financial Times* titled "Sharon Plans West Bank Security Ring." Ariel Sharon, of course, is well known as a right-wing Likud party member. He has held a variety of government posts over the years and is famous for his hawkish views on the Israeli military presence in the Middle East and his negative views on Palestinians and Arabs in general. A prime architect of the invasion of Lebanon under the government of Menachem Begin in the 1980's, Sharon is now Minister of Infrastructure under Prime Minister Netanyahu.

What struck me as I looked at the article was the map which accompanied it, as it illustrated the title of the article in a vivid and shocking way. Though the map is of Israel and the West Bank, the focus and detail relates to the West Bank and Sharon's vision of a final settlement with the Palestinians. The West Bank is outlined in dark colours with the proposed areas of Palestinian control in white. The dark within the West Bank is to be controlled by Israel. Two elements stand out immediately. First, the security zones to be controlled by Israel: twenty kilometres to the west of the Jordan river; ten kilometres from the pre-1967 borders of Israel to Palestinian controlled land. These zones spread the length of Israel and the Palestinian areas and are to insure military security from attack by Palestinians into Israel and prevent a consolidation of these Palestinian areas with Jordan. Second, the areas to be controlled by Palestinians: these are found within and sandwiched between the Israeli security zones and are divided between north and south through Israeli control of Jerusalem. With the security zones and the divided Palestinian centres, Palestinian autonomy is thus limited in the most fundamental geographic and political ways. In this map, at least, Palestinian autonomy resembles more an apartheid, a Bantustan-like existence, than any resemblance to a state.

Above the article I jotted notes as to the meaning of this map, at least the nature of its implications. For it became clear to me that if the pre-1967 Israel part of the map was detailed as to Israeli control and the presence of Palestinians, a similar pattern would be discernible. Within the pre-1967 borders of Israel is the remnant of the original Palestinian presence before the establishment of the state, a population that now numbers close to a million Arabs. They too have a certain autonomy within Israel defined as a second-class citizenship. If the difference between autonomy within the West Bank and second-class citizenship within Israel is for the moment bracketed, then the map shows a continuous pattern of Israeli control and Palestinian life lived within the borders of a Jewish state. In fact, just as the Palestinians within the pre-1967 borders of Israel are part of a remnant population displaced and expelled in the formation of Israel, so too is the Palestinian population of the West Bank a remnant population. For if there are almost 2 million Palestinians in these "autonomous" areas, there are several million more Palestinians who are forced to live outside Israel and the West Bank and Gaza. Thus Sharon's map charts the areas where these two remnant population, almost 3 million Palestinians, will live for the foreseeable future. Yet as important as the borders Sharon draws for the Palestinians are the borders he draws for Israel. In his mind the state of Israel is now expanded to the Jordan river. The autonomous areas of Palestinians within and outside the pre-1967 borders of Israel are now within the expanded boundary of the Israeli state.

Sharon's map represents a permanent occupation of the West Bank and, as a final settlement with the Palestinian leadership, legalizes the occupation as the new borders of Israel. In that sense Sharon envisions the permanence of his map as the end of the occupation of the West Bank. In short, Sharon ends the occupation by making the occupation part of state policy, thus legalizing what has been declared illegal by most international political bodies. To understand the situation I wrote the following note to myself: "Palestinians (Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza – though Gaza is not discussed here the implications are obvious) within an expanded Israel just as Palestinians within the pre-1967 borders of Israel but without citizenship." Looking at the map the reality is clear and devastating from an ethical and historical perspective: in fifty years Israel has conquered all of historical Palestine and, because it is unable or unwilling to expel the remnants of the defeated Palestinians, creates areas for this population to live, albeit in a seriously restricted manner. The obvious possibilities of either a Palestinian state with a shared Jerusalem or an integration of Jewish and Palestinian communities, two viable alternatives to this policy of an expanded Israeli state, have been rejected.

Yet even more devastating than the proposed map by Sharon is the inability to dismiss the map as a vision of a right-wing zealot, one unlikely to ever move from fantasy to reality. *In fact, Sharon's map is the map of Israel, is the map of Palestinian existence, as both stand today. To counter Sharon's map is to move from reality to an alter-*

native vision, to reverse the process which has already taken shape. Sharon's map is not a right-wing version of a greater Israel; it is Israel as it has come to be on the fiftieth anniversary of the state. As certain, and equally as devastating, is the realization that many progressive Jews, including those in Peace Now, could agree to this map if it was done peacefully and with the acquiescence of the Palestinian authorities. With minor adjustments and debating point flourishes, Sharon's map is essentially the consensus map of Israel for the twenty-first century.

At the End of Jewish History

My stay in Germany was haunted by these realizations, and the stories I heard about the Nazi past were filtered through this disturbing present. In fact a reversal took hold of me in this journey. In my previous trips to Germany, the past dominated or at least vied with the present; there evolved a dialectical relationship between the past and present, the victims of the Holocaust demanding an accounting, the Holocaust making a moral claim on the present. During this time, however, the past receded as if the claims of the victims for an accounting and a morality were too distant to be heard. Israel was caught up with itself, as if it was on its own and therefore responsible for its actions without any claims to history. The victims of the Holocaust cried out for an accounting on their own without any reference to contemporary Jewry or the state of Israel, and Israel itself could no longer call for support of its policies from any other vantage point than the policies themselves. Even the stories and concerns of Germans about their own history – including the possibility of a revival of anti-Semitism – seemed less about the past than the contradictions in German society experienced today. I realized that the Holocaust could be used by Germans, just as it has been by Jews, to deny the fact that contemporary problems had to be dealt with within their own framework.

One day a friend brought me to the exhibition of models that were being considered for the Holocaust memorial in Berlin, a project that continues to stir tremendous controversy. One model stood out. The memorial consisted of beige walls placed at angles to each other with places to walk between the walls, some light landscaping, and Hebrew lettering on parts of the walls. The Hebrew starts at odd places on the walls and also fades at certain points, as if you are entering through language a world that is ending. Though there are many dimensions and possible interpretations of such a proposed memorial, what struck me is the trace-like vision the architect invoked. We remember this world, the world of the Jews of Europe, where Hebrew was already becoming part of the past for most Jews, but nonetheless defined aspects of their existence whether they were religious or secular in their outlook. The proposed memorial saw the world of European Jewry present only as a reminder that their world had come to an end. European Jewry was now past, at least the history that had evolved over the last thousand years, and the Hebrew that they spoke or once spoke, the Hebrew images they evoked in liturgy and art were also part of the past.

The map of Israel- that is the future of the Jewish state – and the memorial commemorating the lost world of European Jewry forced me to the conclusion that we have come to an end of Jewish history as we have known and inherited it. Jerusalem remembered in prayers, Hebrew chanted in liturgy, the ethical and moral compass of Jewish history, even the ability of Jewish intellectuals to think through the issues of the day, happened somewhere else in time, meant something else, was possible elsewhere, but not here, now, in the present. Jerusalem had moved from a place of redemption to a place of violence, and Hebrew, once the language of the poor, the suffering, and those who struggled for dignity and justice, had become the language of the conqueror and the state. More often than not, Jewish intellectuals are now those who legitimize rather than critique injustice and if they do critique injustice, it is typically the injustice of another group or state rather than of Jewish power and the Jewish state.

What is the road ahead? How do we define Jewishness at the fiftieth anniversary of Israel? Does the map of Israel define the boundaries of Jewish life? When the attempt to reduce the dissonance between the Jewish past and present can no longer be carried out, when the rituals and pronouncements of Jewish leaders either avoid criticism of what has become an expanded Israel or actively conspire to enforce the final dispossession of Palestinians, how is Jewish history to be carried on? In short, how do we live at the end of Jewish history as we have known and inherited it?

These are personal and communal questions of great import. For an entire history, one that stretches back millennia, is being radically challenged and changed. In some ways, certain parts of Jewish history are coming to the forenationalism, militarism and chauvinism, for example. These are hardly unknown in Jewish history, so some may see a continuity. The application by religious and political leaders of certain biblical precepts to the conquest of the land demonstrates this continuity to those who see history, or specifically Jewish history, as bounded by the bible. Unfortunately, this sensibility defines Jewish history and life within almost a genetic inheritance, as if the narration of biblical stories defines the parameters of Jewish thought and action. Jews and the Jewish community are thus defined beforehand, as if their destiny has been determined at the beginning, once and for all.

That elements of Jewish life are contained in the biblical narrative and, of course, in the rabbinical commentaries, is beyond question. That they remain part of Jewish life in the present is also true. But to apply these elements to the contemporary map of Israel is to make a fundamental error, for it is to see history as predetermined, to see the ancient scribes, at least as they recalled and interpreted their history, as foretelling the structures of Jewish life forever, *as if they knew Jewish life would continue on for thousands of years,* as if they wrote and questioned with the future in mind, as if they anticipated modernity and politics and the history of the Jews in Europe, as if they knew of the European Jewish settlements des-

tined to become Israel, as if they anticipated the political career of Ariel Sharon.

In this scenario, those who oppose the map of Israel as it has evolved are prophets, sharing the same outlook and propensities as the ancient prophets portrayed in Scripture. If one aspect of Jewish destiny is the land and violence, another aspect is that there will be Jews who speak to the question of justice with regard to power, including Jewish power. The opposite of Ariel Sharon, for example a person such as Amos Oz, will appear, and the two sides of the tradition will, as they have in the past, vie for supremacy. Perhaps the counter to Sharon in the political realm, a person for whom Oz had tremendous respect, was Yitzhak Rabin, in his last years a supporter of the Oslo process, and so Rabin and Oz could be seen within this opposition to the imposition of unjust power.

Yet here we come up short. Could Oz, who supports the "divorce" of Jews and Palestinians on political and cultural grounds, be the prophetic counter to Sharon, who also supports the same policies, albeit in a more extreme and territorial way? Could Rabin, who initiated the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948 and continued that policy in myriad ways though the years, be the prophetic counter to Sharon, who also participated in the same policies? Even the last years of Rabin are suspect in this regard, for his map of Israel at its fiftieth anniversary is surprisingly similar to Sharon's map. Both Rabin and Sharon – and this is true of Oz as well – accept the permanent displacement of Palestinians and the remnant Palestinian population as acceptable within second-class citizenship and autonomous zones.

If this is what Jewish destiny is as it unfolds, if the struggle between power and the prophetic is narrowed to this sensibility, then one wonders about the future of the Jewish people. If the map of Israel, with minor differences agreed to by Sharon and Rabin (and for that matter Netanyahu and Peace Now), remains for the next hundred years as it is today, then the future is indeed bleak. What it means is that the prophetic has narrowed to a dispute within the accepted framework of victory and subjugation, and the prophetic becomes a matter of political affiliation and rhetoric rather than substantive critique. It also means that the fate of the "other", the one that has been treated unjustly, is peripheral to the discussion between power and the prophet, *as if the victims do not exist, as if the Palestinians have no intrinsic dignity and rights, as if they have no legitimate grievances against the Jewish people, as if they have no claim upon Jews and Jewish history.*

For Jews this "non-existence" of the Palestinians is startling and transformative of the very tradition itself, for it means that the prophetic has assimilated to power and that the discussion revolves around the extent and projection of that power. The reversal is that at least in the modern period the Jewish prophetic tradition was extended as much to the "other" as it was to Jews themselves. In a matter of decades, the great European tradition of concern and activity on behalf of the oppressed has

been transformed to the point where the "other" effectively does not exist at all. Another way of perceiving this shift is to note that Jews had concern for the oppressed when they were themselves oppressed and powerless; a vision of shared, interdependent empowerment was born in these circumstances. When Jews have power and responsibility, those on the other side of that equation disappear, become nuisances and obstacles just as Jews were previously thought to be. This suggests the most obvious point: that the Jewish tradition does not simply unfold with predestined positions of the powerful and the prophetic, but is contextual and ordinary, mirroring peoples and states that have their own particular histories and traditions.

Here the history of the Jews unfolds in a different way. Jewish statehood or, more appropriately, Jews in power over a particular geographic space that includes people other than Jews, is almost unknown in Jewish history, and, when known, of short duration. Certainly in the common era, that is most of Jewish history, and certainly the history that contemporary Jews inherit, power over others is unknown in any organized and independent way. Prophetic thought was internal to the Jewish world and extended outward to the surrounding society and world as critical and transformative ideas and action. That the Jewish state has narrowed the idea of the prophetic is, with hindsight, clear, but its inclusion in the international nation-state system, a system that seems stable and capable of enduring into the foreseeable future, means that the narrowing is permanent and that mainstream Jewish culture and thought will be placed in service to that state. Or at least the boundaries of Jewish culture and thought will be shadowed by the state. Diaspora Jewish thought, religious and secular, that has formed what we know today as Judaism and Jewish life, will either be drawn to, mythicize, or ignore Israel.

What Jewish religious or secular thought today considers at a deep level the ramifications of these new boundaries? Since these boundaries have been erected in our time, and since Jewish critical thought has already noticeably atrophied, can we expect that critical thought will once again reappear? Just the opposite is probable: since the boundaries of religiosity, thought and the state have coalesced in our time, when many diaspora and antistatist elements of Jewish history and tradition remained strong, the victory of the sate and hence the weakening and defeat of these counter-elements will likely accelerate in the near future. Already several generations have been born who do not know of Jewish life without Israel, whose sense of Jewishness is bound up with Israel and who could not imagine life without it. Since both power and the prophetic have been reoriented, these themes within the tradition are either unknown, rejected, or seen as foreign. This process can only continue with time.

Paradoxically, Jewish visibility has increased with this new orientation and will continue to do so in the future. What follows, however, is the diminution of the internal life of Jews and the Jewish community or an increased em-

phasis on internationalization that strengthens itself precisely to keep the haunting images of injustice at bay. At the fiftieth anniversary of Israel, increased pride and assertiveness is accompanied by the collapse of sincere and ethical probings on the central question facing the Jewish people: *the creation of a permanent Palestinian diaspora outside of an expanded Israel and a permanent remnant population within it.*

For every other issue, of course, the ethical can be debated and refined and often is, but the central question is hardly uttered. The continuity of Jewish life needs to be asserted endlessly because of the discontinuity at its very centre. Thus the return to the rabbinic, to the Talmud, to liturgies and to the mystical Kabbalah, so prevalent among orthodox and progressive Jews. The words of justice having been omitted or spoken by these theologians and movements, they move on toward an integrated, meaningful Jewish life. The map of Oslo, the maps of Sharon and Rabin, Netanyahu and Peace Now, the borders of Israel at its fiftieth anniversary are either promoted, accepted, or lamented, but life goes on. Israel is supported, tolerated, or placed on the periphery. Still its borders help define the Jewish world into the future. *We now know it is possible to celebrate Jewish orthodox and progressive renewal at the same time that the ghettoization of the Palestinian is made permanent.*

The Unknown Future

In Germany, on the verge of the fiftieth anniversary of Israel, with the map of Israel as it is and will be, I came full circle. The tension I felt among Germans and within myself a decade earlier, the tension of the suffering of the past and the call to the present, was broken. I decided that the discussion about Jews in Germany is not about Jews, but about Germans and Germany and how they will make their way into the future. The actuality of Jewish suffering in the Holocaust is a symbolic marker, albeit a horrifying one, through which different political and ideological factions within Germany argue their positions. So too in the Jewish world. The boundaries of Israel have expanded through a political and military process that often calls upon the victims of the Holocaust as reminders of the possibility of weakness and disempowerment. But in securing power at the expense of Palestinians and making the dispossession and the remnantization of Palestinians permanent, the victims of the Holocaust are symbolic markers as well. For can the permanent dispossession of a people be called for by the survivors of the Holocaust without limiting their own witness to the pain and suffering they experienced? Even more difficult is the ghettoizaiton of a people in the name of the victims of the Holocaust. At some point, the claim of emergency, the refusal of accountability, the drawing on the sufferings of the past as justification for oppressing another people in the present, becomes empty. The dead are trivialized, not, as was feared by some post-Holocaust commentators, because every people compared their suffering to that of the Jews, but because the deeds of Israel, with the full support of the Jewish establishments in

Europe and America, rendered their memory "usable" in accomplishing the goals all states seek: expansion, hegemony, power.

In using the dead as symbolic markers to avoid the complexity and reality of contemporary life, the end of the era of Auschwitz comes into view. That era was about the victims of Auschwitz and other things as well, a complex intermingling of mourning, true repentance, and calculated manipulation. The mixture could be expected, as remembrance is never pure. One must thus establish a boundary for memory so that the cries of the victims will lose their utility, so that they will not be further soiled by the use of their memory for acts that they cannot control and would find difficult to justify. *The boundaries of Israel are not the boundaries established by the suffering Jews of Europe, nor can they be justified in their name.* To the side of Sharon's map next to my first note I appended this statement: "Let us declare these boundaries as our own, willingly established, sometimes fought against, and permanent, with all the repercussions for Palestinian life and Jewish life as well."

On the fiftieth anniversary of Israel we have come to an end of the era of Auschwitz and with that we have come to the end of a history that was severely wounded in the Holocaust. The responsibility is a joint one and both are, from different vantage points, unforgivable: the German and European responsibility for what was thrust upon us so cruelly; the Jewish responsibility for what we did and refused to do in the emergency years after the Holocaust and what we have done and refused to do after the emergency was over.

With the passage of time and the assumption of responsibility, Jews are now accountable. The ramifications of this responsibility are enormous and yet must be faced soberly. *The end of the era of Auschwitz, signalled by the boundaries of Israel and the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, means that Jewish history – as we have known and inherited it – has a boundary as well. That boundary places Judaism and Jewish life in the past and to carry it on in the present, as if nothing beyond peripheral change has occurred, is to instrumentalize Jewish life as Israel has done to the Holocaust.*

If the borders of the state are the borders of Jewish life, what is the road ahead? Does the end of the era of Auschwitz mean more than the end of conventional Jewish life? Does it mean that those who associate with Jewish life in any of its manifestations blaspheme the depth of suffering and struggle that Jews inherit?

There are Jews who struggle, without any religious affiliation and often without any Jewish articulation, to tend those wounded by Israeli soldiers, to document human rights violations caused by Israeli law and policies, to live among Palestinians *as a sign of solidarity at the end of Jewish history.* One wonders if these Jews, unannounced and unheralded, even vilified, without liturgy or mysticism, carry the Jewish covenant into another geography, unchartered, outside the boundaries set by the state and contemporary

Jewish life. Is theirs a journey of solidarity and mourning, a refusal of boundaries that defy contemporary Jewish life as the true and only heirs of the past? Among these few are children of Holocaust survivors. Do they point to a way of true memorialization and authentic respect for the victims of the Holocaust? Do they honour a past and pave the way for a future that refuses to continue the cycle of violence that ended a history they hold dear?

As I left Germany I thought of these lone individuals and saw in their witness the walls of the memorial proposal in Berlin, with the faded Hebrew lettering, as a sign of the future. A solitude to be sure, leaving behind the known, propelled by the suffering of Jews and Palestinians, and a solidarity with the victims of power regardless of who they are or what their justification is; a future that leaves behind the covenant and the God who is known and used. Will a new covenant and God be discovered in this journey? If Jewish history is at an end, who will remember those who journey toward the "other" *as a sign of fidelity to the history which is drawing to a close?*

Preparing for Shabbat after my return from Germany, these thoughts haunted me. For it was at the time of my first journey to Germany, a decade earlier, that Shabbat had taken on a greater importance for me. For years I hesitated because the words of the prayers held meanings I found difficult to affirm. Nonetheless I found the ceremony itself to be important and thus embarked on a regular observance, one that has become increasingly important to me. Yet I have never found Shabbat to be simply a celebration, a time of joy as it is supposed to be. Rather it is a time of reflection and concentration, a time of beholding, and with family, a time of recognition. This has continued and deepened over the years. In coming to observe Shabbat was I preparing for the end that now is evident?

Perhaps, like those who crossed the boundaries of the state, Shabbbat is my way of focusing on the nest arena of struggle, the integration of the remnant Palestinians into Israel with an equal citizenship and with the same rights and responsibilities. Thus though the external boundaries of the state are in the process of being finalized, internal political, cultural and economic life will be fluid and changing. The incorporation of the "other" into the larger Israel is bound to create pressure and opportunities that are difficult to calculate and control. Could this arena now be the place of the practice of fidelity, where displacement becomes inclusion, and the recognition of a joint history of Jew and Palestinian is boldly asserted? In the long run this means the continual extension of rights until all areas of life are shared between Jews and Palestinians. A binational reality, already existing but not as yet fully actualized, would come into being where both communities recognize one another as worthwhile and contributing to a larger whole. One day the particularities of the Jewish and Palestinian communities might give rise to an identity for both groups that embraces those particularities as it issues into a shared identity that also transcends both. Unless we believe in a genetic propensity for sepa-

rateness, shared geography, conflict and possibility, especially with the boundaries of Israel as they stand today, will inevitably bring this new identity into existence.

