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Editorial

In 2007 we celebrated the death centenary of Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, a great patriot and a remarkable Christian. He was both a nationalist who worked for the total independence of India and a Christian thinker who dreamed of a Church which is truly Indian and genuinely Christian. This issue of Jnanadeepa is dedicated to the memory of this great son of the country and the Church.

There are three articles in the issue which deal with the thought of Upadhyaya. The first discusses his thesis that the Trinity is sat-chit-ananda. The author of the article denies the contention of critics that Upadhyaya's theology is largely neo-Thomism in Sanskritic disguise. Upadhyaya is of the view that the Vedanta conception of God and the Christian doctrine of God are the same. And he holds that Saccidananda is the Trinity. Hence it is possible for us to bring out new insights on the mystery of the Trinity from the Vedanta doctrine of Saccidananda. The second discusses Upadhyaya's vision of an Indian Christian Church. Upadhyaya feared that Christianity would remain a foreign cult and a religion repulsive to the people if it did not insert itself into the Indian mainstream. He was convinced that the Catholic Church, in order to gain acceptance in India, should strip itself of all that is European. It is the foreign clothes of the Catholic faith that have prevented Indians from perceiving its universal nature. Upadhyaya believed that we should all be Hindu-Catholics. The third deals with Upadhyaya's nationalist thought. An important factor in the development of his nationalism has to do with Hindu identity. Hindu identity is intrinsically related to national identity in the nationalist perspective of Upadhyaya. For him Hinduism is not a religion like Christianity, but rather a cultural ethos, a philosophy and a way of life. In opposition to British colonialism which seemed to lead to the disintegration of several aspects of Indian culture and identity, Upadhyaya sought to create a national identity based on a common Hindu heritage. Undoubtedly there are many elements of his nationalist thought which are open to criticism.

Included in this issue are four articles which seek to further Upadhyaya's theology and develop Indian Christian thought on life and reality. The first discusses Indian Christian approaches to theologizing. Generally speaking, there are two main orientations in contemporary theological discourse in India today: a socio-cultural orientation and a socio-political orientation. Both these streams are based on the constitutive dimension of Indian reality: poverty and religiosity. Both of them suffer from some serious deficiencies. In this article, the author endeavours to articulate the contours of an Indian theology from the perspective of the Mukkuva community inhabiting in South-Western coast of India. In doing this, he takes into account the latent dimensions of the religiosity of the people as well as their world-view. The second deals with an Indian Christian approach to Christology. The problem with Christology has always been that of confusing the identification of Jesus Christ with his identity. We may have to give up some of his identifications, which are culturally conditioned, in order that people may encounter his identity and be transformed. And nowhere does the identity of Jesus Christ become so universally felt and his inclusive transcendence become so real as in the struggle of the suffering millions of the subcontinent for a fuller life, for unfolding their God-given humanity. The third seeks to develop some Indian Christian perspectives on the sacraments. The author of the article contends that in perspectives that are truly Indian and authentically Christian sacramentality points to a way of life rather than a cultic action by itself. The sacred is so dispersed throughout the secular that a person rarely finds it possible to ignore one or the other. In fact, people are called to sense God's presence in both. The fourth deals with Indian Christian perspectives on spirituality. After pointing out the benefits and perils of spirituality, the author discusses the concerns of the 'spiritual' and the 'bodily'. To keep the balance between the concerns of both is a precarious task. Vigilance over any unilateral development can keep the balance. Understanding of spirituality in terms of moral force, soul force, seems to offer such a balance.

There are two articles included in this issue which are not directly related to its theme. The first deals with Christians and art. It contends that to be a Christian is to be an artist. If revelation in Christ and the response in faith to God constitutes the Christian existence, then one can speak of the artist-Christian. The second discusses the topic: Catholic colleges and social transformation. There is a serious problem

connected with the underlying assumption that education can transform society. As a subsystem of society education is subordinated to and largely conditioned by the socio-economic forces in society. All the same, it does possess a certain autonomy which, if actualized can lead to real changes in society.

Included in this issue is a review article on Philip Jenkin's book, *The Next Christendom*. The main contention of the author is: The era of Western Christianity has passed and the day of Southern Christianity has dawned. "Southern churches" or "South" are used to comprise the tri-continental countries of Latin America, Africa south of the Sahara, Oceania and Asia.

It is our hope that the articles published in this issue will encourage the readers to contribute to the progress of Indian Christian thought, and thus facilitate the emergence of a church which is truly Indian and genuinely Christian.

Kurien Kunnumpuram SJ
Editor

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Trinity as Sat-Chit-Ananda in the Thought of the Indian Theologian Brahmabandav Upadhyaya

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Abstract: Many authors, including Julius Lipner, holds that Upadhyaya was interpreting Sat-Chit-Ananda and Maya of Advaita Vedanta in terms of the neo-Thomism of the day and therefore his originality in these matters was only limited for an Indian Christian theology. Taking a drastically different approach, our author studies Upadhyaya's interpretation of Trinity as Sat-Chit-Ananda. First he traces the insights of authors like Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-1884), J. Monchanin (1895-1957), Swami Abhishiktananda (1910-1973), Bede Griffiths and Vandana Mataji. Keshub Chunder Sen is important because sixteen years before Upadhyaya, in 1882, he was the first one to interpret the Trinity as Saccidananda. For Sen Trinity was only a symbol and the three members of the symbol, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were just pointing to the reality of God in different ways; the three members do not represent three persons sharing the same essence but they are just three functions of the same person. Moreover, Sen gives only a very brief account of Trinity as Sat-Chit-Ananda. The author affirms that iIf Upadhyaya's Saccidananda represented God in Himself as unrelated alone, for Abhishiktananda the concept signified the inseparable aspects of the mystery of God in Himself/Herself as well as the mystery of the divine presence in the innermost sanctuary of a person's being. Abhishiktananda at least outwardly believed that the Hindu experience of Saccidananda should be remoulded to attain the Christian experience of Saccidananda and once that is actualized, the renewed experience of Saccidananda would

be the Trinitarian culmination of advaitic experience. According to our author, the uniqueness of Upadhyaya's interpretation of Trinity as Saccidananda lies in showing the fact that they both are exactly the same.

Keywords: Trinity, Sat-Chit-Ananda, Keshub Chunder Sen. J. Monchanin, Swami Abhishiktananda,Bede Griffiths, Vandana Mataji.

The Context

It is ironical that after so many years of study of Brahmabandav Upadhyaya a professor of the stature of Julius Lipner concludes that Upadhyaya was interpreting Sat-Chit-Ananda and Maya of Advaita Vedanta in terms of the neo-Thomism of the day and therefore his originality in these matters was only limited for an Indian Christian theology.[1] According to Lipner the theological conclusions of Upadhyaya "are largely neo-Thomism in Sanskritic disguise".[2] Upadhyaya's interpretation was a straightforward fulfilment theology.[3] In his scheme of theology, says Lipner,

> Catholic Theology *completes* Advaitic theology.... Revealed truth in their existing Western-Catholic formulation simply needed to be superadded to a receptive corpus pre-interpreted as crypto-Thomistic. This leaves very little room indeed for an original formulation of the Catholic faith in terms of indigenous tradition.[4]

The non-Roman Catholic scholars are in the same boat in such negative projections of the theological contributions of Upadhyaya. Robin Boyd notes:

> Brahmabandhav is not a Hindu drawing an interesting parallel between Saccidananda and the Trinity. Rather, having come himself to know God in Christ, his own personal experience of God is triune, and he finds the Vedantic teaching fulfilled here in a more meaningful way even than in Sankara. And so, for the benefit of his countrymen, he is led to explain the mystery of the Godhead, the real meaning of Brahman, in terms of the Trinitarian Saccidananda.[5]

Even Kaj Baago is of the opinion that Upadhyaya presents the doctrine of the Trinity as "the solution to the problem of how Brahman is to be known"[6] If that is the state of affairs, we in this paper are

making an attempt to bring out the positive theological contributions of Brahmabandav Upadhyaya.

What we have discovered is this: In Upadhyaya's view, the Vedanta conception of God and that of Christian belief are exactly the same, and Maya of Advaita Vedanta is the best available concept to explain the doctrine of creation. Though he is honestly actualizing his primary assumption that the function of Vedanta is to supply a new garb to an already formulated Christian theology, Upadhyaya does not reinterpret either of the Vedantic concepts Saccidananda and Maya to serve as the explanation of a ready made Christian theology. Rather he shows that Saccidananda is the Trinity and Maya expresses the meaning of the doctrine of creation in a far better way than the Latin root *creare*. This indeed is a valuable contribution. From such a conclusion the way ahead for us is clear. It is possible for us to bring out new insights on the mysteries of Trinity and Creation from the Vedanta doctrines of Saccidananda and Maya. This position is entirely different from putting already formulated doctrines of Trinity and Creation in Vedantic terms. Here Vedanta receives authority to formulate an understanding of Trinity in terms of Saccidananda, of Christ in terms of Chit and of Creation in terms of Maya. Of course Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya has not explicitly proclaimed so. But he has indicated to us the way forward. In as much as he was the first to indicate such a way, as early as 1898, he is truly the Father of Indian theology.

Here in Upadhyaya's thought, we are invited to a theological position that goes beyond Inculturation. Inculturation goes against the Indian vision of integral relation between religion and culture. It separates religion and culture and then tries to take in some cultural aspects, after Christianizing these. Both Aloysius Pieris and Raimundo Panikkar have pointed out that separation of religion from culture does not make sense in Asian society. In Christian triumphalism if inculturation means the insertion of 'the Christian religion minus European culture' into an 'Asian culture minus non-Christian religion', that is an impossibility. Cultural incursions have religious consequences. Foe example if Christians use Om or Gayatri, they are participating in the Hindu religious experience related to these in a profound way. In Asia what is needed is not just inculturation but enreligionization.[7] It is to such a

vision that the theological contributions of Brahmababdhav Upadhyaya[8] inspire us. We are encouraged to participate in the Vedantic religious experience related to the theological concepts Sat-Chit-Ananda and Maya. What happens here is, Vedanta fulfills Christian faith and not the other way round as Lipner and Boyd thought.

Trinity as Sat-Chit-Ananda

Sat-Chit-Ananda in Sankara's Writings

It is the Upanishads and Sankara's writings, which Upadhyaya takes as the basis for his explanation of what Sat-Chit-Ananda is. First let us see what, according to Upadhyaya, is the position of this concept in Sankara's Advaita. In Sankara's Advaita, Sat-Chit-Ananda points to the Supreme Being Brahman. Brahman is Sat (Positive Being), Chit (Intelligence), Ananda (Bliss).

Referring to Sankara's Brahma Sutra Bhasya 2.3.18 and 1.1.12 Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya points out that Sankara held the conception of Brahman as Sat-Chit-Anandam. To quote:

> In refutation of the Vaiseshik doctrine that God is potential knowledge, Sankara says: *Parasya hi Brahmanah chaitanya-svarupatyam amnatam* (that Parabrahman is essential knowledge-*chaitanyam*-is spoken of in the Upanishads). He quotes many texts from them against the theory that the Supreme Being attains consciousness (vide Bhashya-Vedanta Darsanam, 2.3.18). In his explanation of the Vedanta Sutra "*anandamayah abhyasat*"(1.1.12) Sankara says: *para eva atma anandamaya bhavitum arhati* (Parabrahman is anandam).[9]

In Sankara's Advaita the Supreme Being is called Sat-Chit-Ananda as well as Nirguna. Both these terms point to Brahman in Himself/ Herself, Brahman as unrelated, and there is no contradiction in meaning between them. Upadhyaya warns that a student of Advaita should be very careful not to misunderstand the term Nirguna. One should not at once conclude from the use of this term that the God of the Vedanta is an impersonal, abstract, unconscious Being. According to Upadhyaya, "Nirgunam means that the attributes which relate the Infinite to the finite are not necessary to His being. For example, Creatorhood is not an intrinsic attribute of the Divine Nature".[10] Brahman is said to be Nirgunam in the sense that He/She

possesses no external attributes, no necessary correlation with any being other than His/Her Infinite Self.[11] The conception of Brahman as Nirguna is not contradictory to the conception of Him/Her as Sat-Chit-Ananda because the meaning of Sat-Chit-Ananda is as follows: "He is *Sat*- existing by Himself; He is *Chit*- self-knowledge, knowing Himself without any external intervention; He is Anandam- supremely happy in His self-coloquy."[12] Moreover, it should be noted here that for Upadhyaya, personality means "self-knowledge".[13] So it is wrong to say that the Vedanta has an impersonal conception of God.[14]

Sat-Chit-Ananda in the Upanishads

Referring to various Upanishadic verses, Upadhyaya points out that in the doctrine of the nature of God the Vedanta conception and Catholic belief are exactly the same.[15] Vedanta conceives the nature of God as *Sat* (positive being), *Chit* (intelligence) and *Anandam* (bliss). There are references in the Upanishads to the only one Eternal Being who is the cause of all other beings. Upadhyaya cites the Upanishadic verse: *atma va idameka evagra asit: nanyat kinchana mishat* (in the beginning there was only one being: nothing else existed).[16] He points out that Parabrahman is Sat (being) for nothing cannot be a cause.[17] Further he points out the verse *Om tat sat* (that is being)[18] as the mystic *mantra* of the Vedanta. For explaining Chit Upadhyaya quotes the verse *sa ikshata lokan nu srija iti* (he beheld; shall I create the *lokas?)* and narrates Sankara's comment on it: "The great Sankara says that He beheld the universe not as yet actualized; He beheld the origin, the preservation and the destruction of the universe. He beheld all these before He had created it."[19] What Upadhyaya infers from this is that the Upanishadic rishis had a very clear conception of the universe existing ideally in the intelligence of God from eternity.[20] The further explanation which he gives of Chit on the basis of the Upanishads, is as follows:

> Parabrahman, the supreme Being, is essentially *Chit.* For him to be is to know. It is written in the Upanishads that He grows by brooding (*tapas*) and His brooding is knowledge. He reproduces His self as Sabdabrahman (*Logos*) by *Ikshanam* (beholding). The knowing God is mirrored as the known God in the ocean of *Chit.*[21]

To point out the Vedantic position of Brahman as Ananda Upadhyaya describes the narrative in the Taittiriya Upanishad in which through the directions from his father Varuna, Brigu came to the knowledge that Brahman is Bliss[22], and then writes:

> Brahman is Bliss. He is blessed, ineffably blessed by His very nature. He knows Himself and from that self-knowledge proceeds His eternal beatitude.... He is in Himself, by himself.... He affects all things but is not affected in return. He is self-satisfied. He is ananda.[23]

Upadhyaya's own explanation of Sat-Chit-Ananda

Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya's own explanation of Sat-Chit-Ananda can be summarized as follows: We have to admit a self-existent eternal being, otherwise we would be compelled to admit the absurdity of existence proceeding from non-existence.[24] Further, intelligence alone can relate to that which does not exist, for it can *think the non-existent.* If something has begun that which began was *known* by that which existed. Apart from intelligence, beginning is absurd.[25] Moreover, if the Eternal Being finds no repose in the infinite Image of His own being, mirrored in the ocean of his knowledge, then it is wanting in perfection. But to say that the Infinite Being is wanting in perfection is a contradiction.[26] Thus is proved Sat-Chit-Ananda.[27] What does it mean to say that Brahman is Sat-Chit-Ananda? It means that Brahman knows Himself/Herself and from that self-knowledge proceeds His/Her eternal beatitude. Brahman is in Himself/Herself, by Himself/herself. He/She is related of necessity only to the Infinite Image of His/Her own Being, mirrored in the ocean of His/Her knowledge. This relation of Being (Sat) to Itself in self-knowledge (Chit) is one of perfect harmony, self-satisfaction, beatitude, bliss (Ananda). So Sat-Chit-Ananda shows us how Brahman is ineffably blessed in Himself/Herself; blessed in His/Her very nature. [28]

> *The Christian doctrine of God as Trinity is exactly the same as the Vedantic conception of Brahman as Sat-Chit-Ananda*
> Upadhyaya explains the Christian doctrine of God as Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the following way: God comprehends Himself by one act of eternal knowledge. The knowing self is the Father, the known self or the self-begotten by His

knowledge is the Son; and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of reciprocal love proceeding from the Father and the Son.[29]

Upadhyaya compares Sat-Chit-Ananda, the nature of Parabrahman, with the Christian doctrine of the nature of God and proclaims:

> We can boldly and safely affirm that this Vedantic conception of the nature of the supreme Being marks the terminus of the flight of human reason into the eternal regions. The Catholic belief is exactly the same. God is the only eternal being; He is purely positive for the particle 'not' cannot be predicated of Him. He knows Himself and reposes in Himself with supremest complacency.[30]

Upadhyaya wrote a Sanskrit hymn *Vande Saccidanandam* in adoration of Parabrahman who in Catholic faith is referred to as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[31] As an explanation of the hymn, he writes that it is an adoration of that ancient *Parabrahma*, the Supreme Being whose eternal act finds, according to Catholic faith, an adequate resultant within his own Self, who is not obliged to come in contact with finite beings for the sustenance and satisfaction of His nature. His knowledge is fully satisfied by the cognition of the Logos, the infinite image of his Being, begotten by thought and mirrored in the ocean of His substance.. His love finds the fullest satisfaction in the boundless complacency with which he reposes on his Image and breathes forth the Spirit of bliss[32]

It is revealed in Jesus Christ that the differentiating note in Divine knowledge is the response of intelligence. God begets, in thought, His/Her infinite Self-Image and reposes on it with infinite delight while the begotten Self acknowledges responsively His/Her eternal thought-generation.[33] Jesus Christ acknowledges responsively His eternal thought-generation from the Father. Between Him and the Father, there is no division in the divine substance; it is a relation of perfect reciprocity. This relation is the relation between Sat and Chit and Ananda is the result of that relation.[34] Trinity as Saccidananda means that there is a response of knowledge in the God-head. God knows His/Her own self-begotten in thought and is known in return by that Begotten Self. God reproduces in knowledge a co-responding, acknowledging Self-Image, and from this colloquy

proceeds His Spirit of Love which sweetens the Divine Bosom with boundless delight.[35]

Conclusion

When we analyse Upadhyaya's interpretation of Sat-Chit-Ananda, it should be pointed out that nowhere in the early Upanishads or Sankara's writings do we come across that term as such. The term Saccidananda perhaps first appears in the Tejobindu Upanishad of the 9th or 10th c. CE. But at the same time, as Upadhyaya rightly shows, there are many instances in the early Upanishads as well as in Sankara's writings where Sat, Chit, and Ananda are discussed separately. Upadhyaya was one who believed that Sankara should be understood with guidance from post-Sankarite Advaita traditions. Hence there is nothing unusual in his search for support in Sankara's writings for a post-Sankarite concept. On the whole Upadhyaya's interpretation of Sat-Chit-Ananda can be accepted as true to the spirit of Advaita Vedanta and nowhere does he reinterpret the concept in terms of neo-Thomism. True, progress and creativity we can notice as emerging regarding the concept. First the three words of the concept were separately used. Then the three words were combined to explain the one Reality. Now we are able to experience that one Reality as Trinity and in that process witness to a convergence of the Hindu and Christian experiences.

While we study Upadhyaya's interpretation of Trinity as Sat-Chit-Ananda, mention has to be made of other persons who did similar work, namely Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-1884), J. Monchanin (1895-1957), Swami Abhishiktananda (1910-1973), Bede Griffiths and Vandana Mataji. Keshub Chunder Sen is important because sixteen years before Upadhyaya, in 1882, he was the first one to interpret the Trinity as Saccidananda. For Sen Trinity was only a symbol and the three members of the symbol, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were just pointing to the reality of God in different ways; the three members do not represent three persons sharing the same essence but they are just three functions of the same person. Moreover, Sen gives only a very brief account of Trinity as Sat-Chit-Ananda.[36] Monchanin did not make any important contribution. His Saccidananda is a mere exposition of the traditional Christian doctrine of Trinity. What he believed was that the Hindu Sat-Chit-Ananda finds its fulfilment in the already formulated Christian

doctrine of Trinity.[37] If Upadhyaya's Saccidananda represented God in Himself as unrelated alone, for Abhishiktananda the concept signified the inseparable aspects of the mystery of God in Himself/Herself as well as the mystery of the divine presence in the innermost sanctuary of a person's being. Abhishiktananda at least outwardly believed that the Hindu experience of Saccidananda should be remolded to attain the Christian experience of Saccidananda and once that is actualized, the renewed experience of Saccidananda would be the Trinitarian culmination of advaitic experience.[38] Bede Griffiths [39]and Vandana[40] continued the Christian reinterpretation of Saccidananda in the line of Abhishiktananda. The uniqueness of Upadhyaya's interpretation of Trinity as Saccidananda lies in showing the fact that they both are exactly the same.

Notes

1 Julius Lipner and George Gispert-Sauch, *The Writings of Brahmabandab Upadhyay, Vol.I,* Bangalore: UTC, 1991, introduction, p.xxxviii.

2 Julius J. Lipner, *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay.The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary*, Delhi: OUP, 1999, p. 387.

3 *Ibid.*, p.201.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 196.

5 R. H. S. Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, Madras: CLS, 1975, p.73. Cf. Pp. 71, 74.

6 Kaj Baago, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity*, Bangalore/Madras: CISRS/CLS, 1969, p. 40.

7 Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988, pp. 42, 52-53,83-85; R.Panikkar, "Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism from the perspective of Interculturation" in *Religious Pluralism. An Indian Christian Perspective*, ed. By Kuncheria Pathil, Delhi: ISPCK, 1991, pp269-70.

8 Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya (1861-1907), whose original name was Bhavani Charan Banerji, was a disciple of Keshub Chunder Sen for some time. He was a friend of Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore. It was with him that Rabindranatha Tagore founded Shantiniketan. Upadhyaya came to know Jesus Christ through Keshub Chunder Sen and through his own uncle the Rev. Kalicharan Banerji. In 1891 he received baptism from an Anglican priest but, in the same year, he became a Roman Catholic. In 1894 he became a Sannyasin and adopted

the new name. His literary activities include the editing of *Sophia* (Jan.1894-March 1899), a monthly Catholic Journal; *Sophia* (June 16, 1900-Dec. 8, 1900), a weekly paper; and *The Twentieth Century* (Jan.1901-Dec. 1901), a monthly magazine. Due to a total discouragement from church authorities he almost stopped his theological writings in 1901. Upadhyaya then became fully engaged in the nationalist movement in Bengal. In November 1904 he brought out a Bengali daily called *Sandhya* (1904-1907) and in March 1907 a Bengali weekly called *Swaraj*. In September 1907 he was imprisoned by the British and in October 1907 he died after a hernia operation.

9 B. Upadhyaya, "Hinduism and Christianity as compared by Mrs. Besant", *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 2, Feb. 1897, pp. 6-7.

10 B. Upadhyaya, "Notes", *Sophia*, Vol. 1, No.4, July 7, 1900, p.6.

11 B. Upadhyaya, "Notes", *Sophia*, Vol. 1, No.2, June23, 1900, p.7.

12 *Ibid.*

13 B. Upadhyaya, "Christ's claim to attention", The Twentieth Century, Vol.1, No. 5, May 1901, p.116.

14 Summary of the lecture by Upadhyaya, "Hinduism, Theosophy, and Christianity", *Sophia*, Vol.IV, No.12, December, 1897, pp.1-2. Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya may be perhaps the first Christian who proclaimed that the conception of God in Advaita Vedanta is not impersonal. This is a truth which is often forgotten by Christians and even by Hindus. Further, it is worth noting that according to Upadhyaya the philosophical meaning of the term 'person' in Catholic theology is "a rational *individuuim*, a being endowed with reason and free will." Cf. B. Upadhyaya, "Hinduism and Christianity as compared by Mrs. Besant", *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 2, Feb. 1897, p.9. Hence the similarity between the Christian and Vedanta conceptions of God.

15 B. Upadhyaya, "An exposition of Catholic Belief as compared with the Vedanta", *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1898, p.11.

16 *Ibid.*, p.13. The reference is to *Aitareya Up.* 1.1.1a.

17 *Ibid.*

18 *Ibid.* The reference is to *Bhagavad Gita* 17.23

19 *Ibid.*, p. 14. The reference is to *Aitareya Up.* 1.1.1b and the *Sankara Bhasya* on it.

20 *Ibid.*

21 B. Upadhyaya, "Chit", *Sophia*, Vol. VI, No.3, March 1899, p.238.

22 B. Upadhyaya, "A Vedantic Parable", *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 8, Aug. 1898, p.119. The reference is to the third *Valli* of *Taittiriya Upanishad.*

23 *Ibid.*

24 B. Upadhyaya, "Sat", *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 10, Oct. 1898, pp.150-51.

25 B. Upadhyaya, "An exposition of Catholic Belief as compared with the Vedanta", *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1898, pp.13-14.

26 B. Upadhyaya, "Being", *Sophia*, Vol. 1, No.7, July 28, 1900, p.7.

27 In a series of articles entitled "Being" in *Sophia*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June 23, 1900, p.8; No. 3, June 30, p.7; No. 4, July 7, p.7; and in No.6, July21, p.7 Upadhyaya shows that self-existence is a necessary content of being and that being is eternal, immutable, infinite and one. In the last of the same series No. 7, July 28, 1900, p.7, he also proves that the necessary contents of being are *Sat* (Self-existence), *Chit* (intelligence) and *Anandam* (bliss).

28 B. Upadhyaya, "A Vedantic Parable", *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 8, Aug. 1898, p. 119; "Being", *Sophia*, Vol. 1, No. 7, July 28, 1900, p.7.

29 B. Upadhyaya, "Hinduism and Christianity as compared by Mrs. Besant", *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 2, Feb. 1897, p.8; "Question and Answers", *Sophia*, Vol. 1, No. 11, Aug. 25, 1900, p.7.

30 B. Upadhyaya, "An exposition of Catholic Belief as compared with the Vedanta", *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1898, p.11.

31 B. Upadhyaya, "Our new Canticle", *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 10, Oct. 1898, pp. 146-47.The hymn is mainly an exposition of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and does not have much theological significance. More important than the hymn is the explanation Upadhyaya gives of it. Still, it is significant to note that all the words used to explain Trinity are put as adjectives to *Saccidananda* and adoration is to *Saccidananda.* Moreover in the hymn, *bhavavrkshabijamabijam* (the rootless principle of the tree of existence) denotes *Sat*; *chinmayarupa* (one whose form is intelligence) denotes *Chit*; *Saccidomelanasaranam* (one who proceeds from the union of *Sat* and *Chit*) and *anandaghanam* (intense bliss) denote Ananda. But if we isolate this hymn from the rest of Upadhyaya's writings on the Trinity as Saccidananda and interpret it, such an interpretation could be misleading as has been proved in the case of G Gispert-Sauch, "The Sanskrit hymns of Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya", *Religion and Society*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, Dec. 1972, pp.60-79. Upadhyaya, in his theology, does not give 'new meaning' (p.68) to the Vedanta concept Saccidananda, nor are the terms heavy with mythological or historical association (pp. 68-74) relevant to his theology of the Trinity as Saccidananda, as Gispert-Sauch thinks. Jo-

seph Mattam, "Interpreting Christ to India Today: The Calcutta School", *The Indian Journal of Theology*, Vol. XXIII, Nos3-4, July-Dec. 1974, pp.192-98, is also misleading, as reference is given to this hymn alone (p.195) to explain Upadhyaya's doctrine of the Trinity as Saccidananda.

32 B. Upadhyaya, "Our new Canticle", *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 10, Oct. 1898, p.146.

33 B. Upadhyaya, "The Incarnate Logos", *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan.1901, p.6

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7. Cf. Summary of the lecture by Upadhyaya, "Hinduism, Theosophy and Christianity", *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 12, Dec. 1897, pp.4-5.

35 B. Upadhyaya, "Christ's Claim to attention", *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. I, No. 5, May 1901, p.116. Cf. B. Upadhyaya, "The Incarnate Logos", *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. I, No. 1, Jan. 1901, p. 7.

36 Keshub Chunder Sen, "That Marvelous Mystery-The Trinity", *Lecture in India,* Vol. 11, London: Cassell and Co., 1904, pp.1-48.

37 Cf. *Swami Parama Arubi Ananda- A Memorial*, Tiruchirapalli, 1959.

38 Cf. Swami Abhishiktananda, *Saccidananda. A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1974; *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point. Within the Cave of the Heart*, Bombay/Bangalore: IIC/ CISRS, 1969.

39 Cf. Bede Griffiths, *Return to the Centre*, London: Fount Paperbacks, 1978; *The Marriage of East and West*, London: Fount paperback, 1983.

40 Cf. Vandana, *Waters of Fire,* Madras: CLS, 1981; *Jesus he Christ. Who is he? What was his message?,* Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987.

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The Church in Upadhyay's Vision

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Abstract: While paying tribute to an exceptional man who had two passions: intense patriotic zeal to liberate India from colonial power and an ardent desire to win India to the Catholic faith, our author affirms that Brahmabandhab Upadhyay symbolizes a threefold commitment: to the Church emphasizing the need for incarnating the Gospel in the cultural ethos of India; to the nation with the message that Indians must be responsible for one another and must love and live an authentic Indian life.

Though Upadhyay cannot be copied today, the author asserts that he is a theologian of importance who can teach us something significant. We know that the circumstances in which he lived and struggled are not the same as what shapes the context in which we today live and search. In our changing and challenging context of the 21st century, Upadhyay inspires us to listen anew to what the Spirit is telling the Church and nation and for deeper Christian commitment to the integral development of the people of India.

Keywords: Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, Indian Church, Indian Christianity, Hindu-Christian theology, contextual theology.

Introduction

The year 2007 celebrated the centenary of the death of a great patriot and a remarkable Christian who in his time had a profound influence on the country and on the Church. Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861-1907) lived fast and died young, 46 years old. But

the intensity of his love and commitment to his country and to Christian discipleship inspired many. Among them was his contemporary, Rabindranath Tagore, who described Upadhyay as "a Roman Catholic ascetic yet a Vedantin - spirited, fearless, self-denying, learned and uncommonly influential."[1]

The country and the Christian community recall the memory of Upadhyay, an unrecognized martyr of the freedom struggle who died a prisoner of the British Raj. An outstanding example of Christian value, he is remembered today as a thinker of high standing, and for his numerous writings that contain authentic seeds for an Indian theology. Upadhyay gave an impetus to the process of inculturation of the Christian faith not only at the level of theology but also in spirituality and Christian practice.

We pay tribute to an exceptional man who had two passions: intense patriotic zeal to liberate India from colonial power and an ardent desire to win India to the Catholic faith. He wanted to liberate his motherland from European political hegemony, and the Church from western ecclesial monopoly, which he perceived as a cultural domination. His loyalty to his motherland was intimately interwoven with his loyalty to the Catholic faith and Church. In Upadhyay, we find a courageous pioneer of the difficult synthesis of supernatural faith and national culture. In this paper I shall underline the many and varied efforts of this farsighted thinker to sow the seeds of a great revolution in Indian theology and ecclesiology.

