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Committed to the Church  
and the Country



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## Editorial

### Committed to the Church and to the Country

What is the significance of the search for Indian Church? How far has it contributed to the betterment of both the Church and the nation? What are some of the challenges and possible responses the Church in India faces? These are some of the questions we ask ourselves in this special issue of *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies*.

This is a special issue is fondly dedicated to Professor Kurien Kunnumpuram on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. As most of the readers are aware, it was Professor Kunnumpuram who founded this journal in 1998, with the help of JDV staff and support of the then JDV President, Dr Anthony da Silva. He remained the editor and publisher of the journal till 2010.

So this issue takes up some relevant issues which resonate with Kunnumpuram's theological concerns. Being an ecclesiologist, his primary theological focus was on the emergence of an Indian Church. Being an academician who specialized in Vatican II, he did his best to radiate the spirit of the Council for the Indian Church. Being a committed Christian, his was a forward looking and hope-filled vision. Further, his theology took up specific issues relevant to contemporary India and Church in India and dealt with them constructively.

So the first part of the Journal, subtitled "Towards Together," discusses the collective and communitarian vision of the Indian Church. This first part deals primarily with the essential communitarian (ecclesial) aspect of human beings. The next one entitled "Beyond Borders" dwells on the need to go beyond

ourselves as a community and reach out to others with respect. The third part, “Crucial Concerns,” deals with a few specific issues confronting the contemporary Indian Church. The final part is a reflection on his theology by Kunnumpuram himself.

## 1. Towards Together

The first part, “Towards Together,” deals with the collective search for a more authentic Church and humanity. The first article by a budding theologian, Dr Antony D’Cruz, Research Scholar, Gregorian University, Rome, portrays Kurien Kunnumpuram as a champion of Vatican II, pleading for the dawn of a new humanity. He examines the manner and the style of Kurien’s writings, which indicate both his scholarly bent for Vatican II’s concerns as well as his personal interest in an inculturated theology. These concerns are evident in *Ways of Salvation*, one of his seminal works based on Vatican II. Kunnumpuram understood that “a conciliar decree cannot give systematic and detailed instructions for a such a vast process in the history of humankind, but only enunciate a few guiding principles which can decisively influence, in the long run, the national position of a missionary Church”. This article discusses elaborately two claims about the Church’s mission: (1) “The one mission of the Church receives its specification from the actual context in which it is exercised, in the concrete situations in which it is fulfilled” and (2) “Mission of the Church is to collaborate with God in his work for the wholeness of the human person, the human community and the cosmos according to the pattern revealed in Jesus Christ.”

The young author of this article concludes by asserting that his attempts to devise an indigenous theology of the Church proves that Kunnumpuram’s concerns are post-conciliar. Though his works are primarily descriptive, he harmonizes various conciliar and post-conciliar teachings and principles for a contextual ecclesiology. Vatican II has “proved to be a point of departure rather than of arrival for the Indian Church.” And Kunnumpuram can be credited with keeping alive the thrust of Vatican II for an inculturated Church in India, and above all the Church as a sacrament of the Kingdom of God in all times. That is an invitation for a new humanity.

The next article by Dr Thomas Kuriacose, Dean, Faculty of Theology, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, studies and situates some important documents of Vatican II, in fact the academic focus of Professor Kunnumpuram. The two key words ‘catholic’ and ‘catholicity’ in the documents of Vatican II, according to him, deserve a closer look. Among the important reasons for this is the fact that the Church is qualified as ‘catholic’, and ‘catholicity’ is an essential dimension in ecclesiology. Therefore, it is an imperative that we make a deeper study of this word in the documents of Vatican II. A very large portion of this article is devoted to a study of the usage of ‘catholic’ and ‘catholicity’ in Vatican II, and then drawing out their implications for a contemporary ecclesiology in India.

The Catholicity of the Church is indicated by the acceptance and fostering of genuine diversity and plurality. This has important lessons and consequences for the local churches in India, as also for the contribution of the local churches of India to local churches outside India. One of the important applications of *Lumen Gentium* has been in the field of inculturation. True ecclesial catholicity demands that attempts be made to inculturate at deeper levels. This would require serious study, in-depth dialogue with knowledgeable people, great generosity, humility, courage, and most of all, total openness to the Holy Spirit.

This is followed by an article focussing on the Church as a “praying community. Based on his personal experience in India, Professor Andreas Vonach, an Innsbruck Biblical Scholar, studies the transition from a “sacrificing society” to a “praying community” within the Hellenistic Judaism. Then he tries to apply it to today’s church. First the author shows how the ancient Israelites made and experienced the shift from a religion of Jerusalem centred cultic offerings into a worldwide spread Jewish community with common and private prayers as focus of their identity and solidarity. He raises the question if this process may function as a model for our future hope, faith and life.

In the Jewish history, as opposed to the Jerusalem temple, the “synagogue universalized official Jewish ritual practice while democratizing worship by taking it out of priestly hands. Thus the way was opened for any Jew anywhere to participate and officiate in

the recognized communal ritual. Moreover, the synagogue radically changed the content of this ritual, shifting the focus from sacrifice and libation to Torah study and prayer.” Prayer henceforth was seen as the appropriate divine service and not seldom it was called “offering of the lips”.

The author contends that today’s Christianity finds similar preconditions and chances. Communal as well as individual prayers can have the power to build the inner centre of Christian existence, the gospel offers more than enough models of prayerful actions and attitudes in daily life which at the same time lead to compassion and solidarity.

The next article by Stephen Jayard a philosopher of science hopes for “an enlightened and enriched humanity,” and bases his hope in the contemporary scientific and cultural scenario. Science is, no doubt, a powerful force that cannot be just ignored, while considering human and Christian communities. It is indeed a great asset, not only for making our lives comfortable, but quenching the inborn curiosity to know better and to achieve more. However, science, being aware of its own limits and limitations, is cautious in claiming to be absolute; being led by the spirit of interdisciplinary approaches it realizes more and more the need not to be autocratic; and above all, being a social enterprise, which is by humans and for humans, science realizes its moral and ethical responsibilities and this last realization, in turn, emphasizes the serious commitments of humans towards safeguarding nature, as humans are supposed to be the custodians of nature, rather than exploiters of it.

In the first section, the author focuses on one of the important areas of the contemporary science that pose challenge to the human identity and dignity: Artificial Intelligence. After a brief exposition of this enterprise, he argues that though this is quite challenging to the understanding of the human person. Its shortcomings and inability seem to suggest that science cannot handle these issues alone, but need to collaborate with other disciplines. Then, in the second section, the young scholar discusses the limits and limitations of science, showing the need and the urgency of the interdisciplinary approaches to fathom reality and to enhance humanity. This learning experience has made science rather realistic in its claims and approaches. In the Concluding Remarks, after briefly explaining what he means by ‘hope’, ‘enrichment’ and ‘enlightenment’, our scholar shows how the deeper awareness of the intrinsically complex

issues of the mind-body relationship and the limits of science make science more realistic in its claims, more cautious in its investigations and, above all, more humble in its self-image. This, according to the author, enables us to see the rays of hope for the betterment of humanity and the Cosmos.

## 2. Beyond Borders

This take us to the next part, “Beyond Boundaries” dealing with the need to realize and transcend our borders and boundaries, a theme very close to Professor Kunnumpuram’s heart. To begin with, Professor Johnson Puthentpurackal, one of the best known Indian Christian philosophers, delves into these rich notions. He begins by acknowledging the growth and development in all realms and dimensions of human existence in contemporary society. Humans have been creatively growing in thought and action, since they have been creative and dynamic in their being. This aspect of humans’ creative dynamism may be referred to as their ‘new-ward journeying,’ a term found often in Kunnumpuram’s theology. This paper takes a philosophical look at the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of this journeying—a journeying ‘with boundary beyond boundary.’ He begins with a philosophical clarification of the dynamic character of human existence (1), and then proceeds to show that human life and thought is a ‘journeying’ (2), and finally dwells on the meaning of journeying ‘with boundary beyond boundary’ (3).

The author concludes this philosophically reflective study with a twofold plea—a plea to keep on creatively journeying ahead in our thinking and acting, and a plea to break open the boundaries that are human constructs.

The next article deals with a particular experience of crossing borders, a cross-cultural conference on *Faith-formation* in India and Germany, which took place in Mumbai about a decade ago. In fact, it become a performative adventure across cultural borders. This report by Christian Bauer reflects on that Mumbai-experience, organised by the JDV in Pune and the *Faculty of Catholic Theology* of the University of Tübingen. As the narrative “we” in the beginning shows, the author of this report had a double-role as participant and as observer of the conference at the same time. This participant

observation is connected with the delightful experience of meeting Kurien Kunnumpuram for the first time.

The author describes the dynamics and nuances involved in such a complex encounter on faith formation. Reflecting theologically he concludes that inter-religious dialogue will not have to seek an utopic identity of the different, but instead it will have to mediate real differences of the identical. This theological turn from abstract identities on the level of theoretical ideas to concrete differences on the level of practical problems brings about changes within the religions taking part in that kind of dialogue – as an Indian participant illustrated at the conference in Mumbai. Many *Small Christian Communities* shift from being “agents for a change within the church” towards *Small Human Communities*, becoming “agents for a change in society”, who discover common concerns in the light of the gospel, since there is “no Muslim-electricity, no Christian-toilet, no Hindu-road”

The next two articles take up the issue of transcending human body and nature and crossing the threshold of being ourselves, through genetic engineering. Charles Davis, Sankt Georgen, Frankfurt, asserts that human beings have now the power to alter their very nature through a programmed change in their biological character. Earlier humans wanted to resemble the gods, separate themselves from their body or get near the arena of higher spirits on the ladder of low and higher natures. Today’s cutting-edge technologies may overtake the performances of human limitations with the rise of biotechnological developments, like genetic engineering, gene therapies, nanotechnologies and stem cell researches. Now “superhuman” performances can be achieved by altering bodily elements. Humans want to be creators. This new power of “Playing God” brings forth many ethical problems.

This article discusses the ethical dilemma connected with bodily enhancements, transhumanism and instrumentalisation of the human

body. It pleads for Greater Human Sensitivity and Responsibility in fostering human dignity while engaging in technological innovations. It asks for a “permanent confrontation with technology” since Technology would always remain a human act. It recalls the plea of Pope John Paul II: “If the scientific research in this area should serve the person, it must be accompanied by a careful ethical reflection on every step, which reflects in corresponding legal norms for keeping the human life intact. Life can never be degraded to an object.”

The next article by another promising scholar, Gini T.G., Research Scholar, Loyola College, Chennai, places before us two crucial choices. According to her Human Genome Project unfolds our collective identity as humankind. We progressively seem to acquire more power and greater responsibility. Our collective identity reminds us that all our actions have a profound effect on the environment and on virtually all forms of life. We become stewards of our own Genome and this calls us for greater responsibility. With the discovery of the nature of DNA and the genetic code, a new previously unknown world was opened up that lies within each of us; within the cells of all other living creatures. Insights into all that was considered to be human nature, from disease possibilities to dispositions were poised to enter humankind’s collective consciousness. Our explorations of the then unknown world which now have initiated unfolding in and through Genetic Revolution impels us to delve into the anthropic implications of the genome mapping and of the project of being human.

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin viewed human beings as “Evolution become conscious of itself.” Today in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century we can well broaden this understanding as “Evolution become capable of consciously extending or eliminating itself.” So too in the reflections ahead, the author probes into the shift that has taken place in our understanding of Human beings as co-creators; Human understanding of God; Human longing for fulfilment; Humans as being at-home in the universe; human capability to affirm life; human urgency to make choices as well as human vocation as trailblazers of self-extinction or self-extension.

After focussing on the unique role and responsibility of humans in the universe of life, the author says that it is the task of the present humanity has to make constant and responsible choices collectively to determine our destiny – to extend or to extinct. In this sense today's human beings are the train-blazers for the whole of life. We have reached the level of consciousness that other living beings can hope for. Either we can foster the evolution in all living creatures or we can wipe out evolution and consequently life itself from earth.

### 3. Crucial Concerns

In the third part of this book, we take up some crucial concerns of the Indian Church and society: the nature of knowledge and the intentional spread of ignorance leading to exploitation; the need for an ecologically sensitive folk religiosity and a deeper analysis of the intricacies of and religious response to the caste system.

Since India claims to be a knowledge society and a knowledge-hub for the world there are two articles dealing with knowledge and ignorance. So the paper by Nishant Irudayadason, a budding scholar who has specialised in postmodernity and ethics, attempts to study the nature and significance of knowledge. He treats the subject from the perspectives of postmodern authors Foucault and Lyotard. The paper discusses first the ideas of Foucault followed by Lyotard's understanding of knowledge. Then it tries to show how their perspectives on knowledge affect the information-knowledge distinction and their relevance for contemporary society. Foucault's and Lyotard's extensive treatment of knowledge rests on a very important principle, that is, knowledge is necessarily a matter of social relation. They differ in their view of what type of social relations underlies knowledge. While for Foucault, it is power and techniques associated with power, for Lyotard, it is related to the shifting language games. However it is quite clear from their analysis that the distinction between information and knowledge gets blurred in postmodern perspectives. Knowledge is not pre-given or internalization through appropriation but is already and always interwoven with information we receive depending on our social position and on the language game we are playing.

The next article by Dr Victor Ferrao, Rachol Seminary, Goa focuses on the paradoxical nature of knowledge and on the circulation of ignorance, a topic rarely discussed in academic circles. Epistemology and ignorance are intimately related. We might naively construe the relationship as hostile because epistemology deals with operations of knowledge, the goal being the elimination of ignorance. It appears that epistemology and ignorance are radically opposed to each other. But a deeper scrutiny will manifest some of the complexities involving the two. Perhaps a juxtaposing of the two, as in ‘epistemology of ignorance’, might offer an effective semantic tool that will assist us in drawing out the nuances implied and prove to be educative and transformative.

So this article studies the complex phenomenon of ignorance exploring its different forms, examining how it is produced and sustained. It problematizes the role that they play in knowledge production and circulation, and seek to understand how they impact the power relations in our society. Epistemologies of ignorance certainly widen the understanding of ignorance that is often construed as a gap in knowledge or an epistemic oversight that can be remedied once it is noticed. While this kind of ignorance does exist it is not the only kind. There are also other forms of ignorance that can put on the mask of knowledge and produce domination and exploitation. Sometimes these ‘unknowledges’ are deliberately produced while at other times they are unconsciously generated.

The production, maintenance and circulation of ignorance in our society generates oppression and exploitation. Ignorance is not merely a tool of oppression employed by the powerful. It is also a strategy of survival of the victims. Often the victims of oppression use it to unlearn the ways of the oppressor. This is widely known as the ‘strategy of resistance’. In the context of our exploration of how a witness of Christian values can liberate society, we explore how ignorance, in multiple ways, can re-produce oppression. However, we are not merely interested in the understanding of this issue, but also in its remedy. Hence, our study is both diagnostic and therapeutic. The motivation for this study flows from our mission to bring forth the kingdom of God in our society. It is in this regard that we feel that our study of the epistemologies of ignorance can redeem

our society, leading to a praxis of life deeply fueled by the values of the kingdom.