The Jewishness experienced there and by extension in the West as well, whatever it might be, will not be the Jewishness that we have inherited. A new history will be born, the contours of which are unknown and will be worked out over the centuries. This new chapter cannot be defined in advance or prepared for, but it must be struggled for in the name of the past, for the principle of justice, and without a desire to preserve what has ended in name and structure. *The fidelity of those Jews who have come into solidarity with the Palestinian people at the end of Jewish history must be a fidelity without desire or plan, without hope of rescuing Judaism or the ethical framework which has promoted their solidarity, without preconceived boundaries, even in opposition to those cast by the state.*

In essence, a new beginning must be struggled for to create a history which may, indeed is likely to, take on a completely different character than is now known to us. The character of Jewish history has always evolved, and though the consternation over the changing definition of who is a Jew as proposed by the orthodox in Israel and opposed by those in the Conservative and Reform communities in America, has been vigorous – with of course a corresponding silence on the central issue facing the Jewish world – the real change in Judaism and Jewish life has already been defined by the oppression of the Palestinian people. When that oppression ends another understanding of Jews and Judaism will evolve, though what relation it will have to previous history remains to be discerned in the future.

For this is where we have arrived on the fiftieth anniversary of statehood. Celebrating within injustice is as futile as mourning what cannot be retrieved. There is a future beyond injustice and mourning, beyond the boundaries of the present. The boundaries of our lives have never been and are not now the boundaries of our destiny. Living at and through the end of Jewish history is a challenge few would choose. And yet the context of fidelity is always bequeathed to a generation rather than chosen. What is done with that inheritance is our choice. In turn that choice helps to narrow or expand the possibility of Jewish life to the generations which follow. To be in solidarity with the Palestinian people on the fiftieth anniversary of Israel is a path of fidelity that one day will give birth to a destiny of justice and dignity for Jews and Palestinians, and leave a Jewishness worth bequeathing to those who come after.

JPJRS 2/1 (1999) 80-87

Combating Communalism in Twenty-First Century India

A Social-Psychological Perspective*

Anthony da Silva, SJ
Dept. of Social Sciences, JDV, Pune

Introduction

It appears that fifty years after the first Partitioning of India, history is repeating itself. However, this time the partitioning is occurring along psychological lines and not along physical or geographical boundaries. Once again Hindus, Muslims and Christians seem to be experiencing a deep mental and emotional divide between them. Feelings of suspicion, hatred and violence seem once again common place between the three communities. Identities are questioned and definitions sought as to who is a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian or worse still, an Indian! In other words, restrictive and exclusive identities are fuelling a communalism which pits one community against another. Thus, seeds of disunity and conflict are sown within the whole country.

In fact, the nation as a whole seems to be in an identity crisis, gripped as it is by intermittent violence and economic and political instability. While on the one hand liberalization and modernization are the new slogans given to us by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), on the other hand, many political parties have discovered the powerful lure of traditional religious myths and symbols to captivate the imagination of the voting masses.

Hence, scenes like the ones witnessed at the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, though reminiscent of medieval religious wars, still find a positive echo in the hearts of many millions of Indians. The new found euphoria and pride in one's Hindu identity, as propagated by the Shiv Sena or the RSS, is also indicative of a felt-need to assert and define clearly one's "Hinduness"; this identity is perceived by some Hindus as being under attack from encroaching modernization.

It is, therefore, not surprising that traditional, religion-based ideologies like *Hindutva* seem to fulfil some latent psychological needs of the masses.[1] In fact, modernization, with its bias toward a rational, scientific temper, leaves a value-vacuum in the lives and identities of many; for example, modernization tends to alienate people from their traditional lifestyles, customs or even belief patterns. Such psychological alienation and dislocation of life invariably leads to self-doubt, insecurity and eventually to an identity crisis.

Interestingly, two well-known European social psychologists, Tajfel and Turner,[2] highlight in their research on social identity that individuals are motivated to maintain or achieve a posi-

tive self-identity. In the Indian situation, where competing group identities abound, such motivation is likely to lead to conflict. The point at issue is which group identity would an Indian opt for in order to achieve a better positive self-identity?

Now, religion-based ideologies, which claim to be guardians of tradition, are well suited to respond to such identity needs. Unfortunately, needs such as these are then cleverly exploited by demagogic political leaders. They often woo their insecure followers with ideologies of extreme religious fundamentalism. These ideologies generally tend to provide followers with a definite and clear identity and a sense of belonging to a specific group or community.

The struggle to resolve the identity needs brought about ultimately by some form of alienation also have specific consequences for intergroup relations. In India intergroup prejudices based on religious affiliation are not totally unconnected with identity struggles.[3] No doubt, many other factors, such as historical, economical, political, religious and even archaeological contribute to intergroup violence and disharmony.[4] However, the focus of this paper is on the psychological aspects of group-conflicts. This touches largely on the social psychology of prejudice and discrimination between groups.

The paper is divided into three parts and a conclusion. The first part presents at greater length an analysis of identity-needs and its implications for intergroup tensions and rivalries, known generally in India as the problem of "communalism;" the second part evaluates critically the concept of secularism, and the pursuit of a secular identity as an antidote to communalism; the third part proposes rather briefly, cultural pluralism and a multireligious identity as a more appropriate response to communalism. The paper ends with some concluding comments.

I. Identity Needs and Communalism

In India the word "communalism" traditionally refers to the prejudiced and often hostile relationships that exist sometimes between the Hindu and Muslim communities. In more recent times, however, the term has been extended to include hostilities occurring between any religion-based communities in India, e.g., Sikhs versus Hindus, or Christians versus Hindus etc. The meaning is always pejorative; it indicates a situation where relationships between communities are tense and full of suspicion at the best of times and dotted by sporadic violence at other times. Hence, a related term, namely, "communal riots," is used frequently to characterize such violence. Even if religion (as a doctrine or teaching) is not the direct cause of riots and violence, as a sociopsyohological phenomenon, that is, as an identity provider, religion is a major contributing factor to the problem of communalism in India.

As indicated in the introduction, at least part of the reason for today's communalism lies in the identity needs of individuals and groups. The process of modernization is unstoppable if we are to be part of the global economy and the global political order. The nation has

little choice but to give in to the pressures of a free and open market dictated principally by the modernized West. At the same time the appeal of tradition and religion to many millions of Indians is not to be overlooked. Their security and a sense of who they are, are deeply rooted in centuries of religious tradition. Given that the ideologies of modernity and traditionalism often subscribe to contradictory sets of values, it is not unusual for people to experience within themselves a sense of loss and confusion as to who they are or what they stand for. They struggle to define themselves anew, to evolve a new identity.

Not infrequently, an identity struggle has a spillover into the communal sphere because religion also contributes to identity formation. For instance, in Ayodhya and its aftermath, for many people, targeting Muslim lives and property for destruction meant contributing toward the establishment of a Hindu raj, ultimately a Hindu identity. Similarly, in Ayodhya challenging and eventually bypassing the judicial apparatus of the modern State, were seen as a sign of asserting one's traditional religious identity; ultimately, the destruction of the mosque was a supreme sign of a fanatical mob proclaiming this new found religious identity.

Since religions tend to be the carriers and protectors of tradition, it is not surprising that sometimes one's religious identity tends to come most to the fore in conflict situations. The great majority of the people in India are born into a religion and are subsequently nurtured and socialized to believe in the traditions, customs and teachings of that religion. In other words, the religious identity becomes the dominant identity. It defines for Indians who they are, how they should behave, what they should believe in and which group they belong to.

In India, this process of socialization via religion is crucial for followers of all religions. Both Hinduism as well as Islam claim that besides being "religions" they are also ways of life. In other words, these religions legislate for and encompass most aspects of the lives of their followers. Thus, they negate the modern distinction between the sacred and the secular,[5] between the private and the public, between politics and religion. In doing so, the emphasis is placed heavily on an identity that is provided by religion. Religious affiliation becomes the primordial identity around which all subidentities of the individual revolve.

What then is the nature of this religion-based identity? Given that religion is a group-based ideology, the nature of religious identity is a group identity. In other words, this identity provides individuals with a sense of group-belonging based on religious categorization. It does not necessarily follow that such persons are either particularly religious or even token believers in the teachings of the religion they supposedly belong to. Rather, the religion-based group provides them primarily with a sense of social belonging, a group identity. As the experiments of Tajfel and his associates repeatedly demonstrate, social categorization is essential in order to deal with a pluralistic environment.[6] Moreover,

as Taylor and Moghaddam point out, categorization "provides a locus of identification for the self."[7] Thus, it is possible for a very secular person like Jinnah to claim to be a Muslim as it is for an avowedly agnostic Advani to claim that he is a Hindu!

Now, given the kind of alienation that modernization tends to bring about in society, the natural tendency for individuals is to seek to rediscover their identity. In practice, this means to reaffirm one's roots, one's belongingness to that group which has from times past defined who one is.[8] Since the primordial identity is religion-based in India, religion or at least religion-based categories are employed to make the alienated feel that they belong to such a group of people who espouse similar categories.

In this manner religion enters into the identity fray – not so such as faith or doctrine but as a social phenomenon, providing identity to the psychologically alienated. But unfortunately the fears and insecurities of the alienated are not always put to rest by merely identifying with their own religious group. With increasing frequency in the recent years, a more commonly used method of shoring up one's identity is through violent conflict against a group that is perceived as a threat.[9] Such a group is generally called an "outgroup," in contrast to one's own group which is called the "ingroup". Tajfel's research repeatedly indicates that there is almost a natural positive bias towards one's ingroup and a negative bias towards the outgroup. Thus, discrimination enters into intergroup relations.

The mere perception of a threat, even if the threat were untrue, is sufficient motivation for the ingroup to aggress against the outgroup. When applied to the Hindu-Muslim communal situation in the country, presently we see that although the Hindu ingroup is the majority group, it perceives itself under threat from the Muslim outgroup, though it is numerically a minority. Similarly, the Christian minority (2.5%) is perceived as a threat by some in the Hindu majority group; they seem convinced that Christians are committed to augmenting their numbers through conversions, in spite of recent census data indicating the contrary. Moreover, such perceived threats are fanned and kept alive by the frequent use of negative stereotypes about the outgroup. Never mind that these stereotypes are inaccurate; they serve the primary purpose of creating and maintaining a hostile and prejudiced attitude toward the outgroup.

Finally, a substantial section of the middle-class in India which is experiencing rapid modernization feels a greater threat of alienation from its traditions than the economically less successful citizens. Hence, the pressures and frustrations of competition make them much more prone to insecurity; consequently, they seem to have a greater need to reaffirm their religious identity.

To summarize, our analysis indicates how through a process of alienation brought about by the forces of modernization in our country, identity-needs are created.; the analysis also highlights the role religion and tradition play in reaffirming one's identity; further, since

religion-based identities are community related, they are likely to contribute to communal conflicts whenever these occur in India. Hence, from a psychological perspective, identity-needs seem to be an important contributing factor to communalism.

II. Secularism an Answer to Communalism?

Having presented a possible psychological explanation to understand some aspects of communalism in our country, we are now poised to ask the following question: how has India usually responded to such situations?

Particularly after the demolition of the mosque at Ayodhya one hears a lot of talk these days about *SECULARISM*; it seems to be the panacea for all the ills that the country is facing now. Secularism is always touted as the antidote to communalism in India. Lengthy harangues from politicians, the Government controlled media and other such agencies keep reminding the people that the only response to the communal virus is secularism.

The term secularism originated in the West, an outcome of the religious wars of seventeenth century Europe. It involves, in its simplest form, a strict separation of Church and State or religion and politics. Or as Ashis Nandy says: "This secularism chalks out an area in public life where religion is not admitted."[10]

Several other characteristics of the western concept of secularism need to be borne in mind.[11] First, the concept arose in the Enlightenment period in Europe, when rationalism and a scientific temper were rapidly replacing medieval religious thinking. Second, the modern State was establishing itself and redefining its autonomous relationship to Church and religion. Henceforth, the State would legislate for its citizens without interference from the Church and vice versa. Some authors refer to this as a noninterventionist model of secularism.[12] Third, the concept of secularism connotes a certain indifference on the part of the State vis-a-vis religion. Implied is also a kind of "passive" tolerance of religion.

Now, although India adopted the concept of secularism through the 42nd constitutional amendment, in 1976, it was given quite a different meaning. In India secularism meant *sarva dharma samabhava* or "equal respect for all religions." Whereas the Western concept seeks to distance itself from religion, the Indian concept tends to make room for religion. Whereas the Western concept is noninterventionist, the Indian concept would be called "accommodative" by scholars like Nandy.

Mahatma Gandhi was the best example of the Indian concept of secularism. In fact, he claimed that those who thought that religion and politics could be kept apart understood neither politics nor religion. Moreover, Gandhi practised as well as preached this doctrine.

It appears that the Western definition of secularism would have suited India better given its history of communal violence. However, because of our religious traditions and philosophies as well as the fact that most of the rural

population of India lives in the pre-Enlightenment, or prerationalistic world, it is not yet possible to have a complete separation of religion and politics.

Hence the country has adopted the "accomodative" definition of *sarva dharma samabhava* (equal respect for all religions). However, it has not lessened the communal conflicts since Independence. If anything the conflicts have increased and have become more vicious and brutal. In spite of this kind of secularism, various Governments have not hesitated to play politics with such volatile issues as the Shah Bano case, the Babri Masjid dispute in Ayodhya or the more recent attacks by the VHP/RSS against the Christians. All in the country are aware of the terrible consequences of such manipulation of religious issues to get short-term political gains. Therefore, evidence seems to indicate that this brand of secularism has not worked for India.

The following may be some of the reasons for such a failure. First, it seems that the kind of tolerance proposed in the formula of "equal respect for all religions" is a sort of graveyard tolerance. Religions merely co-exist side by side; no effort is made for one tradition to enrich or interact with the other. In fact, boundaries between different religions are clearly delineated and followers are generally not encouraged to cross them.

Second, underlying the concept of Indian secularism is the hidden assumption that all religions are one, and, therefore, they deserve "equal respect." The stress here seems to be on a certain sense of uniformity among religions. The reality is that not only are religions radically different from each other but the followers are strongly committed to maintaining such differences.

Third, the term "equal respect" is deceptive since a "majority religion," like Hinduism in India, is bound to feel "more equal" than the "minority religions". The sheer numbers of the followers of a majority religion give them a psychological feeling of dominance over other religions. In such an unequal demographic environment to speak of "equal respect" is rather utopian. Typically, the majority will decide how much is "equal" and in what circumstances this "equality" is to be manifested.

Given these constraints about Indian secularism, it is not surprising that communal peace has proved elusive in spite of the constant reminders that the Constitution respects all religions equally. Indian secularism, the usually proposed antidote to communalism, seems to have failed to check the growth of communalism.[13]

III. A Multireligious Identity for India

What might be an alternate response to communalism? Given the intertwining of different religious traditions in one's social life and the importance Indians attach to religious identities, a commitment to a multireligious identity rather than to secularism seems a preferable antidote to communalism.

Religious pluralism is a living reality in India. For centuries now the people have evolved strategies and skills to cope with and appreciate the

religious and cultural differences among fellow Indians. By religious pluralism is meant a basic openness and an appreciation that religious traditions other than one's own go into the make-up of a multicultural Indian identity; also, a willingness not only to teach but to learn from others because in pluralism it is assumed that "there is no one and only way"[14] to the Ultimate.

Though the history of India is also dotted with wars of religious intolerance, one cannot deny that the Indian civilization has by and large been open to new peoples, cultures and religions. We have a tradition of active tolerance. In fact, the majority Hindu religion has frequently adopted customs, festivals, language, etc., of some minority religions and vice versa; this confirms empirically the history of mutual enrichment and cultural assimilation, in other words, the experience of pluralism.

It would, therefore, seem logical and eminently practical to strengthen and build a multi-religious identity, based on this tradition of pluralism and active tolerance. Such an identity, with its indigenous roots, would serve as a more fitting antidote to the fundamentalistic identities nurtured by communalism

From among the many steps one could take in building such a multi-religious identity, I will focus on three. First, to acknowledge in the Constitution that India is a multi-religious nation. As such, the cultural and psychic make-up of an Indian is to be built on the ground reality of diversity and religious pluralism. Second, one has to affirm and cherish this religiocultural pluralism and discover in it the richness and heterogeneity of one's traditions. Third, to accept that all religious traditions are interdependent; every tradition needs the other tradition in order to proclaim its uniqueness from as well as its similarity to contemporary traditions. In other words, every tradition is dependent on the other and has something to learn from it.

Concluding Remarks

This analysis indicates that for India the concept of a multireligious national identity has more to offer than the concept of a secular identity; that perhaps designating India as a multireligious nation is more appropriate than calling it a "secular" nation. Further, while the concept of secularism is alien to Indians, the experience of religious pluralism and multicultural tolerance has had a long standing tradition of several centuries. In this sense, comparatively, the concept of secularism is rather spiritless.

An attitude of religious pluralism will also influence the formation of communal identity; such an idenity will no longer be exclusive but will acknowledge and appreciate other communal identities as well. In other words, communal identity takes on a pluralistic flavour; one's communal identity shapes itself in an interactive context with other communal identities. Thus, the religious pluralism of the nation should be as much treasured as its ethnic diversity.

An affirmation of pluralism encourages a kind of "active tolerance,"

whereby religions actively seek out what is common as well as accept that which is different. Differences are to be celebrated and not glossed over or sought to be homogenized. Further, the acceptance of differences leads to a psychologically less defensive posture vis-a-vis other religious traditions. It also tends to permit timely correction and a more empathic reinterpretation of negative stereotypes and prejudices against outgroups, as discussed earlier. Such a psychological process is bound to reduce communal tensions between groups.

Finally, a pluralistic communal-identity also contributes to a healthier national identity. When one's communal identity is secure and not threatened one becomes more tolerant. A secure identity does not feel threatened by diversity. In fact, in this context, diversity and pluralism could become the sources of unity and communal harmony in a multi-religious India.

Notes

* Portions of this article were presented by the author as the "Menezes Bragança Memorial Lecture" in Goa.

1. Deshpande, S.H., "Evaluating Hindutva," in *The Times of India*. Bombay: January 4 & 5, 1994.
2. Tajfel, H., and J.C. Turner , "An integrative theory of intergroup behaviour," in W.G. Austin and S. Worchel (eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Monterey, Calif.: Brooks/Cole, 1979, pp. 33-47.
3. Madan, T.N., "Will of the Majority: Threatened Identities and Secularism," in *The Times of India*, Bombay: April 16, 1993.
4. Chandra, Bipan, *Communalism in Modern India*. New Delhi: Vani Educational Books, 1984.
5. Oommen,T.K., "The Sacred and the Secular: A False Dichotomy," in, *The Times of India*, Bombay: March 9, 1993.
6. Tajfel, H., *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
7. Taylor, D.H. & Fathali Moghaddam, *Theories of Intergroup Relations*, New York: Praeger, 1987.
8. Oommen, T.K., "Problems of Identity: Native and Alien in One Country," in, *The Times of India*, Bombay: May 1, 1993.
9. Kothari, Rajni, "Spectre of Violence: State Terrorism and Other Evils," in, *The Times of India*, February 24, 1993. Bombay.
10. Nandy, Ashis, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," in V. Das (Ed), *Mirrors of Violence*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 74.
11. Sarkar, Sumit., "Roots of Secularism: Not an Elitist Concept," in, *The Times of India*, Bombay: March 26, 1993; Khan, Iqbal., "Concept of Secularism: Primacy of Reason over Faith," in, *The Times of India*, Bombay: April 6, 1993; and Banerji, B.K., "Primacy of Faith over Reason," in, *The Times of India*. Bombay: May 5, 1993.
12. D'Cruz, E., *Indian Secularism: A Fragile Myth*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1988.
13. Engineer, A.A., *Communal Riots in Post-Independence India*. Hyderabad: Sangam Books, 1984.
14. Knitter, Paul., *No Other Name*? New York: Orbis Books, 1991.