I. Upadhyay's Indian-Christian Identity

Upadhyay was a child of his times to be understood in his context. He was born in the Kulin Brahmin family of Bengal – Kulin being the ritually purest and socially most elevated stratum of the caste. He was an Indian of the 19th century nationalism with its claim of swaraj and in his sacramental rebirth he was a Christian of the 19th century Catholic Church.

In its broadest sense, nationalism is an ideological movement that draws upon national identity in order to achieve certain political goals. However, political self-determination is only one part of the demands inherent in nationalism. An equally important characteristic

feature of nationalism, according to Prof. Hans Kohn, is cultural self-determination.[2]

For many Bengali nationalists of the late 19th century, 'nation' was an ambiguous concept. It often coincided both with Bengal and with the territorial boundaries of British India. This 'nation' was sometimes called Bengali, sometimes Hindu, sometimes Aryan, sometimes Indo-Aryan, and sometimes Indian. Upadhyay and other early nationalists were more concerned about the contours of cultural identity than the territorial-geographical dimensions of the national space. "Carving out a national space out of colonial space meant investing it with a cultural identity and meaning," says V. Sebastian.[3] The roots of cultural nationalism can be found in the political thought of Upadhyay who tried to define Indian culture in terms of Hinduness based on Aryan racial superiority, consolidation of caste system and Brahmanical hegemony.

The notions of Aryan-Hindu-caste that form a unity in Upadhyay's thinking are essentially linked with his concept of Indian nation and nationalism. This Aryan-Hindu-caste triad determines his understanding of Indian national identity and also forms an essential part of his conception of Hindu Catholicism.[4] The images, symbols, metaphors and idioms expressed in Upadhyay's writings convey complex interpretations, not only of the emergent Indian national identity but also of Hindu-Christian identity.

Upadhyay's Christian identity was influenced by the 19th century Catholic Church to which he belonged. The Catholic Church of this period bore an extremely institutional character, which was carved by the Tridentine ecclesiology of the 16th century. Its institutional self-understanding was further accentuated in the 18th century with the rise of National Churches, *ecclesia gallicana* in France and its variations in Germany and Austria known as Febronianism and Josephism. It was a contest between papal absolutism and royal absolutism. A Church dominated by an exaggerated extension and exaltation of papal authority at Vatican I in 1869-70 obviated the full realization and individuality of local churches. Between 1850 and 1950 the Catholic Church was characterized by a dominant European culture and a centralized form of governance with its hierarchical structures that enforced uniformity, orthodoxy and submission at all levels.

Upadhyay's vision for an indigenous Church in India will have to be assessed against the backdrop of his political stance, caste allegiance and his Catholic religious experience and outlook which influenced and determined his Indian Christian identity. Just as many from various circles – historical, cultural, religious and political - would agree that Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861 – 1907) has made a significant contribution to shaping the new India, today in the ecclesiastical circle, many would acknowledge Upadhyay's daring passion to change the colonial face of the Church in India.

2. Upadhyay's Vision for an Indian Church

2.1. The Context

From the 16th century the mission of proclaiming the Good News entered a new phase. Coincident with political expansion the Gospel encountered the major cultures of the world. However, the association of the Catholic faith with European culture, transplantation of feudal ecclesial structures into the 'new world', and the fear of pagan beliefs and practices affecting the purity of Christian faith proved great stumbling blocks for inculturating the Christian message. Until the late 19th century the tendency was to address one culture and one civilization, since multiplicity was feared to be the disastrous result of human arrogance, as symbolized by the Tower of Babel.

Planting of the European Church in mission lands without any appropriate adaptation hindered the Christian faith in its encountering and dialoguing with cultures and other cosmic and meta-cosmic religious traditions. Dialogue could not take place because the institutional Church had come to give and to teach and not to receive and to learn. Consequently, the Church became a ghetto, excluding all creativity of indigenous cultures.

Attempts by Robert de Nobili and Constantine Beschi in India, Matteo Ricci and others in China and elsewhere to incarnate the Gospel in various contexts presupposed an interaction between faith and culture. Such efforts were scant and were to pass almost unnoticed in comparison with formidable efforts made to propagate a Western form of Christianity globally. However, some of those apparently negligible efforts became a motivating force for recognizing the urgency of inculturating the Gospel in modern times.

Inspired by Robert de Nobili's innovative efforts among the caste Hindus, some Indian Christians of the late 19th century, like J.N. Farquhar, Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Keshub Chunder Sen and Brahamabandhab Upadhyay felt that the Church in India should assume a uniquely Indian character, and that Hindus should become Christians without having to desert their cultural heritage. They attempted to portray Hinduism as an avenue towards Christianity and as being fulfilled in it. From among these pioneering figures, Upadhyay's farsighted vision for an Indian Church contributed much to the contemporary search for a relevant Indian theology and ecclesiology. I shall underscore some of his novel and pertinent insights.

2.2. Upadhyay's Obsession: Defrock European Christianity in India

Upadhyay[5] feared that Christianity would remain a foreign cult, an alien system, an anti-national force and a religion repulsive to the people, if it did not insert itself into the Indian mainstream. His passion was to win India for Christ and the Church. He was obsessed with the ideal that the Catholic Church, to gain acceptance in India, should strip itself of all that is European because according to him, "it is the foreign clothes of Catholic faith that have chiefly prevented our countrymen from perceiving its universal nature. Catholicism has donned the European garb in India. Our Hindu brethren cannot see the sublimity and sanctity of our divine religion because of its hard coating of Europeanism."[6] Christianity in European clothing is extremely repulsive to India. He therefore appealed to all Christians in India to sever the undesirable alliance of Christianity with Europeanism.

On being received into the Catholic Church in 1891, Upadhyay goes through a phase of intellectual confusion. He wants to remain faithful to his Brahmo faith into which his love for India was integrated, and to the new understanding of Jesus Christ. Besides, he is also confused about the meaning of the Church, the Church of foreigners, of "trousers and beef and drinks ...," the Church which seemed to have donned the religious attire of the colonial rule. This Church he found it difficult to accept. Like his uncle Kali Charan Banerji, Upadhyay often said that the Indian followers of Christ

should form "a national, indigenous Church of their own and maintain good relations with all."[7]

2.3. Upadhyay's Identity-claim: "We are Hindu-Catholics"

Sensitive to affirming the Indian identity of Christians, with remarkable cultural insight, Upadhyay made a decisive pronouncement, which expressed a comprehensive notion of being Hindu-Catholic in India, when he wrote:

> By birth we are Hindus and shall remain Hindus till death. But as dvija (twice-born) by virtue of our sacramental rebirth, we are Catholics; we are members of an indefectible communion embracing all ages and climes. In customs and manners, in observing caste and social distinctions, in eating and drinking, in our life and living, we are genuine Hindus; but in our faith we are neither Hindus nor Europeans, nor Americans, nor Chinese, but all inclusive. Our faith fills the whole world and is not confined to any country or race; our faith is universal and consequently includes all truths. Our thought is emphatically Hindu. We are more speculative than practical, more given to synthesis than to analysis, more contemplative than active. It is extremely difficult for us to learn how to think like the Greeks of old or the scholastics of the Middles Ages. Our brains are moulded in the philosophic cast of our ancient country ... In short, we are Hindus as far as our physical and mental constitution is concerned, but in regard to our immortal souls we are Catholic. We are Hindu-Catholics.[8]

This astonishing declaration reveals a basic principle, which as it were articulates the nature of the Catholic Church that he had envisaged for India. The Church is indigenous and catholic, local and universal. Therefore, Christian faith bids us retain both our native Hindu-Indian identity and our Catholic identity of being in communion with the whole community of Christians. It invites us to respond to and to live the Christian message within one's socio-cultural context, for 'in our life and living we are genuine Hindus,' and within the context of world culture, 'in our faith we are all inclusive.'

In his search for a Hindu-Catholic identity, he adopts a firm theological stance on issues of Christian truths and Hindu beliefs, such as avatara and incarnation, of patriotism and Catholic allegiance to the

nation, etc., which are as relevant for the Church in India today as it was in his time.

Calling himself a Hindu-Catholic, he indicates the direction he desires for Christian presence in India. It expresses his deep concern for a dialogue between the Hindu heritage and the Catholic faith. Making a distinction between faith and culture, he has stated that a fruitful dialogue should evolve between Vedanta and Catholic faith, which will transform both Hindu religiosity and Catholic culture. Upadhyay gives an insightful expression to describe his new found Hindu-Catholic identity. According to samaj dharma, which is the order of society and the cultural world he had inherited, he is Hindu; according to sadhana dharma, that allows an individual the inner freedom to choose any authentic path to spiritual pursuits, he is Christian..

2.4. Upadhyay's Dream: A Church with an Indian Face

Upadhyay's open stand in favour of inculturation in several areas of Catholic life will give us insights into what he hoped the Catholic Church would be.

2.4.1. Incarnate Christ and his message in Hindu garb

Upadhyay envisaged certain elements in the realization of his creative vision of establishing a Church with an Indian face. These were: the integration of the Indian social order into the Christian way of life, the use of Vedantic categories to express Christian theology, the recognition of the Vedas as 'the Indian Old Testament' in preparation for the Gospel and the establishment of an Indian Christian monastic order.

The landmarks of his ever-unfolding desire of realizing this vision for the Church in India were the deeply Hindu religious system of India and the Indian social order of the caste system. On the occasion of the Eucharistic Congress in Goa in 1900 he wrote:

> If the universal character of the religion of Christ is to be demonstrated to our fellow brethren, it is necessary to show that in matters of faith we are above time and space neither Indian nor

> European, but in matters other than those of faith we are essentially Hindu in the strictest sense of the word.[9]

As an Indian-Hindu, he assumed a nationalist stance and a rigid defence of the caṣte system, which he justified on grounds that it "was framed on the basis of the human constitution." He further affirmed: "Hinduism is generally taken to be a religion with a definite code of doctrines, while it is fundamentally a social organization with a well defined hierarchy of class division."[10]

Upadhyay believed that in matters other than those of faith, Indians are essentially Hindu in the strictest sense of the word. To be a Hindu one need only be born a Hindu and observe caste distinctions. The rules of caste are the bonds that keep the Hindu society unified. He summed up his views on this social structure thus:

> The regulating principle of the Aryan or Hindu society is the love of vocation for its own sake and not for its fruits. The central social law that governs the four classes of communities was the loyalty to hereditary vocations, which should create a sense of self-respect and check unseemly desire for reward in the discharge of social functions.[11]

Upadhyay felt it was rash to militate against the Hindu social system of hereditary vocation on the ground that it was incompatible with the spirit of civilization and Christianity. Here we witness his natural-supernatural principle at work: Caste is a natural distinction, and therefore the Church has no right to interfere with the cultural modes of ordering human living, even though it may rightly insist that our supernatural destiny will properly consist in equality of all humanity.

2.4.2. Construct an Hindu-Christian Theology

Having a comprehensive knowledge of the Hindu culture and religion, his first priority was to construct a Hindu-Christian theology, through a symbiosis of Hinduism and Christianity, respecting the authenticity of each. Upadhyay was convinced that to construct an Hindu-Christian theology, one would first and foremost have to eradicate from the minds of Indian people the erroneous doctrines of pantheism implicit in traditional *Advaita* and its modern expressions,

and the debilitating social and moral consequences of belief in karma and re-birth, and of Hindu idolatry and its polytheistic mythology.[12]

He believed in introducing Theism through the Vedas, for he was of the view that the natural culmination of Vedantism was faith in Christ, the Son of God. He used the Vedas and Vedanta for interpreting Christ against the Indian cultural background and Hindu terminology for expression of Christian truth. He argued that if the Thomist system could make use of Aristotelian philosophy to interpret Christian faith, the same could be done with an Indian system of Vedantic thought to render Christianity intelligible in India. In spite of his strong Christian convictions, he never abandoned Hinduism.

In the Hindu Scriptures of the Vedas he sought to discover the 'natural' foundation for the 'supernatural' religion of Christ. He held the view that the Vedas represented an Indian monotheism, similar to that of the Old Testament. He wrote, "Whatever may be the theology of the Vedas, they are, from cover to cover, surcharged with the idea of a Supreme Being, who knows all things, who is a personal God, who is father, friend, nay even brother to His worshippers."[13] However, he also cautions us not to be led away by chauvinistic pride, since truth is universal and not local, "there is no such thing as Asian truth and European truth just as there is no such thing as American geometry and Indian geometry."[14]

2.4.3. Inculturate the Christian faith in the Hindu context

Upadhyay felt that Christian theology tends to get stagnated in abstract concepts and definitions because it refuses to pass on through stages of evolution to the goal of consummation. Immersed in his 'Hindu-Catholic' dual belonging and well equipped with the tradition and language of the religion of his birth, Upadhyay sought to incarnate Christian faith in Indian religious thought.

He was of the view that theology should open its gates to the East and continue the process of indigenising the Church as initiated by the early Fathers. Though deeply rooted in the Catholic heritage, Upadhyay refused to admit the culture of the Eurocentric Christianity as normative for the whole Church. "No mistake could be more fatal to progress than to make the Indian Christian community conform

to European social ideals because Europeans happen to be prominent in the Christian World," he said.[15]

Upadhyay believed that Christianity alone was supernatural in its origin and offered comprehensive salvation to humankind. However, Catholic doctrines appear unintelligible when preached in expressions alien to the Hindu mind. "We must fall back upon the Vedantic method in formulating the Catholic religion to our countrymen," he affirmed.[16] For instance, the doctrine of creation that the infinite alone is eternal; and finite beings exist only in time have been defended by European missionaries against the vedantic doctrine of Maya.[17] Upadhyay attempted to reconcile Maya and the Christian doctrine of creation to render it intelligible to the Hindu mind.

In an article in *Sophia* entitled "Our Attitude Towards Hinduism" in 1895, Upadhyay wrote that Christian faith must fulfil and not destroy what is true and good in Hinduism, and that with the exception of ancient Greece it is in Hindu thought that human philosophy or insight into the invisible things of God reached its zenith. The unique, spiritual, all-pervasive, omniscient, omnipotent and the imperishable nature of the Supreme Being are some natural Hindu truths, whereas the doctrines of Christ, the Trinity, the atonement and resurrection are supernatural truths beyond the domain of reason.[18]

Upadhyay was convinced that an open dialogue between Hindu Vedanta and Catholic doctrine could purify Vedanta from its "degeneration into factions of warring gods and goddesses" and liberate Catholic theology from its stagnation by giving "a new impetus from the east." He also believed that an ongoing dialogue between the Hindu culture of dharma and the Christian faith and spirituality would have significant consequences for Christian life and theology in India, and for the universal Church as well. "The more we meditate on the cogitations of Hindu philosophy concerning the Supreme Being, on its marvellous but fruitless effort to penetrate into His inner nature, on its heroic struggle to harmonize unity with diversity .... the more light is thrown upon the ever-mysterious Christian doctrine of God, one yet multiple, absolute yet related within Himself."[19]

Upadhyay felt strongly urged to share with all his compatriots the treasure which he had discovered, namely, Christ and his Church. His method was a novel one for the times, which raised many an eyebrow: Let the Hindu remain one in his culture, in his language, his lore, his ethos, his customs, his philosophy, and let the new-found faith be grafted hereto, purifying whatever is required and in the process sublimating everything. Only when the doctrine of Christ is couched and explained in the categories of Vedanta Philosophy and the Church is fully indigenised in its outlook and functioning, then Christianity will make sense to the Indian mind and find a foothold in our motherland. He geared all his energies towards this end – his publications and writings, the research he conducted, his life of a sanyasi and the monastic order he began.

In fact, his ideal for incarnating the religion of Christ in Hindu garb was concretely manifested in the Catholic monastery that he founded on the banks of the Narmada, and of which he wrote, "Here in the midst of solitude and silence will be reared up true Yogis to whom the contemplation of the Triune *Saccidanandam* will be food and drink. Here will be trained the future apostles of India. In this hermitage will the words of the Eternal Word be strung in the hymns of Eastern melody; in this Holy place will the transcendent Catholic devotions be clothed in Hindu garb."[20]

2.4.4. Catholicity of the Church

Though Upadhyay dreamed of an Indian Church, he considered his admission into the Catholic Church as universal, not bound to any nation or culture.

He strongly upheld the Catholicity of the Church, believing that it is not confined to any one race or country. *Kasthalika*[21] or Catholic faith is a faith that extends to all ages and lands. Commenting on this viewpoint, M. M. Snell, the American editor of *The Church Progress* in 1898 said, "The Catholic religion is not the property of any race or group of races, and is not associated with any special type of civilization or culture, but, on the contrary, it is the only means by which any race or nation can realize perfectly its own proper type of culture in its most ideal form."[22]

Upadhyay was convinced that if a synthesis between the Vedic systems and the eternal truths were taught in the Catholic Church, it would not only aid the conversion of the whole Hindu nation to truth and unity but it would also make a valuable contribution to the mentality of the whole world. The Catholic Church with its profound learning and charismatic gifts could erase the racial, local and personal prejudices. Though Upadhyay dreamed of a Church with an Indian face, he fully recognized its catholicity and cosmopolitan character by which it adapts to the changing environments of time and space and "is one in essence but various in manifestations; she is one body but has many clothes. In Asia she puts on the oriental costume; in Europe, the Latin garb."[23]

2.4.5. An incarnated Church: Spirituality of Involvement

True discipleship is mission oriented

Upadhyay was a prophet well ahead of his times. A true Indian and Christian, he committed his life to the freedom struggle, denouncing the continued foreign presence in India as well as to Christian discipleship announcing the Good News of his new found faith in Christ. His vision of being genuinely Indian and deeply Christian made him embrace the sannyasa way of life and commit himself to the teachings of Jesus in authentic praxis.

In place of the militant strategy and material allurements employed by the *Padroado* Church to Christianize India, Upadhyay's missionary strategy was the might of the pen for winning over Hindu-India to Christ. In the course of his short span of life he edited several journals: the *Harmony* (1890), the *Sophia* (1894), the *Twentieth Century* (1901) - and later the *Sandhya*, which became a leading nationalist vernacular daily. Through his writings he fearlessly pursued a synthesis of philosophy and theology, and a meeting of East and West by crystallizing Christ's message in Vedantic thought and harmonizing Hindu culture and Indian patriotism with Christian life. He trusted that the pen would "supply a new garb to the religion of Christ without affecting in the least the essential Christian tenets."[24] By his life and writings Upadhyay sought to demonstrate that being a Christian and a patriot are not in any way contradictory.

In spite of his resolute step to adopt the lifestyle of a sannyasi, he does not accept a world-denying spirituality. He advocates a

spirituality of involvement in the struggles of the people and of commitment to the welfare of all beings. His ascetic life style, his care for the sick in the plague stricken city of Karachi (1896) where he looked for abandoned men and women in the hidden lanes and by-lanes, his participation in the freedom-movements and his appraisal of the oppressive systems of the British flowed from his Vendantic-Christian theology.

Brahmabandhab Upadhyay's nationalism, which harbored vital concern for an indigenous Christianity was manifested in the varied roles he played - as religious reformer, religious revivalist, political activist and social commentator, and as teacher he gave special attention to the poor and talented. His commitment to India was itself deeply religious. It was not merely political independence or a Hindu society that he dreamed of, but the revival and appreciation of the spiritual values and religious traditions of the Indian people. He denounced poverty, slavery and westernisation, for he believed that they stifled the soul of India. Among the many burning social issues that he expressed concern for was the perennial problem of the status of women.

He dared to fight for the cause of women even at the young age of 15. He came to the rescue of some Hindu women who were being harassed by the Armenians. He administered them a severe beating and even hauled them before the court. On another occasion he showed attentive concern towards an abandoned exquisitely beautiful lady who was gasping for breath. He addressed her as mother and attended to her needs with utmost care. He was greatly distressed and deeply wounded to find the Sindhi boy in whose care he had entrusted the lady to, shamefully misbehaving with her. He sent the boy away remarking: "I lost my mother at a very early age. I have heard it said that she was famous for her beauty. When I see a fair girl I think that perhaps my mother was like her."[25]

Conscious of the subjugated and servile status of women in Indian patriarchal society, he maintained that, "woman is not an attendant of man. She is not born merely to serve him. She is not his shadow."[26] He championed the cause of restoring the esteem and position of

woman that is due to her and affirmed that she is a pillar of human society and "has a noble function to discharge in the social economy."[27]

2.4.6 Allegiance of the Indian Church to Rome

Upadhyay's two great loves: love of his country and love of Jesus Christ coalesced and took a new avatar in his love for the Church, especially evident after his conversion. His dream to establish a Catholic Church in Indian garb was evident in his passionate efforts to construct an Indian Catholic theology, to inculturate Christian faith and embellish Catholic doctrines in Hindu philosophical expressions Though proud of his Indian nationality and of his new found Hindu-Catholic identity, he never wanted an Indian Church cut off from its Roman roots.

Though he often criticized the colonial aspects of the institutional Church, he was basically an apologist for her. During his visit to Rome in the winter of 1902, he expressed his feelings to his intimate friend Animananda:

> As soon as I got down from the train I kissed the soil of Rome. In the morning I went to see St Peter's. If one wants to see Christianity expressed in concrete form, it will be found here. I prayed at the tomb of Peter – the Rock, the Holder of the Keys – for India, for you all. ..... While kneeling down at the tomb of St Peter, I thought of the Holy Father – the living St Peter. Oh! How I longed to kneel at his foot and plead for India....."[28]

Upadhyay's zeal to establish an Indian Church and his efforts to inculturate Christian faith in India did not have the support of the ecclesiastical establishment that it deserved, though it did not go unnoticed by a few perceptive European members of the hierarchy in India. [29]

The closed mindset of the Church authorities of the time is evident in the statement of Mgr. L.Zaleski, the then Papal Delegate to India, who consistently opposed the indigenisation efforts of Upadhyay:

> Christianity alone can bring civilization. Heathenism, whatever form it assumes, may sometimes take an exterior appearance of civilization, but it always leaves the soul of the people plunged in barbarity and superstition. There is no civilization outside

> Christianity. Christianity made Europe the leading continent of the world, and Christianity alone has in itself the power to civilize other countries.[30]

Mgr. Zaleski opposed his dream project of an Indian Catholic Monastery and forbad the Catholic public from reading the Sophia for its theological and political approach, which was unacceptable to him. Another journal for socio-political affairs, *The Twentieth Century,* met with the same fate. Even Upadhyay's appeal to appoint a censor to scrutinize every journal before printing was not complied with.[31] The real issue of course was not theological but political: Zaleski was afraid that Upadhyay's writings would give rise to an indigenized theology and a national Church that would sever its ties with the Roman Catholic Church. It was also a time when the Catholic Church was haunted by the phobia of modernism and frightful of the loss of control secured in the hands of Christian colonial powers. Even Upadhyay's efforts in 1902 to obtain the support and approval from higher authorities for his projects proved futile.

However, in spite of the injustice Zaleski meted out to Upadhyay, the latter showed exemplary sincerity and humility when he stated in the *Examiner*, August 7, 1901: "I have never shown any disinclination to submit my writings to ecclesiastical judgment and I never write on theological or philosophical matters without the approval of good theologians with whom I have personal correspondence." In July 1904, he reassures his Sindhi convert friend, Premchand, that the rumours that he had abandoned the faith were unfounded:

> Rest assured that for me it is impossible to go against the Holy Church. Never, for a moment, since my baptism have I been tempted (I am not boasting) to doubt the divine authority of the Pope of Rome over my faith and morals. Moreover, I have never failed to submit to lawful ecclesiastical authorities. [32]

It is only fair to admit that Upadhyay's predicament vis-à-vis ecclesiastical authority was distressing. Even though the Roman Hierarchy shattered his life's work and missionary zeal, Upadhyay never gave up his faith in Christ the Saviour.

3. Appraisal of Upadhyay's Vision for an Indian Church

Upadhyay was a pioneer of an indigenous expression of Christian faith and he worked relentlessly to establish a Hindu basis for the reception of the Gospel in India. His dream for a Catholic India was perhaps too ambitious and idealistic to become a reality in a milieu with such deeply ingrained Hindu tradition. Although his primary desire, to free India from political colonialism, was strong and genuine he never actively championed an India free from the caste system. However, his vision for an Indian Church and the means he proposed for realizing it still survives as a great contribution to inculturation today.

His life as a 'Hindu-Catholic monk' and 'Roman Catholic advaitin' was the living synthesis of Hinduism and Christianity, of which he spoke and wrote so much. He had hoped that it would serve as a basis for a Hindu-Christian theology and an Indian ecclesiology. He remains one of the great pioneers of Indian Christianity in spite of the ambiguous justification he made at times for being a 'Hindu-Catholic'.[33]

This was consistent with the natural-supernatural distinction he made, between Hinduism and Christianity - representing Hinduism as a culture rather than as a religion. But such statements seem inconsistent with his other claim, that the Vedas are an 'evangelical preparation,' a divine revelation. Hinduism interpreted essentially as culture renders impossible the reception of divine grace through the Hindu tradition.[34] However, a discerning study of Upadhyay's prophetic vision will certainly enrich contemporary efforts at inculturation.

Furthermore, the validity of his theological base on his interpretation of Vedanta in terms of unity in multiplicity and his stance on caste could be questioned. One may sense a sort of theological elitism in his methodology, particularly in the Vedantic theology that he advocated and in his persistent defence of the caste system. One wonders what they could really mean for the millions of poor and marginalized in India. If Vedanta were to be understood as advocating an elitist way of thought, it may not have much relevance for Indian

theology. But if Vedanta could be interpreted as a call to perceive the divine presence in the poor and to respond to the unjust structures as Jesus did, then a theological assimiliation of Vedantic insights into Christian theology could contribute towards making the Gospel truly incarnate and meaningful in India and towards shaping an Indian ecclesiology.

However, Upadhyay's stance on the caste system and his full support of the continuity of its practice is not only questionable but also unacceptable. His understanding of the caste system seems to be quite naïve and one wonders if Upadhyay saw the contradiction of affirming caste distinction without questioning its shocking and inhuman discrimination.

But one must not examine Upadhyay's social, political and religious stance from standpoints of today since he was formed in and belonged to another era. Facing many odds, he showed how a loyal Indian could be an authentic follower of Jesus.

Conclusion

In this year of the centenary of his death, we remember with pride this great son of the soil and fellow believer in the Catholic communion. His contribution to the country's history and the Church is perhaps greater than he is credited for.

In spite of the discouraging and sad experiences that Upadhyay encountered, his bold initiatives have given an orientation for the emergence of an Indian ecclesiology. Setting aside his pechant for a high caste Sanskritized Church, his approach remains an inspiration and a challenge because of his contribution towards incarnating an Indian Church within the universal character of the Catholic Church.

He symbolizes a threefold commitment: to the Church emphasizing the need for incarnating the Gospel in the cultural ethos of India; to the nation with the message that Indians must be responsible for one another and must love and live an authentic Indian life; and to the world

at large declaring that a secular culture without God cannot build a truly human civilization.

Upadhyay cannot be copied today. But he is a theologian of importance who can teach us something significant. We know that the circumstances in which he lived and struggled are not the same as what shapes the context in which we today live and search. In our changing and challenging context of the 21st century, Upadhyay inspires us to listen anew to what the Spirit is telling the Church and nation and for deeper Christian commitment to the integral development of the people of India.

Notes

1 Julius J. Lipner, *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay:The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary*, India: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. xv.

2 V. Sebastian , S.J., "Implications of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay's Cultural Nationalism and Constructions of Identity," ITA 30th Annual Seminar, 2007 (Unpublished), p. 5.

3 *Ibid.*

4 V. Sebastian, p. 8

5 It is important to pay attention to Upadhyay's mindset when he made any statements for they were influenced by the time and place of their composition.

6 Julius J. Lipner, *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay:The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary*, India: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 211.

7 Animananda, *The Blade,* Calcutta: The Alliance Press, p. 43.

8 This is a development of an earlier idea when in 1895 in an open letter to Annie Besant, he claimed to be "a Brahmin by birth and a Christian and Catholic by faith," J.Lipner & G. Gispert-Sauch, *The Writings of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay*, Vol. I, Bangalore: UTC, 1991, p. 24.

9 B. Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 97.

10 *The Blade*, p. 202.

11 *The Blade*, pp. 209-210.

12 Lipner & Gispert-Sauch, *The Writings of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay*, p. xxxiv.

13 M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ*, pp. 102-103. He was totally opposed to the doctrines of the cycle of emanation or evolution of God and of rebirth of the human.

14 Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 64.

15 Sophia, 27, 10, 1900 in Lipner & Gispert, *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay,* 256.

16 Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 74,

17 Lipner & Gispert-Sauch, *The Writings,* Vol. II, p. 226.

18 Lipner & Gispert, *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay,* 126.

19 Sophia 07 / 1897, Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 68.

20 Animananda, *The Blade*, pp. 78-79,81.

21 The Sanskrit words *ka* and *sthala* mean 'time' and 'land' respectively. The two words together form the compound *kasthalika* implying 'pertaining to all times and lands.' *Ibid.* pp. 73-74.

22 Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 76.

23 Lipner & Gispert-Sauch, *The Writings of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay*, vol. II, p. 206.

24 Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 88. Lack of knowledge of the spiritual and intellectual culture of the Hindus led Mgr. Zaleski the Delegate Apostolic to forbid Christians from reading the writings of Upadhyaya.

25 Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 7.

26 Lipner & Gispert, *The Writings,* vol. II, p. 65

27 *Ibid.* 65.

28 Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 109.

29 The bishop of Nagpur, Charles Pelvat supported his monastic initiative at Jabalpur and several bishops and archbishops had favoured his journal *Sophia* both as its aims and financially.

30 Lipner & Gispert, *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, p.* 213.

31 Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 103.

32 Lipner & Gispert, *The Writings*, vol. II, p. 349.

33 Evelyn Monteiro, *Church and Culture, Communion in Pluralism*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2004, p. 137.

34 J. Dupuis, *Jesus Christ à la Rencontre des Religions*, Paris: Desclée, 1989, pp. 58- 60.

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alist response to British colonialism cannot be brushed aside lightly. The colonial ideology had legitimized their continued existence through the claim that India was not a nation. Over and against this colonial claim, the anti-colonial nationalism required to forge a national identity. In the process of confronting British colonialism Indian nationalists like Brahmabandhab Upadhyay felt the need to create a national identity through the mediation of complex mechanisms. Out of several competing claims of what constituted such national identity, a common Hindu heritage, based on the classical Hindu ethos originally created by the Aryans, was projected as the core structure of nationhood. Indeed, there are several aspects of Upadhyay's nationalist thought which are open to criticism. Upadhyay's nationalism was a response to a situation in which the loss of Self was looming large in the political and cultural horizon.

Keywords; Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, Swadeshi, national space, nationalism, identity.

Introduction

Historically, we can detect two interrelated phenomena in the Indian nationalism, namely, the awakening of a new political consciousness and the simultaneous emergence of the 'national space.' The emergence of the national space in the nationalist discourse marks out a distinctive narrative break in Indian history. Indian nationalists imagined and constructed this national space, as distinct from the existing colonial space. In the nationalist discourse, the national space was a complex ensemble which included the reinterpretation of India's past, diagnostic investigations into India's present degeneration, restructuring the present, contestations for the public sphere, and identity formation in terms of religion, race and caste. To put it differently, it is through the complex interpretation of India's past and present that the notion of a distinct national space began to crystallize in the nationalist discourse.