The next article by James Ponniah, Dean, Faculty of Philosophy, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, deals with ecological concerns and folk traditions. Caring for the earth has become an imperative in today's society. In this age of post-modernity and post-development, humans have finally come to realize that the future of humanity and the future of the environment are intrinsically, inseparably and indefinitely related to each other. But the folk and indigenous cultures have always believed in this inalienable relationship and manifested it through their religious and symbolic schemes. This essay endeavours to delve into their religious universe by deploying their frames of conceptualisation and their meaning-schemes of strategic action that reveal their collective self's integration with the natural environment. It does this by engaging in a discussion on various questions and topics such as why study "religion" for ecology?, The relationship between humans and nature, conservation of nature in folk religions, folk ritual realm as a form of indigenous environmentalism, ecological concerns in folk world-view, shaman: an ecologist?, and the role of religion in the conflictual relationship between development and ecology.

While celebrating the sovereignty of the common folk in India, the essay demonstrates how religion can play a vital role in the conservation of endangered bioregions through the folk religious forms and imaginative acts like 'Ganv' and 'Sacred Grove'— which are characterized by their regional discursive formation. It further shows how they are closely related to the natural environment and the human habitat of the place. While modern environmental studies make us increasingly aware of nature's ability to influence and affect human lives, such a truth has always been part of the heritage of folk world-view. It describes religious beliefs and practices as cultural-ecological adaptations that are systemically involved in the maintenance of human ecosystems. It transmits habits, and attitudes of mind to succeeding generations, thereby guaranteeing the perpetuation of an ecologically sustainable religious world-view. Folk religions and their rituals basically aim at generating, maintaining, preserving and upholding a world-view that sees a

fundamental unity between god, nature and humans. It is built on a philosophy that these different dimensions can affect each other, influence each other, and take care of each other. By making nature as an entity with power and by endowing on its objects such trees, hills and waters varying degrees of power, the Indian folk-world-view has constructed nature and its parts as manifestations of diving power, *shakti*. Thus it has made humans respect nature, while modernity has reduced nature and its various parts to ‘powerless’ objects.

The article further argues that folk religion needs to be understood as an interface between development and ecology. It also shows that the indigenous or folk forms of religious resources can be both prophetic and transformative as well as conservative and constraining.

Caring for the earth and ecological concerns help us to appreciate our relationship with the whole cosmos. The next paper by Binoy Pickalakkattu, a mathematician and theologian, attempts to study relationality as an integral aspect of reality. For this the author bases himself on scientific and philosophical perspectives, with a view to understanding theology more adequately. The worldview of science plays a significant role in shaping the philosophical and theological worldview and vice versa. In this paper he starts with the Western perspective on relation and relationality with specific reference to the views of Stoics, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. It is followed by the idea of relationality in process philosophy. We bring to light the notion of relationality in Indian Philosophical schools with special emphasis on Sankara’s notion of relation. Relationality is further substantiated by the Vedic myth of *Purusa Sukta* which underscores the relatedness of the living and non-living beings of the universe. We move on to the scientific grounding of relationality with special reference to Newtonian Mechanics, Einstein’s Theory of Relativity and Quantum Mechanics. It is shown that the concept of relation has been a food for thought in the schools of science and philosophy both in the East and in the West. The scientific and philosophical grounding of relationality enable us to create an adequate platform for interfacing science, philosophy and theology.

The scientifically and philosophically inferred analogical sparks of divine nature on the world also set forth a new scientific framework for theology and an incentive to rethink its traditional conceptions of Theological doctrines and dogmas. In this paper we tried for a historical synthesis of the concept of relation from scientific and philosophical perspectives.

The next article by Kuruvilla Pandikattu, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, deals with the paradoxical relationship between Gandhi and Ambedkar or between classical reformative Hinduism and revolutionary Neo-Buddhism – a very relevant theme for contemporary India. This is an attempt to study critically the emergence and development of the new religious movement Neo-Buddhism from Hinduism, which has been facilitated by modern technology and education in India. As a powerful protest against the traditional cultural and economic order, as exemplified by caste system, and a serious effort to usher in a radically new social and cultural order, Neo-Buddhism is significant in understanding the contemporary Indian scenario. The two icons that we study are Ambedkar and Gandhi, both of whom have worked sincerely and tirelessly for the upliftment of those enslaved by the caste system. Their religious commitment and scientific openness are also discussed, with a view to understanding better the dynamics of Indian society.

This paper argues that one's social upbringing and personal experience shape, to a large extent, if not totally determine, one's religious commitment and scientific openness. Gandhi was deeply concerned about the untouchables and he wanted to uplift them by being faithful to the cultural and religious system of Hinduism. This made him rather conservative or withdrawn towards scientific and technological innovations. On the other hand, Ambedkar's passionate commitment to the cause of the untouchables made him give up his original religion and opt for another. Their life-experiences and diverging responses, the author believes, has something to teach to the Indian Church.

Whereas in their lifetime Gandhi and Ambedkar were political rivals, now, decades after their death, it should be possible to see their contributions as complementing one another's. The history of Dalit emancipation, advocated by both leaders, is unfinished, and

for the most part unwritten. It should, and will, find space for many heroes. Ambedkar and Gandhi will do nicely for a start. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi was not so much the Father of the Nation as the mother of all debates regarding its future. His fight with Ambedkar continues even today, and Ambedkar seems to be winning in contemporary India.

The article concludes by holding that India has sufficient space for many Gandhis, the social reformers, and many Ambedkars the cultural revolutionaries. Together, even through their controversies, they will facilitate the emergence of a new cultural and economic order in India. The discourse of a multi-cultural, pluralistic and scientifically advancing India with different religious traditions will go on, and this is highly desirable. The Catholic Church can contribute religiously and spiritually to such an on-going discourse in India.

The concluding part deals specifically with Professor Kunnumpuram. An article by Professor Kurien Kunnumpuram, to whom this issue of *Jnanadeepa* is dedicated, briefly discusses some of the theological views he holds. He has been engaged in learning and teaching theology for about fifty years. During the course of these years he has gained some theological insights and acquired certain theological convictions. It is these that he tries to articulate here. What is said here is necessarily tentative and incomplete.

Then carefully and cautiously, he summarizes his theological position on the following topics: God; The Human Person; The World; Jesus Christ; The Church as a Divine-Human Reality; and The Mission of the Church. Essentially these reflections are liberative, life-affirming, future-oriented and hope-based.

His focus has been to evolve a vision of Church's understanding of mission as comprehensive, service-oriented and resonating with the Kingdom of God. It is possible that all our ministries – be they frontier mission, pastoral work, education, health services or social involvement – be directed to the fulfilment of this mission. This may, however, call for a radical reorientation of our ministries.

This is followed by another article that describes the life-journey of Kurien Kunnumpuram, that is found in *Wikipedia*. A few details of his personal life and academic activities are also provided.

## **Towards a New Humanity Kurien Kunnumpuram Revisited**

**Antony D'Cruz O. Praem**

Research Scholar, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome

**Abstract:** Kurien Kunnumpuram as a theologian is a champion of Vatican II and its reform. The manner and the style in which his writings are structured indicate both his scholarly bent for Vatican II's concerns as well as his personal interest in an inculturated theology. These concerns are evident in *Ways of Salvation*, one of his seminal works based on Vatican II. Kunnumpuram understood that “a conciliar decree cannot give systematic and detailed instructions for a such a vast process in the history of humankind, but only enunciate a few guiding principles which can decisively influence, in the long run, the national position of a missionary Church”. This article discusses elaborately two claims about the Church’s mission: (1) “The one mission of the Church receives its specification from the actual context in which it is exercised, in the concrete situations in which it is fulfilled” and (2) “Mission of the Church is to collaborate with God in his work for the wholeness of the human person, the human community and the cosmos according to the pattern revealed in Jesus Christ.”

The author concludes the article by asserting that his attempts to devise an indigenous theology of the Church proves that Kunnumpuram’s concerns are post-conciliar. Though his works are primarily descriptive, he harmonizes various conciliar and post-conciliar teachings and principles for a contextual ecclesiology. Vatican II has “proved to be a point of departure rather than of arrival for the Indian Church.” And Kunnumpuram can be credited with keeping alive the thrust of Vatican II for an inculturated Church in India, and above all the Church as a sacrament of the Kingdom of God in all times. That is an invitation for a new humanity.

**Key words:** Ecclesiology, Indian Church, Vatican II, Church's mission, hope, sacrament, inculturation.

The well-known Indian theologian Kurien Kunnumpuram,<sup>1</sup> under consideration of this paper,<sup>2</sup> might be considered a champion of Vatican II in bringing about a spirit of renewal in the Indian Church. The manner and the style in which his writings are structured indicate both his scholarly bent for Vatican II's concerns as well as his personal interest in an inculturated theology. These concerns are evident in *Ways of Salvation*, one of his seminal works based on Vatican II.<sup>3</sup> Kunnumpuram understood that "a conciliar decree cannot give systematic and detailed instructions for a such a vast process in the history of the humankind, only a few guiding principles can be given but these can decisively influence, in the long run, the national position of a missionary Church."<sup>4</sup>

## **Claim 1: Context of the Mission of the Church**

In tune with his theological vision, we can highlight two important claims around which his writings are focused.

1) "The one mission of the Church receives its specification from the actual context in which it is exercised, in the concrete situations in which it is fulfilled" (cf. AG 6).<sup>6</sup>

S. Brechter has observed that "the [Church] has not become entirely native anywhere, but has everywhere remained western,"<sup>7</sup> but the concern of Vatican II was that the Church truly become a world Church that imbibes the true spirit of the term catholicism. In this context it is worth referring to Congar who affirmed that in the theology of catholicity the element of reciprocity is predominant.

It is quite certain that this catholicity has a source from above, namely Christ's 'pleroma', but it also has a source as it were from below, namely, the indefinite powers of human nature. The Church is the actualization of the mystery of Christ in mankind. It is therefore called- and this is a source of its essential missionary character- [join] what is in Christ for mankind and for the world, and what is in mankind and in the world for Christ.<sup>8</sup>

Following the same line of thought, Kunnumpuram affirmed that the local Church cannot become a province or an administrative unit of a Church that is grown elsewhere. Rather the Church of Christ has an infinite power to become a truly Indian Church. Citing the growth of various local Churches of new Testament era, he affirmed that it is *ius divinum* that the Church, in her own right, can become real and tangible in local communities of the faithful. What is important is the unity of faith and charity. Often in the name of preserving unity, the Church has called for a uniformity, i.e., a reality that is exactly the same everywhere. This has led to juridical uniformity and standardization. Instead, taking a clue from Rahner, Kunnumpuram proposes more fundamental and sacramental understanding of the Church where the Word is proclaimed, the Eucharist is celebrated and love is practised while <sup>10</sup> preserving the flavor of the local culture and the unity of the faith.<sup>11</sup> In other words fundamental unity of faith is preserved when it is nuanced in a given context.

When thinking about the Church in India, Kunnumpuram states that there is no such thing as an Indian Church but rather that there are three Churches, namely, the Syro-Malabar, the Syro-Malankara and the Latin Church. For him they are the Asian extension of Euro-American local Churches, rather than a community grown out of a faith-response to the needs, concerns and problems of the local people.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless as far as safeguarding the faith-tradition is considered, it is beyond doubt that the various Catholic rites, namely, the Syro-Malabar, the Syro-Malankara and the Latin, have exhibited their vigor in diverse ways. But he writes that “the various rites of which should be a source of enrichment for the Church have become a cause of division.”<sup>13</sup>

The disunity between the Latin and Oriental Churches is related to the question of apostolicity. The Oriental Churches base themselves very much on the apostolic foundation of their Churches. They have treasured all along the ‘Apostolic Christ experience of St. Thomas which is taken as normative.<sup>14</sup> This has resulted in multiple jurisdictions within one territory leading to the collapse of the territorial principle and to disunity of the local Church.<sup>15</sup> The territorial principle is not merely a formal unity, but rather expresses

the brotherhood of all the believers of an area, gathered by the Word of God and called to manifest their brotherhood in celebrating their fellowship in the Eucharist (LG 26; CD 11).<sup>16</sup> According to F. Wilfred the Church must staunchly oppose all privatizing and sectarian understandings of the faith. Instead she must insist upon what is common and essential to faith as normative.<sup>17</sup> The value of the tradition that has been handed down does not lie in its antiquity but in its missionary and eschatological calling to gather all into unity.<sup>18</sup> And often history teaches that the prevailing controversy of the times (i.e. great schisms, or the time of reformation) resulted less from the refusal of one side to accept orthodox doctrines held by the other rather than with antagonisms<sup>19</sup> between persons and groups with different ethnic backgrounds.<sup>20</sup> Therefore Kunnumpum's axiom that the 'one' mission of the Church receives its norm from Jesus and it cannot be guided by the values of the world but of the Kingdom.

[Therefore] to continue dealings with past rights and wrongs of the ritual Churches in India is to allow oneself to be imprisoned by the 'facts' of history. This is so because those 'facts' will necessarily be colored by our preoccupations of today...[And] we shall probably fail to recognize the opportunity offered by the present as also the freedom to shape a future which we really desire.<sup>21</sup>

Kunnumpum also points a finger at the scandalous divisions that exist based on caste, language, culture and ethnicity. He finds that the Church in India has to grow to accept the rich diversity that has come into her fold (cf. Gal. 3:28). Unity is the face of the Church as the herald of the Good News, for it shows forth the effectiveness of that part of the Church that has appropriated Christ's saving work (Jn. 17:21).

The reality of the ritual Churches in India makes the Indian Church not a homogeneous body and the presence of *dalits* makes one more church: *a church of dalits*.<sup>22</sup> *Dalits* were humanly motivated by the hope of rising to share the same measure of equality and dignity with others and embraced Christianity. In their transition to a new identity this hope has been realised to some extent but not totally. Here Soares Prabhu's words are apt and prophetic: "There is

surely something sick about a Church which is agitated by infractions of the liturgy, but tolerates without qualms the obscenity of untouchability. If *dalits* exist and suffer in the Church in India this is surely a sign it is not yet ‘Church’.”<sup>24</sup>

So when Kunnumpuram spoke about a Church that is truly Indian and genuinely Christian, we can also read between the lines that he refers also to *unity* within the Church, i.e., ‘the Church as sacrament of unity’ endangered by the division that is caused by various rites as well as by scandalous divisions based on caste, language, culture and ethnicity.<sup>25</sup> This unhealthy divisiveness creates problems for Kunnumpuram when he tries to explain his dream for an ‘Indian Church’. For he himself has acknowledged that unity does not stand for uniformity. “Uniformity is the death of life. Wherever there is life, there is diversity.”<sup>26</sup> Yet the diversity of rites and castes is proving to be divisive.