JPJRS 2/1 (1999) 88-95

A New Millennium: A New Society?

Cyril Desbruslais, SJ
Dept.of Systematic Philosophy, JDV, Pune

Introduction

We are born into a world in conflict. Discussion there might be as to the identity of the main protagonists: economic classes (as per Marxism), geopolitical groups (the "First World" vs the "Second World" in competition for the allegiance of the "Third World"), the "more industrial North" vs the "more agricultural South" on the inter- and intranational level, or whether it's more a question of gender or colour differences; the fact is, whether we realise it or not, from the moment we utter our first cry on earth, we are forced to take sides in a global battle. How truly did Matthew Arnold write, in Dover Beach:

> . . . we are here, as on a darkling plain,
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Many of us are scarcely aware of the battle going on. We climb into our buses (cars or rickshaws) and speed off to work or study. We get our meals and newspapers more or less on time. We are able to have our baths more or less regularly (except when the water/electric supply don't quite collaborate) and we get our clothes nicely laundered for us. We can go for an occasional movie, party, "night out with the boys", or simply stay at home and watch TV or put on the Video. Seldom do we notice that things aren't so easy for a sizable proportion of our "fellow-travellers on space-ship earth." Few of us realise that many of our compatriots are being forcibly deprived of their rightful share of the cake, because that would bite into the abundance that some of the privileged few have accustomed themselves to.

> From Hereclitus to Karl von Clausewitz and Henry Kissinger, "war is the origin of everything", if by "everything" one understands the order or system that world dominators control by their power and their armies. We are at war – a cold war for those who wage it, a hot war for those who suffer it, a peaceful coexistence for those who manufacture arms, a bloody existence for those who are obliged to buy and use them.[1]

A Brief History of Colonialism

During the first millenniums or so of recorded history, the Mediterranean emerged as the first great centre to oppress and exploit its far-flung Periphery. The Greeks and Romans believed that they were at the centre of the earth in more senses than one, and set out to take possession of the rest of the then known world. It was these pristine colonial powers who would set the trend for others to come: decide just how many rights and privileges might be allotted to the denizens of the remote, in-

consequential, "noncivilised" periphery, whose ownership they would dispute among themselves until finally Rome emerged supreme. Roman law and polity would provide the blueprint for more sophisticated colonisers of the future.

For, eventually, the "Mediterranean millennium" came to an end. Our modern era began with certain other European nations taking over where the Greco-Romans left off. And the new colonialists did their homework well. They had learned from the pioneering colonialists rule number one for any would-be successful power that would try to subjugate a far away people, often more numerous than the "mother" (?) nation: *divide et impera*, encourage divisions among the vanquished. Feed suspicions and distrust among the conquered people. For as long as a colonised people remain split into a motley crew of rival ethnic groups, the suzerainty of the foreign overlord would be left unchallenged. There were some bloody skirmishes (on colonised territory, of course, never in Europe!) between the British, the Dutch, the Portuguese, the Spaniards and the French but it was, mercifully, soon over. The Spaniards had their flag planted firmly on the South American Continent, the British were firmly esconced in Asia (with enviable footholds in Africa, North America and elsewhere), while the French, Portuguese and Dutch had to lick their wounds and settle for leftovers.

Of course, it was a bit awkward for all those intrepid European explorers and discoverers who raced about setting foot in "New Lands" and naming rivers, mountains and forests ... for the natives and aborigines had been there long before, had already set foot on these places and had long given names to all these geographical landmarks. This embarrassment was easily dealt with. When Spanish colonialists raised the question, "Are the Amerindian human?" They were but voicing a perception of the problem common to all colonialists of whatever age. They were simply stressing the fact that since the "natives" (people of the periphery) were not Europeans (people of the centre), they could not be counted as human persons and so had no dignity, status or rights other than those which the good Europeans should bestow upon them.

And all people of the centre, ever since, have taken a similar pragmatic attitude to the people of the periphery, their lands, their possessions ... and their women. This applies equally to the high caste *brahmins* of the Centre and the *shudras* and *dalits* of the Periphery, to the urban centres and the rural peripheries, to the North Atlantic nations of today's international centre and the rest of the world, their Periphery.

Naturally, the "ungrateful" natives of the periphery were not always too happy at their being civilised by the centrists, nor would they generally stand with awe to see their lands possessed, their forests destroyed and their wealth plundered and carted off to the "mother nation". Efforts had to be made to get rid of these uncooperative ingrates. Bartolome de Las Cassas, the early Latin American liberation thinker

summed up this reaction of the centrists all too well: "They have used two ways to extirpate these pitiable nations from the face of the earth. One is by unjust, cruel, bloody and tyrannical wars. The other is...the most violent, horrible and hateful slavery." Today the method is usually rendered a little less bloody, but the brutal results remain as ruthless as ever. Wholescale decimations and massacres of the aborigines (sometimes by the expedient of offering them poisoned meat as in Australia and New Zealand), gave way to "peace treaties" that were disregarded when pragmatic reasons required it (as in the USA), or were summarily brushed aside by deceit and treachery (as in Pizarro's conquest of Peru). Soon, the centre learned that it was not expedient to kill off all the people of the periphery: some able-bodied men, plus the women and children, could be kept on to do dirty work as slaves.

As the world became more "enlightened" and "humanised," colonialism got a bad name. Besides, historical circumstances conspired against the costly business of maintaining far-flung outposts, especially when erstwhile submissive subjects began to assimilate dangerous subversive ideas like democracy. But, as Vatican II puts it, "At no time have men had such a keen sense of freedom, only to be faced by new forms of slavery in living and thinking." (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 4) In brief, political colonialism is out; other creative versions are welcome. STAR TV and other international media provide a subtle form of cultural domination which is already emerging in more or less overt forms of pedagogical and sexual domination. The "free" market economy and multinationals are completing the process. Thus millions of men, women and children – together with their lifestyles are being sacrificed to the newly emerging Molochs of mercantilism, immolated on the altars of the almighty dollar or the pound sterling. Colonialism – in its classical version as well as in its latter part of the twentieth century variety – has ended up recording more human sacrifices to its Supreme Beings, than the "old savages" had to their traditional gods, a practice that was deemed shocking by the civilised Christian Europeans.

History is written by conquerors and they invariably do it to whitewash their crimes and justify their excesses. So they saw to it that the "precolonial natives" were represented as uncouth, immoral brutes, with no culture, no religions worthy of the name and no real human feelings. This was a gross travesty of the facts, as any contemporary scholar of comparative religions or of history could have told them. But that was no major problem for the early colonial historian. From there, it was but a small step to the conclusion that the "white man's burden" laid on his noble shoulders by his God was to educate, civilise and Christianise these poor savages as best he could. In effect, this would naturally involve Europeanising them so as to render them humanly significant (making due allowances for their limited capacities – "How much can one expect from these savages?"). Macaulay's recommendation was that the best form of education for Indians would be to make them "brown

Britishers," writing off, thereby, the entire cultural wealth of India (of which he was grossly ignorant). Thus, the colonial could conclude that colonialists was the best thing that could have happened to the poor devils. Indeed, the European conquerors did the nations a favour by colonising them, replacing their subhuman cultures, value systems and speculations with the language, art and religion of their liberators!

Philosophical Presuppositions

It would seem that for the colonialists (the classical ones and their latter day variants), the old Cartesian *cogito, ergo sum* would be replaced by *conquiro, ergo sum* (I conquer, therefore I am). In other words, it would no longer be the ability to think (*cogito*) that guaranteed one the right to existence (*sum*), but the fact that one had conquered, had come out on top. Only the *conquistador* enjoyed the rights and privileges of human existence. The rest – the vanquished native – did not. He or she could be enslaved, made a concubine, thrown to the lions for support, or turned into a bonded labourer. And since these latter were nonpersons, one was not honour bound to keep one's word with them. And, since the colonisers' women and children had not played any active role in the conquering process, they would enjoy only very limited rights and privileges, at the discretion of the conquering males. Females would never know full rights; young males eventually could – provided that, when they came of age, they played their part in consolidating, by further conquests or by administration, what had been won. In the long run, it was not one's ability to think, to build up mighty civilisations (such as the Aztecs) or be courageous hunters (such as the Amerindians) or weave elaborate philosophical systems (such as the Asians): all that mattered was that one was a conquering warrior. If one did not prove himself capable of that, all his other accomplishments counted for nothing. And, just as Christians had learned to replace bloody and gory human sacrifices with the "unbloody" sacrifices of the Mass, so the now "enlightened" colonialists gave up their old crude forms of weaponry and terror for a more subtle and refined (but equally deadly) versions of the same. Of course, once in a while the bloody version did rear its ugly headnapalm, Kalashnikovs and Exocet missiles replacing the sword, spear and arrow of yesterage – but the preferred approach would be the "free" market, "globalization", the capturing of the media by powerful First World moghuls and cultural, linguistic and social domination would continue in the most destructive and efficacious fashion. The ultimate effect of all colonialism was assured: the humiliation – if not the total annihilation – of native identity and its replacement by the white man's superior culture and civilisation!

Long ago, Parmenides – another white man! – had enuntiated his basic metaphysical conviction: "Being is: nonbeing is not!" The colonialists readily agreed, interpreting this to mean that only they, the conquerors, merited the title of "Being"; the vanquished native, by that very title, was nonbeing and, together with his culture, could claim no legal right to exist. Later, when "home-rule" became the order of the

day, the "local" authorities would ape the values and attitudes of their conquering lords. They, in turn, would emerge as the new conquering class and – with rare exceptions – would do all they could to ensure that only their families, tribes or clans (or "others" who would bow to the same mentality and mindset) could be admitted into the exclusive conquerors' club. Prophetic figures might arise from time to time, to challenge all these presuppositions, but the club perfected ways and means to domesticate them, emasculate them and, if all else failed, eliminate them (with religious approval: after all, the hierarchy was part of the club!). The embarrassing part of it all was that many of these "dead and gone" personages refused to be just that: they had this disconcering habit of "living on" in the nonentities they had fought for, "conscientising" them. Worse still, some highly respected members of the conquerors' club got "converted", spurned all their inherited privileges and luxuries and "went over to the natives", adding their voices to the protests of the latter. The wheel had now gone full circle: no longer were the nonwhite native being compelled to become "brown sahibs" (or black or yellow ones for that matter): some white sahibs were freely opting to become nonbrown natives! Liberation was catching on!

But this did not upset the conquerors' club for long: if you can't lick 'em, join 'em, as they say. And so the authorities appropriated liberationist jargon and slogans. The most repressive regimes would declare themselves "Free/Democratic/People's Republics" and generously lard their political parties and action groups with such misleading epithets (how "free" is the "free" market and "free" love?). Liberation thinkers had to be wary of anyone who used liberation vocablulary a bit too effusively.

Centres, New

The vagaries of history have concentrated the most powerful and wealthy nations in the same strategic area: all along the northern shores of the Atlantic Ocean, both sides of it! On the one side looms today's only superpower, the United States, fortunate enough to have been able to build up its vast fund of economic and financial might by wresting a new and wholly untapped source of natural wealth from helpless natives. On the other side is the emerging European Community, flexing its newly acquired muscles, to a great extent gorged with booty and resources expropriated from excolonial southern territories. Together with the Scandinavian nations (who play a relatively minor role in the whole process), they would call the rules of the game – for all games – and the ravaged and disadvantaged South has little choice but to obey. Extermination is out, but a judicious level of undernourishment (hence dependence) was in. That would ensure subservience to the will of former masters, who still find their erstwhile vassals useful to provide performance of essential dirty work, exotic imports . . . or convenient and cheap sites for messy, polluting industries that could not be established back home without running foul of proecology laws. Out of this network of interlocking, mutually supportive decision-mak-

ers came the pattern for a more industrial North to set the standards for a more agricultural South. This same style soon came to be parodied within the very disadvantaged nations of the South, India being a very illuminating example. Leadership would invariably come from the Northern States or provinces and their language, art forms and other interests would dominate those of their Southern neighbours. And when the latter, in desperation, started regional political parties and other pressure groups to protect their cultural identity from being swallowed up by the Northen Leviathan, they were accused of being narrow, "provincialistic" or "antinational" (that is, against that which would further the interests of the North, which was identified with the nation as a whole). But in what other way could they respond? Few seem to have bothered themselves with that question. And maybe we *should* move towards a more federal, less central, form of Government after all!

Many Worlds in the World

In what is perhaps the most insightful and provocative encyclical of his entire career, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (December 30, 1987), Pope John Paul II, made reference to the sad fact that we can speak of "different worlds within our *one world*: the First World, the Second, World, the Third World and, at times, the Fourth World." (No. 14)[2] We are, more or less familiar with the first three. The former two are taken, in common parlance, to comprise the "developed" nations, the last two, the "developing" ones. The First World is more or less coextensive with the North Atlantic nations we spoke of and assembles the so-called "free" (non-Communist) wealthy nations of the West. After the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the dismemberment of the former USSR, the "Second World" has become somewhat outdated. It was meant to sum up all those East European countries that had been "swallowed up by the Russian bear", as well as China and those northern parts of Asian lands that has also succumbed to Communism. These latter, we now realise, were not as prosperous as the First World models (and now we know that they were a good deal worse off than they pretended to be), but claimed to be an alternative model of development, more "proletarian" than the other "capitalistic" variety. Just for the record, I mention here that, in the same encyclical, the Pope rejects both "models" of development, that of "liberal capitalism" as much as that of "Marxist collectivism" (No. 31)[3], as neither of them took the total human person as its inspiration. In other words, according to Pope John Paul II, there is, at present, no nation on earth that can call itself an authentically developed nation: all nations are underdeveloped! Which brings us to the Fourth World, which, in the same section of the encyclical, we are told refers not only to the "so-called *less advanced* countries, but also and especially to the bands of great or extreme poverty in countries of medium and high income." I would, more specifically, use the phrase to refer to those pockets of glaring poverty to be found among the wealth and opulence of First and Second World nations as also of nigh-unparalleled opulence and wealth

found among the poverty and squalor of the Third World.

Urban Centres and Rural Peripheries

This is the setup that is "at work" in India. Decisions are made by and for the city élites, who see to it that budget outlays, plans and projects are allocated and opted for on the basis of what promotes their own self-interest, providing them with more sophisticated luxuries and toys – and not whether these would assure more basic necessities to people hovering about and below the poverty line. Thus, when the question of switching from black-and-white to colour TV came up during the Asian Games in Delhi, some years ago, there was little hesitation in approving the expense – even though the same funds could have been used to give clean drinking water facilities to villages that had been suffering immensely due to this lack. If a plague breaks out in an important urban area like Surat, the administration swings into action and ensures that the disease is dealt with swiftly.and eradicated, so efficiently that the former "plague-ridden" city is now a model of hygiene and sanitation. Similar and worse problems have plagued many villages since before Independence, and they still remain. The situation has become so mockingly grim that social analysts say that we often come across refugees from *Bharat*, living in India hoping to better their prospects. India throws these refugees a few scraps, exploits their services and from time to time demolishes their hovels as part of a beautification drive. The pattern is repeated in many other Third World nations. It is worth recalling, at this juncture, Gandhiji's advice to Nehru when the latter had asked him what could possibly be a criterion for a worthwhile policy-decision for the entire nation. The Mahatma said, "Panditji, ask yourself just one question: will this decision benefit the poorest of the poor in India? If it does, take it!" How often have we followed this advice?

Big and Little Traditions

Just as the centre has its history, art and tradition, so does the periphery. But, as in all such matters, the former dominates the latter. Indeed, it does this so effectively as to identify its culture with that of the entire nation, region or group. And "periphery culture" is brainwashed into thinking of itself as nonculture, the "culture of silence", as Paolo Freire would say.[4] In other words, side by side with the very eloquent centre styles of music, dance and painting – whose development and publicity are encouraged, fostered and ensured with generous grants there is also a "little" tradition of "folk culture" which desperately struggles to keep itself alive. There is scant hope of the "centre" releasing funds for the development of "folk" dance, "folk" art and so on of our tribals and dalits. This expression of art is ignored in many nations. It falls silent and dies off. In Latin America, many ancient tribal languages are disappearing, while Spanish is rapidly displacing native languages. The same is happening in India.

Very often, our attempts at inculturation – laudable enough in themselves – are not properly geared

towards liberation. It is often the "big", "oppressive" or brahmanic tradition that we draw upon in the liturgy. We use Sanskrit (replacing one incomprehensible dead language, Latin, with another equally dead and even more incomprehensible), the sacred language of the oppressors of the Dalits and Adivasis. In Pathardi, a mission station not far from Pune, where the local Christians are all Dalits, the priests discard the usual saffron-coloured shawl in favour of a green one. Wearing a saffron vestment would identify them with the oppressive priestly caste in the eyes of the very people whom they wish to liberate! There seems to be no dearth of priests and religious who study and become expert in classical dance forms, or music, as well as, of course, the great brahminic philosophical traditions. How many are there who, like Wendell D'Cruz, have studied tribal (*Katkari*) art and are saving it from extinction? We should ensure that our inculturation merges with our option for the poor and seeks to inculturate the "culture of silence" into our liturgy. Thus we would also conscientise the poor and the rejects, making them aware that their art is as much art as is *Bharat natyam* and as worthy of study, even at an international level, as the more well-known Indian classical forms.

Notes

1. Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, trsl. from the Spanish by Martinez and Morkovsky, New York: Orbis Books, 1985, p. 1. I have made use of many insights of Dussel in this chapter.
2. John Paul II, *Solliciudo Rei Socialis* (December 30 1987), English translation by St. Paul's Publications, Bombay, 1988, p. 23(cf. esp. footnote 31).
3. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
4. Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* (trsl. Myra Bergman Ramos), Hammondswoth, Penguin Books, 1977.

JPJRS 2/1 (1999) 96-99

Towards a New Society: A Feminist Perspective

Hazel D'Lima DHM
Provincial, Premankur, Mumbai

The journey of a society is marked by quests and realizations, challenges and responses to myriads of happenings, all of which partially satisfy the continuing search for self-realization in an environment that is at times facilitative and at times self-defeating.

While the search for self-realization is universal, the events of human history tend to favour some rather than the others at different epochs. Ever since the Industrial Revolution, there has been a greater consciousness of the inequalities in society, which give a privileged position to some, while others remain in a state of passive dependency. The tension and conflict provoked by the practice of inequality in various contexts of human interaction give rise to initiatives and movements that tend to restore the balance of a society and open vistas of thought and action.

It is through the dissatisfaction and restlessness created by social inequality, that one searches not merely to restore a balance but to find the deeper foundations on which human dignity stands. In our times, there is no word more frequently used than the word "development". This concept seems to embrace the goal of all social planning and endeavour. Has it enabled society to come closer to the goal of self-realization for the millions who populate our planet earth?

The Quest for Development: A Patriarchal Paradigm

The quest for development was originally to give persons a better standard of living, with the understanding that improvement in the economic sphere determines "better standards" of life. Growth in (the possession of) capital has thus become the highway of progress and status in our world. Technology has become an instrument of economic growth and a source of power to control the destiny of society within nations the world over. The technological explosion has created such a sense of euphoria among the "men" who mastermind it that their claim to power becomes an end in itself. Power seeks to justify its position under various reasonings and holds sway over person and natural resources, reducing them to the status of objects to be used by the one in control.

In this perspective, plans and policies are framed to safeguard and promote the interests of the powers that be, not the good of all. To take measures that empower others becomes threatening to their own position, hence plans remain on paper, not an action to follow up and carry out.

The lust for power is accompanied by the fear of losing power, hence every care must be exercised to consolidate

and entrench one's position by fair means or foul. Those who can question the status quo must be held in check by any means, even aggression, violence or annihilation. Thus is continued the stance of neglect of and violence towards vulnerable groups like women, children, dalits, tribals, etc. Despite international conferences and increased legislation to promote the cause of women, violence against women continues with blatant disregard for legal norms.

The centres of affluence and power must flourish at any cost, even if they become overgrown, congested, polluted urban agglomeration. To feed those centres of industrial development, rural areas must sacrifice their natural resources and the harmony of their being; to accommodate mega-projects of development rural and tribal populations are uprooted into the nowhere of impoverishment.