The term national space denotes the complex of interpretations and the hermeneutical horizon in the nationalist discourse regarding India and its past within a socio-cultural and political framework.

It seems reasonable to suggest that for many Bengali nationalists at the tail end of nineteenth century 'nation' was an obscure concept. Often 'nation' in the nationalist discourse coincided both with Bengal and with the territorial boundaries of British India. The early nationalists were more concerned about the contours of meaning and identity of the emerging national space than the territorial geographical dimensions of the national space. Carving out a national space out of colonial space meant providing it with a cultural identity and meaning. To put it differently, envisioning the nation as a pan-Indian entity is intimately tied to the production of meaning. During both pre-Swadeshi and Swadeshi periods, Bengali intellectuals like Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861-1907) played significant role in the articulation of identity formation as well as the production of meaning in the emergent national space.

How does Brahmabandhab Upadhyay envisage and interpret the national space? How does he interpret India and its past? How does he deal with the question of cultural and religious identity? Upadhyay wrote on a wide range of topics such as politics, religion, social issues, education, and culture. In spite of such diversity, at a deeper level we can detect a unifying thread in Upadhyay's thought and writing; and that thread is precisely the imagined national space. Seen as an overarching conceptual category, the notion of national space brings into unity what might otherwise appear as disparate fragments in Upadhyay's political thought. This article delineates the development as well as the complex nuances of Upadhyay's nationalist thought through various stages of its development.

There is one important factor to be noted in the development of Upadhyay's nationalism. And that factor has to do with Hindu identity. Upadhyay's nationalist thought is intrinsically related to the question of Hindu identity. More specifically, Hindu identity is intrinsically related to national identity in the nationalist perspective of Upadhyay. So overwhelming is his concern regarding the Hindu identity that it keeps appearing in most of his writings in one form or another. This identity formation process in the nationalist thought of Upadhyay can

be seen as a cluster of attitudes towards other competing groups such as non-Aryan groups, depressed classes, reformers, Muslims and Europeans. It needs to be noted right at the outset that for Upadhyay Hinduism is not a 'religion' like Christianity. Rather, Hinduism for him represents a cultural ethos, a philosophy and a way of life. There are four stages in the development of Upadhyay's nationalist thought.

First Stage: Upadhyay and 'Sanitized' Hindu Identity

The first stage in Upadhyay's nationalism is closely linked to his interpretation of Hindu identity. During this stage, Upadhyay sought to cleanse Hindu identity from what he thought were unacceptable and questionable elements. During this stage, Upadhyay's interpretation of Hindu identity may be termed as a 'sanitized' version of Hinduism which lasted from 1894 to 1897. During this period Upadhyay engages in a vigorous critique of traditional Hindu beliefs and practices which he thought were not consonant with true religion. At this point in his life, his Catholic faith serves as the guiding principle in his critique of Hinduism. It is important to note that at this point in time, for Upadhyay Hinduism represents both positive and negative elements. On the negative side, he is critical of Hindu pantheon[1] in general and of Krishna of Bhaagavat in particular.[2] Vedanta too comes under Upadhyay's critical scrutiny. He concludes that the Vedantic system is incompatible with Catholic doctrines, especially that of creation. On the positive side, he finds Vedic Theism as an antidote for the 'evils' of Hinduism such as polytheism, nature worship and idolatry. He insists that in spite of some negative tendencies, Hinduism does possess 'sublime' truths. A byproduct of Western education had been an enthusiasm for rational and critical enquiry among the Bengali intelligentsia and Upadhyay was not alone in questioning the cultural ethos of Hindu past. Bengal renaissance had brought several Hindu beliefs and practices under the scrutiny of rational and critical inquiry.

We find one of the earliest comprehensive interpretations of Upadhyay about India and its past, in an article titled "National Greatness," which was originally a public address given by him on 8 July 1896 in Karachi. In this article he focuses on 'the elementary qualifications that befit a nation to compete for the acquisition of greatness.' Dwelling 'upon the initial conditions that a nation must fulfil'

for greatness, Upadhyay considers the 'present state' of India. More to the point, he attempts to identify 'the fundamental defects which have arrested the march of the Indian people as a whole towards the goal of greatness.' For him, national greatness consists primarily in being gripped by 'the idea of the Infinite and Absolute.' In Upadhyay's reading, ancient India was 'great' precisely because the scriptures, rites and ceremonies, philosophy, cult and discipline- all tended to the elevation of the human mind towards the Infinite Being.[3] He insists on the need for the people to become familiar with India's 'glorious' past. He points out the lack of appreciation of Indian history by juxtaposing several examples:

> Our students, our historians, can accurately describe the battles of Marathon and Salamis and the exploits of the Greeks in their encounter with the Persians, but they have scarcely heard of the chivalrous deeds of Puru when he fought against the great Alexander. They know how the women of Carthage cut their hair for the purpose of supplying cordage for warships, but they do not know how Rajput women lighted up a funeral pyre and jumped into it, one by one, cheerfully and heroically, to save themselves from being violated by the Mlecchas. They will tell you how the Greeks died to a man in the pass of Thermopylae, but they are totally ignorant of a similar incident in the siege of Chitor.[4]

There is one thing that emerges clearly from Upadhyay's writings: the foundations of India need to be based on religion and religious values and such a basis is to be found in India's classical past. For Upadhyay as well as for other Indian nationalists the Indian classical past remained the ideal to which India must return, if it was to regain greatness.

Second Phase: Interface between Christian and Hindu Identity

The second phase in Upadhyay's articulation of Hindu identity lasts from 1897 to1900. During this phase we see some significant readjustments in Brahmabandhab's perspectives on Hindu identity. His major concern now is to present Catholicism to the Hindus of India in a meaningful way. During this period he was actively engaged in setting up a Catholic ashram on the banks of the Narmada River. His prime concern is to de-Europeanize Christianity in India. At this point in time Upadhyay was also in active search for theological-philosophical

categories to present Catholic truths which made sense in Hindu context. Perhaps the most important paradigmatic change in Upadhyay's approach to Hinduism during this period is the adoption of Vedanta, which he had denounced not long ago, now he would use it as the vehicle for conveying Catholic truths. He was convinced that just as Aristotelian philosophy nurtured Christian thinking in the West Hindu philosophy could serve Christian thinking in India.

During this phase Upadhyay articulated the 'Hindu-Catholic' synthesis. This is a new form of 'hyphenated identity' proposed by Upadhyay. He declared: "By birth we are Hindu and shall remain Hindu till death. But as dvija (twice-born) by virtue of our sacramental rebirth, we are Catholic; we are members of an indefectible communion embracing all ages and climes." He added: 'We are Hindus so far as our physical and mental constitution is concerned, but in regard to our immortal souls we are Catholic. We are Hindu Catholic."[5] Interestingly, such paradoxical juxtaposition was most clearly reflected in his death. Upadhyay saw no contradiction between being a Christian and being a Hindu at the same time, a conviction which he seems to have carried till his death.

Let us note some of the important developments in Upadhyay's nationalist thought during this period. A significant aspect of Upadhyay's thought is his diagnostic quest for India's present state of decline. He devotes considerable time and energy in showing the causes of India's degeneration. In an article titled "Degeneracy of India," (1897) Upadhyay locates the decline of India specifically in the Hindu worldview. It is important to note the change in perspective in Brahmabandhab in locating the source of India's decline. He situates India's decadence not so much in the political realm, rather in the way Hinduism has interpreted reality. More specifically he locates India's degeneracy in the Hindu interpretation of karma. According to Upadhyay, the traditional interpretation of karma doctrine left no room for 'vicarious suffering' which is the 'noble privilege of feeling and suffering for another.' Because of such interpretation of karma 'man has been made an unfeeling machine.' Upadhyay points out that since the doctrine of karma does not foster self-transcendence, responsibility and the virtue of self-sacrifice have been absent in India. More importantly, for Upadhyay, there is another crucial implication

of the karma doctrine: "The cohesive power of moral relationship which binds human society into an organic whole, has been destroyed." He goes on to compare the misapplied law of karma to 'a vampire sucking the very life-blood of India.'[6] It is clear that Upadhyay's reading of Indian 'decline' is from a Catholic perspective. During this period Brahmabandhab sees the British rule as providential and beneficial to India.

For Upadhyay Hinduism and Hindu philosophy are the foundations of Indian cultural ethos. Indian cultural ethos, as he sees, is the legacy of the classical Hindu heritage. At this point we must note one of the important elements in Upadhyay's interpretation of Hinduism. Hinduism, for him, is a living reality, and not a dead civilization of antiquity. Unlike the dead civilizations, the Hindu race has been persevered right up to the present time. Upadhyay asks:

> Where are now those ancient nations whose deeds have been recorded in golden letters by historians? Where are the Egyptians and Phoenicians? Where are the Babylonians and Assyrians? Where are they? They are gone never to rise again. But the Hindu race has persevered. India has passed through fiery ordeals and tremendous crises; she has undergone most excruciating trials... Still the people of India have lingered on bound together with the tie of a common, ancient tradition. There must be some deep significance in her marvellous survival.[7]

For Brahmabandhab such capacity for 'marvellous survival' holds out the hope for the future of India. Though there are signs of degeneration and decay Upadhyay believes in India's future glory: "We believe that India will rise again and be exalted in glory. We fondly cherish the hope that the day will come when she will bloom as a hundred-petalled lotus and madden the whole world with the fragrance of her virtue. Apart from this belief and hope in her future greatness we find it hard to explain the miraculous length of her life."[8]

Upadhyay's Hindu-Catholicism was not acceptable to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Papal delegate Zaleski was opposed to Upadhyay's vision of Catholicism. Zaleski was not in favour of the Ashram project undertaken by Brahmabandhab. By March 1899 Sophia (monthly), a journal edited by Upadhyay, ceased to exist.

Third Phase: Upadhyay's Anxiety over Hindu Identity

The third phase in Upadhyay's articulation of Hindu identity lasts from 1900 to1901. Despite opposition from the hierarchy, Upadhyay's concerns about Indian Catholicism have not yet waned completely. In the year 1900 we see a number of articles by Brahmabandhab which sought to create Hindu categories to articulate Catholic truths mainly through a new journal, named Sophia, which now appeared as a weekly. During this period he continues to explore themes such as Vedic Theism and Vedanta in this journal. From June 1900 onwards Upadhyay explored Sankara's Vedanta extensively. Upadhyay who had denounced Advaita not long ago, now becomes convinced that Vedanta 'will play as important a part in giving direction to modern Indian thought as did Greek philosophy in moulding different schools of European philosophy.'[9] From this point onwards, for Upadhyay the foundation of India's cultural rejuvenation is Sankara's Vedanta.

However, there is a subtle change taking place in Upadhyay's thinking regarding Hinduism and Hindu identity at this point of time. And that change, on the one hand, has to do with Upadhyay's consistent opposition to European/Orientalist interpretation of Hinduism. During this period he is highly critical of Orientalists like Thibaut and Max Muller. He feels that Western Orientalists have not really understood the essence of Indian thought and philosophy.[10] The larger question reflected in Upadhyay's writings during this period is: who is entitled to interpret India's cultural heritage?

On the other hand, the change in Upadhyay's thinking has to do with his own grappling with Hindu/Indian identity. He is increasingly concerned about the effects of excessive European influences on India which he felt were detrimental to the Hindu mode of thought. Upadhyay writes: "European philosophy is aggressive and by unceasing onslaughts is attempting to destroy Hindu thought. Our existence is at stake."[11] Upadhyay's effort at the educational front has to be seen within the context of Hindu identity. Most of his plans of education centred on strengthening Hindu cultural ethos which he felt were under the threat of westernizing influences. Upadhyay stressed the need to invigorate the Hindu mode of thought:

> We shall never be able to think vigorously unless we are taught to think as Hindus. No doubt, our education cannot be complete if we do not assimilate European culture, but there must be first a healthy constitution to befit us for the process of assimilation. European science makes our herbs and trees grow most luxuriantly but only when they are planted in Indian soil. No science, no culture would be of any use to them if they were transplanted to a foreign land. Our universities are producing only bastard bantlings who can think neither like a European nor like a Hindu.[12]

We see another significant development in Upadhyay's nationalist thinking during this period. There is an increasing tendency of identifying Hindu thought with Indian thought in Upadhyay's writings. For Brahmabandhab the creators of Indian cultural ethos are the Aryans. By parity of reason there is an unmistakable projection of Aryan race or Hindu race as the rightful inheritors of the emerging national space in Upadhyay's writings. From the perspective of Upadhyay the decline of Hindu/Aryan race is equal to the very decline of India; the progress of Hindu/Aryan race is equal to the progress of 'India.'

The territorial contours of the emerging national space in Upadhyay's writings are not very explicit: sometimes this national space is identified as India, sometimes as Bengal, sometimes as Bharat and sometimes as Hindustan. Often he shuttles between the 'national' and regional identities. For example, while writing about the significance of Durga Puja for Bengalis Upadhyay notes that the 'readers in the Western and Southern presidencies are, perhaps, not aware of what is Durga Puja.' He goes on to note the difference of signification attached to Durga Puja in various parts of British India: "The strange thing is that Bengal, effeminate Bengal, goes mad over this power-worship. The strong Hindustani, the stalwart Punjabi, the heroic Rajput and the sturdy Mahratta are not half as much stirred in the celebration of the worship of the Goddess of Power as the delicate Bengali."[13]

There is one aspect of the above quote which merits our attention in the context of the emerging national space. In the scale of comparison Upadhyay has included Bengali, Hindustani, Punjabi, Rajput and Mahratta which form the traditional Aryan 'heartland.' Nowhere does he mention or compare Dravidian south India with the Aryan territories. Upadhyay writes: "Durga Puja is believed to be the celebration of the anniversary of Rama's conquest of Ravana- the triumph of the Aryans

over the non-Aryans. Rama is said to have worshipped sakti (power) to conquer his monster-enemy."[14] For Upadhyay the triumph of the Aryans over the non-Aryans is a 'national triumph' and Durga puja is the celebration of that 'national' victory. Upadhyay laments the lack of 'national' spirit among Bengalis during Durga puja: "Not a spark of chivalry kindles the breast of the Bengali, not a thought of past glory and greatness crosses his mind, not even a teardrop moistens his eye at the sight of his misery and degradation, during this commemorative season of national triumph."[15]

Upadhyay's notion of cultural-national space reflects the assumptions of Aryan Race theory which is deeply embedded in Aryan-Dravidian dichotomy. In the second half of the nineteenth century the Aryan race theory had generated considerable interest both in Europe and in India.[16] The Aryan race theory had a significant impact on the Indian nationalist scene. The Indian nationalists were quick to incorporate Orientalist interpretation of ancient India into their political agenda.[17] The Aryan race theory became a convenient political weapon for three different groups: Hindu nationalists, the Dalits and Dravidians.[18] To many Hindu intellectuals, the Aryan notion served basically as a nationalist rallying point as well as a cohesive instrument. Indian intellectuals and nationalists of the nineteenth century, who were mainly from Hindu background, found in Aryan Race theory an ideological support to further their nationalist cause.

By the year 1900 we see a growing anxiety in Upadhyay's writings regarding the integrity of Hindu society. For him the ancient India was united and one under Aryan supremacy; but now he sees the signs of decline and decay all around. He writes: "When any calamity overtook the father-land, when clannish jealousies tore the national heart, patriots and bards could appeal to the entire race by touching one common cord which bound together every Aryan child, notwithstanding the prevalence of stupendous differences." Upadhyay points out that laxity and looseness in enforcing the salutary conditions of social life will bring into the fold heterogeneous elements which will endanger the very existence of the society. Against the potential disintegration of Hindu social order Upadhyay suggests that certain conditions must be laid down for every member of society under the pain of excommunication. These conditions do not pertain to the uniformity

of belief among the Hindus, rather to social practices.[19] He suggests two 'tentative' conditions for every Hindu to be followed: (1) not to interdine and intermarry with non-Hindu races, such as Europeans, Mahommedans, etc and (2) not to eat beef. According to him, 'intermarriages with alien races will make hybrids of us and destroy our national integrity. It should be repressed with a high hand. Interdining often leads to social aberrations and hence it should also be prohibited as a rule.' He points out that beef eating shocks Hindu sentiments horribly and to violate that sentiment is to break up the entire Hindu edifice.'

Upadhyay is extremely critical of any efforts which he felt would threaten the integrity of the Hindu social fabric. It is against his anxiety of the Hindu social fabric that Upadhyay's pronouncements on the caste system need to be located.

> The caste system is a natural evolution of the social instinct. Far-sighted, learned men formulated it in consonance with the genius of the people. The greatness of the Hindu race was achieved largely through the regulating influence of caste. It was caste that preserved the Hindus from being transformed into hybrids of the Semitic stock. It is this social polity which still checks mammon-worship on the European scale.[20]

Upadhyay sees Hindu society as an organic whole: "Hindu society is an organism. It has its unity as well as its diversity, though the unity has been greatly disturbed by disintegrating influences consequent upon too much emphasis laid upon the principle of differentiation. The caste system which diversifies the principle of Hindu unity should be restored to its original salutary order of divisions."[21] Upadhyay is highly critical of those social reformers who wanted to dismantle Hindu caste system. Upadhyay writes:

> Some of our Bengal reformers are uncontrollable. They will not rest until they see all old landmarks which go to constitute social variety clean washed off. They are seized with a sickly, sentimental idea of brotherhood. They have been tutored by certain European freelances that not to have uniform fellowship with anybody and everybody is unjust, immoral. They are chips of socialists. Social differences and divisions there must be.[22]

A close scrutiny of his writings between 1900 and 1901 would suggest that Upadhyay is disillusioned with the state of the church in India. In 1900 Sophia weekly came to an end; in March 1902 Catholic authorities banned Upadhyay's journal The Twentieth Century.[23] After the ecclesiastical censures he began writing in Bangadarsan on issues pertaining to Hindu society almost with a vengeance. Upadhyay's trip to England (1902-3) made him even more antagonistic toward the British.[24] Now on, anti-Europeanism becomes more and more explicit in his writings. He sees European domination detrimental both to national progress and to the progress of Hinduism. Now all his energies are focused in projecting Hindu identity as the basis of Indian national identity. One important aspect of his approach to Hinduism is the growing concern to strengthen the Hindu identity. Somehow Upadhyay is convinced that cultural regeneration is the condition for the possibility of national regeneration.

Fourth Phase: Hindu Nationalism as Cultural nationalism

In the fourth stage, Upadhyay moves towards Hindu nationalism or cultural nationalism and this period lasts from 1901 to 1907. The beginning of what might be called the Hindu nationalist phase of Brahmabandhab is marked by his writings in Bangadarsan from mid 1901. A major turning point in Upadhyay's Hindu nationalism is the starting of Sandhya in 1904 December. As Sumit Sarkar points out, radical politics and aggressive Hinduism often got inextricably combined in the pages of Sandhya.[25] His interest in Catholicism, for all practical purposes, becomes somewhat marginal. In spite of opposition from the Catholic hierarchy Upadhyay remains a Catholic; from now onwards he disengages himself from any theological controversies. The most pressing concern for him during the swadeshi agitation centres on strengthening Hindu identity. We can discern three interrelated aspects dominating Upadhyay thought: (i) His articulations of Hindu identity which become more and more resolute. (ii) His anxiety which becomes more acute over racial self-preservation. (iii) His anti-European stance which becomes more forceful. There are several articles and speeches of this period which reveal Upadhyay's new perspective on Hinduism.

Given his anguish over Hindu identity it is not entirely surprising to see in its inaugural number Sandhya Upadhyay declaring that the

'Vedas, Brahmin leadership and caste were all indispensable for the Hindu.'[26] One of the clearest articulations of Upadhyay's understanding of Hinduism can be found in an important essay titled "The One Centredness of the Hindu Race," written in 1901. In this essay published in Bangadarsan he delineates the 'Hinduness' or the Bengali term used by him "Hindutva" of the Hindus. The significance of this article consists in his effort to synthesize his views on Hinduism written earlier and brings to focus the meaning of 'Hinduness' or Hindutva. So overwhelming is his concern for racial self-preservation that practically every article written by Brahmabandhab during this period reflects the theme of Hindu identity and 'racial self-preservation.' According to Sumit Sarkar, Rabindranath Tagore came under attack from Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh "for not being sufficiently enthusiastic over the amalgamation of politics with Hindu revivalism, and for his Universalist leanings which were felt to have a demoralizing effect."[27]

In July 1901 Upadhyay had expressed his anguish over the loss of Self and the loss of 'spirit of manliness' under colonialism.[28] In Brahmabandhab's reading, the Western education and cultural adaptations by Indians are responsible for eroding the traditional social system. To make matters worse, Indian social reformers and liberal minded Indians are questioning the very basis and validity of Hindu caste system. As far as Upadhyay is concerned these two factors are causing a grave danger to the very existence of Hindu society.

Central to the creation of the national space within the nationalist discourse is the enunciation of India's 'difference' with other nations and cultures. Articulations of dissimilarity entail a double dimension of forging both identity and difference: On the one hand, such differences mark out Indian national space from other national spaces as something unique. On the other hand, this differentiation strategy was central in forging a collective identity in most nationalist discourses.[29] Orientalists portrayed an image of India as ontologically different from the West and this image became crucial to the reconstruction of the national space in the Indian nationalist discourse. The writings of Max Muller in particular reflected an image of India as a land of lofty spirituality and as an embodiment of primordial community whose very existence symbolized an implicit critique of

the West, the cultural 'other' of Europe. The idea of a spiritually oriented India vis-à-vis a materialistically oriented West became part and parcel of the nationalist imagination. The materialist West was also seen as victorious, masculine and strong, whereas India, though spiritually superior to the West, was weak, passive and unorganized.[30]

Upadhyay compared and contrasted the materialistic West with the 'spiritual' India.[31] Upadhyay is highly critical of the British inclination for conquest and domination. "What's the point," Upadhyay writes from England, "of conquering Nature for one's use, of enslaving her, if without her one loses one's peace of mind? Such victory- hardly victory, but defeat-is really to acknowledge abject servitude." Upadhyay points out the futility of such conquest and victory: "...If, having shed blood through a rain of cannon balls, I amass gold from the very depth of the desert, and if I use that gold in terrible strife for my own ends, and if that gold then causes conflict, and I lose it, and suffer the gall of that loss, where is the difference between slavery and human prowess?"[32] From Oxford he wrote: "To tell the truth, I don't like the vain display of English civilization one little bit. All this manhandling of Nature is getting on my nerves."[33] In contrast, Upadhyay writes about the Hindu vision of man's relation to nature: "He is the noblest of men for the Hindu who, having based himself on the most sublime, boundless, all-encompassing Unity, then wanders freely as a lord amidst the trifling manifestations of plurality. Nature serves such a one, no doubt, yet he himself is not caught up in Nature's ties."[34]

Hidden behind these comparisons is the effort to sift through the distinctive elements of two contrasting worldviews of the rulers and the ruled. In Upadhyay's interpretation the Englishman, the ruler, is caught up in the web of attachment and worldly ties whereas the Hindu, the ruled, who is beyond such worldly ties, soars in freedom. By a clever inversion of preferences and values, on the one hand, Upadhyay shows that though ruled by the English, the Hindu is potentially free because of his approach to reality. On the other hand, the English, the rulers, are caught up in slavery. The English desire to conquer, govern and amass wealth is his bondage. In Upadhyay's view, the Hindu worldview is far superior to that of the English.

During the final months of his life Upadhyay's cultural nationalism became more and more vociferous. He became highly critical of the

moderate nationalists who wanted reforms within the framework of constitutional means. According to Brahmabandhab's friend and colleague Animananda, "Upadhyay's Swadeshi was altogether different. He was the first man in our political history to suggest complete independence for India."[35] The pages of Sandhya reflected Upadhyay's nationalism which had begun to advocate violence and extremism. Upadhyay wrote in Sandhya about his nationalist conviction: "Know that the Hindu never dies, neither of a bullet, nor of decease and pain. A few worms like you and me may indeed die, but the Hindu race will not die out and cannot die out..."[36] Perhaps the most striking expression of his cultural nationalism is reflected in his exhortation given to fellow Bengalis on the eve of Swadeshi agitation: "In all that you hear, in all that you learn, in all that you do, remain a Hindu, remain a Bengali."[37]

Upadhyay was at the forefront of the Swadeshi movement which began in the context of the partition of Bengal. He was arrested on September 10, 1907 for the inflammatory articles published in Sandhya and prosecuted on charges of sedition. Brahmabandhab had claimed that no foreign court would be able to punish him. Interestingly enough, this proved to be only too true because he died before the conclusion of the sedition trial due to complications arising out of hernia operation on 27 October, 1907, at the age of forty seven.[38]

Conclusion

Whether or not Upadhyay's advocacy of violence as a political means can be justified as a 'historical necessity' is an open question. However, Upadhyay's role in evolving the early nationalist response to British colonialism cannot be brushed aside lightly. The colonial ideology had legitimized their continued existence through the claim that India was not a nation. Over and against this colonial claim, the anti-colonial nationalism required to forge a national identity. In the process of confronting British colonialism Indian nationalists like Brahmabandhab Upadhyay felt the need to create a national identity through the mediation of complex mechanisms. Out of several competing claims of what constituted such national identity, a common Hindu heritage, based on the classical Hindu ethos originally created by the Aryans, was projected as the core structure of nationhood. Indeed, there are several aspects of Upadhyay's nationalist thought which are

open to criticism. Upadhyay's nationalism was a response to a situation in which the loss of Self was looming large in the political and cultural horizon. His nationalism was conditioned by what he perceived as the urgent need to consolidate those aspects of culture and identity which were at the verge of disintegration.

Notes

1 See, B. Upadhyay, "The Supreme Being Under Delusion," *Sophia*-Monthly, January, 1896.

2 He goes on to suggest that 'for the moral safety of India Krishna of Bhagavat should be denounced and abjured by all right minded patriots.' B. Upadhyay, "Krishna of Bhagavat," *Sophia*-Monthly, January, 1895.

3 B. Upadhyay, "National Greatness," *Sophia*-Monthly, August, 1896.

4 B. Upadhyay, "National Greatness," *Sophia*-Monthly, August, 1896.

5 B. Upadhyay, "Are We Hindus," *Sophia*-Monthly, July 1898.

6 B. Upadhyay, "Degeneracy of India," *Sophia*-Monthly, July, 1897.

7 B. Upadhyay, "Why we are Fallen," *Sophia*-Monthly, January, 1898.

8 B. Upadhyay, "Why we are Fallen," *Sophia*-Monthly, January, 1898.

9 B. Upadhyay, "Vedantism," *Sophia*-Weekly, 11 August, 1900.

10 B. Upadhyay, "Notes: Western Misperception of Hinduism," *Sophia*-Weekly, 24 November, 1900.

11 B. Upadhyay, "European Domination," *Sophia*-Weekly, 18 August, 1900.

12 B. Upadhyay, "Modern Education and Hindu Thought," *Sophia*-Weekly, 30 June, 1900.

13 B. Upadhyay, "Power-Worship," *Sophia*-Weekly, 29 September, 1900.

14 B. Upadhyay, "Power-Worship," *Sophia*-Weekly, 29 September, 1900.

15 B. Upadhyay, "Power-Worship," *Sophia*-Weekly, 29 September, 1900.

16 See, Thomas Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1977); Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic*

Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

17 Romila Thapar, "Some Appropriations of the Theory of Aryan Race Relating to the Beginnings of Indian History," *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia* (ed.) Daud Ali (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp. 15-35.

18 Romila Thapar describes the politics and dynamics behind the various appropriations of the Aryan race theory: "The debate over how it [Aryan race theory] was to be interpreted provides an insight into the political agendas of the groups who used it. These groups were involved in seeking identities from the past and in countering each other's claims to these identities as well as choosing a homeland and working out a national culture." Romila Thapar, "Some Appropriations of the Theory of Aryan Race Relating to the Beginnings of Indian History," pp. 17-18.

19 B. Upadhyay, "Integrity of Hindu Society," *Sophia*-Weekly, 10 November, 1900.

20 B. Upadhyay, "Question and Answers: Caste," in *Sophia*-Weekly, 15 September, 1900.

21 B. Upadhyay, "Notes: Caste," in *Sophia*-Weekly, 27 October, 1900.

22 B. Upadhyay, "Notes: Caste," in *Sophia*-Weekly, 27 October, 1900.

23 Julius Lipner and Gispert-Sauch, Eds, *The Writings of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay*, Vol. II, (Bangalore: The United Theological College, 2002) footnote no. 114, p. 135. Henceforth abbreviated as *TWBU*.

24 Upadhyay had left for Europe in September 1902 and came back to India by July 1903. C.f., Animananda, *The Blade*, pp. 119-120.

25 Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947* (Madras: Macmillan, 1996) pp. 113-14.

26 Sumit Sarkar writes: "Strange words these, coming from a man who had been once a Brahmo and then for quite some time a Catholic." Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973. Reprint, 1994) p. 259.

27 B. Upadhyay, "Swadeshbhakti o biswaprem," *Swaraj*, 15 Baisakh 1314 (1904). Cf., Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908*, p. 61.

28 B. Upadhyay, "Our Poverty," *The Twentieth Century*, 31 July, 1901.

29 Manu Goswami, *Producing India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004) p. 15.

30 Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton University Press, 1999. Reprint, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004) p. 68.

31 Several letters written during his stay in England reflect the theme of identity and difference. See for instance, B. Upadhyay, "Letter from a Sannyasi Staying in England," 16 January, 1903. These letters were originally published in *Bangabasi* between 1902 and 1903. Cf., Julius Lipner and George Gispert-Sauch, Eds, *TWBU*, Vol. II (Bangalore: The United Theological College, 2002) p. 510.

32 B. Upadhyay, "Letter From a Sannyasi Staying in England," 16 January, 1903. Lipner and Gispert-Sauch, Eds, *TWBU*, Vol. II, p. 511.

33 B. Upadhyay, "Letter from a Sannyasi Staying in England," letter No. 6, Oxford, 6 March, 1903. Lipner and Gispert-Sauch, Eds, *TWBU*, Vol. II, p. 513.

34 B. Upadhyay, "Letter From a Sannyasi Staying in England," Letter No. 5, Oxford, 16 January, 1903. J. Lipner and Gispert-Sauch, Eds, *TWBU*, Vol. II, p. 511.

35 Italics in the original. B. Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 136.

36 B. Upadhyay, *Sandhya*, 11 January 1907. C.f Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 139.

37 B. Upadhyay, *Sandhya*, November, 1904. C.f Animananda, *The Blade*, p.131.

38 Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 176.