Notwithstanding this debate, there is a theological rationale in reflecting on the possibilities for an ‘Indian Church’. This is a urgent task in a situation where there is no unanimity as yet and where the priority is given to allegiance to historical patrimonies, liturgical traditions and sociological identities.<sup>27</sup>

The hermeneutic key (*ecclesia semper reformanda*) for the being of the Church in India should be to ask herself how she *lives out* the story of Jesus *to be* a prophetic witness for all people.<sup>28</sup> And the unity of the Church highlights the Church’s self understanding as counter-cultural for there is an inherent desire for a communion by a country that holds terrible memories of oppressive division of the caste system.<sup>29</sup> Thus her sacramental character (cf. LG 1) does not come from her link with any particular culture, but from her witness to the Gospel in word and deed, and by becoming a sign of salvation in Jesus Christ (*signum elevatum in nations*, DH 3013).<sup>30</sup>

Against this background Kunnumpuram’s slogan that the ‘one mission’ of the Church receives its specification from the actual context has theological and ecclesiological repercussions in India.

Kunnumpuram’s contention is that the true catholicity of the Church is found when the Church has the ability to be local i.e., Indian in India or Chinese in China (cf. LG 13). For Kunnumpuram,

the autonomy of the local congregations receives its support in “the legitimate autonomy of the human culture” (GS 59). Following the teaching of Vatican II, he argues that the foundation of cultural autonomy depends on God who, as the Creator, endowed humans with the freedom to unfold and refine their manifold gifts and qualities (cf. GS 55). It is, therefore, God’s plan that humans develop cultures (cf. GS 57). He adds that this God, as the Creator, also reveals that <sup>31</sup> cultural autonomy is not absolute but subject to divine law (GS 36).

Knowing that the cultural riches of a people are the ‘treasures a bountiful God has distributed among the nations of earth’ (AG 11), Vatican II taught the “faithful to express their newness of the Christian life ‘in the social and cultural framework of their homeland, according to their own traditions’ (AG 21).”<sup>32</sup> The Church is the place where there is a twofold totality of grace and world. But if the Church needs to be rooted in the cultural life of a people, she cannot be totally identical with other local Churches.<sup>33</sup> A local Church with its own perception and history and its unique experience of day-to-day life can make the necessary apostolic spiritual discernment for a fuller and more communicative life.<sup>34</sup> The paradigm of communion in diversity has further consequences for mission in India and Asia with their varying histories, traditions and cultures. Unfortunately the communion of fellowship between local churches is not often understood as charity,<sup>35</sup> but has come to imply uniformity and standardization, pointing to the existence of a Church that is exactly the same everywhere. Such attempts to standardize the Church bring only frustration. Fellowship should not be understood in mere juridical terms, but rather as a fellowship of faith and baptism by which all believers are incorporated into Christ (cf. LG 15; UR 3).<sup>36</sup>

Kunnumpuram contends that the Church is not a static unit but rather a mystical reality that calls for an interaction between the faith and contemporary culture, out of which emerges the local Church.<sup>37</sup> According to him, Catholicity signifies the ability of the Church to integrate the Christian faith and the gospel way of life with the culture of the peoples among whom it exists. At the same time the Church is aware that these cultures have a contribution to make to her life. In this reciprocity, the local Church shapes an

identity relevant to the life, needs, and problems of its *locus*.<sup>38</sup> Vatican II taught that “it is in these and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists” (LG 23).<sup>39</sup> It is in this context that Kunnumpuram upholds that the unique mission of the Church receives its specification from the actual context in which it is exercised and fulfilled.<sup>40</sup> This sets the stage for understanding Kunnumpuram’s second claim.

## Claim 2: Church as Sacrament of Christian Hope

2) “The mission of the Church is to collaborate with God in his work for the wholeness of the human person, the human community and the cosmos according to the pattern revealed in Jesus Christ.”<sup>41</sup>

What is emphasized in this affirmation is the construction of an ecclesiology that embodies Vatican II’s holistic vision of salvation. Vatican II’s holistic vision of salvation imbibes its spirit from the vitality the Kingdom of God.<sup>42</sup> The term the Kingdom of God expresses precisely this saving will of God in history.<sup>43</sup> As a result, the specific Indian context demands that any thinking about the fundamental mission of the Church should be in conjunction with the Kingdom of God and *not* with particular traditions.<sup>44</sup> The heart of the Kingdom is God’s revelation of unconditional love and a project for a new human community. An appropriate response to Jesus’ proclamation can effect healing and wholeness in individuals as well as in communities.<sup>45</sup> The mission of the Church embodies this vision and this is in contrast to the traditional understanding of the Church’s mission as “saving souls”.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, Kunnumpuram highlights that a vision for a new humanity lies hidden within the Kingdom paradigm. This is the challenge that post-conciliar teaching poses for the Indian Church. The Indian Church must delve into the Kingdom to realize her mission to build up communities rooted in God and living in harmony.<sup>47</sup> For such an approach Kunnumpuram delves into the concept of People of God, the principal paradigm of the Church in the Vatican II’s teachings (LG 9-17).<sup>48</sup>

The concept people of God (LG 9-17) points to a participatory Church.<sup>49</sup> The emergence of a truly participatory Church in India will have great witnessing power for a country that has a history of a

priestly caste that for centuries has oppressed and dominated over dalits and of a rich and powerful elite that has exploited the poor.<sup>50</sup> Evils of discrimination are all pervasive. Thus while the Church raises her prophetic voice against such evils, the Church is equally called to build an egalitarian society where there is no place for power and domination but only a participative community.<sup>51</sup> For “the example of a genuine Christian fellowship can inspire our non-Christian brothers and sisters to live together in harmony.”<sup>52</sup> In the this context Kunnumpuram affirms that:

All this calls for an attitudinal change in the Church. An inward looking Church gives undue importance to rite and rubrics, orthodoxy and discipline. But God-ward looking Church is concerned with the great human problem of living together in freedom and equality, love, justice and peace as well as in tune with the rhythm of nature. For the world, not the Church, is the primary object of God’s love.<sup>53</sup>

Thus Kunnumpuram describes the Church’s need to become a sacrament of Christian hope and joy in a world where people do not find these blessings.

[Jesus] wanted it [the Church] to be a community of love where the human person is respected, true brotherhood is fostered and forgiveness and reconciliation are effected. He hoped and prayed [for] true unity in the Church, one that embraces and enhances all diversity... He did not, of course, desire an inward-looking community, concerned only about its welfare. He expected the Church to be deeply committed to the service of the mankind.<sup>54</sup>

“Christ’s gospel is not, in the first place, an intellectually satisfying doctrinal system, but a challenging way of life.”<sup>55</sup> Jesus never made it easy for anyone to follow him for his demands were radical and uncompromising. Thus it is not a set of rules but a way of living.<sup>56</sup> The Church as a Kingdom community is called to be doers of the Word (cf. Mt.7:24). Therefore, in an Indian context, oppressive poverty and religious fundamentalism are concrete trends that prevent achieving genuine human communities. Thus the option for the poor in India is based on the conviction that “poverty in

India is not primarily caused by wickedness of a few rich people but by the operation of a socio-economic and political system which permits the unjust system.”<sup>57</sup> Similarly, religious dialogue also aims at the creation of a new India, where all citizens can live in freedom, justice and peace.<sup>58</sup> The success of the Christian call is found in creating genuine communities. Accordingly, Kunnumpuram contends that the Church be imbued with the presence of God.<sup>59</sup> What is basic to this community “is not humans’ love for God, but God’s love for humans (cf. 1 Jn. 4:9-19; Jn. 3:16)... [therefore] the Church is meant to be above all a community of love.”<sup>60</sup> Given the pluralistic scenario, Kunnumpuram holds that grass roots communities or small Christian communities hold the answer; as a community that lives in *solidarity* with others.<sup>61</sup>

Such a theological concern with an eschatological flavor can be the catalyst for an Indian Church. Such a vision transcends the boundaries that have come about historically. In this context Kunnumpuram alludes to Hebrew 13:14 and writes that “Christian hope asks us to regard every stage in the growth of a person and every phase in the development of the Church as merely provisional. It has to be transcended. We are still on our way to the final Kingdom.”<sup>62</sup> Therefore what is binding on the Church is not only to her historical patrimony, but even more her missionary and eschatological nature.

The theological vision of Kunnumpuram becomes eloquent when he describes the Church’s significance as a ‘sacrament of Salvation’, especially amidst religious pluralism. A remarkable teaching of Vatican II is the rediscovery of the richness of the biblical view of salvation effected by Jesus Christ, i.e., “salvation is something personal (spiritual-corporal), communitarian, societal and both this-worldly as well as other-worldly.”<sup>63</sup> Vatican II rejected the idea that salvation is something merely individual and purely spiritual; rather it is communitarian, societal, this worldly incarnational and other worldly (cf. LG 9, 16; AG 2, 3; GS 39).<sup>64</sup> In that sense the Church’s mission is truly religious, but the concept of religious mission expands to embrace all that is human (cf. GS 11).<sup>65</sup>

It [Vatican II] does not look upon the ‘religious’ as one dimension among other dimensions of human

existence. The religious dimension intersects with other dimensions. That is why the Council could speak of ‘the supremely human character’ of the Church’s religious mission (cf. GS 11).<sup>66</sup>

According to J. Ratzinger, *Gaudium et Spes* 11 demonstrates what is *the true humanism*, i.e., that humanity’s full development as human is achieved only by faith in God, and vice versa, that Christian faith in God aims at the full development of the human person.<sup>67</sup> For Kunnumpuram, “Christian spirituality is a spirituality that humanizes,”<sup>68</sup> and this holistic approach has been the concern of most post-conciliar teachings on mission.<sup>69</sup> In such a perspective, Kunnumpuram’s vision embodies the elements of fundamental ecclesiology as outlined by Vatican II, especially its teaching that the Church is the sacrament of salvation.<sup>70</sup> His outlook calls for a decentralization of the Church, centering her vision not on herself but altogether on Christ.<sup>71</sup>

## Conclusion

In short, the style in which Kunnumpuram’s writings are structured and the method by which he attempts to devise an indigenous theology of the Church proves that his concerns are post-conciliar. Though his works are primarily descriptive, he harmonizes various conciliar and post-conciliar teachings and principles for a contextual ecclesiology. Vatican II has “proved to be a point of departure rather than of arrival for the Indian Church.”<sup>72</sup> And Kunnumpuram can be credited with keeping alive the spirit of Vatican II for an inculturated Church in India, and above all the Church as a sacrament of the Kingdom of God in all times.

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## Notes

1. See K. KUNNUMPURAM, *Ways of Salvation. The Salvific Meaning of Non-Christian Religions According to the Teaching of Vatican II*, Poona 1971.
2. This is a modified version of a chapter of my Doctoral Dissertation titled: Church as a Witness to the Kingdom: Towards an Ecclesiology in India According to G. M. Soares Prabhu, S.J.; M. Amaladoss, S.J.; K. Kunnumpuram, S.J. Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome. Defended on 3.02.2011.
3. Cf. R. ROCHA and K. PANDIKATTU, "Editor's Introduction to Visions and Dreams", 10; P. T. MATHEW, "The Notion of Boundary. A Challenge to an Indian Ecclesiology", 142; S. PAINADATH, "Church as Table-Fellowship", 72.
4. K. KUNNUMPURAM, Ways of Salvation, This is a doctoral study about the breakthrough that happened with Vatican II. It positively acknowledges that the salvific activity of the Holy Spirit is beyond the visible boundaries of the Church and, therefore, other religious traditions are to some extent 'ways of salvation' for their followers. In Ways of Salvation Kunnumpuram exhibits his stature as an authority in understanding Vatican II in regard to a contextual theology.
5. S. BRECHTER, "Commentary on the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity", 150.
6. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Church of My Dreams", 26; Cf. Id., Towards a New Humanity, 7; Id., "The Church and Peace", 212.
7. S. BRECHTER, "Commentary on the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity", 150.
8. Y. CONGAR, "Commentary on Chapter IV of Gaudium et Spes", 220-221.
9. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, The Indian Church of the Future, 71. The Pope's 'power of Jurisdiction' appeared in Canon Law only towards the end of the twelfth century. The primacy of the bishop of Rome, as it was intended by the early ecumenical councils was not primacy of dominance over other bishops, but rather charity standing in their midst and responding to their requests, the Bishop Rome used his responsibility to promote unity. This view is strengthened by Vatican II's affirmation of the sacramental origin of the episcopacy. Nevertheless unity is the framework within which Vatican II understands the sacramental nature of the episcopacy, as well as the relation between the episcopacy and the primacy of Pope (cf. W. HENN, The Honor of My Brothers, 73, 83, 148ff.).

10. Cf. K. RAHNER, *The Church after the Council*, 48. cited in K. KUNNUMPURAM, "Towards a New Ecclesiology in the Light of Vatican II", 17.
11. For instance W. HENN, on the theme of the 'unity in faith' argues that there is significant diversity in the way of 'understanding faith' in biblical and patristic literature that recognizes and concurrently preserves 'unity in faith'. The unity of faith was preserved when the faith was nuanced and contextualized through different literary genres, languages, historical circumstances and theological challenges (cf. W. HENN, *One Faith. Biblical and Patristic Contributions Toward Understanding Unity in Faith*, 7-191).
12. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *Indian Church of the Future*, 59-60.
13. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *Towards a New Humanity*, 235.
14. Cf. F. WILFRED, *The Emergent Church in a New India*, 237ff.
15. 'One Bishop per city' is the axiom derives from council of Nicaea (325) canon, 8 (See N. P. TANNER, ed., "First Council of Nicaea", 10). Following this axiom critics questions the theological significance of multiple juridical principle within one territory. For instance H. Legrand argues that the principle of territoriality of a local Church is the guarantee of its catholicity (See H. LEGRAND, "La Realizzazione della Chiesa in un Luogo", 178ff. Id., "One Bishop Per City", 369-400). Wilfred, argues that theological rationale of "the territorial principle is not just a juridical matter, it is above all meant to underline the unity of all in Christ" (F. WILFRED, *The Emergent Church in New India*, 42).
16. Cf. F. WILFRED, *The Emergent Church in New India*, 42. See also above, footnote 8.
17. "The Church is Apostolic because, totally dependent on Christ like the Apostles, and empowered by his Spirit, she is sent into the world with a mission-to be an instrument of God's Kingdom. In the sending of the Apostles by the risen Lord as heralds of the Kingdom, it is the Church in its nucleus, the new Israel represented by the Twelve which is sent into the world" (F. WILFRED, *The Emergent Church in a New India*, 234).
18. Cf. H. LEGRAND "One Bishop Per City", 375.
19. Cf. Y. CONGAR, *After Nine Hundred Years. Background of the Schism between the Eastern and Western Churches*, 25; E. D'LIMA, "Challenges to the Ritual Churches in India", 707-718.
20. "Any other principle of organization of Christian gatherings, if it were become systematic (language, age group, social class as such, ethnic belonging, etc.) would reproduce in the Church the divisions of the world. But the eschatological vocation of the Church is the reverse. It is not to reproduce Babel, that symbol of violence and confusion, but become its antitype" (H. LEGRAND, "One Bishop per City", 399).