In the quest for development, thousands must survive on pavements, streets and slums in the most dehumanised conditions of life. Elaborate systems of health care with ultramodern equipment for diagnosis are proliferating but the common man and woman breathe polluted air, drink contaminated water and live in unhygienic, dilapidated homes and surroundings. Our communication system is binding us by cables, but we need to be frisked at airports and to look for signs of possible bombs as we move around. The rate of literacy and education is moving upwards, but one lacks courage to take a stand for social justice. Human life is the easy target of political, criminal and terrorist attacks. Investments in nuclear weapons are increasing to maintain security on our borders but panic and fear are increasingly gripping the hearts and homes, the buildings and streets of our neighbourhoods.

In this dismal scenario of a development that tends to remain primarily economic and gender-biased, one looks for signs of hope that can challenge the domination of a patriarchal system. The Eco-Feminist movement which came into being as a response to violence against women and nature provides a new perspective in the search for a meaningful development.

Eco-Feminism: A Concern for Life

The Concept of "Eco-Feminism" took off from movements like "Chipko" and "Greenpeace," where women took the initiative to protest and prevent the destruction of nature that infringed on people's right to livelihood and health, under the label of development works.

The growth of women's and ecological movements is a response to the aggressive domination of the existing paradigm of development, but the search for meaning goes beyond mere profeminist or environment-friendly stands. It is in effect a pro-life quest which recognises the deep mystery of life in the womb of woman and mother earth. It is there that life on this planet takes root and receives the nurturance required for growth and development. How then can development effort streamroll over the very stirrings of life and energy on our planet?

The principle of life is a mystery. It cannot be produced in the laboratories of this world. It is a gift to value and nurture according to its own rhythm of growth. Life is sacred. It calls for recognition and respect; it is not to be used as a commodity. Life has a purpose – a purpose which must be understood and accepted according to its plan in the divine panorama of creation.

Interconnectedness of Life

The first law of ecology is, everything is understood as connected to everything else. This consciousness that everything and everyone is connected to everything and everyone else allows for a recognition of self as one really is, and not as dependent on the dynamics of power equations.

The interconnectedness of persons and things is necessary for the completeness of the whole. The mutual dependence of the parts is not a weakness but a bonding for the strength of the whole. Each part is important and contributes to the well-being of the whole.

In this perspective there can be no domination or trampling upon the rights of the other. If such a deviation occurs, the whole suffers by being deflected from its goal. If there is male domination or even female domination at any point, it will adversely affect the growth of the whole – our planet, Earth. Our society today seems to be heading along the path of self-destruction. The principle of domination must yield to respect for life and life-nurturing processes. Eco-feminism is a call to an awareness of life, not in the frozen figures of the gross National Product but as it flows in our homes, fields and villages, in our tribal hamlets and urban slums. It is an awareness of life as experienced in the present reality. It is a call to experience the inter-connectedness of persons as one shares the "joys and sorrows, griefs and anxieties" beyond the barriers of gender, race, religion or culture.

A Way of Life

Contemplation: Eco-feminism invites us to develop a contemplative attitude towards creation. It rejuvenates the story of creation and invests nature and persons with a reverence that development workers tend to take for granted. How deep are the lessons that Mother Earth unfolds as she gives birth to life in its varied splendour, nurtured in the silence and hiddenness of her womb! Her rich contribution is integrated into the quality of human life. How much more does one need to read the book of nature to sense the serene touch of the divine in our world?

Collaboration: The very breath of our lives keeps humanity in constant communion with the cosmos. God breathed into the human form and man and woman received the breath of life. It is this breath of life that moves in harmonious unity between people, earth and sky. Each part has a place in togetherness with the whole to keep the purpose of creation alive. We may call it solidarity or networking, but it brings together a collective interest and action for the larger causes affecting our world. Nature has her own identity and pattern of living which humanity cannot ignore. Our collaboration must encompass, not

only the human element, but the vast, varied forces of nature.

The spiritual tradition of India has much to contribute in this regard as embodied by the prayer of the Rishis: *"Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu"* (May the entire world be in happiness), or by the line in the Upanishads: *"Vasudhaiva Kudubakam"* (The entire world is my family). Such an attitude also breeds a sense of concerned vigilance for the interest of the larger family.

Simplicity of Life-Style: The restlessness of modernity makes people ill at ease with the simplicity of nature. Baba Amte, speaking at the protest against the Narmada dams in Harsud, said: *The objective is not to stop a dam but to change human wants and life-styles."* On the same occasion, Sunderlal Bahuguna said: *"To my mind the two basic characteristics of development are that it should be sustainable and ethical. This is possible only if we adopt a life-style in which we practise austerity and fulfil our basic needs from renewable sources."*

Person-Centred: The thinking, prayer, reflective power of our world is invested in human persons. More than material constructions and machines it is the inner potential of our being which enables us to live life to its fullness. It is this creative energy which is the true source of power in the search for happiness and fulfilment; whereas the domination of the patriarchal paradigm leads to the triumph of a few at the cost of the society where their life-energy loses its scope for creative contribution. It is a sensitive concern for that which can sustain the deep yearnings of the human heart in the hidden recesses of our world. It is from the wellsprings of power within persons that one can draw creative resources to give shape and direction to our planet.

The questions of conflict and competition in the collective movement of humanity towards self-realization can best be answered when our common, ultimate goals become clearer and closer to our deep inner striving. In the words of Isaiah:

"Yahweh shaped the earth and
made it.
He did not create it to be chaos
He formed it to be lived in ..."
That we may live, as a community,
unto Him.

Notes

1. Joy K.P.(ed.), *Eco-Development and Nature Conservation,* New Delhi: AIACHE, 1994.
2. Bernice Marie-Daly, "Eco-Feminism: Sacred Matter/Sacred Mother," *Teilhard Studies* 25 (Autumn 1991).

JPJRS 2/1 (1999) 100-110

The Bible and the Search for a New Society

A. Gabriel, MSFS
Dept. of Scripture, JDV, Pune

Biblical experience is ensconced between two great myths, namely the 'yesterday' of the paradise lost (Gen 2:4b - 3:24) and the 'tomorrow' of the paradise regained, 'the new heaven and the new earth' (Rev 21:1-4). The biblical understanding of the human person and human society also moves back and forth from sectarianism to universalism, and from individualism to corporate existence. God, human person and cosmos are often seen as separate entities, but at the same time, they cannot be understood without being related to each other. And the Bible says that Yahweh is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob; he is the King of Israel, and is the Lord of the universe. In the New Testament he is the 'Abba' of Jesus Christ (Mk 14:36) and the Father of humanity, whom we ought to "worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:21, 23-24). And the Bible is the unfolding of the divino-human intentions in the sacred-secular history of a people, albeit all people of all times are partakers of this divino-human economy.

1. Patterns of Faith in the Search for a New Society

In any religious tradition metaphysics, politics and ethics are inseparable. Often it is not noticeable because of the mythopoeic thought enshrined in the origin of religions. The 'sense' of the Divine is correlated to the understanding of the nature of the cosmos, the function of the state and the values of life.[1] The theogonies and cosmogonies of the Ancient Near East are attempts to understand these points. Though the myth-making process in ancient Israel has some similarities with its neighbours, its faith tradition is different in nature.

1.1 The Beginnings

The uniqueness of Israel is that, at a very early stage, it distinguished itself by monotheism, at least in its central strand. For, in its amphictyonic existence, Israel's faith was not primarily tied to the sanctuaries like other similar confederations. Though the old Canaanite shrines were their cult places, Yahweh was their God. "What happened was that Israel's own form of worship, with the shrine of the Ark, found a home for itself in an ancient Canaanite place of worship but was not so bound up with this place that it could not be shifted if occasion arose, to another place. This raises the question of the form of worship observed by the Israelite tribes and their special relationship to God."[2] Already at the time of Israel's tribal confederacy, Yahweh occupies 'the entire sacred domain'; he alone is 'active in the world'; he is 'conceived by egalitarian sociopolitical

analogies'; he is 'coherently manifest in power, justice and mercy'; he is 'in bond with an egalitarian people'; and he is 'interpreted by egalitarian functionaries'.[3] This sets the pattern of belief in the biblical tradition.

The Israelite society in its formative period was egalitarian in every aspect. "In spite of its inner tensions, Israel ... is clearly in conception and in practice one community: socially, economically, politically, militarily and religiously."[4] The loyalty of the cult-community to Yahweh was inseparable from absolute social justice and egalitarian socioeconomic relations.

1.2 The Time of Monarchy

The establishment of monarchy in Israel heralded the arrival of stratification of the Israelite society. In some sections of the society, the monarchy came to be seen as an alien institution, uncharacteristic of Israel which was the people of Yahweh.[5] The people were reminded of the evils of monarchy (I Sam 8:11-18). "The rapid amplification of the transition to monarchy, from the modest court of Saul to the proverbial magnificence of Solomon over a period of little more than a generation, magnifies the sense of the state's departing from the 'Israelite' norm."[6] The outcome was evident. Solomon exported subsistence materials like wheat and oil in exchange for costly timber (I Kings 5:9-11), precious metals and ivory (I Kings 10:14-22) which were used for the king's household. Stratification which replaced egalitarianism continued its sway throughout the period of monarchy even after the division of the kingdom. Rationalisation of the exploitation of the lower class by the upper class was sought in the belief system and displayed in the cultic practices. "The ideology of legitimacy is conveyed to different levels of society by a variety of means ranging from the literary output of a royal bureaucracy, to monumental architecture, iconography and ceremonial."[7] Dissenting voices came from the prophets who vehemently condemned it as idolatry and injustice. The cult was no more an expression of faith, but a sin. "Come to Bethel and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days" (Amos 4:4). The prophet Amos is very clear about what people are to do: "Seek me and live; but do not seek Bethel and do not enter into Gilgal;" (Amos 5:4b-5a) and "let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). The pre-exilic prophets Proto-Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah and Zephania made similar analyses.

> Woe to her that is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city! She listens to no voice, she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the Lord, she does not draw near to her God. Her officials within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning. Her prophets are wanton, faithless men; her priests profane what is sacred, they do violence to the law. The Lord within her is righteous, he does no wrong; every morning he shows forth his justice, each dawn he does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame (Zeph 3:1-5).[8]

The oppressor class – princes, judges, prophets and priests – hold the political, social and economic power; besides they claim to possess knowledge, especially the knowledge of God. The four groups of the oppressive structure which Zephania mentions are analogous to today's categories of politicians, bureaucrats, media and religious bigots. These groups control political power, wealth and knowledge. It is a clear deviation from the biblical vision of the human society.

1.3 Exilic Period

The destruction of Israel and Judah, and the consequent exile made the people reflect upon what went wrong with them. In fact, 'the faithful remnant' came into its own and carried forward its faith and hope. In the preexilic period, the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the *Torah* was the cult, whereas in the exilic period it was the human heart.

> For thou hast no delight in sacrifices;
> were I to give a burnt offering,
> thou wouldst not be pleased.
> The sacrifice acceptable to God is
> a broken spirit;
> a broken and contrite heart, O God,
> Thou will not despise (Ps 51:16-17).

The prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutro-Isaiah imprinted a definite stamp on this turn-around.

> Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I make a covenant with the house of Israel ... not like the covenant which I made with their fathers ... I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; ... And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest... (Jer 31:31-34).

Religion is no more cult-oriented or cult-centred, but person-oriented and person-centred. The destruction of the Jewish state and of the temple-centred cult and the encounter with foreign religious traditions in the exilic period made Israel reexamine its own faith. In this period, the Israelite religion started to move out of its own prison walls of a narrow nationalism and worldview. Deutro-Isaiah includes all nations in the saving plan of God. "The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Is 52:10). The promises of Yahweh need not always be fulfilled through the instruments appointed from Israel, but by anyone whom Yahweh chooses from anywhere. Thus Cyrus becomes the 'anointed' of Yahweh to fulfil his plan (Is 45:1-7). In the Old Testament the term 'anointed' is used only to refer to a reigning king. It signifies that some one is given the authority to do something as Yahweh's delegate.[9] King Cyrus, a non-Israelite, becomes God's instrument to fulfil his plan.

Belief in the resurrection of the body, which had not been explicit till then, appears in this period due to the influence of the Persian religions. A shadowy existence in *sheol*, the place of the dead without any reference to happiness or the reverse (Gen 37:35; 42:38; 1Sam 2:6; Job 14:13) is replaced by the concepts of heaven and hell, reward or punishment after death. The metaphysical dualism of good and evil enters the biblical world. It is intrinsi-

cally linked to the belief in the resurrection. "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan 12:2). This in fact answers the hitherto unsolved problem of evil and suffering raised mainly by the book of Job.

1.4 Intertestamental Period

The crisis of Old Testament faith reaches its climax in the inter-testamental period. Besides the Eastern religions, it came into contact with Hellenism which spread rapidly after the conquests of Alexander the Great. The understanding of man and the 'Transcendent' in Hellenism was significantly different from that of the Israelites. Qohelet took a critical view of Israel's religious tradition. "In his writings the foreground is not occupied by the manifold traditional motives; rather, he transforms them in his extremely individualist criticism by shattering a fixed connection between action and result, and proclaiming the absolute inexplicability of the divine action in nature and history."[10] Ben Sira in the second century B. C. unwilling to give in to the onslaught of Hellenism, reaffirmed the traditional faith of the Fathers. '*Torah*' was the eternal divine wisdom communicated to Israel; and it is only in adherence to it that one can find harmony in life. Ben Sira's language of social justice surpasses that of the prophets:

> Like one who kills a son before his father's eyes is the man who offers a sacrifice from the property of the poor. The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; whoever deprives them of it is a man of blood. To take away a neighbour's living is to murder him; to deprive an employee of his wages is to shed blood. (Sir 34:24-27).

On the other hand, in the Wisdom of Solomon, a book of the first century B.C., we see an explicit attempt made to harmonise Israel's traditional faith and Greek philosophy. The author tries to prove that there is no opposition between genuine faith and scientific reasoning. It is the same with Philo of Alexandria.

The political crisis of this period contributed to the religious thought of the time. The political, cultural and intellectual domination by the Greeks and later by the Romans put the Israelite faith under strain. A brief period of independence at the time of the Maccabean-Hasmonian dynasty did not bring about any relief. Wielding the royal and priestly powers, the new rulers were neither the descendants of David nor that of Zadok, contrary to the traditional Jewish expectations. Moreover, they proved to be as cruel as the alien monarchs. The people were caught between the utopia of the peaceable kingdom and the realities of oppressive political and military powers around them. One of the significant features of this period is the birth of apocalypticism, which sought answers to the problems, in a direct divine intervention. "The real meaning of events and persons, within an overall view of history, and the disclosure concerning the imminent change in the structure of society are directed to providing men and women with a way of looking at the world and God's intervention in it.

This then gives coherence and significance to existence in the present when historical circumstances offered only perplexity and despair."[11] One can see the formation of different groups with their specific religious beliefs and goals – often contradicting each other – within Judaism. The Pharisees and Sadducees,[12] the Essenes and the Qumran Community,[13] and the Zealots could claim to be the adherents of one faith, though they had different goal-directive belief systems.

The new society is a dream, not only in the biblical tradition but also, for that matter, in all the religious traditions. In the ups and downs of Israel's history, it always searched for a free fearless and egalitarian society. Its faith affirmations are conditioned by the evolution of the society. As we look at these affirmations we cannot take all of them today as absolutely normative – the very nature of the evolution is such – but suggestive of an ever evolving society which inherently looks forward to peace and harmony – not just an existence but transcendence.

2. The Nature of the New Society: The New Testament Vision

The ideal society was already envisaged in the Old Testament times. At the cosmic level: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them... They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Is 11:6-9). At the level of the human societal existence: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Is 2:4; Mic 4:3). Amidst the chaotic disorder of the nations and of the cosmos, the prophets looked forward to a free and fearless society upon which Yahweh would have supreme control. But it is very much an earthly society. "The conceptual material of their promise is based upon a belief in the enduring significance of Zion as the sole place of the revelation of God."[14] It is in fact a call to humanity not to live in violence, exploitation and suffering, but in peace, justice and harmony not only with fellow human beings, but with all living realities. The New Testament idea of the new society surpasses it because of its identification of this vision with what has been realised in the person of Jesus Christ.

2.1 The Symbols and Metaphors:

The New Testament vision of the new society is expressed in a variety of symbols and metaphors such as Kingdom of God/Heaven, new Israel, new age, new covenant, Body of Christ, wine and the branches, shepherd and sheep, and new heaven and new earth. Down through the centuries, some of these symbols came to be interpreted with strict ecclesial connotations. But they, in fact, have an atemporal and metaspatial significance. "A symbol, in contradistinction to a sign, represents another entity and refers to something outside itself. Its interpretation aims at deriving the meaning-value that tran-

scends the literal meaning."[15] Moreover certain symbols may have an inexhaustible overflow of meanings. Wheelright makes a distinction between two types of symbols, namely *steno-symbol* and *tensive symbol*. The former has a one-to-one relationship to that which it represents as in mathematical symbols, and the latter can have a set of meanings that can neither be exhausted nor be adequately expressed by any one referent.[16] The symbols of religious language belong to the second category and the interpretation of these symbols should open up new horizons of understanding of religious experiences.

One of the New Testament symbols that offers inexhaustible meaning is 'the Kingdom of God/Heaven'. The Greek term, *basileia tou theou* which is translated as the Kingdom of God, stands for the Aramaic expression *malkut di `elaha'* which means God's ruling activity.[17] This Kingdom comes into conflict with the evil forces of the world. The apocalyptic eschatology foresees this. "It means the regime of God which will destroy the present course of the world, wipe out all contra-divine, satanic power under which the present world groans – and thereby, terminating all pain and sorrow, bringing in salvation for the people of God which awaits the fulfilment of the prophets' promises."[18]

The Kingdom of God breaks into human history, not because of human initiative, but because of divine intervention. Throughout its chequered history, Israel experienced the impotence of human efforts to regain paradise. The New Testament community built the concept of the Kingdom of God on this realisation. "Nowhere do the early Christians display any confidence in the idea that man by his own means can transform this world into a second paradise. The Kingdom of God is to be brought in by God. The strong emphasis on sin and its deep destructive effect on man, his nature and his world prevents the early Christians from placing any hope in man himself."[19]

Here lies the essential difference between the Marxian and the biblical models of the new society. 'The new heaven and the new earth' that Marxism promises is totally the result of human effort, whereas the Bible sees it as a divine gift and human task. There is no place for human passivity. The ethical dimension which is the human responsibility cannot be swept under the carpet of divine intervention. In announcing the nearness of the Kingdom of God, the New Testament emphasises the need for repentance and believing in the Gospel (Mk 1:15). A Christian is exhorted to do "whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious..." (Phil 4:8). This is the Christian standard of existence.

Jesus announces the arrival of the rule of God as a present reality, unlike the apocalyptic Judaism of his time, which thought that it would be entirely in the future. Jewish apocalypticism considered two aeons – the old one (the present), the aeon of sin, suffering and death, and the new one (the future), the aeon of eternal bliss which is directly under God's control. The New Testa-

ment sees the dawn of this new age in the life, teaching and works of Jesus. The first Christians believed that theirs is the community of the new age or the new aeon. Theirs "is not simply the non-historical existence of the (still future) aeon to come, but first of all a new society . . . The historicity of this society is accentuated by locating it 'now in this time' (i.e., within the present evil aeon)."[20] So the above mentioned symbols and metaphors which speak of the 'newness' are, in fact, referring to the present reality, inaugurated by Christ, and oriented to fulfilment for which a collective human accountability is attached.

2.2 The Leader

The Judaeo-Christian religious experience underlines the fact that there can be only one leader, eternal and absolute – that is God. He is the Lord of history and of human destiny. In the perfect society, God becomes "everything to every one" (1Cor 15:28). The whole world is the creation of Yahweh and the Davidic king was his representative – his anointed (Ps 2) – on earth, ruling from Zion. Though he has the title, son of God, it was only functional unlike the kings of the neighbouring countries. For instance, the emperor of Egypt was considered to be the direct descendent of the supreme God, Re. Amon-Re, King of the gods says to Amen-hotep III,

> My son, of my body, my beloved,
> Neb-maat-Re,
> My living image, whom my body created,
> Whom Mut, Mistress of Ishru in Thebes, the lady of the Nine Bows, bore to me,
> And (she) nursed thee as the Sole Lord of the people –
> My heart is very joyful when I see thy beauty;
> I work a wonder for thy majesty,
> That thou mightest renew youth,
> According as I made thee to be Re of the Two banks.[21]

As the Israelite king was only a delegate, the ultimate leadership of the society was with Yahweh who is given various titles, such as King, Father, Husband, Go'el (Redeemer), Shepherd etc. When his deputies failed in their task, God promises that he himself will shepherd his flock (Ez 34:11-20).