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Indian Christian Approaches to Theologizing: Lessons from the Seashore

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Abstract: . 'Inculturation of theology' was the key phrase for a long time since Vat.II in theological discourse. It rightly pointed to the reality of the alienation of Christianity and Christian theology in India. Later, theological discourse took up the theme of 'contextualised theology'. The key question here is not 'how to inculturate theology', but rather 'how and where do people experience the divine, and articulate that experience and use it for wholeness and wellbeing'. Authors indicate two main orientations in contemporary theological discourse in India: the socio-cultural orientation and the socio-political orientation. The present paper os an attempt to cull out some methodological directions relying on the positive cultural and religious resources that lie dormant in Christian communities. Authentic and relevant theology has to have a life context and a lived-experience as its point of reference. Doing theology in India is not simply a matter of expressing the Christian faith in culturally intelligible categories, but rather a question of understanding and articulating the living theology that sustains and supports diverse Christian communities, and responding to their concerns and challenges within a faith matrix in the direction of human liberation and wholeness. The author believes that an interpretative presentation of the religious experience and practice of the Mukkuva community could contribute in no small way to our theological enterprise in India.

Keywords: inculturation, Mukkuvar, fishing community, liberation theology, Sangam

1. The Indian scenario: shifting contours of the theological project

Christianity in India is still struggling hard to shed its alien garb and its colonial past. 'Inculturation of theology' was the key phrase for a long time since Vat.II in theological discourse. It rightly pointed to the reality of the alienation of Christianity and Christian theology in India. Later, theological discourse took up the theme of 'contextualised theology'. The key question here is not 'how to inculturate theology', but rather 'how and where do people experience the divine, and articulate that experience and use it for wholeness and wellbeing'. Authors indicate two main orientations in contemporary theological discourse in India: the socio-cultural orientation and the socio-political orientation.[1] Both these streams are built, so to say, on what Pieris describes as the constitutive dimensions of Asian reality, viz. poverty and religiosity,[2] although some add a third, viz. the all-pervasive caste. The socio-political stream has been deeply influenced by the methodology of Latin American Liberation Theology, with its accent on experience and praxis commitment directed at the transformation of the social reality. But it fails to take the cultural matrix seriously. The socio-cultural orientation, on the other hand, remains so preoccupied with personal experience and transformation that it fails to be touched by the burning socio-political issues around.

In an enlightening article some years ago S. Kappen tried to define theology as "the analytic, critical, articulate, dialogical, and committed reflection on our primordial encounter with God."[3] If theology deals with people's encounter with God (or the divine, as he prefers to use elsewhere), we need to inquire first where and how this encounter takes place. Every human encounter has to have a spatial-temporal context. The question, in this perspective, is not what the texts of the Bible say, nor how to apply biblical precepts to human situations. Amaladoss writes pointedly: "Scripture and tradition are of value only in so far as they are a living part of my contemporary faith experience. They are not data out there to be looked at from the outside."[4] The notion of 'encounter' remains the point of departure.

The questions and concerns that haunt Indian theologians are many. Since the Indian religious world is predominantly a ritual world, how

does theology deal with it adequately? How to handle a religious world that is not demarcated and contrasted with a secular world? How to interact with the secular world itself in its manifold complexity? How to develop a theological language that resonates with the everyday experience of different faith communities? ... The theological methodology that is derived from the Enlightenment rationality of the West finds itself ill-equipped to cope with these questions. Let us agree that "it is high time that we stop repeating the need for a different methodology, and enter into tentative attempts to delineate methodologies, even at the risk of being incomplete."[5]. The fact is that such attempts have been going on in different communities, though academic theologians remain largely unacquainted with these. A rich collection of theological literature is emerging on the religious experience of Dalit communities and tribal communities, exploring a methodological path yet to be charted.

This paper tries to articulate the contours of an Indian theology from the perspective of the marine fishing community, more specifically the Mukkuva community inhabiting the South-Western coast of India.[6] Lessons from their life-context and theological practice may provide possible building blocks for an Indian theology, I believe, and these may have wider significance for different faith communities and cultural groups in our country to take the ongoing search further.

3. Building-blocks from the Coastal Experience

1)The value of latent dimensions of religiosity

What usually become material for theological discourse are the rational articulations like scripture, doctrines and institutional expressions. In a global context these vary little from one place or community to another and remain the *manifest form* of religion. Manifest form refers to the socially recognized and sanctioned elements that exist within the conventional and official structures and norms. But the everyday life and practice of the same people will be far removed from what are officially presented. What a specific people or community really believe in and live by need not coincide with the official. Deep down it is the *latent* religiosity that determines what a people treasure as theirs, rooted in their context and culture, expressed in their own idiom, and giving meaning to their life and its struggles.

The *'latent mode'* refers to those elements of religion that are not recognized and approved by the community, and hence operate outside the official structures and norms. Lesser visibility would go with the latent, and hence conscious efforts are needed to acknowledge its theological value, and to evolve a methodology that would do justice to its richness.[7]

A close look at the fishing communities reveals the significance of the latent mode very powerfully. True, the liturgical year, the Sunday observance and the sacramental prescriptions are valuable to them, and they remain scrupulously faithful to them. But what would make their religiosity unique, pertains to the latent realm, which is not confined to the church and to the liturgy, but pervades their whole life. The fishing occupation remains as much a religious activity as liturgical practices. The sacred-secular polarity tends to disappear in the latent realm. It is the sphere of deep experience, that of *anubhava* which transcends verbal articulation and textual formulation. Since every experience is bound by time and space, phrases like universal religious experience, and hence universal theology, remain suspect, seen from the latent mode. No theology would make sense if taken out of the realm of experience of the people concerned.

The latent mode, as a starting-point, would also call for an approach that is more empirical than narrowly textual. The need to turn to the empirical approach has been well acknowledged by Indian theologians although progress remains negligible. Empirical theology means the theological investigation and pursuit that begins from socio-political facts and data. Every single issue treated in theological discourse, thus, will have a concrete social location.[8] This would call for doing theology with reference to particular faith communities, collecting and recording detailed data on their life using appropriate tools, and reflecting on them in the light of the Gospel. Methodologies and tools developed by the social sciences, viz. participant observation, ethnographic narratives, life histories, case studies, etc, become greatly useful in this enterprise.

2) The centrality of the worldview of a people

It is only within the specific worldview of a people that their sacred universe becomes intelligible. The religious representations that

embody the sacred universe weave together the diverse experiences and events of everyday life into a meaningful whole. Cumulatively they provide interpretative schemes and guidelines for the conduct of individuals and communities. Various expressions and articulations of a people's faith and their fundamental value conceptions can be grasped properly only within their worldviews. This explains why consideration of a worldview becomes necessary for a theological activity in the Indian context.

The *Sangam* literature[9] gives us valuable insights into the worldview of the coastal people which may be termed *neithal worldview*. The ancient *Tamiïakam* had been divided into five eco-cultural zones (*aintiòai*), each having its own cultural adaptation and worldview. *Neithaltinai* referred to the coastal zone in the five-fold categorization, and its inhabitants were *Minavar* or *Valainar* or *Valaipparadavar*. The deity of *neithal* was *Varuòan*, a pre-existing 'lord of the ocean' later transformed. However worship of the goddess had been more prominent, as evident from the veneration of *Ko^{oo}avai*, the war goddess, and of the sea itself as *Kadalamma* (mother ocean). The seashore remains the *axis mundi*. The sea and the land, the wind and the waves, and the configuration of heavenly bodies, become meaningful around this pivot. What characterizes their experience of *Kadalamma*, the mother ocean, is her inherent *ambivalence*: she appears as a nurturing mother and protector, on the one hand, while revealing her fury and wrath, on the other. This ambivalence is a recurring theme in the worldview of the Mukkuvar.

It is the life-world of a people that primarily determines their worldview. To be a Mukkuvan is to be attuned to the rhythm of the ocean, that is ever in turmoil. To live, for him, is to live amidst change every moment. The wind and the waves, the moon and the tides, the fish and the stars... all bring to him every moment the reality of change and of movement. His today is quite unlike his yesterday, and he also knows from experience, that tomorrow will again be different. It is this eternal newness that seems to make every day fascinating, and makes his life challenging and dynamic. Yet there is a pattern in this change, he knows; he knows when the next tide will occur, and when the moonlight will vanish.... This 'abnormal' time-consciousness and the feature of eternal change have far-reaching consequences not only

for his daily occupation, but also for every sphere of life including that of religion and theology.

The *neithal* man is basically a hunter-gatherer and a nomad. The hunting instinct is intrinsic to the occupation of marine fishing, and stands in clear contrast to an agrarian culture. Unpredictability and risk seem to characterize the *neithal* culture. The rough monsoon season means risk to the craft and gear, as well as to the very life of fishermen. Certain fishing operations like shark fishing in deep waters involve danger. The fact that fish is a highly perishable commodity prevents the 'harvest' from being stored up for the lean season. The state of flux characterizes not only the phenomenon of the ocean but also fishermen's very life. Fishing and associated activities of the Mukkuvar are determined mostly by the lunar calendar, the sun has only a minimal role. The incongruence between their lunar worldview and the mainstream society's solar worldview is a fact to reckon with.

Every religious tradition has evolved, and continues to operate, in the context of a specific and unique worldview. The Mukkuva worldview has been moulded by and is vitally linked with the community's association with the sea and related phenomena. Conversion into Catholicism could not erase the pervasive hold of this worldview. Similarly, the missionaries brought along not only the Iberian Catholicism, but also a worldview that is specific to the Mediterranean basin. Conversion was an encounter not merely between two divergent religious traditions, but between two divergent worldviews. Every article of faith is interwoven into the worldview of the people in question, and hence a serious consideration of the worldview becomes a precondition for inquiry into their faith journey.

The seashore remains a powerful metaphor. It is the boundary line between the land and the sea. But it is a boundary that is ever shifting – every moment, every day, every season. The boundary is ever merging, ever shifting, and never static and eternal. The 'merging of boundaries' gives us a useful clue to understand a critical issue that Indian theology faces, that of conflicting notions of boundary between religious communities. This is often behind conflicts around conversion and anti-conversion involving Hindus and Christians.[10] This metaphor may explain why people like Mukkuvar are able to live with diverse streams of religious heritage without inner conflict or contradiction.

3) Need to acknowledge the faith journey of a people

It is necessary to remember that Indian society is a conglomerate of cultural groups and communities, each one jealously guarding one's own cultural identity and heritage. Most Christian communities have a history of conversion from a pre-existing worldview – whether tribal or Dalit or maritime or any other. The history of their faith journey does not start with conversion, instead it involves layers of faith traditions accumulated by many generations. The long process of assimilation and synthesis involving various sources, often merging into one, or at times staying with apparent paradox, has been part of their faith journey. Various studies show that even after conversion elements of the previous dispensation continue or are assimilated.[11] Acknowledging this fact calls for inquiry into the layers that form part of the Christian heritage. Here we shall restrict our inquiry into the *Indic-neithal* and to the Iberian Catholic roots.

Two features stand out while considering the *neithal* roots of Mukkuva religious heritage. One refers to the tradition of goddess worship. The other pertains to the urge for warrior divinities. The close association with the ocean instils in them such an attitude of awe and reverence to the ocean that *kadalamma* gets personified and divinised.

A brief look at the *neithal* worldview reveals how various beliefs and divinities emerging from the *neithal tinai* and from various Indic traditions contributed to the shaping of a culture and a religious universe that reflected the specificity of the coastal community. The predominance of the worship of the mother goddesses and of Murugan closely links the Mukkuvar with the religion of ancient *Tamiïakam.* Deities and devotions from other Indic traditions were added on later. *Neithal* religion tries to express the composite of this total phenomenon. Buddhism and Jainism had been popular along the coastal regions and among the subaltern groups in the early centuries of the common era. These began to decline by the 8th century, and many Buddhist/Jain temples were appropriated and adapted to become Hindu temples. At the same time many elements from these traditions got absorbed into the popular form of Hinduism that flourished. Many Dravidian deities were transformed and assimilated into the Hindu pantheon. The mother goddess tradition continued through the Devi cult. It continues through many present-day Christian practices like

the veneration of *Cintathira Mata* (Our Lady of sea voyage). In brief, the religion of the Mukkuvar at the time of their conversion was externally that of popular Hinduism, but adapted through a complex process of assimilation and synthesis of various strands of Indic religiosity. So it is proper to call it an *Indic-neithal* heritage.

It was into this mould of Indic religiosity that Iberian Catholicism got implanted in the 16th century, thus initiating a new process of assimilation and synthesis. There has been a superimposition of Iberian Catholic belief system and ritual system over an Indic form of religiosity in which the community had been nurtured for ages. The transition from *neithal* religion to a creedal religion has been charted out in detail elsewhere.[12] Here I indicate the salient aspects of this transitional experience.

The Christian history of Mukkuvar starts only after the arrival of the Portuguese, and more specifically with the missionary work of Francis Xavier along the Travancore coast in the 1540s. He and his companions tried to erase elements of the pre-existing religious past of the Mukkuvar and replace them with the catechism of the Catholic faith and the Iberian liturgical practices with the help of printed prayer books translated into the vernacular. They introduced Christian feasts of Lord Jesus, veneration of Virgin Mary, and set up church structures and offices and confraternities. What was attempted was a systematic transition from a *neithal* religion to a creedal religion. But this transition was not a smooth affair either. Elements of the pre-Christian tradition lingered on and got merged with the Catholic tradition, giving birth to a unique form of Mukkuva Catholicism. *Neithal* religiosity continued to operate at the latent realm, often invisible to the church authorities, either re-interpreting the scriptures and doctrines in accordance with their worldview, or creating new forms of religiosity to meet their needs. The theological practice of Mukkuva religion remains embedded in the complexity of this latent mode, and can be unveiled only if the faith journey of this people is taken seriously and is acknowledged in its totality.

The above mechanism shows that it has been a process of *encounter and dialogue* between two divergent religious traditions and worldviews. This process has been taking place quietly for generations, and it is proof of the inner vitality of the Mukkuva religious heritage

that it was neither annihilated by the hegemony of Hinduism, nor uprooted by the incursion of Iberian Catholicism. It also shows how latent religiosity feels at home with the disparate elements of apparently incongruous religious traditions, and discovers meaning for life-support and orientation. The creative outcome of this process is both a factor of enrichment and a sphere of challenge.

4) Rituals as valid entry points to latent theology

Insights from ritual theory and ritual analysis become useful here. The notion of ritual is extremely valuable in the Indian context which gives a high premium to ritual life. Rituals, as symbolic actions, make observable the worldview of a people, and also their living theology. *"Lex orandi, lex credenti"* has ever remained an acknowledged principle in Christian tradition, and it still remains a useful tool in understanding the dormant theology anywhere. Generally a ritual is regarded as an action that is performed, and it is distinguished from the conceptual aspects of religion such as beliefs, creeds, and doctrines. However, a clear-cut demarcation of rituals from beliefs does not resonate with the experience of people not having a speculative tradition. For them rituals constitute the medium through which both conceptual and behavioural components get integrated. Thus rituals serve as a window on the inner dynamics by which people make and remake their sacred world.

The term *ritual* is widely used in disciplines like cultural anthropology, sociology or theology, but is not always uniformly understood. Some use it in a broader sense to refer to all 'culturally defined sets of behaviour' irrespective of their explicit religious or social content. All symbolical dimension of human behaviour becomes ritual here. On the other hand, traditional theologians tend to link rituals narrowly with liturgical ceremonies and religious cult. This article prefers to avoid both the extremes. Firstly, the cultural and religious horizons seem to interpenetrate in the realm of rituals, thus making it difficult to stamp certain rituals as purely religious and others non-religious. Secondly, rituals are viewed not only as means to express collective beliefs and ideals of the community, but also, simultaneously, to generate and experience the same.

Fishing, for the Mukkuvar, is more than catching fish from the sea, whether for their own consumption or for the market. For them it is the most central activity that expresses their basic beliefs and concerns, their very identity and life orientation. The series of ritual acts meticulously performed in a fishing expedition, beginning with the homage paid to mother ocean, has significance that encompasses their whole life. Fishing is a sacred activity as much as a secular activity. In and through this they make and remake their world, including what is called their religious world. Fishing, thus, is rightly termed a *ritual performance*. There are various sub-rituals within the ritual world of fishing; eg. *eilamidal (*the rhythmic singing by the crew members during fishing), *celuparachil* (ritual evaluation after every fishing expedition), *kampe°u nokkal* (checking for evil eye), *erikkila adikkal* (beating the net with twigs of *erikku* plant), etc. are examples. All these rituals have much significance, both sociological and theological, and so become valid sources in any theological project.

5) The mystery dimension of life cannot be suppressed

There is always a dimension of mystery in human affairs beyond rational explanations and traditional wisdom. The realm of mystery is deeply culture-bound, and where risk and uncertainly abound, people seek tangible means to gain mastery over the mysterious. How do people come to terms with the mystery dimension over and above the prescriptions of manifest religion with its accent on surrendering faith? What are the mechanisms that they employ, and what aspects of theology are inherent in them? These questions are crucial while exploring a theological methodology in the Indian context.

Mantric rituals that are resorted to by the Mukkuvar are valuable in answering the above questions. The power of *mantric rituals* is a generally accepted fact. At the same time there is a strong disapproval against it within the community, probably due to the official Church's strong stand against it.[13] Hence, there is an obvious guilt-feeling in those who practise it. However theological inquiry needs to take a fresh look at *mantric rituals* to do justice to latent religiosity. Every fishing expedition is a venture into the unknown. One should not go for fishing with the hope of safe return, they say. The ocean itself is a source of tremendous mystery, as *kadalamma* reveals her ambivalent features

of *shantabhava* and *rudrabhava*, her gracious and fierce natures. Protection against risk and evil thus becomes a major preoccupation; misfortune is seen as caused by evil spirits active all around. *Mantric rituals* come to their help in such situations. Mukkuvar resort to *mantric rituals* for one of three reasons: to bring good luck, whether in fishing or elsewhere; to remove or to ward off evil, and to destroy one's enemy. The plate of St. Antony, the wheel of St. Michael, and the *yantra* called Œat°u *Samhara Mala*, are clear examples of the Mukkuva attempt to synthesize the *mantric* tradition with Catholic practices in a way that becomes meaningful to them.[14]

The *mantric* tradition in India, which is closely associated with *Tantrism,* goes back to very ancient times. The deep influence of the *mantric* tradition is evident not only in the various Indian religious systems, but also in the 'imported' religions like Islam and Christianity. *Mantra* is a sacred formula or a mystical verse, addressed to a deity to acquire super-human powers. The central idea is that certain sounds uttered in the prescribed manner produce cosmic vibrations; this energy can be directed to serve specific purposes, good or evil, with the help of the designated deity. *Mantra* is closely related to, and often used together with, *yantra* (also called *cakra* or *mandala*), which is a diagram of geometrical patterns engraved or drawn on paper, metal, or other substances, and used as religious/mystical symbols. A *yantra* is considered a 'dynamic' symbol, while an anthropomorphic image remains 'static'. What *mantra* does with sound, *yantra* does with visual images. The human body itself is a *yantra* in *Tantrism*; "that which is not in the body is not in the universe" is the *Tantric* maxim. *Mantra* and *yantra*, to the Indian mind, form the effective bridge between the microcosm and the macrocosm, between individual consciousness and cosmic consciousness. Christian theology need not frown at the *mantric* tradition on the seashore. Use of sacred monograms (IHS, INRI, XC, A-O, X-P, etc.) and Palindromes[15] are indications of a similar pattern of symbolic use of words in the Western tradition. Early Christian art used many pagan motifs which were open for a Christian reinterpretation; the fish, the Greek word for which (ÉxÈÕò) formed an acrostic *Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour*, was a favourite Christian emblem, especially of the Eucharist.

The practice of *mantric rituals* is closely associated with the *profession of healing*, and practitioners are generally called *vaidyan* (doctor). Some authors indicate that *mantravâdam* and exorcism were part of the treatment of physical ailments in the ancient Tamiïakam, before and even during the *Sangam* period. Sudhir Kakar discusses Tantrism with reference to the healing traditions of India.[16] Healing profession (*Ayurveda, Siddha,* etc.) is as much a spiritual science as it is a medical science. The cosmic aspect of illness, ill fortune and ill luck is highlighted by all Indian systems of medicine including Tantrism, making medical and "priestly" functions hardly separable. *Vaidyan* (literally *doctor*) is usually both a medical man and a priestly (ritual) functionary.[17]

4. Some methodological hurdles

"Why do you use the outmoded category of caste?", I was found fault with for using the term 'Mukkuvar'. "It is outmoded, and the preferred term today is 'fishworkers' or 'fisherpeople'", some activist friends pointed out. It is generally agreed today that people define themselves in terms of multiple identities. Social activists and theologians with a socio-political orientation prefer to work with the category of class. However the inadequacy of a purely class approach becomes evident when theology tries to deal with the latent religiosity of specific peoples. Religion and theology operate basically not in the occupational or economic realm but in the cultural sphere, which alone can provide the worldview of a people coherently . The socio-political stream is too engrossed with the class approach to do justice to the cultural identities that are central in a theological project. This indicates the importance of identifying and defining the community one is working with in a theological project. It is not an easy task either. My own search led me through geographical, occupational and economic categories to arrive at the cultural category of 'Mukkuvar' where alone the worldview of the people concerned began to emerge and present itself for theological inquiry.

"It is sociology and anthropology, not theology" is a refrain one often hears while exploring theology from an empirical standpoint. This can dishearten many a student of theology, and is a stumbling block for Indian theology. Theology for long relied solely on Philosophy as its

handmaid, ignoring methodological developments in other disciplines. The fear of relativism too continues to dissuade people. More concerted efforts at incorporating methodological insights and tools from the social sciences are inevitable in strengthening the feeble attempts at Indian theology.

The fear of syncretism too looms large over genuine attempts at theologising from the Indian Christian experience. Western writings often manifest an obsession with the danger of syncretism with reference to theological attempts from other cultural contexts. This fear, however, needs clarification. Syncretism is a term usually employed officially to designate the phenomenon of indiscriminate mixing of elements from two religious systems. It is a process that takes place at the boundary zone of religious worldviews. At the root of the problem is a confusion in the understanding of the boundary as a line of separation, rather than a region of interaction. It is from the former that syncretism gets its definition as indiscriminate mixing. The distinction between *dual religious system* and syncretism that Schreiter makes of can partially help in clarifying the confusion.[18] A vision of boundary as the region of interaction alone can explain the experience of Mukkuva Catholicism where a dynamic interaction between the Catholic and the *Neithal* has been going on in a creative process of theology in life-life context. The active coexistence of beliefs and practices from both traditions side by with no radical conflict is proof enough of the creative dynamism and resilience of the Mukkuva theological mind, which gets strengthened by the long history of Christian encounter with diverse worldviews in the course of its evolution[19], as well as the insightful directives from Vatican II (GS 53, GS 58, GS 62, etc.).

Does not the accent on the cultural dimension undermine the exigency for justice and liberation in this marginal community? The answer is a definitive no. For a people on the margins, religio-cultural identity is as important as issues of justice and liberation, if not more. One is not necessarily the opposite of the other; instead, one presumes the other, or rather, both inter-penetrate each other. Besides, liberative action too becomes meaningful only when placed within the matrix of a particular culture and its history; an a-cultural approach to liberative action is self-defeating. The present methodological option before

Indian theology demands not only a commitment to justice and liberation, but also a cultural critique of it.

Conclusion

The present paper was an attempt to cull out some methodological directions relying on the positive cultural and religious resources that lie dormant in Christian communities. Authentic and relevant theology has to have a life context and a lived-experience as its point of reference. Doing theology in India is not simply a matter of expressing the Christian faith in culturally intelligible categories, but rather a question of understanding and articulating the living theology that sustains and supports diverse Christian communities, and responding to their concerns and challenges within a faith matrix in the direction of human liberation and wholeness. My belief is that an interpretative presentation of the religious experience and practice of the Mukkuva community could contribute in no small way to our theological enterprise in India.

The hesitant steps of Indian theology are likely to leave large areas unexplored, and many more areas facing incongruity with the familiar route. That is natural, and need not lead to discouragement. Areas of incongruity, in fact, create potential space for further theological engagement. Some areas yet to be explored are: the role to be assigned to the cultural and pre-Christian treasury of Christian communities, the ecclesiological implications of having an open boundary, people's inner urge for the motherliness of God, the reality of ambivalence where good and evil seem to co-exist, the significance of a militant mode of saintliness, and the relevance of a diffuse model of religious leadership in a hierarchical church. It is an uncharted and perilous path, though promising, that lies ahead.

Notes

1 Felix Wilfred, *Beyond Settled Foundations: The Journey of Indian Theology*. Madras: University of Madras, 1993.

2 Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, New York: Orbis, 1988.

3 S.,Kappen, "A New Approach to Theological Education", in *Theologizing in India*, eds. M. Amaladoss et al., Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1981, 57.

4 M. Amaladoss, et al., eds., *Theologizing in India*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1981, 49.

5 Felix Wilfred, "Indian Theologies: Retrospect and Prospects", in *Society and Church – Challenges to Theologizing in India Today*, ed. Victor Machado, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004, 153.

6 The term *Mukkuvar* is used in consonance with the local usage. It is a particular community of marine fisherpeople all of whom are Catholics by faith. *Mukkuvan* is the singular noun, *Mukkuvar*, the plural noun, and *Mukkuva*, the adjective form. This article relies heavily on my book *We Dare the Waters the world and the Worldview of Mukkuvar*, Chennai: University of Madras, 2001.

7. The concept of *manifest* and *latent* modes of religion is adapted from the formulation of Robert Merton. See Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, (1968 enlarged edition), Amerind Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi: chapter 3.

8 Wilfred 2004, 156.

9 *Sangam* refers to an association or academy of Tamil poets, established in *Tamiïakam* (which includes the present-day Kerala), probably between 500 BCE and 200 CE. '*Sangam* literature' refers to the collection of the literary works of these poets, a large number of which have come down to us intact. See N. Subramanian, *Sangam Polity - The Administration and Social Life of the Sangam Tamils*, Madurai: Ennes Publications, 1980; C. Balasubramanian, *A Study of the Literature of the Cçra Country* (upto 11th century A.D.), Madras: University of Madras, 1980; P.T.Srinivas Iyengar, *History of the Tamils: from the earliest times to 600 A.D.*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1983, etc.

10 See P.T.Mathew, "The notion of boundary: A challenge to Indian ecclesiology", in *Dreams and Visions*, ed. by R. Rocha and K.Pandikattu. Pune: Jnanadeepa Vidyapeeth, 2002.

11 Mathur, 1977, P.R.G.Mathur, *The Mappila Fisherfolk of Kerala*, Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1977; Kalpana Ram, *Mukkuvar Women: Gender, Hegemony and Capitalist Transformation in a South Indian Fishing Community*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1991; Patrick A.Roche, *Fishermen of the Coromandel: The Social Study of the Paravas of the Coromandel*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1984.; P.T.Mathew, 2001, etc.

12 cf. P.T.Mathew, 2001, ch. 2.

13 Lev.19:26 b and 19:31 unambiguously prohibit 'practice of augury or witchcraft', and 'turning to mediums or wizards'. The intolerant attitude of the missionaries to similar practices of the Indian Christians is evident in the decrees of the Synod of Diamper in 1599. See *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper, A.D. 1599*, ed. by Scaria Zacharia, Hosanna Mount: Indian Institute of Christian Studies, 1994, pp.202 ff.

14 For a detailed discussion on these see Mathew, 2001, ch. 4.

15 *Palindrome* is a mysterious construction of words that can be read forward and backward. See JCJ Metford, *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legends*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1983.

16 Sudhir Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors - A Psychological Inquiry into India and its Healing Traditions*, New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1982, pp.151 ff.

17 An article by Aloysius Pieris reflecting on a traditional Buddhist healing ritual is noteworthy in this context. See his "Prophetic Humour and the Exposure of Demons", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, 60/5 (May 1996), pp.311-322.

18 Schreiter, J.Robert. *Constructing Local Theologies*. New York: Orbis, 1985, 145

19 Wilfred, Felix (1999) "The art of Negotiating the Frontiers", in *Concilium*, 1999,2, ed. by F. Wilfred and O Beozzo, x-xi.

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Christ, the Suffering God of the Sub-Continent

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Abstract: "Who" is Jesus Christ? is a deeper question. It refers to the mystery of Christ and to the mystery of the one who raises the question. Both the answers, one referring to his identification and the other referring to his identity are needed. The first one cannot but be contextual. The second one too, though universal and absolute cannot escape the limitations of historical, social, cultural and philosophical terms which are used to articulate it.

This identity of Christ as the God who suffers in the least, last and the lost as well as in those who create systems of oppression as they are dehumanizing themselves is a radically new revelation of God in the cross of Jesus. Therefore, any spiritualization of the cross without revealing a God who suffers with humans who suffer and that does not demand a radical commitment to the integral transformation of society would empty the cross of its absolute significance. It is the Christ who suffers who resurrects in those people and movements that strive for a better human life. A meaningful and transforming experience of Jesus Christ and a relevant proclamation about him and his Kingdom values in the Indian Sub-continent calls for a Christology of a suffering Christ.

Keywords: Christology, suffering, suffering Christ, Indian scenario, Kingdom of God.

The fundamental question, "who is Jesus Christ?", can be answered in two ways. It can be answered by referring to his functions and the identification marks that separate him from others. This answer will single him out from all others. By identifying him as Jesus of Nazareth

we can speak of his uniqueness. For example, we can show how he is different from other mediators and saviours and how his claims are unique and how his life and teachings are different from those of other teachers and prophets. But Jesus' identity is different. It answers the question "who" is Jesus Christ. It is a deeper question. It refers to the mystery of Christ and to the mystery of the one who raises the question. Both the answers, one referring to his identification and the other referring to his identity are needed. The first one cannot but be contextual. The second one too, though universal and absolute cannot escape the limitations of historical, social, cultural and philosophical terms which are used to articulate it.

The problem with Christology has always been that of confusing the identification of Jesus Christ with his identity or mixing them up or separating them from each other by absolutizing one or the other. Any identification of him, however meaningful in one context for centuries, need not necessarily be meaningful in another context. Jesus Christ must be proclaimed in such a way that his identity is encountered. For Christ's sake we may have to give up some of his identifications, which are culturally conditioned, in order that people may encounter his identity and be transformed. It is a difficult task.. It is a call to encounter him in one's life-situation and identify him in the *logoi* of the context.

Nowhere does the identity of Jesus Christ become so universally felt and his *inclusive transcendence* become so real and decisive as in the struggle of the suffering millions of the sub-continent for a fuller life, for unfolding their God-given humanity. Here it is not the image of a triumphant Pantocrator, or Christ the King, or a cultic figure of Christ or any such identification that attracts many who seek liberation from their misery and misfortune to encounter him. The Hindus have much more fascinating, strong and comely images of gods and goddesses. But a God who suffers, Jesus on the cross, is something that touches the Indian mind, especially of the poor and the marginalized deeply.