21. E. D'LIMA, "Challenges to the Ritual Churches in India", 715.
22. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, Towards a New Humanity, 235.
23. Cf. SOARES PRABHU, "Indian Church Challenged by Pluralism and Dialogue", 157-159.
24. SOARES-PRABHU, "Indian Church Challenged by Poverty and Caste", 153. While being critical of Oriental Churches in their claim of apostolicity and tradition, F. Wilfred highlights that their claim is a veiled attempt to maintain their caste status. Cf. F. WILFRED, *The Emergent Church in a New India*, 244-245. There also others who makes this similar claims, J. PODIPARA, *The St. Thomas Christians*, Bombay, 1970, 83; J. MUNDAN, *Traditions of St. Thomas Christians*, Bangalore 1970; J. AERTHYIL, *The Spiritual heritage of St. Thomas Christians*, Cochin, 1982, 129; G. KOILPARAMBIL, *Caste in the Catholic Community in Kerala*, Cochin 1982.
25. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, Towards a New Humanity, 235. Repercussions of caste system in the Church see M. AMALADOSS, *A Call to Community*; xii-xiii;
26. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "Editorial of Asian Journal for Priests", 2; cf. Id., "The Church as the Sacrament of Unity", 162.
27. K. Kunnumpuram has only made some passing remarks about the liturgical traditions of these Churches; thus to delve into them here would be beyond the scope of this essay.
28. Cf. E. D'LIMA, "Challenges to the Ritual Churches in India", 716.
29. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "Beyond the Clergy –Laity Divide", 824; Id., "Towards a Theology of Ministries", 9.
30. Cf. M. AMALADOSS, *Beyond Inculturation*, 72; see also R. LATOURELLE, "Church III. Motive of Credibility", 156.
31. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 36- 37.
32. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 40.
33. "When the message of Christ has been received by a people and the missionary task is properly carried out, the supernatural gifts of the Spirit combine with the natural endowments of the people to form a local Church with its own way of living the Christian life." (A. GRILLMEIR, "Chapter II. People of God of Lumen Gentium", 167).
34. "The work of planting the Church in a given human community reaches a certain goal when the congregation of the faithful, already rooted in social life and somewhat conformed to the local culture, enjoys a certain firmness and stability" (AG 11).
35. Citing *Lumen Gentium* 9, Kunnumpuram writes that "The Catholic Church is a communion of Churches. According to Vatican II the Church is fel-

lowship of life, charity and truth" (K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 71).

36. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "Towards a New Ecclesiology in the Light of Vatican II", 20. For a contrast between "foremost in love" in early Christianity and "primacy of jurisdiction" of the present time see W. HENN, *The Honor of My Brothers*, 32-34,
37. J. Ratzinger rightly expresses the Church's significance in a locus. "Certainly the Church is tied to what was once and for all the origin in Jesus of Nazareth, and in this sense it is obliged 'chronologically' to continuity with him and the testimony of the beginning. But because 'the Lord is the Spirit' (2 Cor. 3:17) and remains present through the Spirit, the Church has not only the chronological line with its obligation of continuity and identity, it has also the moment, the Kairos, in which it must interpret and accomplish the work of the Lord as present. The Church is not the petrification of what once was, but its living presence in every age." (J. RATZINGER, "Commentary on Chapter 1 of Gadium et Spes", 116).
38. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 40-41.
39. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 72.
40. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Church of My Dreams", 26; Id., *Towards a New Humanity*, 7; Id., "The Church and Peace", 212.
41. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Church of My Dreams", 407, Id., "Freedom and Liberation. Reflections on the Church's Vocation and Mission", 131; Id., *Towards a new Community*, 17, 237.
42. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Church of My Dreams", 413; Id., "The Church at the Service of the People of India", 154; Id., "Towards a New Ecclesiology in the Light of Vatican II", 4.
43. Kunnumpuram also delves into Soares Prabhu's biblical exegesis of the Kingdom of God, i.e., that Jesus' proclamation consists of a pair of indicatives and a pair of imperatives; i.e., declaring that the time is fulfilled because the Kingdom of God is at hand, and commanding that all to repent as a means to believe in the Good news. If the indicatives point to the revelation of God's unconditional love, the imperatives demand hearts that are open to this love, responding to it by loving God in the neighbor. And applies this exegesis to the conciliar and post conciliar teachings, subsequently creating a contextual ecclesiology. For instance Soares Prabhu, "Expanding Horizons of Missions", 281, cited in K. KUNNUMPURAM, *Towards a New Humanity*, 63. Soares Pabhu, "The Kingdom of God" 62, cited in K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Church of My Dreams", 413.
44. "Speaking of traditions, we should, in the first place, underline that they are all subject and subservient to the act of transmitting (tradere) Christ and his Gospel. Transmitting is the essential and central aspect. Rightly then, Vatican II in its Dogmatic constitution on Divine Revelation did not con-

cern itself with traditions understood as the embodiment of various practices, customs, institutions, etc. instead it treated the transmission of divine revelation.” (F. WILFRED, *The Emergent Church in a New India*, 244; cf. J. RATZINGER, “Commentary on Chapter II of *Dei Verbum*”, 181ff.).

45. Cf. Soares-Prabu, “The Kingdom of God” 62, cited in K. KUNNUMPURAM, “The Church of My Dreams”, 413.
46. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, Towards a New Humanity, 63.
47. According to Kunnumpuram, in their post-conciliar teachings, Paul VI and John Paul II emphasized this mission in their encyclicals: “For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: “Now I am making the whole of creation new” (EN 18). “Working for the kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God’s activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms” (RM 15). (Cited in K. KUNNUMPURAM, Towards a New Humanity, 64).
48. “God’s saving intervention in human history needs a people who responds to it and in whom it becomes visible.” (K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 9).
49. “[People of God] leads to the affirmation of the basic equality of all believers: ‘all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ’ (LG 32). And this in turn paved the way for the realization that the lay people have a mission of their own. ‘Now, the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them she can become the salt of the Earth’ (LG 33; see also LG 31). This is a far cry from the old idea of Catholic action which meant the cooperation of the laity in the apostolic tasks proper to the hierarchy” (K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Towards a Theology of Ministries”, 22).
50. “Rigidly caste-ridden and patently hierarchical as the Indian society is, it nevertheless calls into question the credibility of the Church’s claim to a prophetic role when the church itself is so manifestly hierarchical and undeniably clergy-dominated” (K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Towards a Theology of Ministries”, 9).
51. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 20-26.
52. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Laity and Creative Ministries”, 174.
53. K. KUNNUMPURAM. “The Church as the Sacrament of Unity”, 161-162.
54. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Jesus and Man”, 188.
55. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Crisis of Values in the Catholic Church”, 74.  
Contd on p. 55.

## **'Catholic' In Vatican II: Implications for a Contemporary Ecclesiology In India**

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**Abstract:** The two key words 'catholic' and 'catholicity' in the documents of Vatican II deserves a closer look. Among the important reasons for this is the fact the Church is qualified as 'catholic', and 'catholicity' is an essential dimension in ecclesiology. Therefore, it is an imperative that we make a deeper study of this word in the documents of Vatican II. A very large portion of this article is devoted to a study of the usage of 'catholic' and 'catholicity' in Vatican II, and then drawing out their implications for a contemporary ecclesiology in India.

The Catholicity of the Church is indicated by the acceptance and fostering of genuine diversity and plurality. This has important lessons and consequences for the local churches in India, as also for the contribution of the local churches of India to local churches outside India. One of the important applications of *Lumen Gentium* has been in the field of inculturation. True ecclesial catholicity demands that attempts be made to inculturate at deeper levels. This would require serious study, in-depth dialogue with knowledgeable people, great generosity, humility, courage, and most of all, total openness to the Holy Spirit.

**Keywords:** catholic, Catholicity, Vatican II, Ecclesiology, inculturation, *Lumen Gentium*

## Introduction

The words ‘catholic’ (in its adjectival form) and ‘catholicity’ (in its noun form) in the documents of Vatican II merit a closer look.<sup>1</sup> Among the important reasons for this is the fact the Church is qualified as ‘catholic’, and ‘catholicity’ is an essential dimension in ecclesiology. Therefore, it becomes almost an imperative to make a deeper study of this word in the documents of Vatican II, because Vatican II is so very important for attempting to formulate a contemporary ecclesiology, be it for India or for anywhere else in the world. For this reason, a very large portion of this article is devoted to a study of the usage of ‘catholic’ and ‘catholicity’ in Vatican II, and then drawing implications for a contemporary ecclesiology for India.

## General Remarks on Vatican II And Catholicity

A few general remarks are in order here (some of which are very commonly known and accepted, but which are worth repeating here). This is the first time in the history of the Church, that the Church defines and describes itself in solemn Council.<sup>2</sup> Every Council (like everything else!) is linked and marked by its epoch, and its teaching is best understood in this light, and especially in the perspective of its purposes. At Vatican II, the Council Fathers wanted, as far as ecclesiology is concerned, to free the conception of the Church from overly juridical or hierarchical constraints, to one where all members of the Church would find their eminent dignity and rightful role in the life of the Church.<sup>3</sup>

In a such a big assembly, where Council Fathers came from all over the world, representing different needs of the Church, diverse theological viewpoints, there cannot be unanimity on a number of issues. The Second Vatican Council therefore has tried to give place to various currents of thought, putting stress on a particular position in a given context.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, Vatican II does not provide a uniform usage of certain words (that is, in different contexts the meaning or stress of the same word may vary, or diverse words are used to convey the same thing), nor does it propose a synthesis of the various ideas expressed.<sup>5</sup> This is very true for the *catholicity* of

the Church. In the question of catholicity, this is not a drawback, but one of the riches of Vatican II! It would be helpful here to make three remarks in this connection. One, this is quite fitting, for we are in front of a mystery that is very rich, and cannot be defined fully or adequately. Two, the purpose of Vatican II is not to close a debate, or confine within limits the catholicity of the Church, but rather, to stress the opening out and flowering that has to take place.<sup>6</sup> Three, the variations in stress, according to the context, clearly indicate that different aspects have different importance according to varying circumstances.

A final general remark is concerning the limits being set to the study made in this article because of considerations of the length of the article. It is obvious that one cannot treat of all the aspects of catholicity in Vatican II. Therefore the stress is on what is given in *Lumen gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, primarily because it is on the Church. There will therefore be only restrictive mention or reference to other documents.

## The Word “Catholicity” in Vatican II

The word “catholicity” (“catholicitas”, in the official Latin text, and its inflections) is used eight times in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>7</sup> It is used twice in *Ad Gentes*: in AG 1, it comes at the very start of the decree, providing the very basis of mission; in AG 4, talking of Pentecost, speaks of the union of people in the catholicity of faith. It comes twice in *Lumen gentium*: in LG 13, where the gifts of the parts are shared among themselves and with the whole Church; in LG 23, where the diversity of the local churches, by the convergence of their unity, shows the catholicity of the undivided Church. We find it four times in *Unitatis redintegratio*: in UR 17, where it is said that the spiritual and other heritages belong fully to the catholicity and apostolicity of the Church; and *thrice* in UR 4 itself, once, to talk of the exercise of the liberty each one has in liturgical rites, even theological formulations, and that in charity, and preserving unity, the catholicity and apostolicity of the Church have to be manifested. For the second and third usages, where it occurs twice in the *same* paragraph, we give the paragraph

concerned, for it is very remarkable indeed, in the context of ecumenism! So, from UR 4:<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, the divisions among Christians prevent the Church from effecting the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her sons who, though joined to her by baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her. Furthermore, the Church herself finds it more difficult to express in actual life her full catholicity in all its aspects.

In addition to *catholicitas*, there are 180 uses of “catholicus” and its inflections, of which 146 times it is used as an adjective, and 34 times as a noun.<sup>9</sup> Obviously, for our present purpose, it is not necessary to go into the details of these usages, so just a few general remarks are sufficient. Most of the time, the word, in its adjectival usage, is used to stand for the attribute of the Church (in the sense of the creedal “catholic Church”), and as a noun it stands for members of the Church (the “Catholics”). The word has also been used as a synonym for universality. As for the contexts of its use, it has been used to show the legitimacy of local churches to be “catholic”, in the context of ecumenism, for example. As was remarked in the introduction to this section on Vatican II, this variation of use, far from showing an imprecision on the part of the Council Fathers, indicates rather the richness of the term, thus letting shine forth different facets of a multi-dimensional concept. All these uses help to deepen and widen the understanding of the catholicity of the Church.

Before moving on to the theological consideration of catholicity with special reference to *Lumen Gentium*, it would be useful to say a word about this Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. On hearing the words “Dogmatic Constitution” one would normally expect to see something very legal, technical, speculative or abstract; or something that would define in strict and narrow terms, and tend to underline the static elements present. This is not the case with *Lumen gentium*. It stresses the aspect of Mystery, the active relationship with God and among members of equal dignity, and its orientation is one of openness and dynamism.<sup>10</sup>

## Catholicity: Theological Considerations

As an introductory résumé of *Lumen Gentium* on catholicity, it is worth quoting the words of the ecclesiologist Francis Sullivan:<sup>11</sup> “*Lumen Gentium* treats the property of catholicity most fully in the last five articles (nos.13-17) of chapter Two: ‘The People of God’. In the first of these articles, the council provides a brief theology of catholicity, of which the principal headings are: (1) the Trinitarian source of catholicity, (2) catholicity as universality of races, nations and cultures, (3) catholicity as unity in rich diversity, and (4) catholicity as relationship with all humanity.”

It can be noted right away that the word “catholicity” appears only in LG 13 (of these five articles mentioned by Sullivan). LG 14 to LG 16 show the link and relation of *all* people to the Church of God; and LG 17 speaks of the mission of the Church to go to “the ends of the earth”. What is worth underlining is the *setting* of these texts that treat of catholicity. It is the *second* chapter of the Constitution, which is on the *People of God*, which begins with the words, “At all times and among every people, God has given welcome to whosoever fears Him and does what is right (cf. Acts 10:35).”<sup>12</sup> (cf., LG 9). The fact, yes the *fact*, not the mere *possibility*, of welcome by God, at *all times* and to *every people* (LG 9 mentions certain conditions for this welcome, upon which no comment needs to be made, because the present investigation does not enter into the question of those who purposefully reject God) is of capital importance. It can be deduced that this opening sentence does three things: it sets the background (and is therefore constantly “present” or “visible” even if we move elsewhere), it presents the basis (that is, it provides the foundation, the support), and it gives the dynamic orientation (thus to keep on moving forward, and serves as a reminder that we cannot “turn back” or go in an opposite direction), to the catholicity of the Church.