In the later period, Israel thought that the Messianic king, a descendant of David, would establish the ideal society. The early apocalyptic literature – Daniel, I Enoch and IV Ezra – visualised a divine envoy, the figure "like a son of man" (Dan 7:13), who would appear at the end of age and fulfil this task.

The New Testament sees that these expectations are realised in Jesus of Nazareth. He is of Davidic descent (Mt 1:1; 20:30-31; Lk 1:32; Rom 1:3) and the pre-existent divine person (Jn 1:1-18; Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20). He is God's Son who fulfils the divine plan for the new society by becoming the inclusive representative of humanity. The titles of Jesus in the New Testament – Son of God, Messiah, Lord, Son of man, King, Shepherd, Saviour, Servant, Second Adam, Lamb etc. – are indicative of what he is, what he has done and what he will do for the new society. These are *tensive symbols* and many

of them, according to the New Testament writers, are suggestive of victory after suffering and death. The Messianic leader/King/Shepherd lays down his life to bring about the renewal of the society. He establishes a new corporateness of humanity in him by his righteousness and obedience, in contrast to the old corporateness of humanity in Adam, characterised by sin and disobedience (See Rom 5:12-21). In contrast to Adam in the first myth, Jesus Christ in the last myth becomes the central figure of the Bible's search for the new society. The Lamb-leader in the book of Revelation is a rich symbol with a concentration of meanings.[22] He is the divino-human figure. He is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (Rev 5:5) and receives equal worship and honour with God (Rev 5:13-14). To express his supreme sacrifice, supreme power and knowledge, the author says that it is a slain lamb, but stands with seven horns and with seven eyes (Rev 5:6). For his redemptive work (Rev 5:9-10), he receives praise from "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea" (Rev 5:13). We see the reconstruction of the whole cosmos by the Lamb-redeemer. Moreover, he is the Shepherd (Rev 7:17), controls the destiny of the people (Rev 13:8) and makes war against the evil forces, and becomes "the Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev 17:14). By laying down his life/ self-emptying, he becomes the centre of the 'new heaven' and 'new earth,' where God "will wipe away every tear ... and death shall be no more, neither there shall be mourning nor crying nor pain any more ..." (Rev 21: 4).

2.3 The Neighbour

One of the fundamental premises of the biblical tradition is the oneness of the whole of humanity. Physically all are descendants of Adam and Eve, and they are called to be the children of God universally. But in reality it is practised in varying degrees. First of all, gender inequality is common in most of the societies, both ancient and modern. With Yahweh the God of the universe, Adam the first human person and Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the world, it is obviously a male dominated religious tradition. Women were given only a subordinate role in the society. Slavery was a common phenomenon in the biblical world. Foreigners and gentiles were outside the Jewish commonwealth.

A 'neighbour' is a fellow member of the Israelite commonwealth.[23] The commandment, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev 19:18), is directed to the people of the covenant.[24] The gentile nations like Egypt, Assyria and Babylon are seen as enemies. "The Lord has commanded against Jacob that his neighbours should be his foes" (Lam 1:17b). On the other hand, God's concern for the non-Israelite people was not totally absent. The prophets like Deutro-Isaiah and Jonah will testify to it.

The search for a classless and distinctionless society is conveyed in several ways in the New Testament. The term 'neighbour' is essentially coextensive with humankind.[25] The condensation of the law is seen in the commandment, apart from the love of God, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt 22:39; Mk 12:31; Lk 10:27d; Rom

13:9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8). The meaning of 'neighbour' is stretched to its farthest horizon to all of humanity including one's enemies (Mt 5:43-48). "Who is the neighbour?" was a matter of debate in Judaism in the New Testament period. According to the Sermon on the Mount, those who curse, hate and persecute are also to be loved as neighbours.[26] The story of the Good Samaritan is the proof (Lk 10:29-37). The Samaritan who was hated by the Jews becomes a true neighbour to a Jew in distress. The letter of James defines true 'Religion' along the same lines (Jas 1:27).

The New Testament perception is that the mission of Jesus wipes out all distinctions. The progressive identification of the 'person' of Jesus in his dialogue with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-42) indicates it. The woman who first addresses him, in terms of a stranger, as "a Jew" (v. 9) and "Sir" (v. 11) finds a relationship with him in the common ancestor, Jacob (v. 12). Further, she recognises in him "a prophet" (v. 19) and "the Christ" (v. 29). Finally, the story ends with a solemn declaration by the believing Samaritans, "this is indeed the saviour of the world" (v. 42). In the process all distinctions – male vs. female, Jew vs. Samaritan, and Israel vs. Gentile – vanish. In fact, everything in the New Testament that is addressed to human beings "is addressed to them as actual or potential believers, regardless of age, sex, family connections, ethnic background, nationality, race, economic conditions or social status."[27] We see it in the Gospels' depiction of Jesus' association and table fellowship with all kinds of people and several of his sayings.

In spite of its diversity in composition and its pluralism in thinking, the New Testament Church held the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ and the unity of the whole of humanity. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

Conclusion: The Unfinished Task

The new society is never clearly defined in the Bible. "It remains a 'vision' shimmering in the distance, a summons rather than a plan, an inspiration more than a programme of action."[28] In its experience of God in history, Israel realised that the ideal society could not be realised without freedom, fellowship and justice for all. Any claim of the knowledge of God is futile unless one pursues a sound morality. "The true knowledge of God, and the true and felt knowledge (not merely nominal knowledge) of the relations of man and the universe to Him, and of the true foundations of all ethics and morals, when really felt and acted on, is the means of man's highest well-being."[29]

The symbols and metaphors of the new society indicate that the common well-being of the entire human family must be ceaselessly pursued. Jesus' life-giving death for the human race is the foundation of the new relationship with God, and it calls for self-giving in human relationships. It has to manifest itself in the day-to-day living; it is not merely a dogma to be believed but a

living and life-giving mystery to be lived. As long as religious experiences and traditions lead to class divisions with their rampant repression of human life in the service of racism, provincialism, casteism, and linguistic and religious fanaticism, humanity will continue to reel under fragmentation and oppression. "The analysis, praxes and ideologies of the past are all instructive, but they are not blueprints or lodestones."[30] No religious criteria can override the concern for the visible needs of one's fellow human beings. "Religious criteria are merely functional. As such, they must be judged by higher criteria that are valid in themselves."[31] Any one who pursues any goal to the exclusion of 'the other', will never experience the peace and joy of the Kingdom, nor reach 'the new heaven and the new earth'. For in it, everyone is for the other and God is all in all.

Notes

1. H. and H. A. Frankfurt et al., *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1977, p. 26.
2. M. Noth, *The History of Israel*, New York: Harper & Row, 1960, pp. 110-11.
3. N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, London: SCM Press, 1980, pp. 679-91.
4. Ibid. p.489.
5. R. B. Coote & K. W. Whitelam, *The Emergence of Early Israel*, Sheffield: Almond Press, 1987, pp. 142-43.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p.170
8. See also Is 10:1-4; Mic 3:1-4; Qoh 4:1.
9. C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40 – 66*, London: SCM Press, 1969, p. 159.
10. M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, London: SCM Press, 1974, p. 116.
11. C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, London: SCPK, 1982, p. 22.
12. For their distinctive belief system, see E. Schuerer, *The History of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ*, Vol. 2, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979, pp. 381-414.
13. Ibid, pp. 555-590.
14. O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1 – 12*, London: SCM Press, 1972, p. 30.
15 J. Bleicher, Contemporary hermeneutics, London: Routledge, 1980, p. 41.
16. See N. Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976, pp. 29-30.
17. For a detailed description of it, see G. M. Soares-Prabhu, "The Kingdom of God: Jesus' Vision of a new Society", in D. S. Amalopavadass (ed.), *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a new Society*, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1981, pp. 579-608.
18. R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* Vol. I, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951, p. 4.
19. D. Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament*, Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1983, pp. 107-108.
20. J. M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark and the other Markan Studies*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982, p. 129.

21. J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 3rd edn., New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 376.
22. See D. Guthrie, *The Relevance of John's Apocalypse*, Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1987, pp. 46-51.
23. H. F. Beck, "Neighbour", in G. A. Buttrich et al. (ed.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 3, Nashville: Abingdon, 1962, pp. 534 – 35.
24. But the statement, "hate your enemy" in Mt 5:43 is not found in the Old Testament. It might have been influenced by Sir 12:4-7 where the author advises not to help the sinners and the ungodly.
25. H. F. Beck. p. 535.
26. See J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, in Word Biblical Commentary, No. 4, Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1992, p. 325.
27. S. Schneiders, "Women in the fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church", in *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 12 (1982), p. 35.
28. G. M. Soares-Prabhu, p. 606.
29. S. R. L. Clark, *From Athens to Jerusalem*, Oxford: Clarendon press, 1984, p. 1.
30. N. K. Gottwald, p. 707.
31. J. L. Segundo, *Faith and Ideologies*, New York: Orbis Books, 1984, p. 43.

JPJRS 2/1 (1999) 111-122

A Christian Vision of a New Society

Michael Amaladoss, S.J.
Dept. of Systematic Theology, Vidyajyoti, Delhi

Every religion has its starting point in the experience of evil and suffering and offers a way of overcoming evil and escaping suffering. This may be through one's own efforts of self-discipline or through the mediation of a saviour figure. The goal of liberation is a new life in a new society. The vision of this new society provides inspiration and motivation for people's quest for liberation. Every religion offers a variety of means and *margas* (ways) for this quest.

The Christian vision of a new society is found in the life – the deeds and words – of Jesus Christ. Jesus termed his vision for a new society the *Kingdom of God*. For the Jewish people who listened to Jesus this image evoked a lot of resonances. It awoke their memories of the great deeds God had done for them.

When they were slaves in Egypt God had liberated them. God gave them a land flowing with milk and honey. God made a covenant with them making them his own people. Even when they were unfaithful to God, going after false gods (idols) like selfishness, power and pleasure, God sent many Prophets to call them to conversion and, through many trials, brought them back to God's rule. Knowing well their sinful tendencies and their social consequences like inequality, injustice and oppression of the poor by the rich, God institutionalized a structure like the *Jubilee* when people could restitute all that they have taken from others unjustly over the years and start again as a community of brothers and sisters.

The disloyalty of the people upset the social order to such an extent that God had to dispossess them of their land, which was the root of their identity and well-being, and send them into exile. The Prophets, however, kept reminding the people of God's promises and evoked the vision of a new society to which God would lead them at the appropriate time, provided they remain faithful to the covenant. God would give them a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:16-37), a new life (Ezek 37:1-14) in a new land of fertility and abundance (Ezek 34:23-31). God would send a messenger "to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners" (Is 61:1). God would create a new heaven and a new earth, where the people would live full of joy and peace. Their harmony would be symbolized by the wolf and the lamb feeding together (Is 65:17-25). God's rule would reach out to the ends of the earth and to all peoples (Is 60:1-7; Ps 117).

When Jesus began his proclamation: "The Kingdom of God has come

near; repent and believe in the good news" (Mk 1:15), the people must have recalled the promise of the Prophets. The good news of Jesus, however, is different from that of the Prophets. He does not only announce a future Kingdom to come; through his life and his miracles he shows that the Kingdom of God has already arrived, though its fulfilment will depend on the people's response. He claims to be God's special messenger who brings good news to the poor, freedom to the captives, and liberation to the oppressed (Lk 4:18). He frees people from their maladies and mental afflictions seen and experienced as symbols of their slavery to sin and to the Evil one. He condemns the political and religious leadership that keep the people enslaved. He challenges them by disobeying their merely legal prescriptions with regard to the Sabbath or to ritual purity. In the social conflict between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, he chooses to be on the side of the oppressed. He keeps the company of and eats with the publicans, the sinners, the prostitutes and the marginalised of his day. He mediates to them God's loving kindness and asks them to love one another. He teaches a morality of intention, rather than of observance.[1]

The character of the Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed has been beautifully summarized by George Soares-Prabhu.

> When the revelation of God's love (the Kingdom) meets its appropriate response in man's trusting acceptance of this love (repentance), there begins a mighty movement of personal and societal liberation which sweeps through human history. The movement brings *freedom* inasmuch as it liberates each individual from the inadequacies and obsessions that shackle him. It fosters *fellowship*, because it empowers free individuals to exercise their concern for each other in a genuine community. And it leads on to *justice*, because it impels every true community to adopt the just societal structures which alone make freedom and fellowship possible.[2]

As Soares-Prabhu points out, though Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom through his words and deeds, it will become a reality in history only when people respond to it by true conversion, which involves both a change of heart and a change of the unjust structures that our sinfulness has created in the world and in society. The good news of Jesus therefore remains a continuing challenge to succeeding generations.

While Jesus presents a broad vision of the Kingdom and indicated through his actions some concrete points of application relevant to his own time, he has not given us a blueprint that is valid for all time. He spells out the values we need to safeguard. But he does not tell us how to do it in each generation. He leaves us the task of translating his theological vision in a sociological categories. As Soares-Prabhu says again:

> The vision of Jesus summons us, then, to a ceaseless struggle against the demonic structures of unfreedom (psychological and sociological) erected by mammon; and to a ceaseless creativity that will produce in every age new blueprints for a society ever more consonant with the Gospel vision of man. Lying on the horizons of human history and yet part

> of it, offered to us as a gift yet confronting us as a challenge, Jesus' vision of a new society stands before us as an unfinished task, summoning us to a permanent revolution.[3]

Spelling out a contemporary Christian vision of a new society, therefore, involves a double task. Looking at the society today, we have to identify, first of all, the structures of unfreedom that enslave people in various ways. Then we have to suggest creatively new blueprints consonant with Jesus' vision, that we will have to strive to realise in today's world. Each generation has to repeat this unfinished task of "reinventing revolution" at every age.[4] I shall engage in this twofold task in the following pages. Given the limitations of space it can only be schematic.

It is also good to be aware from the beginning that the values highlighted by Jesus' vision of a new society, namely *freedom, fellowship and justice,* are not particularly Christian, but basically human values which others also may be pursuing. Therefore, I would like to stress that what I am trying to present is a Christian vision of a *human, not merely a Christian* society. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it is Jesus' vision rather than a Christian vision. We should not be surprised to find that many others are also as interested in "reinventing revolution" as we are. We are invited then to collaboration, not to competition. I shall come back to this point when I speak about the role of the Christian community as *Church* in seeking to realise Jesus' vision of a new society.

For the sake of clarity we shall look at Indian (and global) society through a grid of six elements, namely Economics - Politics - Society - Person - Culture - Religion.[5] In each case we shall look briefly at what is wrong with it at the moment, what has Jesus' vision to propose and what kind of concrete alternatives we can suggest.

An Economic Order with a Social Conscience

The economic world order is today dominated by liberal capitalism. Profit is its driving force. Profit comes out of the market. Traders claim absolute freedom to play in the market. Behind the traders are the producers. Their production often focuses not on goods to meet the basic needs of the people, but on goods to respond to the consumer needs. These needs are created and promoted by the media through advertisements. The end of the process is that wealth accumulates in a few hands. In the stock market such wealth produces more wealth by mere speculation without involving any production. The freedom of the market is supposed to favour competition among traders and bring down prices for the consumer. But traders either acquire monopolies or create artificial scarcities or form cartels to keep prices up and increase their profits, sometimes at unreasonable levels. The gap between the rich and the poor keeps increasing.

What is true of individual nations, is also true of the international market. The richer nations grow richer at the expense of the poor nations. Manufactured goods are privileged over raw

materials and agricultural goods. And the trader is privileged in comparison with the producer. Since the focus of economic actors is on production, trade and profit, they tend to exploit people and nature for their own selfish ends. The so-called 'free market' is not really free, as it is controlled by the rich companies and nations to protect their own interests. In any *free* encounter between the *powerful* and the *weak*, the weak are bound to suffer. Commerce and the stock market have replaced production as the motors of the economy. The net result of all this is widespread poverty and blatant economic inequality between the rich and the poor within nations and among nations. Even when essential necessities like food are available, people often lack money to buy them because of widespread unemployment or poorly paid employment.

Looking at this situation, the Christians will think of many values that come to them from the Bible. The earth is God's gift to all peoples and is meant to be shared among all in an equitable manner. All people are brothers and sisters and we are called to be a community that shares all that we have, especially with those who are most in need. Human beings are created in the image of God and have certain basic rights that have to be respected. Among these are rights to a dignified life and work and appropriate recompense. They should not be treated as commodities in the market whose only value is their labour power.

Finally, we must always show special concern for the poor and the suffering. God was aware that production and trade are part of human communities, and that these will eventually lead to inequalities because of the different talents, capacities, initiatives and energies of people. Foreseeing this God institutes the *jubilee* every fiftieth year (Lev 25), when slaves will be released, land restored, debts forgiven, etc. The people reestablish a community of equality and make a new beginning. It is true that the Bible restricts it to the Israelites, but the principle can be extrapolated to all. When the Lord says: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants" (Lev 25:23), it applies not only to the Israelites but to all.

The basic economic principle then is that the goods of the earth belong to the Lord. We are but stewards who are allowed to use them according to the Lord's intentions and purposes in such a way that all can benefit. Any attempt at hoarding and profiteering without concern for every one (liberal capitalism) is wrong.

How do we translate these values and principles into action in the contemporary world?[6] Freedom does not mean irresponsibility. Economic creativity must be encouraged and production increased so that the needs of all can be adequately met. A certain incentive to people to encourage creativity and production in terms of profits need not be excluded. But the prime concern of economic activity must be to meet the needs of all people, not merely the luxury, not to say the greed, of a few. Enough production of basic necessities of life like food, medicine and their easy

availability must be assured. There must be an efficient global distribution system using all the conveniences of the modern means of transport. Labour intensive industries must be promoted so that all can find adequate employment. This means that the inordinate accumulation of wealth and the free pursuit of profit must be curtailed. The stock markets must be taxed. The process of production and distribution must be socially controlled at all levels, from the village through the nation to international levels. A safety net must be provided to care for the poor and the underprivileged. In short, our economic theory and policy must be guided by social welfare. It is significant that Amartya Sen, a specialist in welfare economics, has been given the Nobel prize for economics this year (1998).[7] This means that we have the theory available. What we need is the political will to formulate appropriate policies and to establish the necessary controls in order to translate theory into practice.

A Participative Democracy

Politicians and capitalists support each other. In various ways the capitalists bribe the people in political power to protect themselves and to create conditions favourable to their market games. The politicians of the richer countries work hand in hand with the capitalists to create markets for them everywhere. In the poor countries the capitalists and their political friends support dictatorial governments that will provide a "peaceful" atmosphere for their exploitation. Even in the so-called democracies, elections are won on the strength of money and/or media power. The people's representatives are only keen on enriching themselves rather than on serving the interests of the people. Emotions centred around caste, religion or ethnicity and even poverty are whipped up to create vote banks. The minorities are everywhere dominated not only politically, but also economically and socially. Hero worship or media-created images bring incompetent individuals to power. Feudalism, in which the landlords are now replaced by industrialists and political bosses, masquerades as democracy. International institutions like the UNO, IMF, WB, WTO are controlled by and made to serve the interests of the richer countries. The poor are suppressed by authoritarian governments using legal and para-legal coercive forces. In a moment of crisis, the remaining global superpower and its allies would not hesitate to threaten or to engage in military action to defend their economic interests. The production and sale of arms is a flourishing industry.

In such a power-hungry world, Jesus offers an alternative way of holding and exercising authority. The very idea of the Kingdom of God is the assertion that God alone is the ruler and every human authority is derived from and is accountable to God. Every person is free and responsible for himself/herself and answerable only to God. Jesus often criticises the religious and political authorities of his day for not being responsive to the needs of the people. He himself gives an example of authority as service: in becoming human he empties himself and becomes a servant. He washes the feet of his disciples as a concrete illustration of a new

relationship between power and service. He exhorts his disciples to become like little children and not to seek places of honour. In his miracles he constantly shows that political and religious power structures are to be used for the benefit of the people: "The Sabbath is for people, not people for the Sabbath!" (Mk 2:27) Power must legitimise itself by its care for the poor and the oppressed. Jesus does not organize a political revolt. But his company with the poor and the marginalized of his day and his vision of an alternate way of exercising power were sufficient threats to both the Jewish and the Roman authorities, so that they joined together to physically eliminate him.