The Jesus Christ of the Indian subcontinent cannot be identified with a triumphant Messiah whom nobody is expecting. He is discovered by the poor in their struggles for a fuller humanity as the poor of Jesus'

time discovered in him the compassionate love of God. Ashok Mehta, a former Union minister of India, challenged Christians to prove their commitment to Jesus Christ by their concerted action for the liberation of the poor. He says: "If it is the claim of the Christians that even to this day they feel the agony of Christ on the cross whenever humanity suffers as it were, it has to be proved in action and not by any statement." [1]The real Jesus speaks up in the suffering of the poor, the oppressed dalits, tribals, the bonded-labourers, the deprived children and the discriminated women. They are not a minority. They are not just statistics. They are millions of humans with their own unique personal history. They are men and women with flesh and blood going through meaningless suffering because the system created by the oppressors will not let them be what they are and become what they are called to become. The traditional discrimination against the lower castes, the outcasts, the tribals, women, the economically poor classes, the poor and orphaned children is worsened with the advent of globalization. Globalization and the new market-forces have helped the middle class and the rich to enjoy further the benefits of modern science and technology. The poor have become dispensable. They are not needed. Their survival, let alone their unfolding of themselves by their unique participation in sustaining life in this world through their work, is not the concern of those who make economic policies and political decisions. The worst aspect of the poverty that is experienced by the poor is that it does not let them live as dignified humans. In the Indian context with class and caste discriminations the suffering is doubled for the poor people of lower castes and outcasts and still worse for women of these groups.

I. The Advaita of Suffering

The way Jesus lived his life, his message and the consequence of his option for the poor during his life reveal his identification with all the oppressed and outcast people. There are many such prophets and reformers in the history of the world. Their cause may continue in history through their followers and admirers. These may be moved to follow the ideology of those great men and women and dedicate their lives to continue their ideology. But the God revealed through the Cross is a suffering God who suffers when human beings suffer because He

is absolute love and compassion. The Cross reveals that the suffering of humans and their world, whatever its causes be and whatever its forms be, affects God. It subverts the oriental affirmation about the impassibility of God. A strong resistance to acknowledging Jesus Christ as human by the Docetes and the Gnostics in the early Christian centuries was their refusal to accept the true meaning of the cross. We can see even in the New Testament the struggle of the early Christian community to come to terms with this radical revelation of God, as there is a tendency to an eventual mystification of the cross.

The God who became human in a situation that would not let God be human would not also let humans be human. It would condemn him to death for God's sake! But this god would be like the gods of the religions and systems which give more importance to anything other than humans. The Cross reveals a God who suffers. The Cross reveals a new *advaitam, because the suffering of humans cannot be separated from the suffering of God. They are not one but also not two. They are distinct but not separate.* So if suffering is a mode of God's being in relation to humans and the world, then should we not let it continue? No, that would be blasphemy! God's suffering is concerned with the unfolding of humans to become what they are called to become. Therefore, systems and structures that prevent this process through oppression, injustice, dehumanization and violence are to be denounced and transformed. Any authentic struggle with consequent sufferings to create a Kingdom situation is always liberative and it is a participation in God's own cause for humans. Therefore, it is a way of reaffirming the divine image of communion in humans and thus alleviating God's own suffering.

II Christie Identity in Human Suffering

The Christic identity encountered in the suffering of humans was hitherto unknown in the history of the world. He continues to live in the history of his suffering people. Hence, the Christology of the poor is not an ontological Christology as traditionally understood, asking the questions about his being, or who he is in himself; or a functional Christology discussing about his functions, what he has done for them. It is a relational Christology, which includes both ontological and functional Christologies and yet transcends them. In this relational

Christology humans see their face in him and his face in them and thus they find meaning in their suffering. In this new and radical revelation that Christ suffers with them they experience empowerment in their struggles for a fuller humanity and thus they recognize him as the ultimate meaning of their life, as he is encountered as the beginning, the middle and the end of their lives.

It is a temptation to proclaim Christ in the Indian context as a powerful dispenser of divine favours to those who take refuge in him. He is presented as if he were competing with other gods and saints of popular religions to assert his supremacy. Christ seems to help them to forget their situation of pain and thus they are able to tolerate the tyranny of their misery. He would appear to be like the 'the Gold-Crowned Jesus' in the story of the Korean writer Kim Chi Ha (1978) who seems to understand the misery of the people but does not seem to be affected by it. He is beyond the history of the people. It makes no difference whether God had once entered human history or not, if this history does not continue to be a part of his divine life. He could have been worshipped in one name or another as other religions do, even though they do not believe in his entry into history for its transformation. He is the Christ of religion. He is just another god. He is not the real suffering Christ of the poor.

Many doctrinal statements can be made about this Christ. Humans can be subjugated in his name. Structures and institutions can be built to perpetuate his name to the advantage of his protagonists. He can be manipulated to justify both totalitarianism and terrorism. But he can also be captured by artists and sculptors to give visual satisfaction to those wretched men, women and children who are despised, humiliated and treated as the scum of society because they are poor and powerless. This Christ seems to be silent in the midst of such tragic experiences of real people in their real history of life. Kim Chi Ha portrays in his play, *The Gold-Crowned Jesus,* the struggle of the real Jesus to reveal that he is in the midst of the suffering of the poor. A leper looks at a cement statue of Jesus with a gold-crown and asks him penetrating questions about the situation of pain and misery which destroys millions of humans especially in Asia. The gold-crowned statue of Jesus is silent. Though the leper wanted a dialogue it proceeds as a monologue. Finally, he makes the discovery that this is not the real Jesus. The real Jesus

cannot remain passive and silent in the midst of such intolerable suffering caused by humans' inhumanity to humans. The leper shares his discovery with a fellow beggar who refuses to believe it at first and wants to know if the gold crowned cement Jesus is not the real Jesus, who then is the real Jesus. The leper knows only that the cement Jesus is not the real Jesus. Suddenly, to his astonishment and utter confusion the cement Jesus with a gold crown breaks his silence and speaks to him:

> I have been closed up in this stone for a long, long time...entombed in this dark, lonely, suffocating prison. I have longed to talk to you, the kind and poor people like yourself, and share your suffering. I can't begin to tell you how long I have waited for this day....this day when I would be freed from my prison, this day of liberation when I would live and burn again as a flame inside you, inside the very depths of your misery. But now you have finally come. And because you have come close to me I can speak now. You are my rescuer.[2]

In the words of the cement Jesus the author re-captures the Jesus of the poor revealed in the New Testament. The real Jesus Christ is the one whose identity cannot be separated from the sufferings of the poor. He empowers them through his Spirit to insurrection and finally to the resurrection of their dignity as humans. This is the real Jesus Christ who suffers with all those who are denied the opportunities to unfold themselves as humans. In this real Jesus Christ one discovers the suffering and compassionate God. Reflecting on the dialogue between the leper and Jesus C. S. Song says: "The real Jesus and the people in suffering. The real Jesus and men and women striving for freedom and justice. The real Jesus and human persons longing for life, for eternal life. Jesus cannot be Jesus apart from such people. Jesus is not real unless he is with them in their daily struggle."[3] According to Song the meaning of the real Jesus is revealed in what Jesus said to the leper. "Here is, then, a clue to the question of the real Jesus. Here is the secret of the historical Jesus. And here is an entry into the mystery of the 'messiah' who enables people to have faith in the God of love and compassion in the world of greed and selfishness."[4]

Only the real Jesus of the poor can identify himself with the suffering humanity of the sub-continent in their struggles and tragic

experience of failures in the face of repressive social, political and economic systems and powers. So the suffering people reveal the real Jesus and Jesus the human can reveal the fullness of God as compassionate (suffering with) love as he did when he lived among the poor and the outcasts of his time in Palestine and died on the cross revealing who God is.

The poor who reveal the real Jesus include all those who are deprived of the basic necessities of life, namely, food, shelter, clothing and at least a minimum recognition of them as human persons with dignity. These poor, the hungry and thirsty, the naked, the sick, the homeless and the unjustly imprisoned are the vicars of Jesus (Mt 25: 34-40). To encounter them is to encounter the One whose identity cannot be separated from the suffering poor and the persons who reach out to them.

Does not such a suffering Jesus of the poor inspire them to accept oppression and injustice with passivity and resignation? The history of the rapid spread of Christianity in the Roman Mediterranean world, it is argued, was the result of a revolt of the oppressed, both slaves and women who claimed equality as the members of the Body of Christ. Julie. M. Hopkins says:

> It would appear, then, that the earliest Christian proclamation of a suffering prophet of God and the scandal of the cross, prompted social and even revolutionary impulses. The identification through analogy of persecuted early Christians with their suffering Jesus did not lead to masochism, dependency or powerlessness....meditation upon a suffering Jesus-messiah prompted solidarity in the face of suffering, resistance to unnecessary suffering and strategies to survive through hope in a new liberated future.[5]

If commitment to and identification with the suffering prophetic image of Christ can inspire such an unleashing of the liberative potential of the people, how much more will the revelation that God in Christ suffers with the poor, the down-trodden, the marginalized and the discriminated ones? A one-sided projection of Jesus Christ as a revolutionary prophet or social reformer on the one hand or to proclaim his as a God who is different from other gods but yet needs to be approached with cult and worship as is done to other

gods and goddess on the other hand, is to destroy 'the power and the wisdom' of the Cross.

The Christ of the Sub-continent continues to suffer as he would anywhere in the world when humans are prevented from unfolding their vocation to become truly humans. His blood continues to 'mingle with the blood of the Sudras, Dalits, tribals,' bonded-labourers, women who are exploited and raped, discriminated and discarded and paraded naked, victims of religious bigotry and fanaticism, children who are forced to work in match-factories, stone quarries and tea stalls and many such oppressed and marginalized.

Conclusion

This identity of Christ as the God who suffers in the least, last and the lost as well as in those who create systems of oppression as they are dehumanizing themselves is a radically new revelation of God in the cross of Jesus. Therefore, any spiritualization of the cross without revealing a God who suffers with humans who suffer and that does not demand a radical commitment to the integral transformation of society would empty the cross of its absolute significance. It is the Christ who suffers who resurrects in those people and movements that strive for a better human life. A meaningful and transforming experience of Jesus Christ and a relevant proclamation about him and his Kingdom values in the Indian Sub-continent calls for a Christology of a suffering Christ.

Notes

1 K. Dockhorn, "Christ in Hinduism as Seen in the Recent Indian Theology," *Religion and Society* 21 (December, 1974): 40.

2 Kim Chi Ha, *The Gold-Crowned Jesus and Other Writings* (New York: Orbis Books, 1978) : 121- 122; C. S. Song, *Jesus the Crucified People* (Minneapolis, 1996) p. 11.

3 C. S. Song, p.11.

4 *Ibid.*, 11.

5 Hopkins, J.M., Towards a *Feminist Christology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publ.Co., 1994), p. 53.

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Spirituality: An Indian Christian Perspective

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The term "spirituality" repels and attracts. It repels for a variety of reasons, chief among them being the tone of devaluation of the concerns of life here on earth, the secular, and an apparent over stress on the individual 'spiritual' concerns. Empirical pursuits and consequent reduced concern for the 'spiritual' have sometimes been seen in conflict. The term 'spirituality', on the contrary, has been exerting an enormous influence and power on peoples – always, in all traditions. After analyzing the problem, the author sees spirituality as a moral or soul force, specially in the Indian or Hindu context. All religions do provide innumerable examples. Many hold that if religion is the very meaning dimension of a culture, spirituality is the very core of religiosity. It attends to the depth dimension of the human person. To keep the balance between the legitimate concerns of the 'spiritual' and the 'bodily', has been a precarious task in religions. Vigilance over unilateral development can keep the balance. The rendering above of spirituality in terms of moral force, soul force seems to offer us such a balance. The author pleads that the two religions, Hinduism and Christianity can engage in a fruitful dialogue and interaction to serve the goal of religion as well as the deepest aspirations of the people.

Keywords: spirituality, moral force, soul force, suffering, Hindu spirituality.

Introduction

'Spirituality' – a magic word it has been. The word attracts and repels. Attracts for what it promises and holds. World wide, east west, travel has been taking place in search of resorts where one can quench the inner quest. A rush to India is noticeable. The word repels for a variety of reasons, chief among them being the tone of devaluation of the concerns of life here on earth, the secular, and an apparent over stress

on the individual 'spiritual' concerns. Empirical pursuits and consequent reduced concern for the 'spiritual' have sometimes been seen in conflict. The term 'spirituality', on the contrary, has been exerting an enormous influence and power on peoples – always, in all traditions. All religions do provide innumerable examples. Many hold that if religion is the very meaning dimension of a culture, spirituality is the very core of religiosity. It attends to the depth dimension of the human person.

a. Problems Before Us

Foraying into a very ancient concern, Spirituality has its perils and benefits. Is the 'spirit' in the human an ally of the body only or an integral part? Is the body a mere vehicle only, to be set aside on reaching the destination? Is 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity' still a life promoting perception or a one-time value, of relative import? Is the legitimate concern for the 'spirit' trivializing the 'secular pursuit' and highlighting 'the spiritual pursuit' at the expense of 'truly and fully human'? Can we have 'spirituality' without suppressing/bypassing 'the material, the bodily, the empirical and the historical'? What is the role of the ancient and the established insights and perspectives to honour the full human development in the light of today's ? How will the dazzle of the consumerist culture and the million progenies of the techno-culture live with the needs and demands of the 'spirit' in traditional 'spirituality'?

Treatment of the theme—Indian Christian Spirituality — calls for a dynamics in which dialogical interaction for a religious and cultural structuring and development becomes necessary. The reason is that both the 'Indian' and the 'Christian' components should be brought in for a creative interaction in view of establishing an 'Indian Christian' identity. This has to be based on a sound theological foundation. But we know 'Indian Christian' identity is much debated. It has engaged the attention of sociologists at the level of disciplines. Hindu revival groups in India have expressed their views on it rather aggressively. Even prior to that it had been a concern in the Christian communities, especially after the Church in India Seminar in the wake of the Vatican II's call for renewal. To meet these threefold demands the following method is employed in making reflections on Spirituality: Indian Christian Perspective in an interactive manner

b. Three Requirements

For a reflection on Spirituality: Indian Christian Perspective at least three requirements need to be met with, since the phrase 'Indian Christian' needs to be established.

The first requirement for such an 'Indian Christian' identity is a sound theology of creation. The phrase 'Indian Christian' contains two components: namely, 'Indian' and 'Christian'. The former needs further elucidation, for which creation theology has to be the foundation based on which the mutuality of relationship can be established. That means the Christian in India should discerningly own and internalize whatever values are found fit for the Kingdom of God in Christ.

A second requirement is clarity about the Church's stand regarding the fact and the nature of world religions. Christians do express diverse views on them and the official Church also has its own stand. What, according to the Christian teaching as held by the Church, might be the role of religions in God' plan of salvation, is the moot question. It is based on the answer that today an 'Indian Christian' perspective can be evolved. In other words, a sound theology of world religions is assumed to initiate theological reflection on the theme.

For the Church in India to become truly local and universal, a creative relationship with the religious plurality prevailing here is important.

And a third requirement is a sound theology of inter-religious dialogue. Late in origin, dialogue among religions has been a growing phenomenon among some religions, especially in Christianity. Certainly something is evolving in this regard.

These three dimensions should become integral to an 'Indian Christian perspective' and should be incorporated into the dynamics of the treatment. In following this up a new development has taken place in the Church. It has changed the face of the Church and made her a good listening friend and partner in the world of today. Therefore essentials of the growing theology of dialogue should be introduced in order to be fair to the demands of the context in the elaboration.

Why is a sound Theology of Creation required to evolve an Indian Christian perspective on spirituality? Because the creation of the world,

especially that of humankind, was planned by God's exuberant love for humankind. That plan was a comprehensive one, including the attainment of the ultimate destiny which is participation in the life of God. Of course the entire project is a gratuitous act. About the nature and solidity as well as the true worth of the human person before God the Constitution on the Church categorically states: "By an utterly free and mysterious decree of His own wisdom and goodness, the eternal Father, created the whole world. His plan was to dignify men (and women) with a participation in His own divine life" (*LG* 2).

2. Spirituality as a A MORAL FORCE, SOUL FORCE

If the conquest of the Indian subcontinent by the English was by the use of physical power –in the guise of trade, then guns, supported by Machiavellian tactics, pressure, threat, and blatant aggression, the liberation of the subcontinent was by means of a different power – 'MORAL FORCE', 'SOUL FORCE'. The elements for that moral, ethical weapon were drawn from Indian, and Christian sources. It was fashioned by an Indian genius, M. K. Gandhi. On this platform of MORAL FORCE, SOUL FORCE, all Indians can assemble to wage the war of liberation at a deeper level. I consider SPIRITUALITY – INDIAN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE a very appropriate equivalent of the Moral Force. I am convinced that on this platform both the Christians and Hindus can converge for meeting the formidable challenges the people of India still face, in spite of sixty years of self-management. The existing walls of indifference, exclusion, antagonism and hostility could be left behind. A new era of partnership for a better India could be constructed.

a. Three Components of the 'Moral Force'

The first component was the power of truth. The new Indian weapon fashioned by Gandhi is known as Satyagraha. 'Satyagraha' meant holding on tenaciously to the power of truth to fight evil in the form of domination, repression, oppression, exploitation or other forms. Truth reigns high in the scale of ethical and moral values that adorn a human person. It is also a force, a power. Truth exerts enormous power on minds. None can resist truth. For Gandhi Truth is God. Believing and trusting in God is the practice of truth, and holding on to truth is offering

worship and honour to God. Therefore holding on to the power of truth to overcome evil, to conquer evil in the form of domination, oppression or other misadvantures, is already a battle against untruth.

A second component of the Moral Force is *ahimsa. Ahimsa* means affirmation of all beings' right to live; therefore non-injury to them, and consequently, virtual, real and effective love for all living beings. This love is expressed first negatively as non-injury. But its positive and real content is Love. Love is not only a moral but also a theological virtue.

A third component is faith in God. The origin and destiny of all human beings is God. For Gandhi truth is God. Holding on to truth is holding on to God. That is faith in God. The supremacy of the Spirit of God is affirmed in all Spiritualities other than Buddhist.

A coherent integration of these elements into one gives us an integral Spirituality. For the main agents in most Spirituality are: God, God in collaboration with human beings, the 'spirit' in the humans taking hold of the human in the person as planned and executed by God. Such a process enlightens and reshapes human conduct, and through that influences the community, society, thereby raising the quality of the life of individuals, families, institutions and society in general –all these are aspects of what is originally meant by Spirituality. 'Spirituality' is the final form of the simultaneous action of the above components. It becomes a Moral Force.

Another name for moral force is **Spiritual Force**. Both the phrases were used in the course of the struggle for freedom. Human beings are primarily spiritual beings. They are distinct from other living beings because of the spirit within, the spirit that animates the human person, leading to specifically human acts.

b. Term Clarifying Process, and Entry into the Theme

The Anglo-Saxon word spirit has its equivalent, more or less, in the Indian rendering as *atman*. Spirituality in some of the Indian languages is also rendered as *adhyatmam, adhyatma vidya* etc.In Hinduism *atman* and *Brahman,* the Supreme Being, are often identified. One reason for this identification is that the spirit/*atman* in the human is immaterial. The Bible holds that human beings are created in the image

and likeness of God. The reason for this is that human beings participate in the very nature of God.

Given these diverse roots and sources of the phrase Moral Force, we Hindus and Christians have a beautiful ethico-spiritual platform for assembling and planning for the elimination of the negative in our society and contributing further to the freedom/liberation of the people of India. It provides us with a sound dialogue in action.

c. Source of Satyagraha

We may recall that the weapon of satyagraha was derived from different sources.

First, Henry Thoreau's elaboration of the rights of the citizen to resist bad laws from whatever source and its concrete rendering in the form of *civil disobedience* was a major inspiration for satyagraha. Civil disobedience is a non-violent peaceful resistance to the bad laws of the State. Leon Tolstoy's rendering of some religious classics and his experiments further contributed to it.

Second, the great Sermon on the Mount, which had a lasting impact on the minds of millions, especially on Gandhi, was another source. Jesus' teaching, "If any one strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also" Lk 6:29), and "Do to others as you would have them do to you"(Lk 6:31) made Gandhi reflect deeply on the Christian sources.

Third, respect for life, the animating power in all living beings, a key tenet of Jain-Buddhist traditions also contributed to the same.

Finally, Hindu scriptural teachings, and their elaboration through the three great acharyas, Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva, on the Supreme, as *advaita*, was the major anchorage in his life. But for Gandhi it is *advaita* in action. Action is not ritual but service of the people, especially of the least and the last.

Moral Force, Spiritual force, therefore is none other than an integration of some major spiritual ethical moral philosophical strands like these.

3. The Problem Before All: NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES, SUFFERING

A major factor for the development of a discipline like Spirituality in all religions is the question put to Yama by the *jijnasa*-filled student Naciketas:

"This doubt that there is in regard to a man deceased:

'He exists', say some; 'He exists not', say others—

This would I know..." (Katha Upanishad, I, 20).

Not a single home there was/is/will be on earth from the earliest history till its consummation where this question was not raised, directly or indirectly.

What packs this question of questions with anxiety, earnestness and poignancy? The person who was till this moment seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking, deciding, loving, caring, hating, enjoying, possessing, acquiring, planning to invest — is now a mere inert, lifeless, disintegrating 'body' with all activities ceased! *That* which **was** in it, that which is *not* there now, that which has gone out of it – does it exist? Or does it not exist? Can dark Death shed light on this? For in its light one needs to organize one's life, says wisdom. What then should be the concern of the 'living person'?

'Svobhava—ephemeral things' Shot back the enquiring Nachiketas, when the expected answer was waved and alternatives like wealth were offered. The surprising judgment seems to resonate with some strands in the Bible too. For instance: "Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher,.. all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes I,1). Oriental wisdom entered the Biblical world and began to influence subsequent eras. It now concurs with the Indian insight.

A large portion of ancient humanity's wisdom was born around this question. Equally, much of that wisdom and knowledge was devoted to this question.

Many questions like these spring up and surprise us with the topic above. It is not possible to address them within the limited scope of this short essay.

4. Within the Christian Tradition

I introduce Lily, Tulip, Mango blossom, Rose, Jasmine, tiny Grass flowers, Chrysanthemum — their kind excites eyes, stimulates nostrils, soothes even distraught hearts, and germinates poetry and paintings in the brain-imagination laboratory. The less noticed silent miracle workers behind the scene like the soil, the water, sunlight, and the human service like pruning, are not that easily present in the minds of the admirers at those moments. But the truth is that the former are the products of a well-orchestrated process that dynamically takes place through the mediation of the latter. It is all one process with slightly varied manifestations. The well planned and meticulous processing precedes the blooming and the flowering. Spirituality is a project similar to it and the product also is desired to be similar.

There are 'flowers' in the realm of the human species too. We recall that paradise was our birthplace. And paradise signifies abundance of resources and fulfilment. Let me pick up a bunch of 'flowers' and place it before us: 'love, joy, peace, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control'(Gal5:22). Just as the bunch above effortlessly compels adoration and exaltation, so the bunch below calls for submission, surrender and emulation. They are more precious than pearls of great value. To listen to the list is almost like scaling avidly a portrait of a well developed human person. The glow and fragrance of one 'flower' in the first item in the second list is, love. Love is further described in terms of its manifestation: 'Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth"(ICor13:4-6). These pearl-like berries constitute a garland that decks a 'woman/man' – that is the expectation of true religion. Such men and women can be considered as the best flowering of the human in every one of us. One would wish that these became the cornerstone or preamble of a new society that could be constructed, to replace the existing one. Here too the processing and pruning precedes the blooming and the flowering of the human-divine mix.

A family, community or society or nation built and structured on these will shine.

The concern of these pages is to investigate who is that miracle working Agent, who the collaborators and what the process. The result expected is further clarity on 'spirituality'.

Over against these luminous figures and concepts I introduce here fifteen words that portray the opposite, forming an ugly and repelling picture, probably like thorns in the rose plant:

'Fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these' (Gal 5:20). Not a very civilizing list to be associated with human nature, but it is actual human behaviour. Someone or something is missing here. Some element in the processing chain of actions is missing. Something has gone wrong. Therefore these products of the same human material bite, prick, cut, wound, divide and even stink. If flowers spray fragrance and bees distil honey from the pollen of the flowers, the elements in the second list above waft bad odour, keep people at a distance, and generate wicked sentiments in human hearts. A culture polluted by hatred, mutual antagonism, and consequent violence is the outcome. A family, community, society built on this network will disintegrate.

We need to identify the missing agent and miss-calculated process. This is also part of the task of the process of spirituality.

Let me advance a description of Spirituality guided by the texts above. 'Spirituality can be described as that power and dynamics that transforms raw human materials, marked by properties like those in the second group, into humans marked by properties in the first list. The prime agent at work in that dynamics is the Holy Spirit, according to the Judaeo-Christian tradition and heritage. The secondary agent of course is the human person freely co-operating with the Spirit. The word 'sadhana' conveys much of it, analogically. Both the Christian and Hindu traditions converge much on this point.

The philosopher Aristotle had placed the truth before us that animality is a component of the human species. Unless directed by reason it can dominate the person. The noble element in the human person, the 'image and likeness of God', is immersed in and is integrated into this dimension in the human. In the Christian vision the 'rational', which is an expression of the 'human spirit', and the Spirit of Christ

that one receives at baptism, act conjointly. The sway of the 'rational' and of the Spirit of Christ are often impeded because of the overwhelming force of the purely animal in the human. Consequently instinct-led decisions and actions dominate. And, since it is actions that shape human behaviour, it can favourably or adversely affect the individual and collective culture of the community. Untamed greed, for instance, dominates a person, and making use of social and economic power, succeeds in being a threat to the ordinary members of the society. Uncontrolled desire breeds greed, and greed-led possessions unjustly acquired create restlessness in the individual and imbalance in society too. Social and economic analysts as well as media scanners often place before us the true nature and structure of society today built up on counter-values like those above. Theologians have termed them sinful structures. Then worship of mammon and courting of hedonism prevail over the rational and the truly human.

On the contrary, when both these powers are in enlightened and mature subordination to the voice and will of God, we have a situation where both the individual and the community are in a state of tranquillity and peace. Spirituality in all religions aims at initiating a process whereby the regulatory, the 'educating' and the disciplining processes are made internal to the person that becomes aware of the inner developments. Again, Spirituality can be considered as that process (sadhana) in which the superior principles — the rational, and the Spirit, preside over the deliberation-decision-action components of conduct that help the 'becoming' of the person. This seems to be the prevailing consensus over the conceptualization of 'spirituality'.

Then what is missing here in the unattractive picture of the distraught person we have in Gal 5:20? In the natural process the adept human agents — the gardener, the peasant, the shepherd — dexterously combine the various elements like the soil, water, weeding etc. In the case of the human milieu that dexterous wise and generous gardener in most religions is regarded as the divine agent. The 'Spirit of God' is the name of that masterly agent in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. The 'atman' is a common name in many a Hindu tradition. In Patanjali yoga terms like 'purusha' do figure. In that, Purusha is seen in a state of conflict with the blind irrational force or instinct, *prakrti.* What is common to many religions is the desire to be free of these enslaving

forces within and enjoy deep peace and harmony. Therefore Spirituality is the discipline that actively promotes the role of the reason and of the Spirit of God in human conduct.

The problem is that forgetting our spiritual nature, because of the storms that rage within a person, abiding by the needs and nature of the 'spirit' is often not possible. Vigilance, disciplining and orienting to the goal is constantly necessary.

The two groups of words introduced above are picked up from the writings of Paul (Gal 5:22, ICor 13:4—6, and again Gal 5:20, in their respective order), the second founder of Christianity as the compliment has been given to him by some historians of the Church. The words, the text, and the mind of the author are all full of the new wind blowing upon the earth following the central event in human history: the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The new communities that have sprung up around the Mediterranean Sea, in West Asia in general and coastal North Africa, have been breathing this aura of the Resurrection, and inhaling the Spirit released after the Resurrection, especially at Pentecost. The Peace with which Jesus Christ greets the disciples is won after the fierce battle with the forces of evil in the hearts of men and women. This conflict is symbolized by the Cross, and God's Plan at work in human history through His intermediaries like the prophets, the men and women of goodwill and righteousness. Christian spirituality is best located in this context incorporating these two dimensions

Paul has also traced the source of these contrast pictures within man/woman: the former image emerges if the Spirit is allowed to invest richly in the human, so that the human and the divine work harmoniously. But there is tension between the forces, so that harmonious work is jeopardized. Paul's exhortation is to be aware of the Spirit — flesh conflict and he advises the Christians to be on guard:

"Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want"(Gal.5,16).

More agonizingly the conflict is depicted:

"For I do not do what I want to, but I do what I do not want" (Rom.7,16)

A similar tension is found existing and operating in some of the Hindu understanding of the human situation too. Hindu spirituality begins with the efforts at discovering the roots of this tension and resolving it, so that one is in possession of the freedom and peace that is proper to the sway of the 'atmic' or 'adhyatmam'. Hindu 'sadhana' is the process aimed at this. We will revert to the Judaeo-Christian world.

In the Judaeo-Christian world the resistance to the Spirit, stemming from the realm of 'the flesh' has its own explanation. Paul introduces this to us through a language different from the ordinary: "Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned... Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses.." (Rom 5:13-14).

The words sin and death, besides their literal interpretation and application, refer to a complex of human tragedies that mark the pathetic, the tragic and the distressing in human history: suffering (physical, mental, moral, spiritual), violence (physical, mental, economic, cultural, racial, religious, sexual), poverty (economic, social, cultural, emotional), exploitation (human, economic, racial, gender), injustice (economic, social, moral, cultural, gender), and sexual aberrations. An overall decline of values is what these amount to.

Why such a situation? Loss of grace or life divine, sway of the Satanic, worship of wealth over against yielding to the sovereign will of Yahweh, were pointed out as sources of this mega estrangement from the very nature and integrity of the human created in the image and likeness of God and called to a participation in the very life of God.

Part of prophetism in Israel was a pronounced stand against these condemned forces, expressed in some cases by a withdrawal from society and its pursuits. Prophets like Elijah and Elisha are symbols of this trend in the early days of Judaism.

With the Incarnation a deepening of this process took place. The particular life-style of Jesus provided the world with a particular model of spirituality. He was born to a poor family, in a manger, sending out a particular message for the worshippers of mammon. He took to the life of a mendicant, enjoying the freedom of a renouncer. He was

constantly in communion with the Father, thereby highlighting the primacy of being rooted in God and not in wealth or family ties and relations. He was mostly with the poor and the marginalized (the *anawim* have their hope and reliance on God and less on accumulated wealth and sufficiency of the human). More particularly Jesus called for a more radical way of living for the sake of the Kingdom.

Jesus Christ had on different occasions compared the human quest for the Kingdom to a treasure-drive, leaving behind the less valued treasures of ordinary human pursuit, to a most precious treasure, the Treasure..

"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt.6, 21). Here reference is to a particular drive of the human heart from its depth which needs to be listened to and explored.

There are two brilliant and even classical descriptions of this magnetic power within the human setting it on a hunt for a priceless wisdom implied in this relentless search. We turn to that text (Mathew 13, 44):

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field".

The very next verse in the same narration contains a similar insight:

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Mt.13,46).

The following elements seem at work in this hot pursuit:

One, the selling of what one has in order to purchase the One Treasure. Wealth or social status or individual attainments on which the blind human instincts dwell and enjoy, or the life of the senses as treasure, may be what is hinted at as the treasures to be sold in favour of the one of great value.