It is useful here to quote the text of *Lumen gentium* 13 that talks specifically of catholicity:<sup>13</sup>

It follows that among all the nations of earth there is but one People of God, which takes its citizens from every race, making them citizens of a kingdom which is of a heavenly and not an earthly na-

ture. For all the faithful scattered throughout the world are in communion with each other in the Holy Spirit, so that ‘he who occupies the See of Rome knows the people of India are his members.’ Since the kingdom of Christ is not of this world (cf. Jn. 18:36), the Church or People of God takes nothing away from the temporal welfare of any people by establishing that kingdom. Rather does she foster and take to herself, insofar as they are good, the ability, resources, and customs of each people. Taking them to herself she purifies, strengthens, and ennobles them. The Church in this is mindful that she must harvest with that King to whom the nations were given for an inheritance (cf. Ps. 2:8) and into whose city they bring gifts and presents (cf. Ps. 71[72]:10; Is. 60:4-7; Apoc.21:24). This characteristic of universality which adorns the People of God is a gift from the Lord Himself. By reason of it, the Catholic Church strives energetically and constantly to bring all humanity with all its riches back to Christ its Head in the unity of His Spirit.

In virtue of this catholicity each individual part of the Church contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church. Thus through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase.

First, it is worth looking at the comments of a competent theologian, Aloys Grillmeier,<sup>14</sup> who commenting on this text says that diversity, in the life of unity of people, is from Christ, in the one Spirit, for the universal situation in the world; and that catholicity flows from this. “The nature of this catholicity is determined by the tension between the call to unity and unicity, and the divine command to embrace all men and ages in this unity.” This catholicity is first envisaged geographically, with the one People of God dwelling among all the nations of the earth, remaining in fellowship, in *communio*, with each other, with all the Spirit-given fullness which is proper to the People of God. “Thus catholicity as understood by the Constitution is a union of opposites. The people of God represents one pole [...] The other pole is formed by the multiplicity of the

peoples of the earth, with their various customs, talents and energies, which are to be preserved for them insofar as they are genuine values”; we see some of these elements, which form the ‘opposites’, as Grillmeier continues, “The full catholicity of the Church only comes about when this combination of natural and supernatural goods in the local and regional Churches has been fused in mutual communion in the universal Church.” Grillmeier says that one of the achievements of the Council was “the re-discovery of the universal Church in the local church”, and he notes: “The local Churches enrich each other and also the universal Church.” Further, the “task of the Church is to continue in all ages and places the redemptive work of Christ for all creation, by its missionary preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, which are the instruments for bringing the cosmos into the realm of the grace of Christ.”<sup>15</sup>

Among the aspects of catholicity that LG 13 draws attention to, Grillmeier notes the “fullness in unity”.<sup>16</sup> The communion of the local churches “contributing thereto its full ecclesial reality, for the good of the whole and of each part.” Another aspect of catholicity is “variety in unity.” There are various levels among the members of the People of God, which Grillmeier calls “the catholicity of structure in the Church” and he remarks that the following chapters of the Constitution discuss this at length. Grillmeier notes that “the right of the local church to its own proper existence is preserved. It has the right to live by its own traditions and to maintain its own spiritual features” provided it embodies fully the general structures of the Church, the full preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the unity of government.

Joseph Komonchak draws our attention to some important points of this text of LG 13. To give here his own words:<sup>17</sup> “The catholicity of the Church thus does not refer merely to the universal geographical spread of a single uniform Church”, and Komonchak then quotes a portion of LG 13 (the last part of the quote that is given above). After which he continues: “In other words, the Church is not an abstract but a *concrete* universal, one not in spite of but precisely in and because of the variety of the local churches. And this unity in concrete catholicity is something to be achieved every day, through

an interchange in which all the churches are active and responsible subjects and recipients.” The points wished to be reaffirmed strongly are: the catholicity of the Universal Church is expressed concretely in and through local churches; that diversity is not a concession given to local churches, but something essential to the Universal Church; the necessity of continually achieving this catholicity; the activeness and responsibility of each local church; and the mutual exchange that must take place between local churches. Komonchak goes on to note: “This view of the Church represents, as a number of commentators have pointed out, something like a Copernican revolution in ecclesiology. Historically, it represents at least a counterweight to, if not a reversal of, a centuries-long process of withdrawal and administrative centralization and uniformity in almost all areas of Church life.”<sup>18</sup>

Speaking in the context of the catholicity of local churches, Hervé Legrand notes that the catholicity of the Universal Church is enriched by the catholicity of the local churches.<sup>19</sup> Having in mind a wider context (than the text of LG 13 that has been quoted above), Francis Sullivan underlines the fact that *Lumen gentium* stresses the role of the Spirit, for example, in LG 4 and LG 13, where the Spirit is shown as acting in the Body of Christ, as the source of the rich diversity of gifts endowed to the Church.<sup>20</sup>

What deserves to be highlighted in the Council’s statements that are quoted above, from LG 13, is that the (“good”) diversities of the local churches are “gifts and presents” “from the Lord Himself”. LG 13 shows that the universality of the Church leads to an openness to the *world* (and in AG 4, to cultures): to its problems and questions. We note as well that the Council talks of “the ability, resources, and customs of each people”. Do these “resources” include religious insights that come from other faiths? Can the Spirit be considered the giver of these gifts too? The Council most probably did not have such a question in mind, for the context seems to indicate only cultural riches.

It is proper now take up a very important statement found in LG 23.<sup>21</sup> It is useful to note first the sentence which precedes this statement: “The individual bishop, however, is the visible principle and foundation of unity in his particular church, fashioned after the

model of the universal Church.” And then comes this remarkable statement: “In and from such individual churches there comes into being the one and only Catholic Church.” It is appropriate to take the original words in Latin for the title of the next sub-section: “in quibus et ex quibus”.

## LG 23: “In quibus et ex quibus”

The Council text itself refers to St. Cyprian (*Epist. 55,24*) who talks of the One Church spread all over the world in a multitude of members. It is worth looking at the words of Mgr. Philips who explains this text of LG 23.<sup>22</sup>

The thought which is most remarkable, and which goes back to the most ancient conceptions, we find in the following sentence of the Constitution: particular churches are formed in the image of the universal Church, and it is in them and through them that the one and unique universal Church exists. This vision merits our full attention. Particular churches are not parts which by addition or federation constitute the universal Church. Each particular church is the Church of Christ present in a fixed place and She has all the means of salvation, given by the Lord, to His People.

As Hervé Legrand notes, in comparison with the ecclesiology till then, which was dominated by the conception of seeing the local churches as parts of and subordinated to the Universal Church, this new conception<sup>23</sup> represented a Copernican revolution.<sup>24</sup> It has also been considered as being the most important ecclesiological formulation of Vatican II.<sup>25</sup> From here, it was quite natural for theologians to take the next step, and see this text as being absolutely decisive for understanding the structure of the *communion* of churches in the Catholic Church. In fact, the Extraordinary Synod of 1985 and Pope John Paul II have confirmed the centrality of the communion of churches in the teaching of Vatican II.<sup>26</sup>

Henri de Lubac, on the relation and conception of the Universal Church vis-à-vis the local churches, has this apothegmatic sentence, which has become famous: “A prior universal Church, supposedly

existing in herself, outside of particular churches, is but a being of imagination.”<sup>27</sup> After referring to this, Hervé Legrand has the important observation to make that it is a false problem to talk of “priority” of one over the other, while considering the relation of local churches and the Universal Church.<sup>28</sup>

Seeing the model of the mystery of the Trinity, of unity in diversity, Adelbert Denaux finds a relation of immanence, as the principle of communion, between the universal dimension and the particular dimension of the one and unique Church of Christ.<sup>29</sup> Karl Rahner finds it of fundamental importance that the diocese is not merely an administrative region of the ‘perfect society’ of the Church, but is itself a church “in which” (*in quibus*) the Church exists. He also comments that this is a biblical way of speaking.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to all the insights various authors (some of whom have been quoted above) offer us, it would be very useful to highlight the *dynamics* that LG 23 proposes. This becomes more clear when contrasted to the understanding behind the statement of CD 11, which states, “A diocese is that portion of God’s people which is entrusted to a bishop [...] this portion constitutes a particular church in which the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.”<sup>31</sup> In CD 11, it is the universal Church that is present and active in the local church. Here the dynamics is of a “pre-existing” Universal Church, which manifests itself by its presence and action in the local church. Whereas in LG 23, the dynamics is the opposite: the universal Church is manifested *from* (*ex quibus*) the local churches. The purpose here is in no way to “oppose” these two views; rather to highlight an essential, and very important, insight of Vatican II. The universal and the local are seen in very close, mutual and *essential* relationship; where there is no contradiction or conflict, but rather mutual enrichment and correction in case of overstress of one element over the other.

From a further consideration of *ex quibus* we can see how there is importance given to the local church as an acting *subject* made up of members who also are subjects (this is the “theology of People of God” in action). Another aspect of this could be the valorisation of local and regional institutions, like Episcopal Conferences.

## Vatican II: Further Comments

In the context of ecumenism, as Dulles remarks, “Vatican II’s concept of catholicity may therefore be called cautiously ecumenical rather than narrowly confessional.”<sup>32</sup> Vatican II is also quite clear that the fullness of catholicity is possible only in communion with Rome, as the See of the successor of Peter (cf., UR 4). At the same time, Vatican II shows its openness when it says that the heritage of the Orthodox Churches also belongs to the catholic character of the Church (cf., UR 17). Further, in the missionary context too, as Dulles remarks, “Missionary activity is therefore seen both as an expression and as an intensification of the Church’s catholicity.”<sup>33</sup> What is more, Vatican II is realistic and humble enough to accept that the catholicity that the Church manifests is a limited catholicity, for reasons like the failure of missionary activity to reach all; the dividedness of Christianity, etc.<sup>34</sup>

Vatican II’s openness, as Gustave Martelet so pointedly shows,<sup>35</sup> is characterized by its effort to unite together things that might seem contrary to one another; but the deeper reason for this is the love for all people that the Church bears, in its efforts to interpret the “Signs of the time”, and to present the mystery of the Church. Further, Vatican II was very conscious of its responsibility<sup>36</sup> to respond to the contemporary world, and the existential needs of the men and women of today. We find this of capital importance to the question of catholicity, in the context of our present inquiry.

## Conclusion to Vatican II and Catholicity

As a conclusion to this section on Vatican II and catholicity, I repeat the summary which Avery Dulles makes, for it expresses very well what I too would like to say:<sup>37</sup>

In summary, Vatican II presents catholicity not as a monotonous repetition of identical elements but rather as reconciled diversity. It is a unity among individuals and groups who retain their distinctive characteristics, who enjoy different spiritual gifts, and are by that very diversity better equipped to serve one another and thus advance the common

good. Individual Christians and local churches are bound to one another in mutual service and mutual receptivity. This relationship is founded not upon domination but on a free exchange of trust and respect. Thanks to Christ's faithfulness to his promise to be with his people, catholicity is never lacking to the Church. But it is dynamic and expansive; it continually presses forward to a fullness and inclusiveness not yet attained. It is a ferment at work in the Catholic Church and in every authentic Christian community. Even beyond the borders of explicit Christianity, the grace of Christ, working in the hearts of all who are open to it, brings individuals and groups into a saving relationship with the Church catholic, the God-given sign and sacrament of the ultimate unity to which the entire human race is called. Thus the Catholic Church is, according to the teaching of Vatican II, 'a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope, and salvation for the whole human race' (*LG* 9). [...] Although securely rooted in the tradition, the council's teaching on catholicity is attuned to the new situation that became evident after World War II. It takes cognizance of the plurality of cultures, the other Christian churches, the non-Christian religions, and atheism. Optimistic without being overweening, modest without being abject, this treatment of catholicity is serene and attractive. In comparison with papal teaching of the nineteenth century, Vatican II shows a remarkable respect for freedom and diversity, both within the Church and in the larger sphere of human relations.

After this brief study of catholicity in Vatican II, I now turn to its implications for an ecclesiology for contemporary India.

## **Implications for an Indian Ecclesiology**

Some of the comments made, and the quotes given, while presenting the highlights of catholicity in Vatican II, already offer implications for an Indian ecclesiology. Apart from those obvious

implications, some which are not so obvious, or which need greater spelling out, are given below.

Previously the local churches of India looked to ‘western’ churches for monetary assistance, missionary help, theological guidance and various forms of leadership. To anyone who studied the relationship of the local churches in India to local churches in financially more developed countries, it was obvious that the relationship was not of equal partners. It was more of ‘one-way only’ dependence. Vatican II, especially through LG 13, reminds us that in the one Catholic Church all local churches are of equal dignity, and can and must mutually enrich one another. Therefore it is time that the local churches of India behave as equal partners with local churches outside India, and also be seen and treated as such, especially by those who had, in the past, treated them as ‘merely dependent’ churches. There may yet be differences in monetary terms, and money may need to flow in one direction still. However, money is only one among many important items. There must be mutuality and sharing in personnel, theological insights and the processes of decision-making.

Flowing from the discussion given above on “in quibus et ex quibus” (LG 23) the role of the Indian Church vis-à-vis the Universal Church, in the context of globalization and the coming-to-be of a new world order, becomes very significant indeed. Within the Universal Church, there can be no monopoly of leadership of a permanently fixed group of local churches. Particular historical contexts led to some local churches taking leadership in some areas of Church life. There is a new historical context now, and it is time that Indian local churches take leadership in some of the areas that were previously taken by others. An example of one such area could be what has been termed as ‘New Evangelization’. The vibrancy of the Catholic faith (even in the face of grave difficulties) in some of India’s local churches is a glowing example for those local churches whose Catholic faith has dwindled and is even dying out. India’s local churches can show many other local churches how to adapt and respond to changing circumstances, especially in a globalizing world. Further, speaking in general terms, with regard to the Universal Church (as represented by the Church officials at the

Vatican) and the Indian Church, this statement by LG 23, calls for tremendous reflection and study as to how there can be a mutual give-and-take in deeper understanding, better formulation and greater expression of the Catholic faith in the changed circumstances of the contemporary world.

The Catholicity of the Church is indicated by the acceptance and fostering of genuine diversity and plurality (LG 13). This has important lessons and consequences for the local churches within India, as also for the contribution of the local churches of India to local churches outside India. One of the important applications of this text of *Lumen Gentium* has been in the field of inculturation. However, the inculturation one normally sees is on a superficial level, like in the adopting of some outward cultural traits. The initial attempts which received much publicity were the attempts at 'sanskritization'. It is very creditable on the part of those who attempt to inculturate according to the needs of their context, for example in Tribal areas, or Dalit-dominant regions. True ecclesial catholicity demands that attempts be made to inculturate at deeper levels. This would require much study, in-depth dialogue with knowledgeable people, great generosity, humility, courage, and most of all, total openness to the Holy Spirit. The remarks of LG 13 have great potential, both for the manner of governance by the local church authorities, as also for a much greater participatory role for all members of the local churches. Further, among the local churches of India themselves, LG 13 calls for greater sharing and interaction in various fields and at different levels. Then, this is to be extended to local churches outside India.