What would an ideal society be like according to the vision of Jesus? One can say that it would be a participative democracy.[8] This is different from what we have today, representative democracies which hand power over to a small group of people, who are elected and who can abuse it in any way they want. Elections change incumbents without bringing about any real transformation. Besides, the present system institutionalises the dominance of a majority over the minorities. In a participative democracy, there will be democratic structures from the grassroots level upwards to national and international levels. There will be a constant interchange between the people and their delegates so that people can participate in making both policies and decisions that concern them. There would be widespread information and discussion before decisions are taken. Of course people will have to be conscientized and prepared for this, so that group loyalties based on caste or class do not vitiate genuine participation. The chosen leaders, who are in authority only for a limited time, are in constant touch with the people and look upon themselves as their servants. Widespread consultation would mean that persuasion rather than coercion would be the way for effecting changes through consensus.

Is this vision too idealistic? In many primal groups similar participative structures exist at the level of the village and of the tribe. Switzerland has a system of more or less autonomous Cantons that manage their own affairs, delegating to the national government responsibility for limited specific areas. This would certainly imply decentralization at all levels and the respect for the autonomy of the local in the face of the global. Even within existing democratic structures it is possible to reform the electoral process to make it more responsive to the wishes of the people. One could also reform the parliamentary system at all levels, national and international, in such a way that informed consensus rather than manipulation or the imposition by the majority becomes the guiding principle in decision making. An active and conscientized judiciary can check abuses. We will have to rethink the party system of politics. As a matter of fact, in most countries, where the cohesion of parties is not determined by other factors like ethnicity and religion, the radical ideological differences between the left and the right are turning into mere differences of emphasis. The *Panchayati Raj* would have been an interesting experiment, if it had been

properly carried out. After people have lived through authoritarian governments of various kinds, they have to be conscientized and educated for participative democracy. We also have to develop appropriate structures. People across the world have shown themselves responsible voters in elections. If given a chance, I am sure that they will rise to their responsibilities as citizens of a true democracy, that will really be *for* the people and *by* the people and not surrender their rights to a group of self-serving leaders.

A Society of Equals

One of the obstacles for a successful participative democracy is the division of society into a multiplicity of groups based on factors like caste, ethnicity, religion, etc. The caste system is the bane of Indian society. But elsewhere race, ethnicity and religion similarly divide societies. With the largescale migrations either for economic or political reasons, no society today is immune to social divisions and discriminations. One could keep off the >offending' terms and speak blandly of multiculturalism. But the social reality is the same. Communalism is a phenomenon which takes for granted that people, who belong to a particular religion, caste or ethnic group, also share common economic and political interests. Such presumptions are not entirely baseless when majority groups oppress minorities. Even without such complication and radicalization, social divisions can be disruptive of community. We cannot deny ethnic or religious differences. Even the castes, shorn of their hierarchical structure, may continue as kin or cultural groups. But what causes the problem is that these factors become causes for discrimination and antagonism. Feminists point out how sex too has been and is a cause for social discrimination. In the process of formation of group identities, *WE* are opposed to *THEY*. Such antagonisms often have historical roots. Previous conflicts continue to divide the people as unhealed memories, causing prejudices and evoking anger.

Against such social divisions and discriminations, Jesus' vision of a new society finds a clear affirmation of universal equality in the words of St. Paul: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). While the distinction between the slave and the free has to be abolished, the differences between the Jew and the Greek, male and female will not disappear. But they are not causes for discrimination. Every human is a child of God and deserves respect, not only because of what he/she shares with others as common humanity, but also because of what makes him/her different from others, whether it is a gift of God or his/her own accomplishment. In the New Testament we see a movement from the exclusivism of the Jews to a universal perspective. Peter's vision at Joppa (Acts 10) and Paul's vocation to the Gentiles are turning points. In Jesus' own life we find him dealing with Samaritans and Gentiles. He even holds up a Samaritan as the model for his new commandment to love the other. People in the tradition of St. Paul see the Kingdom as not merely for all people

but as meant to bring all people together as one universal community (1 Cor 15; Eph 1:3-14).

How can we translate this vision of unity in difference without discrimination in our contemporary societies? A certain rational outlook tends to look upon people as mere individuals with rights and does not respect the rights of cultural and ethnic groups. Contemporary discussions on multiculturalism point to the need for autonomy for these groups within the social order.[9] Many Constitutions, like the Indian one, also offer special protections for religious, linguistic and cultural minorities. But what is important is to promote the sense of community that goes beyond group identity at regional, national and international levels. Nations today are coming together for economic reasons. At this level, of course, the factors of group identity are ignored. What seems necessary is to promote a dialogue of life, where the difference of the other is recognised and respected and at the same time a relationship is affirmed in terms of a higher principle of community. People do relate to each other in the public transport, in the school or in the market place. They could be helped to get to know each other in their specific identities and to respect differences so as to remove prejudice and antagonism. Schools could be the places where such mutual discovery could be promoted, particularly in the context of collaboration in some common activity. Special efforts at conflict resolution addressing causes and conditions can also be made during actual conflicts, which provide an opportunity to make every one aware of the real grievances that particular groups may have, because these may often be ignored or dismissed at other times.[10]

Free Persons

Contemporary society and culture are highly individualistic. But the individual is only valued for his capacity as labourer or producer. The labour itself has shifted from manual to intellectual. The individual is a slave to impersonal economic, political and social structures. One feels powerless against them. One has either to conform or be marginalized. One is not really free. While one's rationality is overdeveloped, the emotions are not developed at all and often suppressed. At the most one keeps them to oneself. The body is nursed and catered to. The needs of the spirit are ignored. There is intense competition to survive and to succeed in life. The other is the enemy. Under these conditions egoism becomes a virtue. People demand their individual rights. Their duties to others are largely ignored. Having (more and more) rather than being becomes one's aim in life. Even love, centred on the self, becomes desire. Personality development programmes help either a narcissistic pursuit of feeling good or prepare appropriate cogs in the wheel of business machines. Meditation techniques are used to promote a mental peace without ethical responsibility.

For the Christian tradition, each individual is unique, specially chosen by God. But the person is always in relationship to others. Even the special gifts that a person has from God is for the community (1 Cor 12). Jesus frees

people from the various oppressive demons through his exorcisms. He liberates people from their guilt. He challenges people to a change of heart. He makes them aware of God's unconditional love for them which humanizes them. He gives the Spirit that frees, encourages, transforms and empowers people from within (Rom 8). His new commandment enjoins people to love each other and to find fulfilment in self-gift. He opens their eyes to transcendence that seeks and finds God in all things. In prayer the person encounters God and reaches out to others in reconciliation (Mt 6:9-13).

Such a Christian vision of the person leads us to develop a spirituality that is at once liberative and integrative, constantly tending towards fullness in relationship to the whole of reality.[11] A person can attain freedom through self-discipline. One becomes free by mastery over one's desires and by learning to discern and choose and not follow the current fads. At the same time through symbolic action one seeks to integrate one's body, emotions and mind, in relation to the world, to the other and to God. One achieves such integration, not in withdrawing from the world, but by creatively engaging in it, because one's own fullness depends on the fullness of all. A person finds his/her fullness in being a person for others. Such openness finds expression in service. A community of free individuals is shaped by conversation and collaboration. Life becomes a mutual gift. It is in this way that one escapes being stereotyped.

A Counterculture

Modern culture has its roots in science and technology as they have been understood and practised in recent times. Science brackets out of consideration whatever cannot be observed and measured. Nor has it use for causes that are not internal to the reality that one is dealing with. Therefore, all transcendence is ignored and considered irrelevant, if not denied. Humans claim to be self-sufficient. The power of reason is absolutized into rationalism when it is made the ultimate arbiter of human knowledge and experience. Technology makes use of the laws discovered by science for controlling reality and for production. It has an exploitative approach to reality. Even people are not protected against its intrusion as contemporary bio-technologies show. Widespread use of technology also gives rise to a sense of power over things. People feel that they can solve all problems and reach all goals that interest them, given the necessary time and resources for the development of appropriate technologies. Science and technology can of course be used for praiseworthy ends. But objectified and idolized, they give rise to a spirit of materialism and secularism. The human is reduced to the body and its exaggerated consumer needs. Humans become objects to be manipulated by economic, political and social forces. Nature is violated and exploited. People's attitude to nature seems to go hand in hand with their attitude to women. Women are treated as sex-objects, and violence against them is rampant in various forms. All these factors feed into a culture of egoism and violence. The me-

dia disseminate these predominant cultural values through advertisements and alienating entertainments.[12]

To a culture centred on matter and the ego, Jesus opposes a counterculture that is centred on God and the other.[13] But God is not seen as an otherworldly reality that alienates us from this world. God is present in this world as its creator and sustainer, so that we are led to see God in all things and all things in God. The autonomy of the world, of cultural creativity, of science and technology is not denied, but it is relativized and made subject to ultimate concerns. God is the ruler! "Seek first the Kingdom of God . . ." (Mt 6:33) In this world order, the relationship of the humans to others and to the world is not characterised by domination, exploitation and violence, but by dialogue, gift and service. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:21-48) offers Jesus' view of a counterculture. Soares-Prabhu has summarised this well. The new society that Jesus proposes is one

> in which violence is eradicated at its roots (vv. 21-26), where women are no longer treated as sex objects and discriminated against by men (27-32), where simplicity of speech and the transparency of interhuman relationships make external guarantees unnecessary (33-37), where order is maintained not through the fear of retaliation but through the concern of love (38-42), and where men and women accept each other, across all barriers of class, caste, race and culture, as the children of the one Father in heaven (43-48).[14]

In today's world, materialist and secularist perspectives are being increasingly abandoned. There is an increasing interest in the divine and in transcendence, even if it does not always translate into interest in existing institutional religions. Ecological and Feminist movements are suggesting and demanding a new way of looking at and treating nature and women. People speak of appropriate technologies and suggest that there are limits to growth. A new quest for peace stresses the need for dialogue and collaboration. Subaltern cultures that are closer to nature and more sensitive to community are challenging dominant and exploiting cultures. We are challenged then to join these countercultural forces and struggle for cultural transformation.

Prophetic Religion

In the field of religion, fundamentalist groups in every religion promote an irrelevant and alienating religion. Religious institutions continue to impose conformity and ritualism and to subdue, if not kill, charisms and prophecy. Communalism seeks to use religion for promoting economic and political goals. On the other hand, contemporary economic and political structures seek to privatize religion. Religions themselves tend to be as much legitimating the existing structures as acting prophetically towards them. In this context, people seek to transcend the divisive force of religions by promoting nonreligious secular societies and by searching for a common rational foundation for a global ethic.[15]

Jesus came in the line of the Hebrew Prophets. He is critical of ritualism and legalism that are the bane of

all institutionalized religions. He keeps alive the prophetic force of religion by insisting, on the one hand, that true religion is of the heart and of intention and not merely of external observance and, on the other, that the truth of religion will be tested by praxis, by what one does for the poor and the needy (Mt 25). He points to the oppressive structures of Satan and Mammon and offers the gift of the Spirit that liberates and makes whole. The Spirit of God is also creative, "making all things new".

Jesus' vision of a new society will demand a twofold reform of religion. Every religion must be open to prophetic voices and movements, so that there is a process of reform and renewal. Prophets are not lacking in any age. But they are not listened to and often get killed. Today some of the challenges for religious reform may also come from other cultures and religions with which we come into contact through the vagaries of history. The second kind of reform demands that each religion sheds its exclusive pretensions and learns to collaborate with other religions in the common task of providing a common moral and spiritual foundation to secular life and society. This can be done only through mutual respect, dialogue and collaboration.

Conclusion

We believe that Jesus did not only have a vision for a new society, but that he inaugurated it in deed and word and called and commissioned a group of disciples to be the symbols and servants of this new society. This group of disciples constitute the Church. But unfortunately the Church is far from being an authentic symbol of the Kingdom in today's world. Its life and structures seem to be more influenced by the culture of the contemporary world than by the values of the Kingdom. Though it is involved with the poor, it presents the image of a rich institution. It is one of the few remaining institutions that has a structure of absolute power that is accountable to no one. It has adapted itself easily to prevailing social divisions and discriminations over which the symbolic celebration of the Eucharist has no impact. Its focus is still on individual and otherworldly salvation. It is not a leader of countercultural movements, though often it hesitantly and belatedly follows them. While Prophets are never wanting, they do not always have an easy time in the Church. Jesus' vision of a new society, therefore, faces the Church with a twofold challenge: to make Jesus' vision an ecclesial vision and to collaborate with all countercultural movements in being a prophetic voice and presence calling for social transformation everywhere. It is in and through the Christians as disciples of Jesus that Jesus' vision has to become one of the forces for transformation in society.

Notes

1. Concerning the Kingdom see John Fullenbach, *The Kingdom of God*, Indore: Satprakashan, 1994, and *Proclaiming His Kingdom*, Manila: Logos, 1992.

2. G. Soares-Prabhu, "The Kingdom of God: Jesus' Vision of a New Society", in D. S. Amalorpavadass (ed.), *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society*, Bangalore: National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1981, p. 601.
3. Ibid., p. 607.
4. *Reinventing Revolution* is the title of a book by Gail Omvedt in which she gives an account of agricultural, ecological, feminist and other revolutionary movements in India. See *Reinventing Revolution. New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India*, Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1993.
5. For a detailed explanation of the scheme, see M. Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness*, Bangalore: National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1994, pp. 30-42.
6. See Ulrich Duchrow, *Alternative to Global Capitalism*, Heidelberg: Kairos Europa, 1995; U. Duchrow, "God or Mammon: Economies in Conflict", in *Mission Studies* 13 (1996) 32-67; C. René Padilla, "The Relevance of the Jubilee in Today's World", Ibid., pp. 12-31.
7. Prof. Amartya Sen's works include: *Inequality Reexamined*, Delhi: Oxford, 1992; *On Ethics and Economics*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.
8. Cf. B. Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for A New Age*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984; Judith M. Green, "Educational Multiculturalism, Critical Pluralism, and Deep Democracy", in Cynthia Willet (ed), *Theorizing Multiculturalism*. Malden/Oxford: Blackwells, 1998, pp. 422-448.
9. Amy Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
10. Cf. E. Franklin Dukes, *Resolving Public Conflicts,. Transforming Community and Governance*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996.
11. See M. Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness;* Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993.
12. Cf. Ashis Nandy (ed), *Science, Hegemony and Violence. A Requiem for Modernity*, Delhi: Oxford, 1988; Claude Alvares, *Science, Development and Violence. The Revolt Against Modernity*, Delhi: Oxford, 1994.
13. See S. Kappen, *Jesus and Cultural Revolution. An Asian Perspective.* Bombay: Build, 1983; Idem., *Tradition, Modernity, Counterculture. An Asian Perespective.* Bangalore: Visthar, 1994.
14. G. Soares-Prabhu, *art.cit.*, p. 606.
15. Hans Kueng and Karl-Josef Kuschel (eds.), *A Global Ethic*, London: SCM, 1993.

JPJRS 2/1 (1999) 123-142

The Pope's Vision of a New Society

An Investigation of the Social Teaching of John Paul II

Kurien Kunumpuram SJ
Dept. of Systematic Theology, JDV, Pune

1. Introduction

During the last hundred years several popes have been keenly interested in the problems of human society and have articulated their views as to how these problems could be solved.[1] Their main concern has been the promotion of justice and the establishment of peace in the world. Different popes have formulated their teaching in response to the situation that prevailed at their time. As John Paul II has observed:

> However, if one studies the development of the question of social justice, one cannot fail to note that, whereas during the period between "*Rerum Novarum*" and Pius XI's "*Quadragesimo Anno*" the Church's teaching concentrates mainly on the just solution of the "labor question" within individual nations, in the next period the Church's teaching widens its horizon to take in the whole world. The disproportionate distribution of wealth and poverty and the existence of some countries and continents that are developed and of others that are not, call for a levelling out and for a search for ways to ensure just development for all. This is the direction of the teaching in John XXIII's encyclical "*Mater et Magistra,*" in the pastoral constitution "*Gaudium et Spes*" of the Second Vatican Council and in Paul VI's encyclical "*Populorum Progressio*".[2]

Through the efforts of these popes there has developed in course of time what has come to be called the "social teaching" or the "social doctrine" of the Church. It is significant that the popes regarded this "social teaching" as part of the Church's mission. In the words of John Paul II:

> In effect, to teach and to spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message, since this doctrine points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Saviour.[3]

The social teaching of the Church is rooted in Scripture and Christian tradition. It is in fact "an application of the word of God to people's lives and the life of the society, as well as to the earthly realities connected with them."[4]

John Paul II believes that his teaching is "in organic connection with the whole of this tradition."[5] His intention is to 're-read', to reinterpret the social teaching of his predecessors in the context of the emerging situation in the world today, and thereby "to contribute to the development of Christian social doctrine."[6] Precisely because John Paul II stands in the Christian tradition

and articulates his views as the official spokesperson of the Catholic Church, I think it worthwhile to investigate his social teaching.

However, it is not my intention to study the totality of the pope's social teaching which is mainly found in three encyclicals – On Labour (*Laborem Exercens*), On Social Concern (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*) and On The Hundredth Year (*Centesimus Annus*). I shall limit myself to an examination of the pope's vision of a new society.

John Paul II did not, of course, set out to develop a vision of the new society. In fact, he makes it quite clear that "the Church does not propose economic and political systems and programmes."[7] He believes that the Church does not and cannot advocate a particular model of society, since an effective model can be developed only by those who are actively involved in concrete historical situations. As he declares:

> The Church has no models to present; models that are real and truly effective can only arise within the framework of different historical situations, through the efforts of all those who responsibly confront concrete problems in all their social, economic, political and cultural aspects, as these interact with one another.[8]

All the same, I believe that implicit in the pope's social teaching is the vision of a new society. This does not mean that he has sketched the blueprint of the society to come. Rather, he has spelt out the values that are to realized in the new society and has indicated the principles for the organization of the new society. And in this paper I intend to highlight these values and principles. However, these values and principles are enunciated in the context of the pope's analysis of the contemporary situation as well as his critique of capitalism and socialism. Hence, we need to discuss them in order to understand the pope's vision of a new society.

This paper begins with a discussion of the pope's understanding of the situation of the modern world. It goes on to examine his critique of capitalism and socialism. It then deals with the values and principles of the new society that he advocates. And it concludes by proposing some practical steps.

2. Understanding of the Situation

2.1 As John Paul II looks at the contemporary world what strikes him first is the abysmal poverty of the masses.[9] He sees an innumerable multitude of people "suffering under the intolerable burden of poverty."[10] He is touched by "this vast panorama of pain and suffering." He realizes that poverty leads to hunger, malnutrition, disease and illiteracy. The poor are not only economically deprived, but they are also politically powerless, socially discriminated against, and culturally disadvantaged.[11] Poverty is really dehumanizing, since it involves the denial or the limitation of human rights.[12] The pope unhesitatingly describes this as an unjust situation:

> One of the greatest injustices in the contemporary world consists precisely in this: that the ones who possess much are relatively few and those who possess almost nothing are many. It is the injustice of the poor distribution of the goods and services originally intended for all.[13]

Closely connected with poverty is growing unemployment in the world today. This is quite alarming in the countries of the Third World "with their high rate of population growth and their large numbers of young people." Even in the so-called developed countries employment opportunities are decreasing.[14] As John Paul II points out:

> As we view the whole human family throughout the world, we cannot fail to be struck by a disconcerting fact of immense proportion: the fact that while conspicuous natural resources remain unused there are huge numbers of people who are unemployed or underemployed and countless multitudes of people are suffering from hunger. This is a fact that, without any doubt, demonstrates that both within the individual political communities and in their relationships on the continental and world levels there is something wrong with the organization of work and employment, precisely at the most critical and socially most important points.[15]

Unemployment is more than an economic problem, since it brings with it "a series of negative consequences for individuals and for society, ranging from humiliation to the loss of that self-respect which every man and woman should have."[16]

On the global level, a matter of great concern is "the persistence and often the widening of the gap between the areas of the so-called developed North and the developing South."[17] In the Third World, "vast multitudes are still living in conditions of great material and moral poverty."[18] We are thus faced with a shocking situation in the world today. As the pope observes:

> Unfortunately, from the economic point of view, the developing countries are much more numerous than the developed ones; the multitudes of human beings who lack the goods and services offered by development are *much more numerous* than those who possess them. We are therefore faced with a serious problem of *unequal distribution* of the means of subsistence originally meant for everybody, and thus also an unequal distribution of the benefits deriving from them. And this happens not through the *fault* of the needy people, and even less through a sort of *inevitability* dependent on natural conditions or circumstances as a whole.[19]

John Paul II also calls our attention to the large-scale pollution of the environment and the ecological question it gives rise to.[20] The excessive and disordered use of the resources of the earth to satisfy a profit-oriented, consumerist culture has led to the senseless destruction of the natural environment. The nonrenewable resources of nature are being used up with no thought for the future. Ecological degradation has far-reaching consequences for the quality of life on this planet.