Second, giving up freely much that is treasured till the discovery of the new. In other words the first step of freeing oneself from the chords that bind one to these little treasures and creating an inner freedom for securing the Treasure.

Third, the influence of some power or attraction: certain intimation of the hidden treasure of unique quality and value in the not-yet dug up field forces her/him to sell all existing treasures or riches or acquisitions. Now it is clear that in the life of the prophets, and that of the disciples during and after the lifetime of Jesus, and in the subsequent development of spirituality in the Christian tradition, it is a decisive and exclusive option for God. The culture of renunciation in Judaic Christianity, and that of *tapas* and insistence on austerities are expressions of the 'selling of' the treasure. That done the objective becomes clear: and so one makes a prompt deal with the owner of the field to secure the one treasure of the greatest value lying under the earth. It is not an expression of negativism but a joy-filled opting for God.

Fourth, a judgment of a unique kind is involved in the exercise. A judgment against a set of values and pursuits and a judgment in favour something different, something that is unique, regarded as higher and better and soul-quenching.

Finally, there is the exercise of a particular vision or wisdom because we find the inner sense of the discoverer engaged in a comparative estimation: of what is in the hand and what is under the earth, in the given parable. In that process the dealer measures and assesses the value or the worth of the treasure far exceeding any she/he may have come across in one's lifelong business.

The three texts contain insights that have shaped the life of individuals and cultures down the ages in all religions. A visit to some of them is needed.

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition what is 'sold' seems to be what pertains to and emanates from the body and its many-sided cravings which are considered as choking the deeper needs of the 'soul'.

When the Church emerged out of the era of repression and persecutions, these trends began to acquire a momentum that led to life in the desert, then the birth of monasticism and different forms of what is now termed 'religious life'. It is during these different phases of the new forms of Christian life that the word 'spirituality' began to appear prominently. Scholars who have studied the development have

put all subsequent developments into three broad schools or phases. These are the Purgative Way, the Illuminative Way and the Unitive Way.

5 The following could be considered to be some of the characteristics of Spirituality in the Christian world:

a Pursuit of Contemplation of God as the chief concern and engagement. God in all, and everything in God to become the dominant concern in one's life. The treasure announced in the Gospels is for these seekers of the Treasure that is now the Triune God. The chief occupation of the Christian, of the 'consecrated', is declaredly this contemplation.

b Making the affairs of the Kingdom of God the chief pursuit in one's life and activities becomes a major concern: an enthusiastic affirmation of the supremacy of the Spirit and its works, and prioritizing of the Treasure. The wise one sells all she/he has in order to purchase the treasure. God is the Treasure of treasures. He can be opted for after freeing the inner world of 'possessions', cravings and drives that keep one self-bound This calls for taming and disciplining the self-oriented cravings, their gratifications and blind relish of earth-bound needs and wants.

c Love and charity for all as expression of one's love for God. This is expressed through the service of God's people, especially the needy. An incarnate spirituality expresses itself in absorbing and doing what the Word Incarnate did. It was a spirituality of guileless service of the other. In serving the other you lower yourselves to be at the feet of the other, in true humility and truthfulness, as the Master did.

d An assessment and judgment upon life pursuit as something to be relativized. Jesus gave priority to the plan of the Father, the Kingdom. To be a disciple of Christ, He demands radicalization of the values of the kingdom. Renunciation of your goods, embrace of the way of denial and the cross is a mark of this discipleship.

e Life of renunciation: of possessions and all that attract the inner world. The culture of renunciation is given its due role in one's life and is marked by the process of what was known as 'purification of the soul", in order to achieve true freedom of the spirit.

f Embracing a life of poverty, frugality and simplicity. This introduces a counter-cultural message for the open society, sections of which gloat over wealth and its promises.

g Practice of asceticism and detachment from one's own self, one's relations, and possessions. This is to grow in increasing attachment to, clinging to God in contemplation.

5 Trend Tracing in Hinduism

The Hindu tradition begins with the perception of nature as the manifestation of a great Power. Every power is a god/goddess. Rgveda begins and thrives on this perception. 'Deva', 'the shining one' up in the celestial world, embodiments of the good, is a very early symbol. They are the victorious ones charged with spiritual power. Opposed to them are.the *asuras,* embodiment of the evil forces

Then a gradedness of the density of the divine falls into the ken of the ancient sages and visionaries. From the external a gradual journey to the inward, to the interior, commences. The pilgrimage commences with food (annam brahma) as godly, and journeying through breath (vayu brahma), mind (mano-maya), and knowledge (vijnana-maya) as Spirit-filled, reaches the inmost world of bliss (ananda-maya) (Tait.Up.2).

With the thrill that is experienced at the realization of the inmost as constituted of bliss, the external world recedes, and even lapses into nothingness or only source of affliction (*ato'nyad artam* (Br. Up. 3: 4, 2; 3: 5). Deeper reflections on the *samsarik* (the empirical world) and the saririk (life in the embodied situation) begin to take place.

The world of suffering, nay, the world as suffering, and blocking the realization of the goal, appears at this juncture. The four key words in the Indic tradition that express this concern, drawn from different schools of Indian experience, and that could be considered as the flint that 'triggered' the quest after what now we designate as 'spirituality,' may be brought together. These are: *nitya-anitya,* (experience of permanence and impermanence, of pleasure and pain), *duhkha (*suffering in geneal), *kles* (afflictions, fluctuations in the mind) *and visada* (grief). It can be stated that it is the experience of suffering and

the vanishing nature of happiness, that prompted the ancients to reflect deeply over the sources of these unstable phenomena. Advaita and Buddhist spiritualities may be considered as triggered by the experience of the negative in the life of earnest seekers after freedom and peace. The well-known Yoga spirituality has its starting-point in the experience of *kles* (affliction). The countless fluctuations in the inner world moving in diverse and even opposed directions, set in motion by the multiple cravings, generate in the mind profound restlessness and distress. Analysis of the *kles*, its source, and the remedy, has become part of the Yoga spirituality.

In the Samkhya-Yoga traditions the trend to value more the needs of the 'atmic' and devalue those of the 'body' (prakrti, for instance, in the Patanjali yoga), is quite a pronounced one. There is a return to the dualism, exaltation of the world of the 'spirit' (*atman ,purusha*) over against a devaluation of the empirical (the world of *prakrti*). Patanjali has his own rendering: to be free of the afflictions to be one with the Self (*kaivalya*).

Visada is another term with which the transformative experiences of Arjuna, as we have in the great *viswarupa darsana* of Bhagavad Gita, is introduced.

The galaxy of sages and visionaries (rsis) in India further contributed to the promotion of the concerns of the 'atman' and a devaluation of the concerns and needs of the *saririk (body).*The renouncer is the wise one (cfr. the *sreyas-preyas* discussion in the Kathopanisads).

We have the story of the intelligent, perceptive and ever-brooding young man of Kapilvastu to capture our imagination. He was in possession of wealth, youth, and power, on the one hand, and a heritage, on the other. His departure from these 'possessions and their grips' is preceded by a ruthless act of de-possession. This is succeeded by prolonged wanderings and disputations, to verify for oneself what he actually wanted. It was a quest. His was a bold act of despoliation in order to be on the treasure-driven journey.

And what was the result? He eventually attains to something which gives him supreme satisfaction. The millions of sculptures the world over show his face as reflecting the inner peace he attained as a result

of his illumination. It was a new treasure. What is that treasure he has not disclosed, not even to his trusted disciples. But he has suggested that each one should undertake her/his journey of search. The outcome of Sidharth's journey is now known as Buddhist spirituality

And what has been the impact on society? Buddhism has influenced a large part of Asia, and still attracts peoples from other parts of the world in many ways: non-violence, compassion for all living beings, taming one's violent nature, sobriety in living, and freedom from the many persuasions of the transient phenomenal world

The late historian Arnold J. Toynbee has in his twenty volume Study of History, traced the genesis of great civilizations to such illuminative experiences of the divine/transcendent/of God. Some of the great figures he has brought in to illustrate his central thesis are: Moses in the early dispensation, Jesus Christ in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, Mohammed in the Islamic, Siddharth in the Buddhist traditions and heritages. There also are other figures that contribute still further to this trend. St Paul's experience of the fierce encounter with the divine in the desert on his way to Damascus, St Benedict's experience around Monte Cassino and its impact on Western Christian civilization, St Francis of Assisi and his influence on re-directing and re-shaping medieval Christianity, St Ignatius Loyola and his contribution in the sixteenth century, are among the outstanding leaders with profound 'spiritual' experiences in organizing individual life as well as life of the entire culture, even of the civilization. What can be perceived as common to these creative individuals is an overflow of the 'spiritual' in raising the quality of individual and communitarian life to a higher level.

Spiritual experiences are considered as leading to social transformation.

Three crucial moments are located in such experiences: the experience, the birth of a new vision, and the nature of the consequent transformation.

The significant consequences are also listed among others.

One, impact on one's own life: a disciplining and taming of the many cravings and drives, followed by a transition to a freer and elevated mode of life, at the individual level.

Second, there takes place a newer and wider conceptualization of social living. Many barriers are broken down and walls crumble and inter-relatedness increases. The individual realizes oneself as part of the wider society, discovers oneself as a social being with mutual obligations and indebtedness.

Third, affirmation of the ethical and the moral dimensions of individual and collective living and a greater esteem for the human enrich culture. This latter is concretely expressed by greater attention to the many that live on the margin of the society as a result of the high-handedness of the mighty and the powerful that operate without the ethical and the moral demands of the human. This virtually impacts on the society. A re-organization of life in the light of the new experiences takes place.

Moses' extraordinary experiences have had, according to historical counting, impact upon contemporary and succeeding generations. The prime impact was on organizing the primitive society, governed mostly by instincts interests and powers of individuals or groups, by creating a particular code of conduct. Moses is reported to have gained this transformative vision and experience while in contact with the great source: Yahweh. Human relationship and property relationship, two crucial areas in the life of any community that is so frequently prone to misguided behaviour, like exploitation, violence, rapacious greed-led accumulation and consequent violence, were organized and made subject to a disciplined code of conduct. The overall objective was for the people to become a community of mutually inter-related and mutually bound collectivity in the form of a community.

Fourthly, the emergence of a new culture and new values takes place. The quality of a culture depends upon the kind of values created disseminated and internalized by the members of the community. The liberative values ascribed to the Book of Exodus emanated from the experience.

Finally, a high degree of ethical and moral consciousness, influencing and shaping the economic and social responsibilities can be regarded as the ultimate empirical result of such experiences. The Torah is the crystallization of what Yahweh imparted to Moses in the course of the experience.

The sum total of this process is considered 'spirituality' which in many such cases becomes a socially transformative dynamics.

The Hindu Siddharth who became the Buddha (the enlightened), contributed to the emergence of the concept of *sangha.* Mosaic experience led to the creation of a community: Israel. We have in these cases a liberative spirituality.

Bhagavad Gita, a work that can be considered almost as a mini summa of much of what preceded in these areas in Hinduism, has introduced another term, namely, *visada* (grief). The analysis of *visada,* the remedy proposed, the invitation to contemplate the Lord in the very structure and manifestation of the cosmos, climaxes with the cosmic vision. Simple devotion and love for this great Lord is what is recommended. The Gita's spirituality will entail freedom from cravings and attachment to the Lord.

There is much that is common to these distinct schools where the development of particular spiritualities has been taking place. Much of these are attributed to the nature and activities of the human body. Ultimately all these are traced to nature and the role of *karma.* The argument is quite simple. Human actions determine human becoming. Since all acts do not come to fruition in one's lifetime, there was felt the need to posit rebirth, one or many, depending upon what happens when born.

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the same phenomena, namely, sorrow and distress, be they physical, mental, social or structural, are explained in terms of the loss of grace and glory.

The Santi Parva of the Mahabharata contains many an insight of great value to organize the life not only of individuals but also of the wider community. The great epic is a poetic rendering of the mortal combat experienced by humanity. Every individual is subject to the

inner conflict raging fiercely, relentlessly, all in the dark, and hence the experiencing subject becomes disoriented and distressed. The struggle of every person spills over into the social fabric, leading to the formation of social groupings and structures that are pregnant with conflict potentialities leading to violence and other socially degenerative values. If the struggle in the early phase of India is personified in terms of *devas* and *asuras*, in the Upanishads between darkness and life, between death and deathlessness, in the Patanjali between two internal constitutive principles/forces, in the Mahabharata it is between two branches of one and same family or dynasty. The categories do change but the truth is maintained through succeeding ages. The humanizing and civilizing power that is the subject of the discourse is *dharma*, redefined beyond the ambit of the Mimamsa times.

The discourse of the dying Bhishma, after the great battle of Mahabharata, has exerted enormous influence in shaping the value systems in Hindu society. It is traced to the profound experience of the author of the great religious epic

Similarly, the cosmic vision (*visvarupa darsana*) of chapter 11 of the Bhagavadgita is credited with great influence in shaping society not only during the life-span of the author, but especially a wide spectrum of peoples down the centuries. Towards the end of the book there is the declaration of the outcome. The grief vanishes with the cosmic vision. Arjuna records:

> "Destroyed is my delusion, I have gained knowledge through Thy grace, O Immaculate One".
>
> "I am firm, my doubts have fled away. I will do according to Thy word" (18, 73)

6 Some Distinctive Features of Hindu Approaches

a Ravindranath Tagore has poetically described the overall Hindu perception of the Spirit in the world as follows:

"The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures. It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers" (Gitanjali.LXIX,p.46). This integral vision of God and the cosmos runs through the greater part of the Hindu tradition.

Jan Mason, barrister and head of the department of economics in the School of Economics in London, stated recently in an interview:

There is no conflict between worldly and spiritual life. Human beings are spiritual beings...All God asks is that we remember our spiritual nature, try to know it as well as we can and live naturally. This is possible in any lawful way of life (Times of India, January 16,2008).

b However, confronted with the daily experiences of distress in many forms there has been a manifest trend to turn to the inner world there to discover the realm of the Spirit (*atman).* Increasing concentration upon what has been known as interiority has been another feature of Hindu spirituality. Betaking oneself to mountain resorts, places of solitude and silence to retire to engage in contemplation has become a common tradition and practice.

c. This has in modern times been counterbalanced by combining contemplation and activities. We have the example of the spirituality of service, as advocated and put into practice by the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission, and by leaders like Gandhi. For the latter who was not a temple goer and not given to rituals, held that economic, political, cultural and other activities that contribute to the enhancement of the quality of life of people, is spirituality.

d. If one considers the impact of Christian service upon perceptive Indian reformers as in the Ramakrishna Mission, Gandhi etc. one can hold that what we have here is Indian Christian Spirituality. For,

as a result of the silent and gradual osmosis that has been taking place in India, service has become a new component of Hindu identity. Service is authentically Christian in its origin.

e. Conscious of the degraded human experience inflicted by the so-called upper caste upon the Dalits they have risen in open revolt. A bold repudiation of the social system and open acceptance of this identity the Dalits commit themselves to their liberation. This movement has given birth to what is known as the Dalit Spirituality. "I have seen the suffering of my people, because their outcry has come to me" is the voice of Yahweh (ISamuel,9:16). This is an echo of Exodus 3, 7 where Yahweh hears the cry of the people and summons Moses to go to the oppressor and register Yahweh's protest. Mahatma Phule, B. R. Ambedkar, and others in this line have been listening to the travail of the caste-oppressed people of India. They took up their problems as their own and responded. The experiences of Moses, of Phule and Ambedkar are seen to irrupt and flow like lava after a volcano, engulfing society. Dalit Spirituality is currently growing as an authentic Christian spirituality. The two converge and become one.

f. Land and people are central to the prophets in Israel. Toiling on the land for livelihood, and attributing to Yahweh its fruitfulness had become central to their worship. A people's identity is thus rooted in God and in the land. Eviction of the traditional settlers in order to pave the way for multiple super-projects for the new era in industry has been unsettling the vast tribal population of India. Tribals of all walks of life have been through a massive upsurge protesting against incursion into their identity. What is sustaining them is a spirituality that is rooted in a particular understanding of the intimate relationship between land, identity, culture and religiosity. This tribal spirituality has been contributing to the spiritual wealth of India.

Conclusion

To keep the balance between the legitimate concerns of the 'spiritual' and the 'bodily', has been a precarious task in religions. Vigilance over unilateral development can keep the balance. The rendering above of spirituality in terms of moral force, soul force seems to offer us such a balance. The two religions, Hinduism and Christianity can engage in a fruitful dialogue and interaction to serve the goal of religion as well as the deepest aspirations of the people.

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Being Christian and Artistic

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Abstract: After understanding what art is, the author tries to relate the art to Christian Revelation and human imagination. Every one has imagination and imagination makes man human and gives him a world of meaningful and civilized existence. All may not be able to paint, sing, sculpt, dance or write poetry, novels and stories. Even if we leave the mastery in such arts to the accomplished artists in their respective fields, the ordinary man in the street can be called an artist. He remembers his significant experiences of the yester days and years and imaginatively recounts them as meaningful stories. He sits around with people and spins yarns and narrates the past events manifesting a hidden hope in existence. He lives his stories in working for his family and celebrating his life with the community. Often his simple actions of love and gratitude tell long stories silently. He lives as an artist and if his basic story is about God in Christ, then he is a Christian. As a corollary to the above statement, we will have to say that every Christian is an artist in some way. Thus the author affirms, that the more one is a Christian, the greater his responsibility to live the story of Christ, i.e., to be an artist-Christian.

Keywords: Imagination, Christian revelation, story, art, artist, aesthetics.

> *"In fact art is more indispensable than science. Man can live without science in the modern sense of the word. The human being cannot survive without art. ... Art means to make something of your life with your body and with your surroundings on a human scale."* Raimundo Panikkar

It is interesting to dream of Christians who are by nature artistic. I would very much like to imagine each Christian as a special sort of artist! Theologians like Raimundo Panikkar, Samuel Rayan and Sebastian Kappen have spoken of the Christian believers as artists. They honestly thought that human beings become human and holy only through creative pursuits, artistic production and aesthetic enjoyment. Their theology was based on the philosophical anthropology well expressed by the tallest of Indian art critics of modern times Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy: "Artist is not a special man but every man is a special sort of artist."[1] So for a *Christian to be an artist is not a dream but an accomplished fact, though in the seed form.* Of course in the present Ecclesial setup Christians are more comfortable not to feel and work as artists. Well, we need to examine the structure of this 'tragicomedy'. Perhaps Christians have insufficient knowledge about the inner event of art and imagination. This is the context in which I would like to propose that Christian revelation and Christian faith are constitutionally imaginative and artistic.

A. What is art?

We shall here try to focus on the fundamental features of the phenomenon of art. A work of art is a symbol and a process that has goes into its making is the esemplastic, analogical and playful imagination. Imagination is a process of symbolization. The art-symbol which is produced is cognitive; it presents an idea of a feeling. The feeling element of an art-symbol makes the idea it presents significant and relevant. It is not a pure objective, abstract and intellectualised idea, but feeling makes it causative of an affective union. The idea a work presents then cannot be separated from the affective event. This event is an event of truth, a hermeneutical event. It is an encounter with a work which effects the existential 'real-ization' of truth. It is both a

cognitive and an affective realization of truth. It is the event of *aletheia*. In this disclosure of truth the mental or psychic horizons of humans are opened up. The aesthetic shock of experience provides a new interpretation of reality. A new world of possibilities is opened up for human existence. In the same event their practical and historical existence is grounded firmly. That is to say, this event of the disclosure of truth is not only a notional or mental event, but a practical one. It involves man bodily because imagination and symbolization is rooted in man's bodily existence. Imagination works in collaboration with image making. We could say that it is the hands of the craftsman that imagine.

Finally, an art-symbol as cognitive offers a criticism of reality. It subverts the idea of what normality is. As imagination is a free activity, constrained neither by convention nor by pure logic, it always creates a new vision of reality which will be the seed of transformation in the individual and society. In short, art is an activity that involves the whole man and it is a process integral to the hominization of man.

There are different manifestations of art. The imagination which transforms the diverse activities – linguistic, literary, manual, vocal, and bodily – of man creates diverse forms of works and symbols. A sculptural image is a form given to raw matter. A dance recital is the myriad forms given to human body through gestures and movements. A musical piece is shape given to voice and sounds. A metaphor is a literary form. A myth is a form of archetypal imagination and a ritual its dramatic form. A story can be seen as the interplay of mythical imagination and historical remembrance. In our coming theological discussions we will conveniently use different works of imagination or symbols. To understand revelation, Christ mystery, the Church and sacraments, we make use of different symbolic forms like image, icon, dance, myth, story, and ritual.

B. Who is an Artist?

An artist is a person who cooperates with the process of creative imagination. Creative imagination is a process which involves the artist, the work of art, the receptor, artist's bodily involvement and the esemplastic power of the human mind. It is at once a process of knowing and of doing. The artist knows primarily by doing, by the bodily and

sensorial involvement in making a work of art. For him art is a way of life since it involves working with the hands and knowing with the mind.

He lives in a world different from the empirical world. It is a world created by imagination. Imagination transforms the empirical day-to-day world into a world illumined with significance – 'world apparelled in celestial light', as Wordsworth would say. It may have for him an aesthetic significance proper (that of sheer beauty), emotional significance (vitality), religious significance (of mystery) or archetypal significance (of collective unconscious).

He is a man with feelings or 'heart'. He knows and is in the world with his guts, the seat of feelings. The feelings that charge the world with power and illumine it with radiance make him a relational being, a person who cherishes interpersonal relationships soaked in emotional depth. The feelings that move him are not unrestrained egotist passions which consume persons, but they are mellowed and sublimated aesthetically. The feelings of an artist are intellectualised to an optimum degree so that he is not blind because of them. He is the unmoved mover, the serene revolutionary, the angry prophet who loves peace.

A man of feelings that he is, he does not spurn reason. He is a rational human being who is critical of what is 'normal' and what is taken for granted. He is not destructively critical standing away from reality without involvement in it as he is also not too immersed in reality through great emotional involvement.

The picture of the artist presented here is not of a craftsman producing beautiful wares. Just by being a skilled vocalist, a famed painter he does not rise up to the standards set by this picture. *The artist here is an intensely living and fully functional human being.* It is not a picture of the artist spoiled by the consumer society that atrophies his hand in harness and removes his prophetic fangs spewing divine anger.

C. Christian Revelation

We may say that the warp and woof of the Christian life are revelation and faith.[2] "In the biblical perspective, revelation and faith comprise the totality of Christian existence."[3] If we are at all allowed to analyse the component elements of Christian life, we can see that

God has his part in it, i.e., his call of love, invitation to grace or his good news and man has the complementary role of response to the call, cooperation with his grace or his generous faith. The Good news is that salvation and the Kingdom of God are available to us in the person of Jesus Christ, and to be saved we need to believe in the Gospel, i.e., accept Christ as the forgiving Lord and Saviour and to repent and be converted (cf. Mk 1: 15)

The specific Christian revelation of God is the proclamation of the good news in and through Jesus, the Christ. In the Old Testament we see that God has spoken from creation onwards especially to his chosen people Israel through mighty deeds and through the words of the prophets. " In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Heb 1: 1-2). The Christ event is not only the climax, but it is also the recapitulation and summary of all that God had spoken.

The revelational acts of God diffused and spread throughout the history of Israel are contracted into the personal history of God's Son, Jesus Christ. "By Jesus' complete receptivity to the self-bestowing love of God, all that had haltingly and successively been made present in the history of Israel was recapitulated and focused in one life span."[4]

Jesus Christ became the full vehicle of revelation in his death and resurrection.[5] In his death and resurrection, the Son reveals the Father, and the Father is glorified by his Son. When God ratified his full revelation in Christ, he made Christ the channel of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who enlightens all men in truth. "Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear." (Acts 2:23; cf. Jn 17:13l Eph 1:13-14).

The source of the true and primary revelation is God revealing through Christ. Jesus Christ is the gospel that the Christian believes in and accepts with his whole mind and heart. Now, the phrase 'Christ is the revelation' says much about the content of Christian revelation, i.e., the person and event of Christ, but it says little about what revelation itself is. The Christian, the believing human being, is the receptor of the revelation, and as artist-Christians we are concerned with how the

revelation works its way to the believer. Art is a way to knowledge and here we shall examine the reception of the Good News as mediated through art and the related processes of aesthetic consciousness and imagination.[6]

D. The Concept of Revelation in Crisis

In the world of Christian theological writings, the word 'revelation' is disappearing.[7] If we look through the indexes of recent theological works, in all probability, we may not find a section on revelation. So in vain we will be searching for a coherent exposition of the meaning of revelation. This does not point to the non-existence of the reality of revelation, but to the disapproval of a certain understanding of revelation. The disapproved and decried notion is revelation as a pseudo-scientific or scientific category. "It is this scientific meaning of Christian revelation in Christian theology that has become indefensible, a fact that is implicitly admitted by theology's embarrassed silence."[8]

Christ Mystery

According to Paul, the saving event effected in Christ's death and resurrection is a *Mysterion*[9] (cf. Eph. 3:4; 1Cor 1: 23-24). This mystery was hidden in God from the beginning (Col 1: 2^) but it is progressively manifested in the history of salvation and especially in Christ. But, the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ is hidden behind images and symbols.[10] Jesus Christ himself is the true image of the Father (1Col 1: 15) and for the believers in this mortal historical life God can be known only in a mediated form, as through a darkened glass (1cor 13:12) imperfectly. So revelation has to do with a hidden God and the mystery of his gracious love. For a human being and hence for the Christian, a mystery is not available in perfectly clear and logically presented concepts as in a scientific manner, but it can be evoked as the meaning of works of art.[11]

The Concept of Christian Revelation

The First Vatican Council presented revelation primarily as the communication of supernatural truths which are inaccessible to the power of natural reason. The Second Vatican Council saw revelation as the self-communication of God to man and thus a personalistic approach to revelation was adopted.[12] This shift in perspective points

to the new emphasis that is being given to revelation as mystery, encounter and process. Now the main issue of revelation is no longer centred on the eternal truths preserved in Scripture and Tradition, because revelation has been now placed in the wider context of human existence, history and society.[13]

The understanding of what revelation is has its own history.[14] In the earliest period of Christian era, man had been in search of meaning in his human affairs and worldly existence. The philosophies and the religions of that time provided their own answers which were not fully satisfactory to the man of the New Testament times. At that point of time, the Christian spokesmen came up with the 'right' answer. Christians *knew* the answer: God is one who took personal interest in the people and intervened on their behalf, that too definitively in the Christ-event. Christians knew the key to the meaning of the universe: the Christ-event.

According to the early Christians revelation meant "the entire process by which the problem of human condition was resolved."[15] For them, the revelation of God and his manifestation of the divine plan of things took precedence over all the human attempts as found in philosophies and religious systems. They did not intend to mean it as some truths which are found only in the written biblical texts. They did not oppose Christian revelation to other revelations. Their point was that it is God who gives the answer.

However, decisive changes in the use of the word revelation occur in the period after the Renaissance, Reformation and the scientific revolution in the West. To cope with the modern scientific onslaughts on religious beliefs, theology began to be conceived as a science in the modern sense of the word. Revelation began to be seen as the object of faith which is located somewhere, e.g., in Scripture and the doctrinal pronouncements of tradition. Theology applied the same rigorous logic and stringent controls of reason as science did on the object of investigation. As in science, in theology too, the premises are assumed to be available for investigation. Revelation then is 'the given' for the science of theology.

But as far as theology is concerned this assumption about revelation is far-fetched and unwarranted because there exists no clear objective

data from which a theological reasoning can proceed. But once the premises are assumed, certitudes are possible. Basing on the certitudes arguments and apologetics arose as to who could give a final and sure interpretation of the revealed truths and where these truths are primarily located.

Faith as Assent to Propositional Revelation

Faith was understood as the assent to true and divinely revealed propositions. If revealed truths are in the form of propositions, now reason has a claim over revelation too. So, two sources of knowledge of the divine are posited: reason and faith. But Church never fully gave in to the claims of reason. In the First Vatican Council, it was maintained that natural reason could attain the knowledge of God but in a confused ways, with admixture of error. With the light of reason alone, the truths of religion cannot be known satisfactorily. Only through divine faith we could know those truths that are hidden in God and unless they are revealed by God, they cannot be known.[16] Knowledge through faith exceeds knowledge through reason, but all the same, the idea that relation can be stated in clear propositions remained unchanged and valid. It is to this idea of revelation, the Second Vatican Council took an exception.

E. Imagination and Revelation

The analogy 'through glass darkly' or 'the obscure reflection as in a mirror' used by Paul is a warning "against thinking of God as an 'object' of knowledge to which theology has direct and immediate access..."[17] There is no immediate face to face access to God because our knowledge of God is indirect, mediated and reflected. Our knowledge of God is mediated through images. I concur with William Dych that "it is precisely the work of the imagination, both in life and in art, to provide the images which enable us to 'see' God in Paul's sense."[18] Imagination has a vital role in revealing the mystery of God to the believers.

In a world where scientific thinking reigns supreme, God is an unverifiable hypothesis, an illusion or a projection of the fears and desires of man. Imagination comes to mean the opposite of knowledge, and art performs only a decorative function in life. It is a passing diversion from the serious business of life and the pursuit of genuine

knowledge. This type of rational attitude to life is rooted in the widely accepted assumption that man has a reasoning mind which functions autonomously, independent of hoping, wishing, desiring or imagining.[19]

Rationalism does not take into account the whole person who is doing the thinking. It does not do justice to the unity and totality of human experience and to the human historicity. Rene Descartes who coined the phrase 'I think, there I am' (Cogito ergo sum) is thought to have isolated reason to make it an autonomous faculty. According to him, real knowledge is available through "clear and distinct ideas."

In the twentieth century this Cartesian supremacy of reason is questioned on many fronts, e.g., by Michael Polanyi, Jürgen Habermas, Peter Berger[20] and many others. Their studies have shown that the human knower is not a disinterested observer of an objective world but he is very much involved in the process of discovering the truth. It is not merely the mind, but it is people who think. They think from out of the totality of their existence and in relation to their existential situation.[21] This newer perspective on knowledge is reflected in the thinking of the Second Vatican Council when it places revelation and faith "within the universal context of the Christian existence."[22]

Images that Reveal

It is an axiom that icon precedes the idea and the image precedes the concept. Now we shall see that symbolic images contain the real while rational concepts only refer to the real. While reason precludes the subject from attaining objective knowledge, imagination unites both the object and the subject in images.

In our existential life, knowledge is not always merely rational and objective, because when we are conscious of the outside world, simultaneously we are aware of ourselves as different from what is objectified outside. And again, we realise that though we are aware of our difference from the world of objects, we are also aware that we are not indifferent to the world. The world of persons and things affect us subjectively. We are aware of the affective relationship that exists between the self and the world. "Awareness and affectivity together in their mutual interrelationship are the way in which we become conscious of the real world and the real self, and together they constitute the single pathway into conscious human existence in the

world."[23] The subjective and affective way of knowing and being takes into consideration the totality of human existence. This is made possible by the unity of our sensibilities.