## Conclusion

This article is but a brief study of the words 'catholic' and 'catholicity' in the documents of Vatican II, with a special concentration on the usages of these words in *Lumen Gentium*. There are many more riches to be unlocked and made use of from these two words alone. This great task beckons us as we search for better ways to respond to the challenges before us in the contemporary period and the future ahead.

## Notes

1. These are topics very dear to Professor Kurien Kunnumpuram, since he has been teaching ecclesiology and is a specialist on Vatican II [Editor's addition].
2. CONGAR, Yves M.-J. (OP), "En guise de conclusion", in L'Eglise de Vatican II. Vatican II, textes et commentaires des décrets conciliaires. La Constitution dogmatique sur l'Eglise Tome III (Unam Sanctam 51c), Edited by Guilherme BARAUNA (OFM), Paris : Cerf, 1966. pp.1365-1373. p.1365.
3. DENAUX, Adelbert, "L'Eglise comme communion", in Nouvelle Revue Théologique 110/1 (1988), pp.16-37; 110/2 (1988), pp.161-180. p.16.
4. Some have called Vatican II a "Pastoral Council" because of its pastoral orientation. Hermann Pottmeyer sees it most characterized as a "Council of Transition". Pottmeyer also notes the imprecision of Vatican II concerning exact definitions. Cf., POTTMEYER, Hermann J., "Vers une nouvelle phase de réception de Vatican II. Vingt ans d'herméneutique du Concile", Translated from German by Henri Rochais, in La Réception de Vatican II (Cogitatio Fidei 134), Edited by G ALBERIGO and J.-P. JOSSUA, Paris : Cerf, 1985. pp.43-64. On pages 43-44 Pottmeyere talks of this Council being a Council of transition.
5. The following book served as a helpful reference for a better understanding of Vatican II: Le deuxième concile du Vatican (1959-1965). Actes du colloque organisé par l'Ecole française de Rome en collaboration avec l'Università de Roma-La Sapienza (Rome 28-30 mai 1986) (Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome, 113), Rome : Ecole française de Rome / Palais Farnèse (Diffusion : Paris, E. de Boccard - Padova, La Bottega d'Erasomo), 1989.
6. In a slightly different vein, cf., CONGAR, Yves, "En guise de conclusion", 1966. p.1365. Congar highlights that an important Council touches the Church in its depth and has repercussions for several generations, even centuries. Congar attributes this to the presence and action of the Holy Spirit.
7. Cf., Concilium Vaticanum II. Concordance, Index, Listes de fréquences, Tables comparatives (Collection : Informatique et étude de textes), by Philippe DELHAYE, Michel GUERET, and Paul TOMBEUR, Louvain : CETEDOC, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1974. p.84. For those who may find it useful, given here are the phrases in Latin, in which catholicitas or its inflections occur. (1) AG 1 : "Ad Gentes divinitus missa ut sit 'universale salutis sacramentum' Ecclesia ex intimis propriae catholicitatis exigentiis, mandato sui Fundatoris oboediens"; (2) AG 4 : "et tandem praesignata est unio populorum in fidei catholicitate, per Novi Foederis Ecclesiam"; (3) LG 13 : "Vi huius catholicitatis, singulae partes propria

dona ceteris partibus et toti Ecclesiae afferunt”; (4) LG 23 : “Quae Ecclesiarum localium in unum conspirans varietas indivisae Ecclesiae catholicatem luculentius demonstrat.”; (5) UR 4 : “Hac enim agendi ratione ipsi veri nominis catholicitatem simul et apostolicitatem Ecclesiae in dies plenius manifestabunt.”; (6) UR 4 : “Attamen divisiones Christianorum impedimento Ecclesiae sunt quominus ipsa ad effectum deducat plenitudinem catholicitatis sibi propriam in iis filiis”; (7) UR 4 : “Immo et pro ipsa Ecclesia difficiliter fit plenitudinem catholicitatis sub omni respectu in ipsa vitae realitate exprimere.”; (8) UR 17 : “totum hoc patrimonium spirituale ac liturgicum, disciplinare ac theologicum in diversis suis traditionibus ad plenam catholicitatem et apostolicitatem Ecclesiae pertinere.”

8. The Documents of Vatican II, Edited by Walter M. ABBOTT (SJ), New York : Guild Press, America Press, Association Press, 1966. p.349. From here on, this book will be referred to as The Documents of Vatican II, 1966.
9. Cf., Concilium Vaticanum II. Concordance, Index..., 1974. pp.84-86.
10. Cf., The Documents of Vatican II, 1966. p.13. “The greatest merit of the Constitution is that, far from canonizing the past, or even consecrating the present, it prepares for the future.” Here, in these words, Dulles is quoting G DEJAIFVE (SJ), “La ‘Magna Charta’ de Vatican II”, in Nouvelle Rev. Théologique 87 (janvier 1965), p.21. And that this Constitution “is a stepping-stone and not a final accomplishment.” This second is a quote from Dom Christopher BUTLER, in the foreword to the Paulist Press edition of The Constitution on the Church, New York : Deus Books, 1965, pp.8-9.
11. SULLIVAN, Francis A. (SJ), The Church We Believe In: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, Dublin : Gill and Macmillan, 1988. p.87.
12. The Documents of Vatican II, 1966. p.24.
13. The Documents of Vatican II, 1966. p.31.
14. Cf., GRILLMEIER, Aloys (SJ), “Chapter II. The Mystery of the Church”, Translated by Kevin Smyth, in Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II. Vol.I., General Editor : Herbert VORGRIMLER, Translated from the German by Lalit Adolphus, Kevin Smyth and Richard Strachan, New York : Herder and Herder; London : Burns and Oates; 1967, pp.138-185. p.167. This whole paragraph is taken from this commentary of Grillmeier.
15. GRILLMEIER, Aloys, “Chapter II. The Mystery of the Church”, 1967. p.167. Grillmeier, in a footnote (No.23, started on p.167, and continued on p.168) notes that “catholicity of time” is briefly alluded to by the Constitution, when LG 13 talks of the expansion of the people of God “through all ages”. Grillmeier notes that this doctrine must be completed by reference to the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

16. Cf., GRILLMEIER. Aloys, "Chapter II. The Mystery of the Church", 1967. p.168. The quotes in this paragraph are taken from the same place.
17. Joseph A. KOMONCHAK, "The Local Realisation of the Church," in The Reception of Vatican II. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell, Edited by G. Alberigo, J.P. Jossua and Joseph A. Komonchak, Catholic University of America Press, 1987, p.78.
18. Joseph A. KOMONCHAK, "The Local Realisation of the Church," in The Reception of Vatican II, 1987, p.78. Or, in the original French edition, KOMONCHAK, Joseph, "La réalisation de l'Eglise en un lieu", 1985. p.109. Komonchak, on the comment of a "copernican revolution" gives reference to E. LANNE, "L'Eglise locale et l'Eglise universelle : Actualité et portée du thème", in Irénikon 43 (1970), pp.481-511; and to L. BOUYER, L'Eglise de Dieu : Corps du Christ et Temple de l'Esprit, Paris : Cerf, 1970, pp.333-343.
19. Cf., LEGRAND, Hervé, "La réalisation de l'Eglise en un lieu", in Initiation à la pratique de la théologie Tome III : Dogmatique 2, edited by Bernard LAURET et François REFOULE, Paris : Cerf, 1983. p.154.
20. SULLIVAN, Francis, The Church We Believe In..., 1988. p.92.
21. The Documents of Vatican II, 1966. p.44.
22. PHILIPS, Gérard, L'Eglise et son mystère au deuxième Concile du Vatican. Histoire, texte et commentaire de la Constitution Lumen Gentium Tome I, Paris : Desclée, 1967. pp.307-308. Yves Congar's remark on Mgr. Philips' role in the redaction of Lumen gentium, may be worth noting. CONGAR, Yves, "En guise de conclusion", 1966, on page 1370 states that the role of the principal editor of this text, that is, Mgr. Philips, cannot be minimized.
23. Avery Dulles too notes this "new development", and remarks to what this is attributed. It is the deeper reflection on the oneness of the Eucharist, the role of the Bishop, etc., which led to this realization. We shall be quoting Hervé Legrand on this, a little later as he (Legrand) demonstrates this very pointedly. Cf., DULLES, Avery, The Catholicity of the Church, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1985. p.23: "A new development in Vatican II, in comparison with previous official Catholic teaching, is the doctrine that the whole Catholic Church is present and operative in the local church. This dynamic presence is variously attributed to the [p.24] bishop, the gospel, and especially to the Eucharist, as the sacrament of unity in which Christ himself is truly present with his grace (LG 26, CD 11)."
24. Cf., LEGRAND, Hervé, "La réalisation de l'Eglise en un lieu", 1983. p.152.
25. Cf., LEGRAND, Hervé, "Une éventuelle relance de l'uniatisme pourrait-elle s'appuyer sur Vatican II?", in Irénikon 66/1 (1993). p.18.
26. Cf., LEGRAND, Hervé, "Une éventuelle relance de l'uniatisme...", 1993. p.18. Reference is made to Pope John Paul II's Christifideles laici, n.19.

27. DE LUBAC, Henri, *Les églises particulières dans l'Eglise universelle*, Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1971. p.54. The translation from the French is of the present author.
28. Cf., LEGRAND, Hervé, "Une éventuelle relance de l'uniatisme...", 1993. p.19.
29. Cf., DENAUX, Adelbert, "L'Eglise comme communion", 1988. p.166.
30. Cf., Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II. Vol.I., General Editor : Herbert VORGRIMLER, Translated from the German by Lalit Adolphus, Kevin Smyth and Richard Strachan, New York : Herder and Herder; London : Burns and Oates; 1967. p.205.
31. The Documents of Vatican II, 1966. p.403.
32. DULLES, Avery, *The Catholicity of the Church*, 1985. p.21.
33. DULLES, Avery, *The Catholicity of the Church*, 1985. p.22.
34. Cf., DULLES, Avery, *The Catholicity of the Church*, 1985. p.22. "At various points in its documents, Vatican II acknowledged that the catholicity of the Church is in fact limited." And Dulles mentions the reasons that we too mention.
35. Cf., MARTELET, Gustave (SJ), *Les idées maîtresses de Vatican II. Initiation à l'esprit du Concile*, Paris : Cerf, 1985 (2nd Edition. 1st edition : Desclée de Brouwer, 1966). In the chapter titled "Catholicité de l'Eglise et union christologique à ses contraires" (pp.103-130), the theme that runs through it, is the idea of catholicity as the universality of salvation — to the unbeliever as to those of other religions, as for all Christians — marked by an openness that unites together what might seem contrary. p.130.

To the above can be added another article by Gustave Martelet: MARTELET, Gustave (SJ), "L'Eglise et le temporel. Vers une nouvelle conception", in *L'Eglise de Vatican II. Vatican II, textes et commentaires des décrets conciliaires. La Constitution dogmatique sur l'Eglise Tome II (Unam Sanctam 51b)*, Edited by Guilherme BARAUNA (OFM), Paris : Cerf, 1966. pp.517-539. Especially the section titled "Catholicité complète et récapitulation spirituelle du monde", pp.535-539.

36. Joseph Komonchak draws our attention to some very important points in this connection. Cf., KOMONCHAK, Joseph A., "Ministry and the Local Church", in *Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Annual Convention, June 10-13, 1981 Vol.36*, Cincinnati (Ohio) : The Catholic Theological Society of America, 1982, pp.56-82. For example, p.63: Komonchak is talking of the factors that led to development in Vatican II's themes. In this, Komonchak sees the contribution of modern critical history. "Applied to the Scriptures and to the monuments of tradition, historical studies revealed to what a degree the founding and decisive moments in the Church's history were also human decisions: *ius divinum* inescapably also *ius humanum*. With

this came the realization how greatly the Church's historical self-realization were bound to historical, social, and cultural conditions" ... And the responsibility of each generation ... for GS 55 says of the 'new humanism', "for which man is defined above all by his responsibility for his brothers and for history".

A few other allusions to important points, that Komonchak draws our attention to, e.g., p.64: Refers to Karl Rahner's *Selbstvollzug* (= 'historical subject', is one possible translation), which is central to his 'existential ecclesiology' [reference to K. Rahner, "Ekklesiologische Grundlegung", in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie: Praktische Theologie der Kirche in Ihrer Gegenwart* Vol.I, edited by F.X. ARNOLD and others, Freiburg : Herder, 1964, pp.117-118.] Reference also to Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, New York : Herder and Herder, 1972, pp.361-367, where Lonergan uses this term for his definition of the Church as 'a process of self-construction'. ... "The *Selbstvollzug* of the Church, then, is its coming-to-be, its becoming. The term clearly points to the event-character of the Church's existence, but it also includes the other notion of which I have already made use, that the Church is made to come to be and that it itself is the active historical subject of its coming-to-be. I am not convinced that the ideas carried by the term *Selbstvollzug* are yet adequately integrated into ecclesiology."

Also, Komonchak says (p.65) that using the terms 'People of God', 'the Body of Christ', 'Temple of the Spirit', and then saying the Church is also a "process of self-constitution", may sound odd. But these terms demand the latter expression. My personal comment in this connection is that these terms do not express mere unilateral action by God; the human element is contained in them.

37. Cf., DULLES, Avery, *The Catholicity of the Church*, 1985. pp.24-25.
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Continued from p. 36.

56. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "Laity and Creative Ministries", 174.
57. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Church of My Dreams", 417-418.
58. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Church of My Dreams", 418.
59. The expression, the Church of God, signifies a Church that is rooted in the experience of God. Thus she should open herself to the incomprehensible mystery of God. She does not trust merely in what she can foresee, plan, control and manipulate (cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 30).
60. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Crisis of Values in the Church", 68. The mission Jesus declared was to bring the fullness of life to every man (Jn.10:10).

The ‘good news’ he proclaimed was centered on human beings. He wanted to convince human beings that God loves them (cf. Lk. 12:32). The basic human response to God’s offer of love is not the return of love to God but what Jesus stressed in love for one’s fellow human beings (cf. Mt. 19:16-19). And Jesus meant the Church to be a contemporary realization of the values which he cherished and for which he gave his life (cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Jesus and Man”, 182-186, 188).

61. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Laity and Creative Ministries”, 175.
62. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Crisis of Values in the Catholic Church”, 73. In this context it’s worth quoting R. Latourelle, “the Church is loyal to the past but not its slave; it shows an equal and unyielding will to remain loyal to the unique message of the faith, and simultaneously to the realization of that message, in order to answer the questions of each age.” (R. LATOURELLE, “Church III. Motive of Credibility”, 157-158).
63. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “The Church of My Dreams”, 406; cf. Id., “Towards a New Ecclesiology in the Light of Vatican II”, 6.
64. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, Towards a New Humanity, 6.
65. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Laity and Creative Ministries”, 166.
66. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “The Church at the Service of the People of India”, 155.
67. Cf. J. RATZINGER, “Commentary on Chapter 1. of *Gadium et Spes*”, 118.
68. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Reflections of Christian Spirituality”, 217.
69. For instance Kunnumpuram quotes the THIRD SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Justice in the World, 6; EN 29; RM 58; Sollicito Rei Socialis, 47, 48. But not without an exception, as he highlights that CDF, Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation seems to betray signs of dichotomous thinking when it speaks of ‘of the unity and distinction between evangelization and human promotion’(64). If such a position is adopted in order to point out that the Church’s mission cannot be reduced to a merely this-worldly project of socio-economic and political liberation, then it is quite right to do so. But if it is meant to signify that in addition to her proper religious mission of promoting the supernatural salvation of individuals, the Church has also the task of working for human liberation, then it reveals a dichotomous and a non-holistic approach to the Church’s mission. (K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Freedom and Liberation. Reflection on a New Document from Rome”, 206).
70. See S. PIÉ NINOT, *Teologia Fundamentale*, 466ff.
71. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Towards a Theology of Ministries”, 28-29.
72. J. KAVUNKAL, “Vatican II and the Mission of the Church in India”, 44.

# **From a Sacrificing Society towards a Praying Community: A Movement within Hellenistic Judaism as a Model for Today's Christianity?**

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**Abstract:** Based on his personal experience in India, the author studies the transition from a “sacrificing society” to a “praying community” within the Hellenistic Judaism. Then he tries to apply it to today’s church. First the author shows how the ancient Israelites made and experienced the shift from a religion of Jerusalem centred cultic offerings to a worldwide spread Jewish community with common and private prayers as focus of their identity and solidarity. Then he raises the question if this process may function as a model for our future hope, faith and life.

In Jewish history, as opposed to the Jerusalem temple, the “synagogue universalized official Jewish ritual practice while democratizing worship by taking it out of priestly hands. Thus the way was opened for any Jew anywhere to participate and officiate in the recognized communal ritual. Moreover, the synagogue radically changed the content of this ritual, shifting the focus from sacrifice and libation to Torah study and prayer.” Prayer henceforth was seen as the appropriate divine service and not seldom was it called “offering of the lips”.

The author contends that today’s Christianity in principle finds similar preconditions and chances. Communal as well as individual prayers can have the power to build the inner centre of Christian existence, the gospel offers more than enough models of prayerful actions and attitudes in daily life which at the same time lead to compassion and solidarity.

**Keywords:** Hellenistic Judaism; Model of Church; Prayer; Praying community; Sacrifice; Synagogue; Temple; Temple cult.

“Pray for us”. Never will I forget these three words, which were the most expressed wishes by students as well as JDV<sup>1</sup> staff members and friends on the occasion of my farewell in February 2008. It was a farewell after sharing 25 days of hospitality, friendship and teaching in JDV and Papal Seminary with colleagues and students. But these 25 days were also determined by common fear and – much more – solidarity. In various parts of India Christians in those days were persecuted and killed by Hindu fundamentalists, holy masses were disturbed, churches got devastated. In Pune we felt absolutely safe and secure, but many students had friends and relatives in dangerous areas. Among the students and staff within and around the whole campus I experienced a wave of Christian – or better, Christian motivated human – sympathy and solidarity with the victims. The solidarity got its expression in material collections for the victims as well as in common prayers for them, but also for Christian communities and the ability for peace and respect between religions and peoples in general. I was deeply affected by this atmosphere, which brought the “power of prayer” and its necessity afresh into my mind.

In this article I shall show how the ancient Israelites made and experienced the shift from a religion of Jerusalem centred cultic offerings into a worldwide Jewish community with common and private prayers as focus of their identity and solidarity. By doing this I shall furthermore discuss if this process may function as a model for our future hope, faith and life.

## **1. Israelite’s Temple-Cult and its Early Prophetic Criticism**

Literally taken (see 2 Kings 22f.), at least with King Josiah, who made a cultic reform in Judah in the year 622 BCE, the temple for Jahweh in Jerusalem was the only legitimate place for Israelite and Judaic religious worship. At the same time this temple and the cultic action in it – and with this Jerusalem as the “holy city” – became the

most important element of Israelite identity. According to extra-biblical historical and archaeological sources this was only the case in postexilic Judah. Before the exile neither a monolatric Jahweh-alone-worship of the whole society nor Jahweh-worship only in Jerusalem was practised.<sup>2</sup> And even after the exile the cultic centralization on Jerusalem was only important for those living in the first Persian (539 – 333 BCE), then Hellenistic (333 – 63 BCE) province of Judah. For them the new restored temple of Jerusalem in fact was their social, economic, political, cultural and religious centre.

But also since exilic time quite a number of former Israelite or Judaic people already found a new life in other parts of the world, first of all in Babylonia, Egypt, Syria and Anatolia. For them Jerusalem and the temple could only be a symbolic and mental or even spiritual focus, but never the centre of orientation for their daily life. They had to find other ways to express their religious identity, which were firstly the written materials of Torah and Prophets and secondly new forms of common prayer. Rooms for studying and teaching the Torah were adapted, organized Jewish communities within the bigger cities were founded and times for common prayer were fixed. Around the end of the 4th century BCE then the first synagogues as houses of both study and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and common prayers, were built. The temple in Jerusalem therefore for the Diaspora-Jews – who in good time became the majority of Judaism – more and more lost its direct influence and importance.

On the other hand the enlarging gap between rich and poor population in Judah itself and the growing lack of social justice and solidarity among the Judeans more and more led prophetic circles to a serious critique of the temple cult and its authorities even in Jerusalem. The combination of political and religious power at the temple, which was shared by the priests and aristocrats, more and more indeed did cast a dark shadow also upon the cult at that same temple. The often “theocratic” called constitution of the Persian and Hellenistic province of Judah was questioned by the ordinary people who suffered from its oppressions and taxes. “What God expects are not burnt offerings, but social justice and solidarity. Not formal

rituals out of habit, but deeds out of faithful fear of God is real religious service as God himself likes it”, therefore was the main message of critics of these circumstances who first of all were found among the prophets. Some prominent examples are the following:

Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. (Isa 1:10-17; King James Version).

That these words are postexilic and presuppose the social circumstances of Second-Temple-Judah – even if they are included into an eight century prophecy – is common sense among the Old Testament scholars.<sup>4</sup> Already the address is more than clear and direct to the point: Those here in God’s view are awaiting the same fate as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, namely irrevocable and definitive destruction. Normally offerings lead to forgiveness of ones sins and to a renewal of the relationship with God (cf. Lev 4:1-5:26). But if offerings are brought to the temple only out of habit and if the participation at offering-celebrations is only used as a folkloristic act, this cult will and can have no positive effect. On the contrary, God even hates such a behaviour. It can only lead to an

irreparable situation. The prophet clearly states that well done offerings are not only a question of a ritually correct act, but first of all a matter of a fitting and appropriate inner attitude. Even prayers will not be heard by God, if they are spoken without real and true repentance. Earning God's grace is only possible, if one acts according to also the social laws of the Torah; offerings alone are too little. In the given context the expected action of the addresses is clear: Reversal from ignorance and selfishness towards active solidarity with the outlawed and deprived as well as the helpless and powerless. Widows, orphans and other oppressed people are named as the most important examples, but not as the only poor and deprived groups of that time. Solidarity is the first commitment of Jahweh's Torah and covenant.

Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not. (Isa 66:1-4; King James Version).

Westermann in his commentary rightly states that the prophet with this speech speaks against those – mostly priestly – early postexilic authorities, who sought all the salvation and grace for Juda in the rebuilt temple alone.<sup>6</sup> Isaiah in this understanding functions as an important corrective to texts like Hag 2:15-19, which<sup>7</sup> present the second temple as the beginning of the kingdom of God.<sup>7</sup> The time of salvation begins – thus the prophet's faithful certainty –

not first of all with the construction of a building, but much more with spontaneous care for the poor and needy combined with a longing for God's word. As the first element – solidarity and social engagement – is to be seen in parallel with Isa 1:10-17, so shows the latter – trembling at the Torah – a new pious alternative to the temple cult, namely studying and reciting the law, covenant and instructions of God. In the eyes of Jahweh those who practise solidarity and prayer are much more important for the kingdom of God than those who only think of the temple cult. The tradition of ritual offerings then is sharply criticised by even polemising against it through the prophet's words: With four comparisons of official offerings with idol behaviours the author of Tritoisaiah points out the meaninglessness and uselessness of temple offerings which are not rooted in hearing and obeying the will of God himself. If the temple cult is only practised as a usual rite, but not a sincere expression of an inner attitude which is also shown through acts of charity and solidarity, it is nothing more or better than idol worship. This is the message of Isaiah in the present passage and not – as Westermann thinks – a general judgement against idol worship. We have absolutely no archaeological or historical evidences of children- or dog-offerings in postexilic Judea. But we do have evidence of religious and political selfish temple authorities and Jerusalem aristocrats, who lived their luxurious life at the poor people's expense.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. (Jer 7:21-24; King James Version).

Jeremiah goes a step further than Isaiah by stating that God even did not command offerings. For him keeping the Torah is not only the precondition for a serious and effective cult, but it is the only God-given requirement for the maintenance of the covenant. Israel's primary duty is the fulfilment of the religious and social commandments long before or even *instead* of the temple-cult.<sup>9</sup> Offerings – which are practised by Second-Temple-Judah – are indeed allowed, but not required, whereas listening to the divine word and fulfilling deeds of charity and solidarity – which the prophet is missing in the Judean society – are indispensable preconditions for the validity of the so-called “covenant-formula”<sup>10</sup> and with this for the wellbeing of Israel as God’s people. Such radical kind of cult critique is found in a similar context also in Hos 6:4-7 and in Mic 6:6-8.<sup>11</sup>

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. (Am 5:21-24; King James Version).

“Justice and righteousness instead of offerings and cultic feasts” is the prophetic programme of Amos as well. The harshness in God’s words of refusal and rejection of Israel’s temple cult is indeed beating all the other criticizing prophetic texts, as Deissler – among others – rightly states.<sup>12</sup> Like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea and Micah, Amos also does not prohibit or demonize temple offerings in general, but he too relativizes their importance and often stressed monopoly of significance within the Judaic religion. However, in view of texts like Jer 7:21-24 or Am 5:21-24 Deissler’s statement, that temple cult and Torah build the two focusses of an ellipse,<sup>13</sup> in any case is too far-reaching. Whereas fear of God and doing justice and solidarity in the opinion of such prophetic circles are constitutive elements of Israelite religion, offerings are seen as good, but more voluntary. To say it strictly to the point: Prophets of the Second-Temple-Period in general were of the opinion that the Judaic religion

can survive without a temple-cult rather than without the Torah. The one and only constitutive feature of a common Jewish identity in their eyes lies in the keeping of the divine commandments revealed to Moses in Sinai, at which they obviously only refer to the theological and social, but not to the cultic parts of the Moses' Torah. Whatever that may be, in any case, they opened the way to a later non-cultic Jewish Jahweh-worship without a temple.

## 2. Qoheleth and His Pleading for Prayer

Qoheleth, a Jerusalem sage towards the end of the third century BCE, goes a clear step further. He offers a far-reaching concept of an appropriate religious service, which grounds in the hermeneutics "prayer instead of offerings". Whereas all the cited prophets did see a value in cultic offerings under certain conditions, Qoheleth denies any meaningfulness of temple offerings in general. His more spiritual model of an appropriate human-divine relationship is demonstrated in Qoh 4:17-5:2, the social and political background for his critique of sacrifices has its roots in exactly the same Second-Temple-Society as that of the above cited prophets. He expresses the situation of ordinary people during this time in very sharp words:

And furthermore I observed under the sun:  
the place of judgement – there is wickedness,  
and the place of justice – there is wickedness.  
I spoke in my heart:  
God will judge the righteous and the wicked,  
for a time for every matter and about all deeds is  
there. (Qoh 3:16f; translation by myself)

Even at the court of justice injustice against those of a lower social status prevails. Qoheleth with this statement points to grievances in the Jerusalemitic jurisdiction in general and to rough abuse committed by single judges in particular. "Bestechlichkeit der Richter ist hier genauso im Blick wie Willkürjustiz und die rechtliche Zementierung einer Politik, die die weitere Ausbeutung einer armen

Mehrheit durch eine sich auf brutale Weise bereichernde Minderheit forciert.”<sup>14</sup> Facing this situation Qoheleth sees a chance for final justice only through an act by God, of which he is convinced. “Here the ‘judging’ of God should be understood in the sense that God brings justice to the ‘righteous’ and condemns the ‘evildoer’. ... Thus miscarriages in the administration of justice (v. 16) are eliminated, and a ‘just order’ is reestablished.”<sup>15</sup> When and how God will perform this act is not further clarified, but it is in any case a divine act which brings a radical changing of the fates. As such this text is both hope for the poor and oppressed as well as a serious warning for the rich and evildoing judges and temple officials.

Another text pointing in the same direction is the following:

And I turned back,

and I considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun.

And behold:

Tears of the oppressions – but there is no comforter for them.

And from the hand of those, who oppress them, violence goes out,

but there is no comforter for them.

And I praised the dead, who are already dead,

more than the living, who are still alive.

But better than both of them is he, who has not yet come into existence,

since he has not yet seen the evilness,

which is done under the sun.

(Qoh 4:1-3; translation by myself)

As in the above text, here as well social circumstances come into view, which can be experienced in daily life. The expression “all the oppressions” does not only point to the big number, but even more so to the variety of the visible evilness.<sup>16</sup> Corruption, overreaching and even violence became presentable ways of behaviour among the upper-class members at the poor people’s expense. Qohelet’s

criticism of such circumstances again is very harsh. “The repeated indication that no one intervenes against oppression (‘and they have no one who comforts them’) shows ... that not only the ‘oppressors’ are responsible for unjust conditions, but also all the members of the community who could render help but do not do so ... . For everyone who is in a position to comfort ..., which if necessary and possible includes real assistance, is obligated to act.”<sup>17</sup> From these ensuing sentences Qoholeth sometimes has been interpreted as having a negative view of the world and human life in it in general.<sup>18</sup> But they should be understood within their very context. The expressed option for the already dead and not yet born over the people present and alive is not meant as a statement of general value, but more according to an existence under the above mentioned social and economic conditions. Such an understanding also the end of the pericope indicates, at which those, who have not yet come into existence are praised, because they have not yet seen such evil. The character of these verses is ironical and appellant at the same time. “Wenn jemand, der den Wert des diesseitigen menschlichen Lebens sonst so betont wie der Koheletautor, plötzlich solche Worte finden kann, dann müssen diese die Leserinnen und Leser aufrütteln, ja Betroffenheit und entsprechende Reaktionen bzw. Verhaltensänderungen hervorrufen. ... Wenn Gewalttätigkeit der einen und unbeteiligte Gefühlskälte der anderen Menschen zur Normalität werden, dann pervertiert der Mensch selbst den Wert und Sinn des Lebens.”<sup>19</sup> Thus understood, these words by no means are meant as a manifest of resignation, but rather as a call for conversion to fellowship, compassion and solidarity.