This is the way the pope describes the situation of the contemporary world. But how does he analyze the situation? What in his opinion are the underlying causes of this situation?

2.2 According to *Laborem Exercens*, the central conflict which causes poverty, oppression, alienation and dehumanization in our time is the conflict between capital and labour. John Paul II believes that in the industrial age, which is not yet completed, there is a conflict between "the small

but highly influential group of entrepreneurs, owners and holders of the means of production, and the broader multitude of people who lack these means and who share in the process of production solely by their labour."[21] This is true of all societies be they in the West, the East or the Third World. How did the conflict between capital and labour originate? This is the answer the pope gives:

> The conflict originated in the fact that the workers put their powers at the disposal of the entrepreneurs and these, following the principle of maximum profit, tried to establish the lowest possible wages for the work done by the employees. In addition there were other elements of exploitation connected with the lack of safety at work and of safeguards regarding the health and living conditions of the workers and their families.[22]

In order to understand the pope's analysis we need to examine how he views capital and labour. For him work defines a human being. As he points out:

> Only man is capable of work, and only man works, at the same time by work occupying his existence on earth. Thus, work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons. This mark decides its interior characteristics; in a sense it constitutes its very nature.[23]

For John Paul II work means "any human activity whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances." The pope's understanding of work is different from that of Karl Marx. In his commentary on *Laborem Exercens,* Gregory Baum observes:

> In the first place, the encyclical clearly indicates that labour does not refer principally to industrial labour as it tends to do in Marxist literature, but includes agricultural, clerical, scientific, service-oriented and intellectual work (nn. 1, 4). Work includes homemaking in the family, services offered to society on all levels, as well as the governmental and managerial skills involved in the organization of production and the moderation of society.[24]

The pope makes a distinction between work in the objective sense and work in the subjective sense.[25] The objective side of work refers to the product of labour, to what is achieved out there. It denotes the goods produced by labour, but "it also includes the means of production and the technology operative within it, as well as the entire societal structure with the many–layered services that keep production and society going."[26]

The subjective side of work is that it is the human person who works. A person expresses him/herself through work and so actualizes him/herself. Work is thus the expression, the extension, of the person. As Baum remarks:

> Because through work people constitute themselves as subjects of their own lives and collectively of their common history, the subjective side of work holds primacy over the objective side. What happens to the subject of work is more important than what this work produces.[27]

The preeminence of the subjective meaning of work over the objective one is a key idea of *Laborem Exercens.*

What is capital? Capital refers to the means of production, to the avail-

able raw materials, and the funds necessary to pay the workers and to expand technology. That is a superficial way of looking at capital. But if we examine it more deeply, we see that capital is "the result of the heritage of human labour." It is actually stored up labour. "However complex, gigantic and automated the means of production may be, it is labour and labour upon labour." Capital is labour that has become an instrument.[28]

It is such an understanding of labour and capital that leads the pope to assert the priority of labour over capital. It is the labouring people who are the subjects of production. Capital being a mere collection of things can never be the subject. It is only an instrument and has to serve labour.

All the evils of today can be traced back to the denial of the priority of labour over capital. Poverty and misery are

> . . . a result of the violation of the dignity of human work: either because the opportunities for human work are limited as a result of the scourge of unemployment or because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family.[29]

This is in fact a denial of the subjectivity of the labouring person and the labouring society.

Stan Lourdusamy has remarked that in *Laborem Exercens* the pope has failed to undertake a scientific analysis of society.[30] This, he feels, is a serious deficiency. I think that Lourdusamy is right in pointing out that the encyclical does not provide us with a scientific analysis of society. In fact, John Paul II does not believe that the Church has the competence to analyze society scientifically.[31] All the same, I wonder if Lourdusamy appreciates sufficiently the originality of the pope's personalistic approach to labour, capital and the relationship between the two.

2.3 According to *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,* the primary cause of poverty and underdevelopment in the world today is the existence of two opposing blocs, commonly known as the East and the West. As John Paul II observes:

> The opposition is first of all *political,* inasmuch as each bloc identifies itself with a system of organizing society and exercising power which presents itself as an alternative to the other. The political opposition, in turn, takes its origin from a deeper opposition which is *ideological* in nature.[32]

Whereas the Western system is inspired by the principles of liberal capitalism, the Eastern system is based on Marxist collectivism. Each of these ideologies has a different vision of the human person and human society and proposes and "promotes on the economic level antithetical forms of the organization of labour and the structures of ownership, especially with regard to the so-called means of production."[33] Because of the development of antagonistic systems and centres of power with different forms of propaganda, the ideological conflict has given rise to "two blocs of armed forces, each fearful and suspicious of the other's domination."[34]

What is worse is that this conflict has taken on a global character and has

affected the developing countries of the Third World. In the words of the pope:

> This opposition is transferred to the developing countries themselves, and thus helps to widen the gap already existing on the economic level between *North and South* and which results from the distance between the two *worlds*: the more developed one and the less developed one.[35]

This is the main cause of poverty and underdevelopment in the world. John Paul II also mentions two others. The first one is the immoral economic decisions of individuals which give rise to "structures of sin".[36] These structures are "the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins."[37] They are "linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove." These structures of sin which are at the root of poverty and injustice in the world are created by such human attitudes as "the all-consuming desire for profit" and "the thirst for power".[38]

The second one is cultural diversity. The differences of culture and value systems between various population groups seem to have retarded economic development and thus caused poverty and impoverishment in the world, especially in the countries of the Third World.[39]

John Paul II has been criticised for the way he understands the causes of poverty and misery in the world. Though the pope sets out to apply pope Paul's teaching in *Populorum Progressio* in "a fuller and more nuanced way", he appears to have failed in doing so. Mary E. Hobgood points out:

> This "traditionalist" pope has taken a noticeable departure from traditional or mainstream Catholic social teaching by ignoring structural criticisms concerning the causes of poverty, and by disregarding radical prescriptions of what might be done about poverty. Such structural criticisms and radical prescriptions, which may be aligned with a liberation social theory, are present not only in Paul's encyclical, but can be found consistently within the Catholic social justice tradition itself.[40]

This seems to be a valid criticism. It is true that the pope acknowledges the existence of "economic, financial and social mechanisms" that "function almost automatically" on behalf of the richer countries. However, these mechanisms are not thought to be inherent in the economic system itself, but are manipulated by individuals and "favour the interests of people manipulating them."[41] John Paul II's personalism probably prevents him from identifying the structural causes of poverty.

2.4 *Centesimus Annus* does not discuss in depth the causes of poverty and misery in the world. This is understandable, since the encyclical was written soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist regimes of East Europe. It deals extensively with the reasons for the failure of socialism and the new situation of need that has emerged in these countries. It also attempts to answer the question: can it perhaps be said that, after the failure of communism, capitalism should be the goal of these countries which are now

making efforts to rebuild their economy and society? Should capitalism be proposed as the only option available for the countries of the Third World?[42]

The pope does, however, deal with some of the causes of poverty and hunger in the developing countries of the Third World. He points out that the overall effect of the various policies of aid for development has not been positive.[43] He refers to the "unsolved problem of the foreign debt of poorer countries."[44] This is becoming an unbearable burden since it leads to poverty and hunger for entire peoples. The countries of the Third World find it difficult to gain *a fair access* to the international market, and this has impeded their development.[45] The investment policies of rich countries and multinational corporations are harmful to the developing countries. Finally, the pope speaks of neocolonialism which continues to exploit the developing countries even after they regained their independence. In his own words:

> Decisive sectors of the economy still remain *de facto* in the hands of large foreign companies which are unwilling to commit themselves to the long-term development of the host country. Political life itself is controlled by foreign powers . . .[46]

John Paul II also discusses alienation of various kinds that still exists in the so-called developed countries of the West as well the inhuman exploitation that is prevalent in the countries of the Third World.[47]

3 Critique of Capitalism

3.1 According to the pope, the basic error of capitalism is the denial of the priority of labour. This error originated in the *practice* of the early capitalists. As the pope explains:

> . . . it originated in the whole of the economic and social practice of that time, the time of the birth and rapid development of industrialization, in which what was mainly seen was the possibility of vastly increasing material wealth, means, while the end, that is to say man, who should be served by the means, was ignored. It was this practical error that struck a blow first and foremost against human labour, against the working man . . .[48]

From this practice there arose the *theory* of capitalism which is both "economistic" and materialistic.[49] The error of economism consists in "considering human labour solely according to its economic purpose", as an instrument of production, as a commodity which can be bought with no regard for the person of the worker. This is practical materialism. As John Paul II points out:

> This fundamental error of thought can and must be called an error of materialism, in that economism directly or indirectly includes a conviction of the primacy and superiority of the material, and directly or indirectly places the spiritual and the personal (man's activity, moral values and such matters) in a position of subordination to material reality.[50]

The pope also criticizes the capitalistic understanding of the right to private property and the free market. Like his predecessors, John Paul II defends the right to private ownership of the means of production. But he rejects the position of capitalism "that defends the exclusive right to private ownership of

the means of production as an untouchable 'dogma' of economic life."[51] Hence, this position of capitalism must "be reformed from the point of view of human rights, both human rights in the widest sense and those linked with man's work."[52]

John Paul II repeatedly maintains that the wealth of the world is meant for all human beings: "God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone. *This is the foundation of the universal destination of the earth's goods.*"[53]

From this point of view, ownership of the means of production can become illegitimate if it does not fulfil its primary function. That is why the pope declares:

> It becomes illegitimate, however, when it is not utilized or when it serves to impede the work of others, in an effort to gain profit which is not the result of the overall expansion of work and the wealth of society, but rather is the result of curbing them or of illicit exploitation, speculation or the breaking of solidarity among working people. Ownership of this kind has no justification, and represents an abuse in the sight of God and man.[54]

The pope's critique of the free market is quite nuanced. He believes that the free market is an "efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs."[55] And he is aware that countries which isolated themselves from the world market and tried to develop themselves have in fact "suffered stagnation and recession."[56] But if the free market is to be beneficial to all the members of the society, and not merely to the rich and the powerful, then it needs to be circumscribed by "a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality."[57] Hence, the pope "demands that the market be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and the State so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole society are satisfied." The State has the duty to safeguard the legitimate interests of the workers and to ensure that economic development benefits also the poor and other weaker sections of society.

In this context, the pope points out that "there are many human needs which find no place in the market." A human person is not just an economic unit. That is why John Paul II states:

> Even prior to the logic of a fair exchange of goods and the forms of justice appropriate to it, there exists *something which is due to man because he is man*, by reason of his lofty dignity. Inseparable from that required "something" is the possibility to survive and, at the same time, to make an active contribution to the common good of humanity.[58]

Finally, it must be pointed that John Paul II does not adopt the same attitude to all forms of capitalism. While he severely criticises the "unbridled capitalism" of the 18th and early 19th centuries, he is rather sympathetic to the "welfare capitalism" of the late 19th and the 20th centuries.[59] He calls for a further reform of the latter. However, he is quite wary of the "global capitalism" of our time. He is afraid that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist regimes of East Europe may

give rise to a radical capitalistic ideology "which refuses to deal with the grave human problems of poverty, marginalization and exploitation in the world, especially in the Third World."[60] The absence of effective international agencies to control and direct the economy to the common good of all and to prevent the further impoverishment of weaker nations will prove to be disastrous for the future of humanity.[61] In fact, John Paul II believes that hidden behind the decisions of the advocates of modern capitalism and imperialism are "real forms of idolatry: of money, ideology, class, technology."[62]

4. Critique of Socialism

What the pope criticises is not socialism in general, but the so-called "Real Socialism" which was adopted by the Soviet Union and the countries of East Europe.[63] It is their theory and practice that he vehemently objects to.

4.1 According to John Paul II, the fundamental error of socialism is anthropological in nature. It has a wrong understanding of the human person. As he points out:

> Socialism considers the individual person simply as an element, a molecule within the social organism, so that the good of the individual is completely subordinated to the functioning of the socio-economic mechanism. Socialism likewise maintains that the good of the individual can be realized without reference to his free choice, to the unique and exclusive responsibility, which he exercises in the face of good or evil. Man is thus reduced to a series of social relationships, and the concept of the person as the autonomous subject of moral decision disappears, the very subject whose decisions build the social order.[64]

If the freedom and dignity of the human person are not respected, there is no possibility of building an authentic human community.

4.2 The denial of the dignity of the person is ultimately caused by atheism. "The denial of God deprives the person of his foundation, and consequently leads to a reorganization of the social order without reference to the person's dignity and responsiblity."[65] A human person can realize the fullness of his/her humanity only by relating to God. It is only in such a relationship that he/she can become truly aware of his/her transcendent dignity. That is why "it is not possible to understand the human person on the basis of economics alone." By attempting to do this, socialism creates a spiritual void in people and deprives them of a sense of direction "in their irrepressible search for personal dignity and the meaning of life." [66] It ignores "the deep desire in every human heart for goodness, truth and life", a desire that can find fulfillment only in God.[67]

4.3 The pope also believes that the choice of class struggle as the means to usher in socialism is rooted in atheism.[68] Class struggle, in the Marxist sense, is founded on atheism and contempt for the human person. That is why it places "the principle of force above that of reason and law."[69] The pope's critique of class struggle is quite nuanced. He does not condemn every form of social conflict. As he says:

> The Church is well aware that in the course of history conflicts of interest between different social groups inevitably arise, and that in the face of such conflicts Christians must often take a position, honestly and decisively. The Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* moreover clearly recognized the positive role of conflict when it takes the form of a "struggle for social justice" *Quadragesimo Anno* had already stated that "if the class struggle abstains from enmities and mutual hatred, it gradually changes into an honest discussion of differences founded on a desire for justice."[70]

What the pope condemns in class struggle is "the idea that conflict is not restrained by ethical or juridical considerations, or by respect for the dignity of others."[71] In the pursuit of partisan interests, class struggle seeks to destroy whatever stands in its way. It transfers to the sphere of internal conflict between social groups the doctrine of "total war", which militarism applies to international relations. And this makes it impossible to search for a proper balance between the interests of various groups in society.[72]

4.4 The pope is against State ownership of the means of production, advocated by socialism. This leads to "excessive bureaucratic centralization, which makes the worker feel that he is just a cog in a huge machine moved from above, that he is for more reasons than one a mere production instrument rather than a true subject of work with an initiative of his own."[73] This is a violation of the principle of the priority of labour over capital, which John Paul II defends as a postulate of social morality. Any system that does not respect the subjectivity of the worker and the labouring society is not acceptable to him, because it deprives the workers of all responsibility and creativity in the process of production. It is significant that in the pope's opinion one of the causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist regimes of East Europe was "the inefficiency of the economic system, which is not to be considered simply as a technical problem, but rather as a consequence of the violation of human rights to private initiative, to ownership of property and to freedom in the economic sector."[74]

5. Towards a New Society: Values

5.1 Central to the pope's vision of a new society is the dignity of the human person. Created in the image of God and called to communion with him, the human person has a transcendent dignity. This is the basis of human rights. John Paul II has consistently championed these rights. Whatever be the concrete shape of society, it has to safeguard these rights. The pope lists the more basic rights:

> Among the most important of these rights, mention must be made of the right to life, an integral part of which is the right of the child to develop in the mother's womb from the moment of conception; the right to live in a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child's personality; the right to develop one's intelligence and freedom in seeking and knowing the truth; the right to share in the work which makes wise use of the earth's material resources, and to derive from that work the means to support oneself and one's dependents; and the right freely

> to establish a family, to have and to rear children through the responsible exercise of one's sexuality. In a certain sense, the source and synthesis of these rights is religious freedom, understood as the right to live in the truth of one's faith and in conformity with one's transcendent dignity as a person.[75]

5.2 The pope resonates with the contemporary quest for freedom and liberation. He believes that the aspiration to freedom from all forms of slavery affecting the individual and society is something noble and legitimate.[76] But human freedom is to be understood comprehensively. Economic freedom is only one element of human freedom. Its other dimensions – the sociocultural, the religious, the transcendent – are also to be fostered. "Human beings are totally free only when they are completely *themselves* in the fullness of their rights and duties."[77] This has implications for the organization of society. As the pope affirms:

> Where society is so organized as to reduce arbitrarily or even suppress the sphere in which freedom is legitimately exercised, the result is that the life of society becomes progressively disorganized and goes into decline.[78]

5.3 The pope is in favour of "the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of the citizens in making political decisions."[79] He is against "narrow ruling groups which usurp the power of the State for individual interests or for ideological ends."[80] He is aware that authentic democracy is possible only in a State ruled by law, and on the basis of a correct perception of the human person. Democracy without a commitment to ethical values can easily turn into totalitarianism. Hence, John Paul II points out:

> It requires that the necessary conditions be present for the advancement both of the individual through education and formation in true ideals, and of the "subjectivity" of society through the creation of structures of participation and shared responsibility.[81]

It is important to note that the pope advocates participation and shared responsibility in all aspects of civic life, especially in economic activity. Democracy in the workplace is one of his great concerns.

Besides, the health of the political community is necessary for the growth of human persons. In the words of the pope:

> For the "health" of a political community – as expressed in the free and responsible participation of all citizens in public affairs, in the rule of law and in respect for and promotion of human rights – is the *necessary condition and sure guarantee* of the development of "the whole individual and of all people."[82]

5.4 John Paul II stands for a society which facilitates the full flowering of the human on this planet. That is why he rejects the consumer society which is concerned only with the satisfaction of material human needs. By denying any value to morality, law, culture and religion, it reduces the human person to the sphere of economics and the satisfaction of material needs. The pope stresses the importance of "being" rather than "having". As he points out:

> To "have" objects and goods does not in itself perfect the human subject, unless it contributes to the maturing and enrichment of that subject's "being", that is to say unless it contributes to the realization of the human vocation as such.[83]

The pope pleads for the creation of lifestyles "in which the quest for truth, beauty goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth" is fostered.[84] He also advocates the adoption of eco-friendly attitudes. He stands for ecological solidarity. Humans have to learn to respect all created things – animals, plants and the natural elements.[85] John Paul II is happy to note that the awareness is growing among people today "of the need to respect the integrity and cycles of nature and to take them into account when planning for development."[86]

6. Towards a New Society: Principles

In his social encyclicals, John Paul II has enunciated the principles for the organization of the new society. We shall briefly discuss them here.

6.1 Principle of Solidarity

Solidarity is the correct moral response to the experience of interdependence.[87] Today we live in a world where interdependence is a reality. We live within a system that determines how we relate to each other in the economic, political, cultural and religious spheres. As a result, there is growing awareness of a radical interdependence, a realization that people all over the world are "linked together by a common destiny."[88] And this awareness is convincing people "of the need for a solidarity which will take up interdependence and transfer it to a moral plane."[89]

The pope makes it clear that solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people today. As he says:

> On the contrary, it is *a firm and persevering determination* to commit oneself to the *common good;* that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are *all* really responsible *for all*. This determination is based on the *solid* conviction that what is hindering full development is that desire for profit and that thirst for power already mentioned. These attitudes and "structures of sin" are only conquered – presupposing the help of divine grace – by a *diametrically opposed attitude*: a commitment to the good of one's neighbour with the readiness, in the Gospel sense, to "lose oneself" for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to "serve him" instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage (cf. Mt. 10: 40-42; 20:25; Mk. 10:42-45; Lk. 22: 25-27).[90]

First of all, the principle of solidarity applies to relationship within each country. As the pope points out:

> Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and common services, should feel *responsible* for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess. Those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of *solidarity*, should not adopt a purely *passive* attitude or one that is *destructive* of the social fabric, but, while claiming their legitimate rights, should do what they can for the good of all. The

> intermediate groups, in their turn, should not selfishly insist on their particular interests, but respect the interests of others.[91]

Donal Dorr finds this recommendation of the pope somewhat bland. In his opinion, "it could have benefited from a social analysis that would take more seriously the causes of the class structure of society."[92] There is also need to examine how tensions between the classes can be lessened. In any case, there is no justification for the existence of pockets of affluence in the midst of widespread poverty and misery.