Unitary and Holistic Knowledge

The unity of sensibility is the lived unity of knowing and being in the existential life. The unity takes place at two points. First there is the unity of the subject and the object, the knower and the known. In one act of knowledge, we are in touch with the world and the self. This is precisely what is happening in the process of imagination. Second, there is the unity of awareness and affectivity in which the relationship between the knower and known is existentially grasped. The interaction and the interrelationship between awareness of the world and the self and the affectivity that exists between them cause our real existential and holistic knowledge of reality. This is a knowledge which has its roots in experience and which is expressed in images.

In the lived unity of the existential life of the knower the dichotomies of intellect and will or knowing and desiring are secondary and they are derived from the lived experience. In a dichotomised scheme of reality (which of course has its place, in human communications and critical thinking) the concrete and the particular are abstracted and universalised into concepts and generalities. But before the particular experiences are generalised in terms of verbal concepts, there are the images. The images are formed in concrete life, during the process of work, and also when we sensorially experience the world and involve ourselves in concrete matter. It happens when matter is being explored and then shaped in diverse ways. Images arise while we are still in the affective relationship with the world. "It is in our images of the real that we grasp the real self and the real world together in the unity of their lived and experienced relationship and in the unity of awareness and affectivity..."[24]

Our knowledge of the real concrete world exists objectively and subjectively in imagination and its images. For the knower, nothing is more real and objective than images. Knowledge through images and the imagination is the most basic and concrete type of knowledge. In it the reality of affective relationship with the world is respected and because our affective and conscious relationship with the world, we cannot but form images of the real.[25] Experience, thus, is inevitably

expressed in images. While concepts are our rational constructions, images are experiential happenings. It is through these images that God is revealed.

Images that Grow into Stories

But images of the real may be 'false' due to false generalizations. Images are true, but when they are applied to areas where we have no experience, then we go wrong. This is the risk of knowing through images unlike through clear concepts. Through the maturation of lived experience images grow into a whole system of related images. Experience stores up images in memory and suggestive activity of *dhvani* and the esemplastic power of imagination connect many images drawn from memory and shape them into a whole world of images, the *mundus Imaginalis*. Our experiential knowledge is shaped into the world of our self which has a direction, coherence and form.[26] Our self then has a story which is made up of many images of the real; or rather a story formed out of our experience has a self and a world. The story of Christ forms the lives of the Christians.

"The task of the imagination is to imagine the real."[27] To imagine the concrete reality in all its complexity and inherent possibilities and to shape our affective and sensorial experience of the particularities of matter into a story and a world of the self is a free and responsible activity.[28] The images go into a story form without our asking, when we are in affective and experiential contact with reality. They emerge. They form without guiding formulas or blueprints. In this way imagination can be said to act freely, but at the same time, our story and our world is the result also of our active openness and receptivity. Our imagination of the real is a responsible activity, because instead of leaving things as they are, we choose to involve ourselves in them affectively and sensuously, which then become my images. So imagination is a responsible involvement with reality, by which new stories of the self and new paradigms of life are formed.

Lived Story is Revelatory

Our stories are composed of images of the real, but neither stories nor images are merely literary, i.e., verbal stories and verbal images. We need to remind ourselves that imagination which forms images in

and through an affective relationship with the concrete and historical reality is an act of image-making with hands (or with bodily involvement). Imagination does not dichotomise mental or verbal images and material or historical images. Our stories are not then merely verbal or mental figments, but they are stories lived historically. We are the stories that are formed. Our communities are the stories that are the stories that are narrated. Our culture and our civilization is our own lived story.

Christianity used to be thought of as a self-enclosed system of ideas and revelation as a set of supernatural truths in propositional form. Now we can understand them as people who live the story of Jesus Christ, the risen Lord.[29] Christianity is based on and emerges from a story *of a God* who manifested himself and lovingly offered himself to men through his Son. Jesus Christ. It is the story of *a people* who experienced the risen Lord and who remember the great deeds of God wrought through Jesus Christ.

Story of Christ

The earliest religious documents of both the east and the West are simple stories. The Bible too is a long story of a God who loved man with a covenantal faithfulness. The Christian creeds of faith are narratives too. "The primary and historically consistent way that we have expressed our religious sensibility is through stories."[30] But these stories have mythical and historical dimensions.[31] They are historical insofar as they embody images arisen out of historical experience. But they are not a series of events strung together as brute facts. There is a mythic interpretation of the idea symbolised in the narrative or the non-successive truth expressed through the successive events. The mythic element of the story builds our world and the historical element roots our existence in concrete particular experiences.[32] Christian revelation thus can be seen as the historical revelation in the concrete life of Jesus and the mythic revelation in its supernatural significance, both of which are united in the written, spoken and lived story of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

To tell and live the story of Jesus Christ means to remember and recall the historical Jesus in all his historical particularity. His memory which is passed on as lived tradition is a 'histori-memory' and not just

ideas about is ontological constitution.[33] This tradition which is passed on is preserved in art-forms – stories, plays, music, dance, rituals, architecture, painting and sculpture. In these the images of Jesus Christ are re-imagined for that sake of the present and thus the Christian story matures and 'real-izes' in the life of the Christian community. Then the Good News, the Christian revelation, becomes visible and tangible in the world.[34] The community of faith built around the Good News is the art-work of God who builds the Kingdom. In the community that lives the story of Christ, revelation and faith are conjoined inseparably.

F. Aesthetic understanding of Revelation

Instead of conceiving revelation as truths in propositions, when we consider it as Truth in art forms e.g., story, painting, etc. we have an aesthetic understanding of revelation. The aesthetic way is an alternative way to the rationalistic and propositional way. The three distinguishable characteristics of the aesthetic activity according to Gabriel Moran are the following.[35] First it pertains to concrete materials and it does not abstract them to the level of general ideas. The aesthetic way to present a universal idea is through its embodiment in particular events, people and things. Second, the aesthetic knowing is not simple rational; it is meta-rational too; it is a knowing through feeling and affectivity. Third, it is a holistic way to knowledge. Truth is not primarily sought in self-evident propositions but in relation to the environment in which the human being forms an organic part.

Revelation as an aesthetic category is concrete, affective and holistic. In the all-embracing and holistic function of revelation no more logical dichotomies are entertained, e.g., the splits like cognitive/affective, active/passive, human/nonhuman or Christian/non-Christian. It refers to the total relational pattern which can never be possessed by anybody. Revelation is what happens in an affective relationship with the concrete world and it happens in images and symbols. Revelation as an aesthetic category cannot be contained in Scripture alone or in the holy offices of the Magisterium and its doctrinal declarations. The Church, the Magisterium and the believers, all can only participate in the revelatory events and images.[36] Christians, or the Church, do not possess revelation but revelation possesses all human beings.

Revelation and shape of the community

Revelation conceived in aesthetic terms has such far-reaching effects that we will no longer be able to say that the Church has the monopoly of revelation, because it cannot fetter truth in clear concepts and unambiguous propositions. Aesthetically speaking, revelation has a Church.[37] As revelation has many faces in many a story and myriad images, correspondingly the Church will have many forms and shapes. The concept of the monolithic Church[38] will have to go and the Church has to be imagined as many communities who participate in the rich mystery of the good news in diverse ways according to historical and geographical limitations and possibilities.

G. Revelation and Non-Christians

Can non-Christians receive revelation? According to First Vatican Council, non-Christians can come to a knowledge of the existence and the nature of God who is the creator of the universe using only the power of natural reason. "Hence the apostle — testifies that God is known to the Gentiles in the things that have been made (cf. Rom 1: 20)..."[39] But if God can be known through natural reason it cannot be without God's grace, God's free offer of salvation and love. Paul says that the Good News is for everyone the Jew and the Greek (cc. Rom 1: 16). Moreover, God desires that all men may come to the knowledge of truth (cf. 1 Tim 2: 3-4). But according to the First Vatican Council, the non-Christians do not receive revelation proper. The non-Christians, although they are graced, cannot come to the clear and unambiguous knowledge of God because their access to God is only through natural reason.[40]

If we grant that imagination is a gift of God to all human beings and that it is through imagination we grasp the Good News, then we also have to admit that non-Christians have access to revelation proper in their own right. Karl Rahner grudgingly acknowledges that "it would be wrong to regard the pagan as someone who has not yet been touched in any way by God's grace and truth. If, however, he has experienced the grace of God... then he has already been given revelation in a true sense even before he has been affected by missionary preaching from without."[41] An anonymous Christian then is assumed to be a Christian anonymously. But I am not sure whether we can baptise non-Christians

anonymously. Aesthetically speaking, revelation creates the many and varied religions, of which Christianity is one, and no one set of images of faith and stories of God are perfect, images have to grow and stories have to grow richer through wider experience and greater involvement with other people who have different images of God, the Real.

Mutual fecundation of revelations

Here emerges the question as to the unique revelation of Christ to the Christians. We saw earlier that the specific Christian revelation is that Christ is the Lord and Saviour. How is the specific revelation in Christ related to the ongoing revelation and to the other specific revelation of other religions? For Christians, Christ experience is paradigmatic. The image of Christ is the primal image and the story of Christ is the basic story. When a Christian experiences God in the historical vicissitudes, in encounter with other religions or in personal relationship, he interprets his basic image of Christ and he retells the story of Christ. As for a man belonging to another religion, Hindu Shivite, for example, when he experiences Christ in his encounter with a Christian or a Christian work of art, his images of God become richer, and he is able to tell the story of the one God, the Father of all, in a more meaningful way to himself and to others, in words and in lived life. Thus, revelation can be seen as the primal story which is continuously retold, integrating the ongoing revelation of God in and through history.

H. Revelation and Faith

Revelation incorporates within itself the phenomenon of faith. Revelation and faith are two moments of one existential act and experience. Earlier we saw that revelation occurs in involvement with matter, which already can be characterised as faith. Faith is man's existential response, the living out his basic story. When a Christian lives out the story of Christ, he learns through painful experience that there are ever new images of Christ and his own story is imperfect and so he retells his story of Christ. Thus revelation goes on in and through the faith response, and the openness to new revelations leads to creative ways of responding to man and God.

We can understand both revelation and faith as dialogic. Revelation is not merely God's showing forth; it has a human element. In human

work and involvement in history he attains the openness to receive the Good News. So revelation is a gift and an achievement at the same moment, albeit it can never be reduced to a human invention. Likewise faith is a dialogic process that takes place between God and man. The impulse to involve in history comes as a response to the Good News the Christian receives. The initiative comes from God and so it is a gift. Once we are moved by a divine impulse, human decision takes over and faith becomes a task to be performed responsibly. This dialogical structure of revelation and faith elucidate the reality of the ongoing divine-human encounter. The divine penetrates the human in revelation and the human communes with the divine in faith.

The Artist-Christian

If the revelation in Christ and the response in faith to God makes the Christian existence (as seen earlier, p. 160), then we can speak of the artist-Christian. The artist-Christian receives the revelation in Christ and responds in faith as an artist. The artist's way of life and the pattern of his existence make him open to receive revelation through images and stories. His imagination enables him to approach the mystery of the Christ-event and to assimilate the images and symbols through which the mystery of Christ confronts him. The artist, because he exists through praxis or image-making, expresses his response of faith through historical and bodily involvement in the material world. The artist receives revelation through it. He lives his Christian life as an artist. He exists in being an artist. He is a Christian through art and imagination, in its all-inclusive sense. That is why he can be called an artist-Christian.

According to Ananda Coomaraswamy all men are artists by nature, and only what kind of artist one becomes is left to the particular situation he finds in a society. The idea that an artist is not a special kind of man but every man is special kind of artist is Coomaraswamy's favourite idea.[42] Every man has imagination and imagination makes man human and gives him a world of meaningful and civilized existence. All may not be able to paint, sing, sculpt, dance or write poetry, novels and stories. Even if we leave the mastery in such arts to the accomplished artists in their respective fields, the ordinary man in the street can be called an artist. He remembers his significant experiences of the yester

days and years and imaginatively recounts them as meaningful stories. He sits around with people and spins yarns and narrates the past events manifesting a hidden hope in existence. He lives his stories in working for his family and celebrating his life with the community. Often his simple actions of love and gratitude tell long stories silently. He lives as an artist and if his basic story is about God in Christ, then he is a Christian. As a corollary to the above statement, we will have to say that every Christian is an artist in some way. The more one is a Christian, the greater his responsibility to live the story of Christ, i.e., to be an artist-Christian.

Notes

1 Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, Dover Publications, New York, 1956, p. 24.

2 Cf. Errol D'Lima, "Christian Revelation and Faith", cyclostyled notes, De Nobili College, Pune, 1982, p. 1.

3 J. Neuner and J. Dupuis (ed.), *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 3rd ed., T.P.I., Bangalore, 1978 (Hereafter cited as J. Neuner and J. Dupuis (ed.), *The Christian Faith*), p. 34.

4 Gabriel Moran, *Theology of Revelation*, Herder and Herder, New York, 1966, p. 60.

5 Gabriel Moran, *Theology of Revelation*, p. 76.

6 There are two possible approaches to revelation available to us within the aesthetic context. One is the path illumined by images as opposed to concepts and propositions. Te revelation through images is placed before a backdrop of its peculiar epistemological pre-eminence and the disadvantage of a propositional revelation. The second approach is the way of religious experience engendered through art-images. Art is related to religion in the realm of affective and meta-empirical depth-experiences. Art in general and Christian art in particular, e.g., icons reveal God by effecting religious experiences. In this approach, the different realms of experience – aesthetic, religious and human – are compared and contrasted to determine how art occasions religious experience. We treat here only the first approach, e.e., revelation as non-propositional knowledge.

7 Gabriel Moran, "Teaching Within revelation", in *Aesthetic Dimensions of religious Education*, ed. Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith, Paulist Press,

New York, 1979 (Hereafter cited as Gabriel Moran, "Teaching Within Revelation"), p. 153.

8 Gabriel Moran, "Teaching Within Revelation", p. 154.

9 Xavier Leon-Dufour (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 2nd ed., TPI, Bangalore, 1973, p. 373; cf. Hugo Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, Biblo and Tannen, New York, 1971, pp. 29-48.

10 Leon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, p. 502.

11 Avery Dulles, *Revelation and the Quest for Unity,* Corpus books, Washington, 1968, p. 20.

12 J. Neuner and J. Dupuis (ed.), *The Christian Faith*), p. 43.

13 J. Neuner and J. Dupuis (ed.), *The Christian Faith*), p. 34.

14 Gabriel Moran, "Teaching Within Revelation", p. 155-156.

15 Gabriel Moran, "Teaching Within Revelation", p. 155.

16 J. Neuner and J. Dupuis (ed.), *The Christian Faith*), p. 47-49.

17 William Dych, "Theology and Imagination", *Thought*, LVII (March 1982), p. 116.

18 William Dych, "Theology and Imagination", *Thought*, p. 117.

19 William Dych, "Theology and Imagination", *Thought* , p. 117.

20 cf. Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge,* University of Chicago Press, 1958; Jurgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1971; Peter Berger and T. Luckman, *Social Construction of Reality, A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge*, Irvington Press, New York, 1966.

21 William Dych, "Theology and Imagination", *Thought*, p. 118.

22 J. Neuner and J. Dupuis (ed.), *The Christian Faith*), p. 34.

23 William Dych, "Theology and Imagination", *Thought*, p. 118.

24 William Dych, "Theology and Imagination", *Thought*, p. 120.

25 William Dych, "Theology and Imagination", *Thought*, p. 121.

26 William Dych, "Theology and Imagination", *Thought*, p. 121.

27 William Lynch, *Images of Faith*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1973, p. 63.

28 William Dych, "Theology and Imagination", *Thought*, p. 121-122.

29 Mary Warnock, "Imagination – Aesthetic and Religious", *Theology*, LXXXII (November, 1980), p. 405.

30 John R. May, "Myth and Parable in American Fiction", *Thought*, LVII (March, 1982), p. 53.

31 Mary Warnock, p. 405.

32 Cf. John R. May, "Myth and Parable in American Fiction", p. 53.

33 William Dych, "Theology and Imagination", *Thought*, p. 126.

34 William Dych, "Theology and Imagination", *Thought*, p. 127.

35 Gabriel Moran, "Teaching Within Revelation", p. 154.

36 Gabriel Moran, "Teaching Within Revelation", p. 159-161.

37 Gabriel Moran, "Teaching Within Revelation", p. 163.

38 When the form of the Church is deduced from propositional revelation which the Church itself has ratified, changes and variety in the form of the Church are almost impossible. With such an understanding of revelation, Church has to be individualistic, monolithic, rationalistic and bureaucratic. cf. Gabriel Moran, "Teaching Within Revelation", p. 163.

39 J. Neuner and J. Dupuis (ed.), *The Christian Faith*), p. 47.

40 Cf. Kevin McNamara, "Is There a Non-Christian Revelation", in *Service and Salvation*, ed., J. Pathrapankal, TPI, Bangalore, 1973, p. 192.

41 Karl Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions", *Theological Investigations*, V, p. 131.

42 Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, Dover Publications, New York, 1956, p. 24.

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Sacraments Viewed in Indian Christian Perspectives

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Abstract: In this article, the author highlights the manner in which Sacramentality is understood from perspectives that are Indian and, at the same time, Christian. The author is emphatic that he does not do to attempt a merely comparative approach to the different religions in India and Christianity. The temptation of seeing Christianity as an axial religion and other religions as mere approximations of it could lead the Christian believer to view other religions as an outsider and to make judgments on these that tend to be concept-based, no more! Instead, if the mysterious presence of God is presumed in created reality as a whole, then one is encouraged to discover the sacramental presence of God from Indian perspectives. According to our author, the documents of Vatican II give good reason for presuming some kind of sacramental presence in the Indian reality. Would it not be the task of Christian theology to find out how the divine is present in religions other than Christianity? Would this not be a first step in trying to build community, especially in the secular reality of today that is founded on the divine presence underlying it? In the first part some basic sacramental insights from the Christian perspective are commented on. In the second part, an attempt is made to understand these insights from a perspective that is Indian and Christian.In perspectives that are authentically Christian and truly Indian, Sacramentality points to a way of life rather than to a cultic action by itself. So the author concludes the article by affirming that the effect of sacramental presence is meant to make men and women more caring and concerned about those who are suffering.

Keywords: Sacraments, sacramentality, Indian religions, Christian tradition.

When attempting to describe or define 'salvation', The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions speaks of it in the following terms: "The act or state of being safe in ultimate terms. Although all religions have some sense of a condition which might appropriately be called by this name, the state and the way to it are very differently understood."[1]

In Christianity, the notion of salvation is inextricably linked with the incarnate person of Jesus Christ, the divine-human being who proclaims, through his whole being, the comprehensive and final salvation of humankind.[2] Both the person and proclamation of Jesus Christ constitute the Incarnational event that gave Palestinian and European Christianity its specific identity. At the end of the 15th century, when Christianity came to India with Vasco da Gama during the colonial expansion of the west, it had already been shaped by the culture of Europe, even though its dogmatic and doctrinal formulations preserved a Hellenistic format.

When Christianity speaks of the Incarnational event it means that the invisible becomes visible, spirit is made concrete through matter, the other-worldly is manifested in the this-worldly, God is present in the person of Jesus who is the Christ. The Incarnational event calls attention to the sacramental aspect of the reality of the world and, in particular, of human persons. Sacramentality eschews a worldly reality that is totally autonomous and by itself and a God who must then enter this reality and effect salvation in it. God is seen as already active in the world that is created by the God-self and Sacramentality refers to the underlying presence of God in that world. With the person of Jesus Christ in the world, there is a qualitative difference in the mode of God's sacramental presence in the world. The church community is the concrete, visible witness to Jesus Christ and, to that extent, is viewed by the believer as the official sacramental presence of the God-self in the world. As such, the church community is meant to express the sacramental presence of God coming to greater visibility, in its worship, teaching and life in the secular world: "...the church, in its teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to every generation all that it is and all that it believes." (DV 8)

Our concern in this essay is to highlight the manner in which Sacramentality is understood from perspectives that are Indian and, at

the same time, Christian. It will not do to attempt a merely comparative approach to the different religions in India and Christianity.[3] The temptation of seeing Christianity as an axial religion and other religions as mere approximations of it could lead the Christian believer to view other religions as an outsider and to make judgments on these that tend to be concept-based, no more! Instead, if the mysterious presence of God is presumed in created reality as a whole, then one is encouraged to discover the sacramental presence of God from Indian perspectives. The documents of Vatican II give good reason for presuming some kind of sacramental presence in the Indian reality.[4] Would it not be the task of Christian theology to find out how the divine is present in religions other than Christianity? Would this not be a first step in trying to build community, especially in the secular reality of today that is founded on the divine presence underlying it?

In the first part some basic sacramental insights from the Christian perspective are commented on. In the second part, an attempt is made to understand these insights from a perspective that is Indian and Christian.

PART ONE: *Christian Sacramental Perspectives*

To many in the Church, it would seem that the seven sacraments in their present form cannot be changed. This presumption is based on proof texts from scripture and the Christian Tradition that have been pronounced on by the Council of Trent in the 16th century. This Council forbade change: "13. If anyone says that the accepted and approved rites of the Catholic Church which are customarily used in the solemn administration of the sacraments may be despised or omitted without sin by the ministers as they please, or that they may be changed to other new rites by any pastor in the Church, *anathema sit.*"[5] However, we know that changes were made even though the substantial meaning of the sacrament remained constant.[6]

In the Council of Trent, sacraments were seen as instituted by Jesus Christ who marks the definitive phase of salvation in the world. Faced with the Protestant challenge in the sixteenth century, the Church's concern was focused on the validity and the fruitfulness of sacraments. Hence, besides viewing the sacraments as grace-giving events in the

life of the Church community, the council spelt out neither the anthropological implications nor the ecclesiological dimensions of the Christian sacramental economy. In the wake of Trent, sacraments came to be seen primarily as the actions of a hierarchical clergy that possessed the power to effect sacraments in the faith community. The council concerned itself only with laying down the conditions that were to be observed if the ordained minister's action was to be sacramentally efficacious. In effect, the directives for sacramental celebration took the form of juridical and legal stipulations that were meant to assure the validity of a sacramental action performed (confected) by an ordained minister. This made the way for sacraments to be seen more as ritualistic actions and less as symbols of God's presence in the world and in the humanizing context of community.

In the post-Tridentine period, the catechisms that were published by the church authorities reflected the council's teaching on sacraments.[7] The well-known description of a sacrament (an outward sign of inward grace instituted by Jesus Christ that brings salvation to the person) was helpful in a catechesis that was context-specific, i.e. describing a sacrament against the background of the Protestant Reformation. The Church wanted to affirm Jesus Christ as the originator of the sacraments and to identify clearly the person who was authorized to confect a sacrament?[8] The ordained minister possessed the power to administer the sacrament and the believer was merely a recipient. In this transaction, sacramental grace was effected in the recipient and the sacrament was judged efficacious. Until Vatican II, the notion of Christian Sacramentality continued to draw its meaningfulness from the Tridentine understanding of the seven sacraments.

It was when the Liturgical movement gained a certain momentum and championed the participation of the laity in the liturgy—one recalls the practice of frequent communion encouraged by Pius X in 1905 and the Liturgical Congress in Malines (Belguim) in 1909—that the need for seeing a sacramental action as a community celebration was recognized. Pius XII's encyclical *Mediator Dei* in 1947 supplied the groundwork for liturgical reform that paved the way for Vatican II's *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. There was a retrieval of the New Testament insight that the Christian vocation called a person to believe in Jesus

Christ. Through that action a faith community was born. The building up of a community of faith meant that God was present sacramentally among the people.

While changes have occurred, in the wake of Vatican II, that make for people's participation in liturgical worship, the assumption that, in the end, the ordained minister's action alone matters and that the community can be reduced to a group of mute bystanders still prevails. It would also seem that some further misunderstanding regarding the sacraments continues. Because they confer grace *ex opere operato* (by the celebration of the rite) the wider horizon, i.e. the presence of God underlying the worldly reality, is often neglected. Yet, sacraments are meant to point to, and give expression to, the Sacramentality in the world at large. However, the reality that offers the context in which sacraments function, merits little consideration. The signifying aspect of the sacrament is, for the most part, forgotten and the visibility of the sacrament is mainly concerned with the appropriate gestures, movements and words linked directly with the action or ceremony of an individual sacrament. The cultic moment of the sacrament in the Church is rarely seen as a representation of what happens in the outside world. Karl Rahner had drawn attention to this "anomaly" in the following words: "...the relationship between the 'sign' function [*Summa Theologica* III, Q. 60] and the instrumental causality of the sacraments as Thomas presents them is not fully thought out in its ultimate significance".[9]

Could the fear of the ordained minister forgetting his role be the reason for recent magisterial documents (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia* and *Redemptionis Sacramentum*) being issued which keep on highlighting the unique ministerial role of the ordained minister? One also discovers that the phrase "People of God" and the theology that should emerge from it are rarely mentioned in official documents. In Vatican II, "People of God" was a key theological intuition in the understanding of the Church along with the notion of the mystery of God present among his people. Is the ecclesiology that has its starting point in People of God too frightening for a Church that exercises its sacramental ministry hierarchically? Today's Church has a long way to go before sacraments are seen as ecclesial events in the building up of community.[10] While *Sacrosanctum Concilium* lays great stress on the community dimension

of sacraments and the participative role of the laity, the Tridentine understanding—which is basically priest-centred—continues to cast its shadow on sacramental celebration.

To build up community means primarily that the community members form a unity because of their faith in Jesus Christ and their willingness to follow his way of life. Such bonding and identifying with the person of Jesus necessarily make for a code of ethics, a fact that is noted by Paul the apostle in his epistles. A Vatican II perspective sees the celebration of the sacrament as a prophetic initiative. The celebration of the seven sacraments is an opportunity for the church to become more truly itself and to effect transformation in persons and structures that will manifest the values of the Reign of God. Finally, the sacramental context is meant to bring a greater identification between the person of Jesus Christ and the members of the Church.

The pre-Vatican II understanding of a sacrament has assumed the form of a ritual act, primarily, performed according to rules and rubrics. Such an understanding offered measured scope to express godliness present in the world. The *aggiornamento* promoted by Vatican II surely indicated a new insight and understanding of the sacramental action. Perhaps the following description would more aptly express what sacramental celebration should imply.

In keeping with the insights gained in Vatican II, the sacramental action is (a) a celebration of faith in community to enable it to serve the purposes of God in the world, (b) a prophetic proclamation of God's Reign that transforms persons and society, and (c) an invitation and opportunity for believers to identify with the person of Jesus Christ. These three aspects of sacramental reality would offer a suitable way of understanding sacramental reality present in different cultural contexts since they emphasize faith as foundational for the God-experience, values that serve the cause of human transformation and a summons to personal freedom to follow a concrete example of godliness in the world.

PART TWO: *Indian Christian Perspectives.*

One can begin by asking what is specifically Indian when we look at Christian sacramental perspectives. One could begin by examining the ritual practices in the different religions in India and study their function in each community. One could then begin trying to incarnate the Christian sacramental experience in the rituals of each religion. This would involve the processes of adaptation and/or even inculturation. The difficulties involved are many. Should all the different rituals of religion be collapsed into a single pattern that can be called Indian? Even the three Individual Churches in India would find such an attempt unnecessary and counter-productive. Could one concrete sacramental form be the same for the whole of India? Given the variety of cultures and the consequent worldviews that are present, the meaningfulness of sacramental reality would hardly allow for such a possibility. Many considerations matter when one attempts to articulate Christian Sacramentality in Indian perspectives.

Religions in India constitute a mosaic of diverse faith communities. The present pattern of sacramental reality in the Latin Rite with its monochromatic and juridical structure would not fit in with the different faith communities. The concept of Sacramentality in Indian and Christian perspectives must take into account the issues that are significant in the India of today. The following must be considered to understand the meaningfulness of Sacramentality from perspectives that Christian and Indian.

(1) *Worldview*

The Christian worldview presupposes the notion of person. Edward Schillebeeckx's explanation of sacramental encounter uses the inter-personal model. In scholastic terminology, the notion of person is that of an autonomous subject that is dependent on, yet distinct from God. Secondly, the category of history is seen as essential to understand the Incarnation event in traditional Christianity since the event of the birth of Jesus is plotted on a space-time axis. Worldviews in India may not lay great store by the term 'person' who is seen as the autonomous subject. Must the category of history be a *sine qua non* for all privileged manifestations of God in the world? Cosmologies of the different religions in India differ widely and the elements and concepts of the

underlying structure of the world as a whole suggest that the sacramental manifestation of God in one religion is different from that of another. In Hinduism, keeping the sustained order (*Rta*) of the universe in place will call for sacrifice. In this scenario, what is the type of Sacramentality envisaged? In Islam, the whole concept of Sacramentality is questioned since the need to acknowledge the absolute proscribes any representation of it. The meaningfulness of objects, observances, customs and rituals is largely influenced by the worldview in which they occur and, by the same token, each expression of Sacramentality—if possible at all—will be in terms of a particular worldview.

(2) Universal Presence of the Divine

The sacraments of the Church were constituted by borrowing rituals from local cultures and then giving them a Christian finality through the use of appropriate words and modifications. In the nascent period of Christianity, these rituals, which were mostly taken over from the religion of Israel, preserved their external form but received a new meaning and function. Such a procedure supposes that the rituals even in their original locale possessed a meaning that was wholesome and in continuity with the new meaning acquired in Christianity. Should this fact not be an indicator that the footsteps of God trail over all creation and that Sacramentality in other religions or worldviews waits to be recognized, not infused?

There are merits in considering the whole world as sacramental, since all that exists has its origin from God. One could say that because the world is sacramental, we have the Sacramentality of God present in Jesus Christ and the Church with its seven sacraments. While a Christian believer may appreciate the Christian notion of Sacramentality as understood by the Church, he or she could legitimately look for and recognize Sacramentality present elsewhere. *Nostra Aetate* offers sufficient justification for doing so:

> In its task of promoting unity and charity among people, indeed also among nations, it [the Church] now turns its attention chiefly to what things human beings have in common and what things tend to bring them together.

> All nations are one community and have one origin, because God caused the whole human race to dwell on the whole face of the earth. They also have one final end, God, whose providence, manifestation of goodness and plans for salvation are extended to all, until the elect be gathered together in the holy city which the bright light of God will illuminate and where people will walk in his light. (NA 1)

(3) Community

Community can be seen as the context of the self and the other. A person can only become himself or herself when he or she is symbolized in the other. The implication is that one person becomes truly himself or herself when engaged in relationship to another (the community). For other species it may be different, but for a person to be truly human there is need of the other. Relationship is the essential condition to be or become human. Every society acknowledges the need to form community for those who would be its members. The Hindu *samskaras* perform the task of bringing about community and they are usually seen as the counterpart of Christian sacraments. However, there are differences between the two. "The samskaras are the rituals through which high caste or twice-born Hindus mark their transitions through life (and death), and may thus be regarded as rites of passage. In [K.] Pandey's summary, the samskaras are 'for sanctifying the body, mind and intellect of an individual, so that he may become a full-fledged member of the community'.[11] Christianity, with freedom and equality as core values, cannot and should not endorse caste distinctions.