The principle of solidarity has implications for the international community. There is no place for domination, oppression and exploitation in the relations between nations. As John Paul declares:

> Surmounting every type of *imperialism* and determination to preserve their own *hegemony*, the stronger and richer nations must have a sense of moral *responsibility* for the other nations, so that a real *international system* may be established which will rest on the foundation of the *equality* of all peoples and on the necessary respect for their legitimate difference. The economically weaker countries, or those still at subsistence level, must be enabled, with the assistance of other peoples and of the international community, to make a contribution of their own to the common good with their treasures of *humanity* and *culture*, which otherwise would be lost for ever.[93]

Besides, the existence of different worlds within our *one world* – the First World, the Second World, the Third World and the Fourth World – is a negation of the unity of the world, the unity of the human race. This goes against the spirit of solidarity.[94]

6.2 Principle of Subsidiarity

Basing himself on Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*, John Paul II states:

> A community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.[95]

The principle of subsidiarity is basically a principle of decentralisation. It is meant to safeguard the freedom and autonomy of individuals, families and various groups and associations which make up society. The pope is concerned about making space for the initiative and creativity of individuals and smaller units of society within their sphere of activity. This is in keeping with his understanding of the subjectivity of labour and the labouring society.

The principle of subsidiarity helps to define and delimit the role of the State. As the pope points out:

> According to *Rerum Novarum* and the whole social doctrine of the Church, the social nature of man is not completely fulfilled in the State, but is realized in various intermediary groups, beginning with the family and including economic, social, political and cultural groups which stem from human nature itself and have their own autonomy, always with a view to the common good.[96]

Applying this general principle to economic life, John Paul II asserts that the State "has the task of determining the juridical framework within which economic affairs are to be conducted, and thus of safeguarding the prerequisites of a free economy."[97] This means that the State has to make room for the free exercise of economic activity. As the pope puts it:

> Rather, the State has a duty to sustain business activities by creating conditions which will ensure job opportunities, by stimulating those activities where they are lacking or by supporting them in moments of crisis.[98]

Besides, it is the responsibility of the State to defend the weaker sections of society, to ensure a just wage and humane working conditions for the workers, to provide the necessary minimum support for the unemployed and to place certain limits on the autonomy of the employers, when it is necessary for the promotion of the common good.[99]

6.3 Principle of Pluralism

Diversity of language, culture, religion and so on is part of the life of a nation. The principle of pluralism demands that the identity of each group and community be respected.[100] Conditions must be created for the preservation and promotion of their cultural and religious heritage. Each group or community should be enabled to make its own unique contribution to the welfare of the whole society. In this connection, John Paul II calls attention to the danger of fanaticism or fundamentalism of "those who, in the name of an ideology which purports to be scientific or religious, claim the right to impose on others their own concept of what is true and good."[101]

The principle of pluralism is also relevant to the international community. As the pope observes:

> *Peoples or nations* too have a right to their own full development, which while including –as already said – the economic and social aspects should also include individual cultural identity and openness to the transcendent. Not even the need for development can be used as an excuse for imposing on others one's own way of life or religious belief.[102]

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank tend to impose a Western model of development on countries which have radically different cultures. This is not acceptable. "What the pope proposes here is a community of peoples, each with its own unique culture."[103] Besides, in this age of globalization cultural imperialism is growing.[104] Well-planned efforts are being made today to create a uniform, consumerist culture in the developing countries of the Third World.[105] This is a violation of the principle of pluralism.

6.4 Social Ownership of the Means of Production

It cannot be affirmed with certainty that John Paul II stands for the "socialization" of the means of production. But I am inclined to believe that his vision of the future society includes such socialization.

It is true that like his predecessors the pope upholds the right to private property. In fact, he asserts that this

right "which is fundamental for the autonomy and development of the person, has always been defended by the Church up to our own day."[106] It is doubtful whether the arguments put forward to defend *the right to private property* are sufficient to justify *the private ownership of the means of production*. It is significant that John Paul II quotes with approval the following statement of Vatican II:

> Private property or some ownership of external goods affords each person the scope needed for personal and family autonomy, and should be regarded as an extension of human freedom . . . Of its nature private property also has a social function which is based on the law of the common purpose of goods (*GS* 71).[107]

The pope points out that the right to private ownership of the means of production is not an untouchable 'dogma' of economic life. For "The right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use, for the goods are meant for everyone."[108] This has been constantly taught by the Church. John Paul II explains the basis of this teaching: "God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone. This is *the foundation of the universal destination of the earth's goods*."[109] That is why "Christian tradition has never upheld this right (to private ownership) as absolute and untouchable."[110]

John Paul II approves of the proposals for making workers sharers in the ownership and management of the means of production:

> In the light of the above, the many proposals put forward by experts in Catholic social teaching and by the highest magisterium of the Church take on special significance: proposals for joint ownership of the means of work, sharing by the workers in the management and/or profits of business, so-called shareholding by labour, etc. Whether these various proposals can or cannot be applied concretely, it is clear that recognition of the proper position of labour and the worker in the production process demands various adaptations in the sphere of the right to ownership of the means of production.[111]

In fact, the pope goes a step further. He advocates the socialization of the ownership of the means of production. This is very different from the State ownership of those means, which is equivalent to State capitalism. This is the way he explains his idea of socialization:

> We can speak of socializing only when the subject character of society is ensured, that is to say, when on the basis of his work each person is fully entitled to consider himself a part-owner of the great workbench at which he is working with everyone else. A way toward that goal could be found by associating labour with the ownership of capital, as far as possible, and by producing a wide range of intermediate bodies with economic, social and cultural purposes. They would be bodies enjoying real autonomy with regard to the public powers, pursuing their specific aims in honest collaboration with each other and in subordination to the demands of the common good, and they would be living communities both in form and in substance in the sense that the

members of each body would be looked upon and treated as persons encouraged to take an active part in the life of the body.[112]

What John Paul II stands for is the ownership of the means of production by various intermediate bodies which enjoy real autonomy with regard to the state. This is necessary because of the subjectivity of labour. It enables the worker to feel that in his/her work he/she is working for him/herself.[113] This demands that he/she be part-owner of the means of production.

No wonder, then, that Gregory Baum speaks of "pope John Paul II's Socialism".[114] He believes that the kind of economic system and social order promoted by the pope, especially in *Laborem Exercens*, is "a form of socialism, one in which the subject character of society is safeguarded."[115]

6.5 Principle of Planning

John Paul II is quite convinced of the need for a systematic planning of the entire life of society, especially the economic life. This is all the more important because of growing unemployment in the world today. As he states:

> In order to meet the danger of unemployment and to ensure employment for all, the agents defined here as "indirect employer" must make provisions for overall planning with regard to the different kinds of work by which not only the economic life but also the cultural life of a given society is shaped; they also must give attention to organizing that work in a correct and rational way. In the final analysis this overall concern weighs on the shoulders of the state but it cannot mean one-sided centralization by the public authorities. Instead, what is in question is a just and rational coordination within the framework of which the initiative of individuals, free groups and local work centres and complexes must be safeguarded, keeping in mind what has been said above with regard to the subject character of human labour.[116]

In the context of the growing interdependence among the countries of the world today, John Paul II pleads for international collaboration in the process of planning economic life to ensure a just and adequate development for all.[117]

7. Practical Steps

From among the different concrete proposals the pope puts forward, I shall highlight just two.

7.1 Movements of Solidarity

In *Laborem Exercens*, the pope encourages labour movements aimed at the betterment of the condition of the workers and the removal of poverty and misery. He calls "for ever new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers." And he goes on to add:

> This solidarity must be present whenever it is called for by the social degrading of the workers and by the growing areas of poverty and even hunger. The Church is firmly committed to this cause and considers it its mission, its service, a proof of its fidelity to Christ, so that it can truly be the "Church of the poor".[118]

And in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, he is happy about the growing solidarity

among the poor and their efforts to vindicate their rights:

> Positive signs in the contemporary world are the *growing awareness* of the solidarity of the poor among themselves, their *efforts to support one another*, and their *public demonstrations* on the social scene which, without recourse to violence, present their own needs and rights in the face of the inefficiency or corruption of the public authorities. By virtue of her own evangelical duty the Church feels called to take her stand beside the poor, to discern the justice of their requests, and to help satisfy them, without losing sight of the good of groups in the context of the common good.[119]

The Organised, but nonviolent, struggle of the poor and the oppressed for justice is a step towards the new society.

7.2 Interreligious Collaboration

Faced with a world of poverty and hunger, of injustice and oppression, the followers of all religions should collaborate in a common effort to eradicate poverty and misery and to establish justice and peace. For "the establishment of peace and, as its necessary condition, the development of the whole person and of all peoples, are also *a matter of religion*."[120] In fact, the pope feels that all people of good will, even those without an explicit faith, can cooperate in this common venture.

John Paul II is convinced that "the various religions, now and in the future, will have a preeminent role in preserving peace and in building a society worthy of man."[121] This is particularly relevant to us in the multireligious context of India.

Now to conclude: Inspired as John Paul II is by the Christian faith, he is filled with hope that the struggle for the creation of a new and just society will end in success. As he declares:

> The goal of peace, so desired by everyone, will certainly be achieved through the putting into effect of social and international justice, but also through the practice of the virtues which favour togetherness, and which teach us to live in unity, so as to build in unity, by giving and receiving, a new society and a better world.[122]

Notes

1. Their main documents are: Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 1891; Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931; John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 1961; John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 1963.
2. John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (hereafter *LE*), 1981, 2. It is to be noted that the pope does not always use bias-free language. He speaks of 'man' instead of "human beings".
3. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (hereafter *CA*), 5.
4. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (hereafter *SRS*), 8.
5. *LE* 2.
6. *CA* 3,5.
7. *S*The Pope's Vision of a New SocietyThe Pope's Vision of a New Society*RS* 41.

8. *CA* 43.
9. *LE* 1.
10. *SRS* 13.
11. *SRS*15, 42; *SA* 33.
12. Ibid.
13. *SRS* 28.
14. *SRS*18.
15. *LE*18.
16. *SRS*18.
17 *SRS*14.
18. *SA* 42.
19. *SRS* 9.
20. *SA* 37.
21. *LE* 11.
22. Ibid.
23. *LE* 1.
24. G. Baum, *The Priority of Labour: A Commentary on Laborem Exercens*, New York: Paulist Press, 1982, p. 13.
25. *LE* 5,6.
26. G. Baum, *Op. Cit.*, p. 13.
27. Ibid., p. 14.
28. *LE* 12.
29. *LE* 8.
30. S. Lourdusamy, "Pope John Paul's Letter on Human Work" *Jeevadhara*, 13 (May 1983) 75, p. 217.
31. *LE* 1.
32. *SRS* 20.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. *SRS* 21.
36. *SRS* 36.
37. John Paul, *Reconciliatio et Poenitentia*, 1984, 16.
38. *SRS* 36.
39. *SRS* 14.
40. M.E. Hobgood, "Conflicting Paradigms in Social Analysis", in G. Baum and R. Ellsberg (eds.), *The Logic of Solidarity*, New York: Orbis, 1989, p. 168.
41. *SRS* 16.
42. See *CA* 42.
43. See CA 21.
44. *CA* 35.
45. See *CA* 33.
46. *CA* 20.

47. See *CA* 41, 33.
48. *LE* 13.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. *LE* 14.
52. Ibid.
53. *CA* 31.
54. *CA* 43.
55. *CA* 34.
56. *CA* 33.
57. *CA* 42.
58. *CA* 34.
59. See *CA* 42, 8; *LE* 14.
60. See *CA* 42.
61. *CA* 58.
62. *SRS* 37.
63. *CA* 13.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. *CA* 24.
67. Ibid.
68. CA 14.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. *LE* 15.
74. *CA* 24.
75. *CA* 47.
76. *SRS* 46.
77. Ibid.
78. *CA* 25.
79. *CA* 46.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
82. *SRS* 44.
83. *SRS* 28; *CA* 36.
84. *CA* 36.
85. *SRS* 34; *CA* 37.
86. *SRS* 26.
87. *SRS* 38.

88. *SRS* 26.
89. Ibid.
90. *SRS* 38.
91. *SRS* 39.
92. D. Dorr, "Solidarity and Integral Human Development", in G. Baum and R. Ellsberg (eds.), *The Logic of Solidarity*, p. 149.
93. *SRS* 39.
94. *SRS* 14.
95. *CA* 48.
96. *CA* 14.
97. *CA* 15.
98. *CA* 48.
99. *CA* 15; *LE* 16-20.
100. SRS 14.
101. *CA* 46.
102. *SRS* 32
103. D. Dorr, "Solidarity and Integral Human Development", p. 150.
104. J. Petras, "Cultural Imperialism in Late 20th Century", in EPW 1994, p. 2070.
105. See K.N. Panikkar, "Culture and Globalisation", in EPW 1995, p. 374.
106. *CA* 30.
107. Ibid.
108. *LE* 14.
109. *CA* 30.
110. *LE* 14.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
113. *LE* 15; *SRS* 13.
114. G. Baum, *Priority of Labour*, p. 80.
115. Ibid.
116. *LE* 18.
117. Ibid.
118. *LE* 8.
119. *SRS* 39.
120. *SRS* 47.
121. *CA* 60.
122. *SRS* 39.

Book Reviews

Mission Today: Challenges and Concerns. *Abraham P. Athyal & Dorothy Yoder Nyce, (eds.)* Chennai: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute, 1998, pp. viii, 230, RS. 100 ($ 10).

This book is a collection of articles put together as an expression of the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute's search to facilitate the Indian Church in its task of Christian witness. It is the first publication of the College's newly established Department of Mission, Ecumenism and Dialogue. It deals with the basic challenges and concerns relating to mission in the Indian context.

The book consists of 14 articles arranged in three parts. Part 1 has four articles centred on Church in God's Mission: These are: "Church-in-Mission Facing Contemporary Challenges" by David Udayakumar; "Crisis of Pastoral Ministry and Search for Holistic Spirituality" by K.C. Abraham; "Church: An Obstacle to God's Mission?" by Leelamma Athyal and "Mission and Ecumenical Vision" by P. Victor Premasagar. The thrust of Part 1 is that the Church has no mission independent of God's mission. Hence, the Church must be open to renewal according to Jesus' vision of the Kingdom. There is no mission of creating a spiritual world isolated from the daily struggles of life.

Part 2 has five articles and deals with the multifaith context of mission and the need for dialogue. These are: "Missionary Research of Tamil Bhakti Religions of the Eighteenth Century" by Daniel Jeyaraj; "Dialogue-in-Praxis" by Ravi Tiwari; "Interreligious Dialogue: Our Privilege and Responsibility" by Dorothy Yoder Nyce; "Mission in a Multi-Faith Context" by Monica J. Melanchthon and "God, the Gospel and Human Truth" by Charles C. West. The developments in the country since independence and in Missiology as a whole have brought about a fresh understanding of dialogue. In this the Church's preoccupation must be to build a new community based on mutual trust and fellowship. All religions are committed to life and this must be an incentive for the Church to collaborate with all religions.

Part 3 is entitled Spirituality for Mission and has five articles: "Prophetic Insights for Contemporary Mission" by M. Mani Chacko; "Jesus of History: Insights into His Liberative Mission" by Abraham P. Athyal; "A Relevant Spirituality for Mission Today" by Vinita Manchala; "Mission Experiences in Urban Industrial Contexts" by Paul Siromony and "Mission Priorities Today" by Jesudas Athyal. The authors argue for the need to evolve a new spirituality characterized by prophetic courage and faith in God's presence and activity in history. Jesus' own mission must serve as a paradigm for a liberative spirituality.

As such the unifying element of the book is its search to provide a biblical and theological basis for the Church's engagement in God's mission. Individual articles will reward the reader who is interested in the topics. Frankly, some are shallow while others are stimulating, like "Jesus of History: Insights into His Liberative Mission". Care could have been taken to give the correct names of the authors in references and to avoid certain printing mistakes.

Jacob Kavunkal, SVD

Hindu Thought and Carmelite Mysticism. *Swami Siddheshwarananda, Tr.* William Buchanan, Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, Delhi, 1998, pp. xvi + 172 Original Title: *Presee Indienne et Mystique Carmelitaine*

This book is a collection of lectures delivered by Swami Siddheswarananda in different parts of France some fifty years ago. The author passed away in 1957. But the book has not lost its freshness in the contemporary search for comparative studies of the varieties of religious experience and interreligious dialogue, especially theological reflection.

The purpose of these lectures, according to the author, is to bring out some points of agreement between Christian mysticism, particularly Carmelite, and Hindu thought. The author does not make any claim to be definitive, but aims to offer some degree of comparison of these two currents of religious thought (p. 1), especially on three points, namely, prayer (the discipline of purification), the gift of self to God accompanied by suffering, and union with God.

In the lives of great mystics, the author sees a kind of spiritual realization which transcends the barriers of religion and makes all humans brothers and sisters in the outpouring of human compassion. A careful study of the writings of St Thresa of Avila, St John of the Cross, St Thresa of the Child Jesus and Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity reveals to Swami Siddheswarananda a genuine kinship with Hindu mysticism.

The first two chapters of this book prepare the ground for diving deep into the remaining four chapters which are devoted to a penetrating search for parallels between the *Yoga*, so the author names it, of St. John of the Cross and Hindu mysticism. The specific focus of comparison is on the writings of St. John of the Cross under four characteristic subtitles: "The Study of *Yoga* in St John of the Cross", "*Bhakti Yoga* and St John of the Cross", "The *Yoga* of St John of the Cross and the Theological roots of Faith", and "The *Raja-Yoga* of St John of the Cross". The author establishes that there are similarities and differences between the *Yoga* of St John of the Cross and the classical *Raja-Yoga* of India, but the presentation follows an order which reverses the traditional one.

The author starts with the premise that the similarities and parallels are not to be found in doctrines and theological interpretations but in the psychological content of their experience. It is true that we can note similarities in the transformation of character. All the truly great mystics abided in love; they saw the world and directed themselves towards it in a manner totally different from the rest of us. In the process of comparing, the author is fair and does not take the best of his tradition to oppose the worst in the other without at the same time implying *'All that is the same thing'*(p. 117). The language is respectful. There is a mystical touch in the way he engages in comparisons, and that is perhaps what adds to the freshness of the content.

As the different chapters were originally lectures, one need not look for a scientific research style in the book. It is not clear whether the author had in mind any conceptual difference between *'thought'* and *'mysticism'*. In the lectures, it would seem that these two words are used interchangeably. "In Christian thought, the highest state one can attain consists in betrothal and spiritual marriage, . . ." (p. 23). While it is true that Carmelite mysticism is Christian, Christian mysticism cannot be identified with the

Carmelite mystical experience which is but one of its expressions. To restrict *askesis* to the practice associated with the life of monks or others who live in monasteries (p. 22) is to overlook its wider perspective which is applicable to all others who are outside the stream of monastic spirituality. In the same vein, to see the way of the beatitudes as reserved for rare souls (the author quotes Mt. 10:38-39) in this connection, p. 32) is to restrict the universal significance of Christ's call to his disciples to respond creatively to the way of reunification and holiness. Since the Second Vatican Council, the attitude of the Catholic Church towards other religions has changed radically from what it was when these lectures were given. So the author's observations and comments on conversion, Christianizing, paganizing etc. (pp. 100-101) have to be read discerningly. At times, one gets the impression that the comparison is rather diffuse and not sufficiently pointed.

William Buchanan deserves to be congratulated on this highly readable translation and making it accessible to the English-speaking audience. He has provided a select glossary of Sanskrit words used by the author. The special feature on *Notes on Persons and Books,* also by the translator, is indeed a thoughtful gesture which helps the reader to enter into the mystical universe of the exemplary work of Swami Siddheswarananda.

Varghese Malpan, SJ

jnanadeepa

Pune Journal of Religious Studies

The fourth issue of this journal will appear in July 1999. The theme of the issue is: The Contemporary Quest for Freedom and Liberation.

The quest for freedom and liberation is manifested in a variety of ways in different traditions and by different groups. The next issue of the journal will deal with it from an interdisciplinary perspective.