Community suggests that those who live in it share an equal dignity and the same rights. However, class and caste distinctions have always proved to be obstacles in the path to equality for all members in a community. In christianized Europe, feudalism persisted and it was mainly after the Enlightenment period that the nation state took shape in Europe, thanks to the American War of Independence (1776) that ushered in an era where church and state were confined to mutually exclusive spheres, and the French Revolution (1789) that gave rise to the nation-state. The nation-state was a secular reality and affirmed an individual's dignity and rights, not because he or she professed a religion but because he or she was a human person.

In India, community has been synonymous with caste. On the basis of *Varna*, communities are formed. It is a moot point if social harmony has really been maintained because of casteist society. What is certain is that the lower castes have felt the inhuman oppression of those belonging to the higher castes. Religion is surely being misused to secure and perpetuate the advantages that accrue to the higher castes. Whatever may have been the merits of *Varnashamdharma* that provides a code of ethics and observances for each person in virtue of his/her birth, stage of life, and the duties required of him/her, in fact, differentiation on the basis of caste militates against the idea of a true community.

(4) Prophetic Presence

Just as Jesus is seen as the eschatological prophet who inaugurates a new covenantal relationship of humankind to God, so too there have been prophetic persons in religions in India. The Buddha opted for a society where caste would have no place. In more recent times, persons like Pandita Ramabai Saraswati (1881-1922) championed the cause of women. Similarly there are those who have taken sides with the Dalits and the Tribal people to obtain justice for them and the recognition of their rights and human dignity. Such prophetic action will always have a place in the building of true community and must be seen as sacramentalizing the presence of God.

(5) Ecological Concerns

In general, people who, for the greater part, gain their livelihood in a rural economy respect earth and nature. Ecological concern is not merely about preserving the bounty of nature for succeeding generations; it is first of all affirming God's creation as something given to human persons as a trust. That was the intuition of Gandhiji when he propounded his doctrine of stewardship. The gospels would surely support his intuition. A person's ethical decisions and behaviour reflect the sovereignty of God in his or her life. Closeness to the world of nature has been the lot of most Indians. The sense of the sacred, the holy and the divine follows them in their homes, places of work and in decisions of life. Shrines, temples and centres of pilgrimage dot much of the countryside and devotees frequent these. *Ashrams* witness to peoples' love for simplicity in life and also to their quest for God in

prayer, meditation and study. Ashram communities are made up of persons from different faiths who live in solidarity and manifest religious faith.

Conclusion

In perspectives that are authentically Christian and truly Indian, Sacramentality points to a way of life rather than to a cultic action by itself. The sacred is so dispersed throughout the secular that a person rarely finds it possible to ignore one or the other. In fact, a person is called to feel God's presence in both. All life is the play of God in the world of men and women reassuring them of their faith and responding to their needs. Indians, in general, feel the need of invoking God many times during the day and constantly performing ritual actions to remember the divine in their daily life.

The effect of sacramental presence is meant to make men and women more caring and concerned about those who are suffering. Sacramentality while directing our thoughts and actions to God will always include the neighbour, the one in need. Through the actions that bring health and wholeness to others the divine reveals its presence in the world and the community is the context where the God of all makes the God-self presence most significant and efficacious.

Notes

1 John Bowker (editor): *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, Oxford/ New York, 1997, p 844.

2 When speaking about Christianity, it is Catholicism that is implied.

3 This approach is reflected in the "History of Religion School" (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*) that had used information derived from the comparative study of other religions in its study of Christianity in general.

4 *Nostra Aetate* 2: " The catholic church rejects nothing of those things which are true and holy in these [Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions] religions. It regards with respect those ways of acting and living and those precepts and teachings which, though often at variance with what it holds and expounds, frequently reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens everyone." Norman P. Tanner (English Editor): *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Volume II (Trent-Vatican II) Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, London/Washington 1990, p 969.

5 ND 1323 in J. Neuner and J. Dupuis: *The Christian Faith* in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church, Jacques Dupuis (editor), 7th revised and enlarged edition, Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 2004, p 566.

6 Pius XII in the apostolic constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis* (1947) decreed that the imposition of hands constituted the essential rite of ordination, even though, in the past, the handing over of the instruments (*traditio instrumentorum*) was seen as part of the essential rite of ordination.

7 The Roman Catechism (*Catechismus ex Decreto Concilii Tridentini*) produced in 1566 under Pius V was intended for priests to teach. It contained the Church's doctrine concerning the creeds, sacraments, commandments and prayer. The pope had it translated into many languages.

8 This is true especially of the sacraments of Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick that are "confected" by an ordained minister.

9 Karl Rahner: *Theological Investigations*, Volume XIV, (translated by David Bourke), The Seabury Press, New York, 1976, "9. Introductory Observations on Thomas Aquinas' Theology of the Sacraments in General," p 150.

10 "It must be remembered that the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas does not include any developed ecclesiology, and that the treatise on the sacraments follows immediately upon that of Christology, which is itself

included only at [a] relatively late stage. In view of these facts, it is of course impossible for there to be any really effective treatment of the Church as 'basic sacrament' [*Sacrosanctum Concilium* nos. 5 and 26] as a distinct theme. This inevitably has a damaging effect on the doctrine of the sacraments in general too, for the connecting member, so to say, is missing. Or to put it in other terms: the truly ecclesiological dimension of the sacraments is not taken into consideration. Even at those points at which Thomas interprets sacramental character as deputing the subject concerned to the Christian cult [Q. 63], and at which, as a result, there is a suggestion of an ecclesiological view of the sacraments, the Church is still not clearly included as a vital factor. For as Aquinas presents it this Christian cult is precisely viewed too much as a task of the individual functionary officially appointed in each case." *TI*, Volume XIV, pp 151-2.

11 John Bowker (Editor): *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, Oxford University Press, Oxford/New York, 1997, p 850.

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Another Copernican Revolution!

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1. An eye-opener

This is a review article of the book, *The Next Christendom* (Oxford University Press, 2007) by Philip Jenkins, Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University; pp 316; $ 14.95. The volume is a revised and expanded edition of his earlier book published in 2002. Maps of the various continents and a dozen lists of tables help to suitably illustrate the content of the book. Every assertion of the author is copiously documented. He uses the term "Christendom", not in a political sense, but in a neutral, supranational sense. The book takes up a well known theme, first popularized by Walbert Buhlmann in his book *The Coming of the Third Church* (St. Paul Publications, 1976), which I reviewed in *Vidyajyoti*, 1990, pp 295-299. In that book Buhlmann startled the Christian world when he pieced together, as in a jigsaw puzzle, a mass of scattered data on the Christian churches. The resultant picture was astonishing: a "Third Church" was at hand ! The "First Church", in time, is the Eastern (Oriental) Church; the Second is the Western Church. The Third Church is part of the new nations, now entering as a new factor into the history of the Church. The Third Church contains what Buhlmann calls the "surprise packets" of the near future. A decade later, Omer Degrijse surveyed further data in his book, *Going Forth, Missionary consciousness in Third World Catholic churches* (Orbis, 1984). This only served to confirm the continued development of the trends described by Buhlmann.

In Jenkins' book, the terms "Southern churches" or "South" are used to comprise the tri-continental countries of Latin America, Africa south of the Sahara, Oceania and Asia. The churches here largely cover

Buhlmann's `Third Church'. Europe and North America are comprised under the rubric of "Northern hemisphere" or "North". There follows a presentation of the salient features of the data gathered by Jenkins, followed by some comments of my own.

2. *The Shift South*

If in 1900 two-thirds of the world's Christians were found in Europe, today that figure has dropped to less than a quarter and is expected to shrink still further by 2025. That data should be evaluated in the light of the fact that in Europe "rates of church membership and religious participation have been declining precipitously in a long-term trend that shows no signs of slowing" (p 109). Recent critics are wondering whether Christianity's days are numbered there. Pope Benedict XVI seems to be chiefly engaged in making a last-ditch defence of organized Christianity in Western Europe. But clearly, "The era of Western Christianity has passed ... and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning ... There can be no doubt that the emerging Christian world will be anchored in the Southern continents" (pp 3, 17). *Christianity has "gone South" !* In as much as the centre of gravity of the Church has shifted to the South, we are witnessing a sort of Copernican revolution. This is by no means the first time that such a change has occurred. The centre of Christianity first shifted from Jerusalem to Antioch; from thence to the rest of West Asia (which hosted and dominated the great Ecumenical Councils) and to Italy. Of the five ancient patriarchates, all but one (Rome) lay in the East. At a later stage it "passed over to the barbarians" (Western, Central and Northern Europe). The latter, in their turn, exercised a strong influence on the form, thinking and practices of Western Christianity. Hence, "As Christianity moves southward, the religion will be comparably changed by immersion in the prevailing cultures of those host societies" (7). The once flourishing Christian communities in West Asia were devastated in the early 20th century by a combination of wars, expulsions and population exchanges; unfortunately the process continues today.

It is high time we started referring to southern Christianity as "mainstream" Christianity. The southern churches share similar issues of poverty, race and inculturation; also religious pluralism much more than in the north. Among these churches a vast exchange of missionaries has been on in a vigorous manner and still awaits a major book-length

treatment. Indian missionaries are present in about 160 countries around the world. One can already see how these churches increasingly define their own interests in ways that have little to do with the preferences of the North. Hilaire Belloc's (1870-1953) assertion, that "Europe is the faith; the (Catholic) Church is Europe", is by far outdated.

3. *Historical Background*

Chapter Two provides an excellent overview of the historical development of Christianity from its earliest times into the 20th century. A flourishing Syrian Christianity existed in India, at least from the 4th century. By the 7th century, Nestorian missionaries from Syria and Persia had already penetrated deep into Central Asia and China and established churches there; in the 14th century they probably numbered hundreds of thousands. Jenkins surmises: "In the thirteenth century, the height of medieval Christian civilization in Europe, there may have been more Christian believers on the continent of Asia than in Europe" (28). The Spanish conquerors may have brought Christianity to Latin America, but when they "tried to destroy every written remnant of the ancient Meso-American civilization, all its literature and science no less than its religious materials, they were perpetrating one of the gravest crimes in the history of civilization" (35). The admission of pope John Paul II was rather late in coming, but still welcome. On 12 March 2000 he led officials of the Roman Curia in confessing some of the public sins of the Church of the past and present. Among them he asked pardon for Christians who "have often denied the Gospel; yielding to a mentality of power, they have violated the rights of ethnic groups and peoples, and shown contempt for their cultures and religious traditions" (*The Pope Speaks*, 2004, N. 4, p 247).

That Christianity grew as a grassroots movement in the South may be seen in the fact that it has not only outlasted the political and commercial order which brought it, but has continued to grow by leaps and bounds (see below). How deeply the faith had taken root is brought out by the fact, that "considered globally, the second half of the nineteenth century must be seen as one of the great ages of Christian martyrdom" (53). The missionary message did offer individuals a means of explaining the world around them, when the old world-view began to crumble in face of immense social change. Particularly remarkable is the growth of African Independent/Indigenous Churches, "which

collectively represent one of the most impressive stories in the whole history of Christianity" (61). These churches may differ among themselves in certain ideas and practices, but one thing they have in common is the adaptation of Christianity to local cultures and traditions: something the mainline churches have dismally failed in. Independents world-wide number about 427 million and their number continues to grow rapidly. These churches definitely cater to a vast public hunger. What exercises a strong appeal to people are miracles, release from demonic powers and sometimes even financial prosperity, so that some of these churches have been called 'health and wealth' churches (79). Then during the last half of the 20th century, black-white tensions made many members of the mainline churches feel more comfortable in the Independent churches.

4. *The Data*

Chapter Four contains a wealth of data in the form of statistics and figures, illustrating the stunning growth of churches in the South. Just since 1965, the Christian population of Africa has risen from around a quarter of the continental total to about 46 % ! (64). The 20th century has seen a 6,708 % growth of the Catholic population in Africa: "the most rapid expansion of Catholicism in a single continent in two thousand years of church history" (67). The annual baptismal totals for Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are each higher than those for Italy, France, Spain, and Poland, which are today the major centres of Catholic population in Europe (227); to be noted is that 37 % of all baptisms in Africa today are of adults. Today, one in eight Catholics is an African. Nigeria is home to the world's largest Catholic theological school, with a thousand students on three campuses. The number of Catholics in Latin America alone is nearly double that of those in Europe. Two-thirds of all Catholics now reside in the South. Also, especially in Latin America and the Philippines, Pentecostal churches have been growing steadily. Urban migration has liberated ordinary people from traditional religious structures. The new Christian congregations they meet here replace the old family networks and provide a sense of fellowship. The strongly clericalized Catholic Church faces a desperate shortage of priests, due to which Catholics have been joining other churches in droves, because they offer a far greater sense of popular commitment and lay participation. In Mexico,

if the ratio of pastors to faithful is 1:6400 for Catholics, it is 1:250 among Protestants. Hence if the future of the Church lies in the South, it may not be advisable to 'import' priests into the North. The Catholic charismatic groups have to some extent helped to stem the tide of Catholics joining Pentecostal churches. Although blacks make up about half the national population of Brazil, they supply only 1.5 % of bishops and priests. As a result, many Afro-Brazilians join the new churches where they can rise to leadership positions, and which are more accommodating to their own cultural traditions. According to Jenkins it is beyond doubt, that Brazil will soon be a key centre of world Christianity.

In mainland China there are probably more Christians than in either France or Great Britain. One quarter of the national population of Korea is now Christian. India has more Christians than most European nations. The Philippines is soon heading to be home to the third or fourth largest number of Christians on the planet; it already counts more Christians than any individual European State. There are only half as many Catholics in the whole of the Netherlands as in just the Manila metropolitan area. An ever increasing number of Religious Congregations have Indian/ Asian Superiors General or General Counsellors.

5. *Some Characteristics of Southern Christianity*

Southern Christianity will continue to be enthusiastic (dancing or swaying in solemn religious settings), spontaneous (various forms of popular piety), fundamentalist (literal interpretations of the Bible) and supernatural oriented (visions, dreams, ecstatic utterances, healings, the influence of spiritual forces in everyday life, exorcism), thus marking it out from the older centres of Christianity in the North. Southern Christians feel more at home than those in the North with biblical notions of the supernatural, of persecution and martyrdom. The Marian sanctuary of Guadalupe is Christianity's most visited sanctuary. Marian devotion has been a powerful force in African Catholicism from its beginnings. Several issues which agitate the North are either non-issues in the South or are strongly opposed, e.g. ordination of women and of homosexual priests and bishops. Thus at the 1998 Lambeth conference of the global Anglican Communion, the Southern bishops formed a solid bloc to defeat liberal motions on gay rights. Similar issues have also surfaced among Lutherans, Methodists,

and Presbyterians. The 'death of God' theology which raged in the North in the 1960's was quite irrelevant in the South. Nigeria alone accounts for about two-thirds of all Anglicans. We can no longer hold that what is traditionally done in the North is the rule by which to assess local adaptations. Many in Africa and east Asia may find more power and relevance in the image of Jesus as great Ancestor. The South is also strikingly youthful, in contrast to the North. 50% of Asians are under 20 years of age (about 40% Indians are under 15). With a median age of 16, the world's youngest nations are found in Africa: Uganda, Niger and the Congo. With a median age of 40, the world's oldest countries are all in Europe (Italy, Germany, Sweden) or Japan. Together with this we are also witnessing the increasing economic, political and military clout of China and India.

Furthermore we need to take account of the phenomenon of "new Europeans". The numbers involved in peaceful immigration far exceed those of the world's largest armed forces (224). These immigrants include a large percentage of Christians. To what extent they may contribute to a revitalization of Christianitiy in the West is a moot question. About half of London's people are now non-white; that trend is likely to continue for the whole of Great Britain. Muslims make up more than 8 % of the population of France and about 15 % of the population of Russia. The picture is somewhat different for the U.S.A. where the estimates for the numbers of Jews, Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus is only about 4-5 % of the total population. Yet 28 % of those ordained in the U.S. in 2001 were born outside the country. The same phenomenon is noticeable among the Protestant denominations too.

The churches of the South are also largely churches of the poor. For the overwhelming majority of their members the Beatitudes of the New Testament have a direct relevance, hardly understood by most Christians in Northern societies. The former are really the poor, the hungry, the persecuted and oppressed. In India, at least half of them belong to tribal and "Dalit" (`crushed', `oppressed') communities. "Dalit" in fact comes close to the sense of the term Jesus uses for the poor (`ptochoi') in Lk 6.20. For the churches of the South poverty has also meant financial dependence on the churches of the North. This has sometimes brought with it a measure of control by the North. Hence

the churches of the South need to move towards greater financial independence.

Chapter Seven gives examples, too numerous to quote all, of the enormous influence which the religions –including the churches- exercise in political and public life in the South. The secular, 'rational' North has been slow to understand this, resulting in some policy disasters on their part. Kim Dae Jung, elected President of the Republic of Korea in 1997, described his own Catholic Church as 'the centrifocal point of the spiritual struggle against the Park dictatorship' (174). The influence which the Philippino church wields in the political life of that country is well known, particularly with the ouster of President Marcos. Protestantism has emerged as a distinctive force in mass politics across Latin America. Thus Peru elected Alberto Fujimori its first Pentecostal President in 1990; some months later Guatemala had its first Protestant President.

6. *Religious Tensions*

Tensions have also arisen in the global South between religions and among churches. Hence the great need of inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue. Jenkins exemplifies the parochialism of Western public opinion by the fact that when a single racial or religious-motivated murder takes place in the North, it receives widespread coverage. But when thousands are massacred on grounds of their faith in Africa and Asia, the story rarely registers (189). Often conflicts arise when one religious tradition tries to impose its own legal and social values on the others. Examples may be cited from Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria, Turkey, Indonesia. Not rarely, ethnic and political issues are mixed up. "Of the world's twenty-five largest nations by 2050, twenty will be predominantly or entirely Christian or Muslim" (192). Christian-Muslim conflicts have become commonplace in many countries. In time, there could be inter-religious violence in Europe itself. Mutual recriminations between Northern Christians on the one hand and Muslim, Sikh, Hindu immigrants on the other, about religious practices and sensitivities are an ominous sign of things to come. Muslims have perceived this scenario. In 2007 over a hundred Muslim scholars from various countries issued a call to Christian leaders to begin a dialogue from the foundational principles of both faiths: love of the One God and love of the neighbour. Given the intermingling of such vast

multitudes of Christians and Muslims, the scholars state in the opening paragraph: "Without peace and justice between these two religious communities, there can be no meaningful peace in the world. The future of the world depends on peace between Muslims and Christians."

Religious violence is by no means limited to Muslim-Christian conflicts. The expansion of these two religions tends to be viewed with hostility by Hindus in India and Buddhists in some other Asian countries (Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Vietnam, Thailand). Jenkins' prognosis is very reasonable: "As populations grow in the regions of most intense religious conflict, issues of faith will increasingly shape secular politics, domestic and international ... Issues of theocracy and religious law, toleration and minority rights, conversion and apostasy, should be among the most divisive in domestic and international politics for decades to come" (217, 222).

7. *A Lacuna*

One lacuna in Jenkins' book is, that after presenting extensive data regarding numbers and statistics, he has not developed his own lapidary statement concerning "the lively scholarly activity and the flourishing spirituality in the global South" (14). This may be filled in with data provided by Degrijse in his book referred to at the start of this review article (See also: J.C. England). In connection with India alone he observes: "No other Asian church has so many schol-ars, theologians, faculties of theology, pastoral institutes, theological and pastoral reviews. The Indian church can make use of the cultural and religious wealth of the peoples of India as an instrument for further reflection on the good news and for better understanding of its own mission". He further notes: "India has a growing number of renowned theologians, whose con-tributions to theological and missiological reflection are appre-ciated even outside India." The number of theological, philosophical and inter-religious reviews has been growing steadily during the last few years. These are found to be highly relevant in the questions they deal with and the manner in which they are tackled. In contrast, most of the Western journals speak to us less and less. It is no wonder that new journals are constantly being started in the South, while some of the Western ones have had to close down, due to a lack of sufficient response. Degrijse concludes that the Indian church is "a lively church ... In the years to come, it will be called upon to be

one of the pillars of the universal church ... India has become the most important missionary country of the third church. And this is but a beginning." The picture emerging from many other Southern churches is equally encouraging. This may be related to the fact, that while Asia provides a much smaller percentage of Christians as compared to Africa or Latin America, it is home to highly developed and millennial philosophies, religions and literary traditions. This was acknowledged by John Paul II in his Encyclical "Fides et Ratio" (1998): "Among these lands, India has a special place ... In India particularly, it is the duty of Christians now to draw from this rich heritage the elements compatible with their faith, in order to enrich Christian thought" (N. 72).

Another area which does not find mention in Jenkins' book is that of ever growing non-Western Christian art: painting, music, dance, architecture. Earlier, works on Christian art published in Europe totally ignored non-western Christian art, although examples of it can be found already in the 16th century. This was a case of the "eurocentrism" refered to below (sec. 8.1). A number of Asian countries have their own associations of Christian artists. Walls (186) can confidently conclude: "But that a new phase of Christian art has opened, with its focus in the southern continents, is beyond doubt."

8. *Adjusting to Another Copernican Revolution*

A new form of Christianity is in the making in the now dominant South and is straining to express itself. A sea change has taken place in the configuration of Christianity. Adjusting to the revolution described in this essay will require on the part of some a veritable 'metanoia', an about-turn, a conversion, a new way of looking at world Christianity. And here lies the rub. Many in the North have not realized this, or if they have, they are not willing to accept its implications. In this context Fox (134-135) describes the growing gulf between the Vatican and Asia. If I may speak of the Catholic Church, what is called for is both a change of mentality and an accompanying change of structure at the centre: "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak ... new wine is put into fresh wine-skins" (Mt 9.16-17) ! We must read the signs of the times (Mt 16.3), the writing on the wall (Dan 5.5-6).

8.1 *A Change of Outlook*

There is required an openness to accept new theologies, the legitimate variety of expressions of the profession of faith, new forms of spirituality, new ways of liturgical celebrations: all of which may then require new Codes of Canon Law. In reference to what is happening in the Asian churches, Fox describes it as "a new way of being Church". All this will ultimately mean the rise of new Rites within the unity of the same Church. Sadly the Roman centre is presently closed to or at least exceedingly suspicious of any developments or proposals in this context (Saldanha: 1997; 2006). A fear has been spread among editors of prestigious theological journals, at least in India, regarding what they publish; they have to look constantly over their shoulder. This atmosphere needs to be replaced by one of serene and sincere dialogue, for all can err and all can learn.

It is amazing to see how far Rome is willing to bend over backwards to accommodate small Lefebvre groups or others attached to the Tridentine Mass, while blocking any liturgical inculturation beyond a few externals, for the vast churches of the South. Through his *Motu Proprio* "Summorum Pontificum" (7/7/2007) Benedict XVI reinstated the Tridentine Mass and Breviary; also the sacraments as promulgated before Vatican II in 1962. One the reasons he adduced to justify his decision: "Looking back over the past, to the divisions which in the course of the centuries have rent the Body of Christ, one continually has the impression that, at critical moments when divisions were coming about, not enough was done by the Church's leaders to maintain or regain reconciliation and unity ... omissions on the part of the Church have had their share of blame for the fact that these divisions were able to harden." Perhaps it is not realized that the same factors are at work in the growing gulf between the Vatican and the Asian churches. Also, hundreds of thousands of Catholics in Latin America have been opting for other churches and Christian communities.

We know that John Paul II asked pardon for many sins of the past (above, N. 3). But this remains ineffective, so long as there is no effort to change the mind-set and the structures which gave rise to those sins or made them possible. One does not see much effort in this line, thus leaving the way open to a repetition of the same sins ! Do we not see a repetition of the condemnation of the Chinese and Malabar rites in

the proscription in 1975 of the Indian Eucharistic Prayer and the Order of the Mass for India ? (Saldanha, 1997: 70-73). The still unhealed schism of 1054 between the Latin Church and the Orthodox Church was driven primarily by cultural factors, though theological and political issues got mixed up in this as usual. Thus the 'filioque' controversy was fuelled by different approaches to the Trinity, stemming from different cultures; added to this were such trivial issues as the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist and priests being clean shaven (Jenkins: 244).

Eurocentrism was the chief bane of missionary work during the colonial period (Saldanha: 1988). It dies hard. This may be illustrated from the history of the Vatican II "Declaration on the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions". It began as a Declaration on the Jews, because this was a burning issue for Europe. Thanks to interventions from bishops, especially from the younger churches, it was broadened to include other religions. Today too care should be taken to avoid a rather one-sided concern for Europe: its secularization and the `emptying of the churches' there.

8.2 *A Change of Structures*

The cardinalate is not of divine institution and could therefore be abolished; it came into existence rather late in Church history. Apart from being a "dignity" (contrary to the Gospel), its chief purpose seems to be to elect a new pope. However, following the Consistory of 24/11/2007, there is no proportion of cardinals to the data submitted in this essay: more than half the cardinals are from Europe and 21 of 121 electors are from Italy (*The Tablet*, 20/10/2007, p 34). The Philippine Senate even passed a resolution protesting that no new Cardinal had been named for their country ! The question is sometimes raised: since the pope appoints the cardinals, could he not thereby pre-determine, to some extent, that the conclave elect as his successor someone in his own image and likeness ? Can the cardinals be considered as really representative of the thinking of the Episcopal Conferences from which they come ? There is much substance in this objection.

A solution should begin from the basic premise that the supreme governing body in the Church is neither the College of Cardinals nor the Roman Curia, but the universal episcopate (inclusive of its head

which it elects). For practical purposes, the college of bishops could accept that its head be elected by a Synod of bishops elected from each national or continental Episcopal Conference. The number of bishops so elected should be roughly in proportion to the number of Catholics in their countries/continents. This would ensure that "*fullness* in unity" and "united *variety*" (LG 13, 23; emphasis added) which constitutes the catholicity of the Church. We might then expect that the choice of the head would be more expressive of the universal body of bishops. Unity must not be confused with uniformity.

Likewise the heads of the various Roman Congregations and Pontifical Councils could be headed by persons chosen by the Episcopal Conferences: if necessary, a 'terna' of three names could be suggested to the head (pope) of the college of bishops for his selection. This will help to make the documents issued by the various Dicasteries of the Vatican representative of the faith and thinking of the supreme governing body of the Church. The current method of internationalising the Curia has not ensured this, since the persons concerned are not proposed by the Bishops' Conferences. Furthermore, the Dicasteries should generally consult with the Episcopal Conferences before issuing documents which they expect to be binding on the whole Church. Otherwise we will continue to see some of these documents being met with sullen silence or even open disagreement. Not rarely, bishops, and even cardinals, have expressed public criticism of such documents. It is not surprising that the 'schemata' prepared by the Roman Curia for the bishops at Vatican II, were rejected and entirely new ones drafted by the bishops. Finally, there should be interaction, sharing and dialogue, not only directly with Rome but also between the various Continental bishops' Conferences.

These measures will probably contribute in no small measure to the enrichment and "united variety" ("in unum conspirans varietas": LG 13; 23) of all the churches.

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Book Review

Hrangkhuma, F and Thomas, Joy. *Christ among the Tribals*, FOIM, 2007, pp. 290, price not mentioned.

Christ among the Tribals is the XI Volume of the series of FOIM (Fellowship of Indian Missiologists) publications and it contains the papers presented in the Biannual Mission Studies' Research Seminar and General Body Meeting of FOIM, held at Bangalore from April 26 to April 29, 2006. The present volume represents one of the contextual missiologial issues discussed from various perspectives and it covers various areas of history and contexts.

The book has three parts. The first part deals with the presence of Christ among the tribals. The first article begins with an overview of Christianity among the tribes in India by the first editor, F Hrangkhuma. He discusses the cause of tribal's relative openness to Christianity; both the contributory factors of their responsiveness and the more pertinent reasons for their conversion. In the context of the Mizo and Naga tribals, the en masse conversion to Christianity is discussed and commented upon.

In the second chapter scholars Julian Saldhana, Selvister Ponumuthu and Joe Mattam trace the presence of the tribal Church in Maharashtra, Kerala and Gujarat. Concentrating on the Warlis, who live in the hilly tracts of Maharashtra and Gujarat, Julian Saldhana traces the strengths and weakness of the mission among them. Joe Mattam analyses the history of tribal mission in Gujarat and points out some of their defects and vigour. Selvister refers to the 48 tribal groups found in Kerala, paying special emphasis on their economic and social development.

The next chapter by Linus Kujur deals with the tribal churches in India today. After defining the notion of tribals, he analyses the tribal mission in Chotanagpur and Assam. Similarly Agapit Tirkey studies on the question of inculturation among the tribal church. He holds that inculturation has been achieved by charistmatic individuals and have

not reached the level of structures. The next article by Sebastian Vazhapally deals with the anthropological framework or worldview as a conceptual category for theologizing on the tribal situation.

The second part of the book deals with three case studies related to the tribal Church. P. Kuriakose takes up the issue of development as mission and tries to correct two major misunderstandings: (i) that Christianity is incompatible with tribal religions and (ii) that tribals were Hindus from time immemorial. In the next article Clare Purakary describes the concerns and experiences of Orissa tribals and suggests various ways in which the Church can respond meaningfully to their suffering. In the final article of this section, Daniel Katapalli deals with the development and transformation of the Savaras tribes of Andhra Pradesh, brought about mainly by the Christian message.

The third part deals with larger Indian and global scenes. L. Stanislaus first views comprehensively the tribal movements in India from a historical perspective. Joseph Patumury highlights the significance of tribal spirituality which can appreciate Christianity better than the traditional Brahminic spirituality. He pleads that tribal spirituality be preserved, since it represents a very ancient tradition. The next chapter by Joseph Puthenpurakal talks of Jesus as a tribal. He argues that the tribal Jesus represents the best qualities of all the tribal people. Jesus is here portrayed as a tribal who goes beyond his tribal world and embraces the whole of humanity to transform it, while remaining loyal to his tribal roots. It is significant that he brings out the exploitation of the tribals and relates them to the person of Jesus (pp 236f). The last chapter by J. A. B. Jonganeel portrays the encounter of Jesus with the primal traditions around the world. The positive response of the tribal societies to Jesus Christ as Lord of history and Saviour of humanity is affirmed in this article. The highlighting of 16 issues by way of conclusion (eg: Meet God everywhere, p. 256) is an apt conclusion to the book.

On the whole the book is well planned and executed. That they have been able to deal with a relevant topic is a credit both to the organizers of the seminar and to the editors. The fact that the future of the Church in India will be largely based on the tribal areas adds urgency to a book of this kind. At the same time, I wonder, if sufficient attention has been

given to the diverse characteristics of the tribal traditions in different parts of India. This book is highly recommended both to the tribal Church as well as thé non-tribal Church who will profit a lot by coming to know of the tribal spirituality and way of life.
Kuruvilla Pandikattu

Please note that the index (both title and author) will be printed in the next issue of this Journal.

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