That such a reversal must go hand in hand with an appropriate divine service Qoheleth is deeply convinced of. The corresponding recommendation he offers in Qoh 4:17-5:2.

Watch your foot when you go to the house of the God,  
but draw near in order to hear.  
A gift of fools is a sacrificial offering,  
but they do not understand that they are doing something bad.  
Do not be rash with your mouth,

and let your heart not be too hasty to bring a word before the God.

For the God is in heaven and you are on earth,  
therefore do not make many words.

For the dream comes with a multitude of toil,  
and the voice of a fool with a multitude of words.

(Qoh 4:17-5:2; translation by myself)

Qoheleth starts his advice with a double call to be careful when entering the house of God on the one hand, but nevertheless to draw near to the house of God on the other hand. What at first glance seems to be somehow contradictory, is absolutely intelligible if seen and understood in its full context. That people have to and do go to the temple<sup>20</sup> Qoheleth takes for granted. According to Krüger this verse “advises readers to be careful when they go to the Temple”<sup>21</sup>, but they also “warn against thoughtless rushing to the temple”<sup>22</sup>. Whenever one enters the temple he should absolutely be aware of what he is doing and why he is doing it. Visiting the temple requires careful consideration and a clear goal. How exactly people are supposed to conduct themselves there is clarified and substantiated in the next verse. “First, they are to go into the temple ‘in order to hear’. ... This presupposes that in the temple there is something to hear. ... In any case, in relation to the ‘hearing’, the ‘sacrifice’ is of less value – if it is not rejected entirely.”<sup>23</sup> Maybe that this “hearing” also refers to hymns and readings from sacred writings, as Krüger states,<sup>24</sup> but the next verse makes it quite plain that here first of all an inner hearing of God’s voice is in view. Such a kind of hearing of what God has to say is then brought into sharp contrast to – mostly thoughtless – cultic slaughtering. “Nicht die äußere Kulthandlung, sondern die innere Bereitschaft, auf Gott und sein Wort zu hören, ist also für den Koheletautor beim Besuch des Gotteshauses entscheidend.”<sup>25</sup> With words harsher than any prophet’s critique Qoheleth concludes that temple offerings are foolish actions. The fools bring goods for burnt offerings to the temple, whereas the wise people draw near to hear God’s real will. It is noteworthy here that in the context of wisdom scriptures like Qoheleth the term “fool” almost always includes meanings like “evil-doer” and “unjust”,

“wise” correspondingly “God-fearer” and “just”. Nevertheless the remark that the fools do not understand that they are doing something bad “expresses ... a certain forbearance toward ‘the fools’: they do not know any better.”<sup>26</sup> For the understanding, however, Qoheleth recommends a reasonable temple visit, which means hearing of God’s voice as the first goal.

This viewpoint he again underlines with his second direction, not to make too many words. With this Qoheleth offers a somehow revolutionary concept of appropriate and meaningful prayer. Praying is rather listening than speaking, is more being addressed by God than addressing him. In this advice “the traditional wisdom ideal of restraint in speech in the interpersonal realm is carried over into the relationship with God: also in dialogue with God, the ‘fool’ betrays himself by making many words.”<sup>27</sup> The reason given for such kind of caution in direct contact with God is the fact that God dwells in heaven, whereas the humans live on earth. Against many commentators the thus expressed distance in no means points to an image of God as a distant despot who has no contact with human beings,<sup>28</sup> but it merely reminds those who pray appropriate respect in relation with God. “Gott ist eben jemand, zu dem man nicht irgend etwas sagen soll, sondern gut reflektierte und ihm angemessene Worte. ... In diesem Sinne wäre es auch gar nicht notwendig beim Gebet zu eilen, da Gott einerseits zeitlich nicht eingeschränkt ist, und andererseits dem Gebet ... ja auch nicht ... die Funktion zukommen kann, Gott sozusagen zu einem bestimmten Tun zu zwingen. Vielmehr ist es eine Möglichkeit des endlichen Menschen, sich mit dem unendlichen Gott in angemessener Weise in Verbindung zu setzen.”<sup>29</sup> And finally there is no need to explain to God every detail, since he already knows about our sorrows, troubles, wishes and needs. Therefore hearing his answers is much more important than making too many words.

The concluding sentence seems to be “an already coined proverb that regards dreams critically ... in addition to wordy speech”<sup>30</sup>.

All things considered Qoheleth offers a new way of a God-pleasing divine service. Instead of cultic offerings he pleads for prayer and praying he defines as first of all hearing the voice of God. This concept agrees with the temple critique expressed by many

prophets and with their cry for more social justice as well, but it furthermore also shows an alternative kind of keeping the contact to God alive. Those who are willing and able to listen to God with honesty and open mind will also feel compassion and solidarity with the oppressed and they will oppose public injustice and violence.

### **3. The Final Shift in Jewish Worship after 70 CE**

Prophetic cult critique and the development of new concepts for an alternative divine service within the schools of Judean sages as Qoheleth on the one hand and the above mentioned already established synagogue traditions in the diaspora on the other hand helped the Jewish people to survive the crisis caused by the final destruction of the temple of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE. In contrary, out of the former Israelite cult-society arose the new Jewish prayer-community. Ways to keep the common identity without the temple cult in Jerusalem were already found. A part of some prophets' visions seemed to have come true: The Torah with its commandments and rules for a good life became the one and only centre of Jewish life, identity and religion. In Judah itself the few already existing synagogues got the same functions as those of the diaspora already had and new synagogues spread out. The rabbinic schools for Torah-study and interpretation gained much more importance and influence. Divine services of prayer finally took the place of the former temple cult and the Jewish religion in general became a matter of prayer, scripture and inner solidarity.

The latter is impressively demonstrated in Mishnah Abot (mAb) I.2: "Shimon the just used to say: On three pillars lies the world: on the Torah, on the cult and on deeds of charity" (mAb I.2; translation by myself). This falls absolutely into line with Qoheleth. Torah functions as the guideline for the whole life, prayer<sup>31</sup> is the appropriate way of keeping direct contact with God and deeds of charity and solidarity are the practical result of the other two pillars. Charity / solidarity here is not only understood as a help for some needy people, but as a real holistic mentality.<sup>32</sup> A few verses later Mishnah Abot again reminds us of Qoheleth: "Shammai said: Schedule fixed times for your Torah; speak less, but do much; welcome all the people with a friendly face" (mAb I.15; translation by myself). "Your Torah"

here means the daily portion of studying the Torah. Study of the Torah was understood “as the on-going revelation of God’s word”<sup>33</sup>, the favoured time for the daily study was the early morning upon awakening. “Speak less” refers to the same behaviour in everyday life as Qohelet’s advice concerning the prayer. Wise people do not make many words, but they act in a good and well reflected manner.<sup>34</sup> Concerning prayer Mishnah Abot says: “Rabbi Shimon said: Be careful while reciting the *Shema* and when you pray. When you pray, do not make your prayer to a fixed matter of form, but to a sincere beseeching before God” (mAb II.13; translation by myself). Whereas the carefulness by reciting the *Shema* consists in keeping the fixed time<sup>35</sup> and – since most people knew it by heart – the correct wording, with reference to prayer in general it refers to the inner attitude of the praying person and to the content. For the Rabbis it was always of great importance that prayers – even official common ones – do contain free elements for actual, personal and spontaneous words of the praying individuals.<sup>36</sup> This included of course also the possibility of hearing what God wants to say, as Qoheleth already demanded. Thus understood, prayers indeed were able to fulfil the former communicative task of temple offerings much better and Arndt’s insight that Israelite cult-institutions enable communication between humans and God<sup>37</sup> does first of all fit the synagogues. Till today both private and common worship for a pious Jewish way of life is important; Hoffman describes this matter of fact in orthodox tradition: “The primary expression of traditional worship is corporate. The Jew may pray privately any time, any place, and with any words, gestures or songs. But the Jew must pray with the community three times daily.”<sup>38</sup> The community prayer keeps the fellowship and solidarity among the praying Jewish community alive and symbolizes at the same time also the bonds tying together the Jews all over the world. But along with this – to say it again – also all the common prayers offer space for individual thoughts and words.

#### 4. Conclusion

“The synagogue universalized official Jewish ritual practice while democratizing worship by taking it out of priestly hands.”<sup>39</sup> Thus the way was opened for any Jew anywhere to participate and officiate

in the recognized communal ritual. Moreover, the synagogue radically changed the content of this ritual, shifting the focus from sacrifice and libation to Torah study and prayer.”<sup>40</sup> Prayer henceforth was seen as the appropriate divine service and not seldom it was called “offering of the lips”. God’s on-going revelation in this shifted Jewish tradition is noticed by studying the written and the oral Torah. Moreover the Torah constitutes a sentiment for the common identity of the Jews all over the world, which leads to solidarity among the whole Jewish community. Thus understood the corporate character of divine service is far-reaching; praying in such a context always – whether the prayer be individual or communal – means keeping contact with God in (mental) communion with all the other members of the whole Jewish family. Praying, therefore, also means praying for and with the others, which causes a deep-rooted sense of solidarity with them and closes the circle “Israel – synagogue – Torah – prayer – solidarity – Israel.” It is in such a focus that God himself is situated. This kind of common identity is working till today and the worldwide solidarity among the Jewish people is still unparalleled.

Today’s Christianity in principle finds similar preconditions and chances. Communal as well as individual prayers can have the power to build the inner centre of Christian existence, the gospel offers more than enough models of prayerful attitudes and actions in daily life which at the same time lead to compassion and solidarity. And last but not least is the salvation caused by Jesus Christ’s resurrection more than predestined for functioning as the crucial point of a common Christian identity of all Christians. The Christian family of course is much bigger than the Jewish and at the same time more divided into various denominations and groups. As a consequence of this, longing for power and influence not seldom is the main motive of the leaders’ actions, especially in those regions, where Christians are the religious majority. Within the catholic tradition during the last decades numerous – but still small – reactionist groups moreover turned back to a strong observation of pure ritual and cultic forms in their liturgy, which did not cause a sense of fellowship and solidarity, but separation and polarization. At the same time many people leave the church’s community by declaring religion as a private matter. All these developments – which mostly happen in regions of Christian majority – call the situation of Second-Temple-Judah into

remembrance. There are problems which challenge our today's Christian societies. For this process the shift within Hellenistic Judaism can again be a model for us. What we need is a reorientation by the achievements and benefits of those prophetic circles and theologians. The necessary theological, salvation-historical and spiritual preconditions we do have. And in addition we do have something more: There are Christian communities who already (or still?) are aware of the inseparability of "salvation – Jesus Christ – gospel – church – prayer – solidarity – salvation", a circle in whose focus God himself is situated as well and for ever. Such communities mostly are either found as small circles within Christian majority societies (private praying-groups etc.; cf. the Israelite and Judaic prophets) or in regions where Christians are in a minority situation. An impressive example for the latter I found at JDV campus in Pune.

As I already have stated at the beginning of this article, the Christian motivated solidarity in combination with a deep-rooted trust in the power of prayer which I have experienced there especially in February 2008, I will never forget. Fr. Kurien Kunnumpuram, to whom I dedicate this essay with gratitude and pleasure, is one of the most outstanding persons within this campus. It was he who discussed about security-strategies with the superiors of the houses in and around the campus, it was he who could describe the backgrounds of what happened in clear and appropriate words, it was him who nevertheless trusted in the power of prayer and it is he through whose life and work the unity of Christian studies, prayer and solidarity always becomes visible. I am proud of the privilege of knowing him and counting him among my fellows and friends. And of course, I do pray for and with him, the entire staff and students of JDV and all the people worldwide who trust in the common power of prayer and human solidarity. I deeply believe that this can and will be our future.

## Notes

1. Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV): Pontifical Institute of Religion and Philosophy, Pune, India, is where Professor Kurien Kunnumpuram has spent his whole academic life. It caters to the philosophical and theological formation of the Church leaders in India. Professor Andreas Vonach, the author

of this article, has been a regular visiting faculty and he begins this article on a personal note [Editors' note].

2. See e.g. KEEL / UEHLINGER, 1992, 426-429.
3. The reproach with which some people confronted Nehemia may shed some light on the social situation of Second-Temple-Jerusalem: "And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards." (Neh 5:1-5; King James Version).
4. Cf. KILIAN, 1986, 23f.
5. "Festfrömmigkeit und rite vollzogene Opfer helfen nicht weiter. Jahwes Forderungen müssen beachtet, die sich aus dem Bund ergebenden Verpflichtungen müssen eingehalten werden." (Ibid., 25.).
6. See WESTERMANN, 1976, 328.
7. Hag 2:15-19: And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD: Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat [=wine-press] for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD. Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD'S temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you. (King James Version).
8. WESTERMANN, 1976, 328: "Es geht dann in V.3 um etwas ganz anderes, die Polemik gegen einen Synkretismus: die legitimen Jahweopfer ... werden eingehalten, daneben aber gehen verabscheungswürdige Afterkulte einher. Es werden Menschenopfer dargebracht ... und Hundeopfer ...".
9. SCHMIDT, 2008, 185: "Wenn Opfer nicht von vornherein zum Glauben gehören, können sie für ihn keine grundlegende Bedeutung haben. Auf diese Weise wird die prophetische Kritik mit anderer, geschichtlicher Begründung durchgehalten oder weitergeführt."

10. The 19th century German exegesis coined the term “Bundesformel” for the common phrase “I will be your God and you shall be my people”.
11. Hos 6:4-7; King James Version: O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth. For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.  
– Mic 6:6-8; King James Version: Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.
12. Cf. DEISSLER, 1985, 118.
13. Ibid.: “Es geht hier schlicht um den Stellenwert des Kultes in der Offenbarungsreligion. Anders als in den ‘Religionen der Völker’ wird er durch die Propheten aus dem alles bestimmenden Zentrum gerückt. In einem Bild gesprochen: Er ist nicht die Mitte eines Kreises, sondern nur einer der beiden Brennpunkte einer Ellipse, deren anderer (ebenso konstitutiver) Brennpunkt ‘Recht und Gerechtigkeit’ ist. Das mitmenschliche Ethos gehört als Mit-Konstituente (und nicht nur als Konsekutivum) zur Jahwereligion.”
14. VONACH, 1998, 231f.
15. KRÜGER, 2004, 91.
16. Cf. VONACH, 1998, 236.
17. KRÜGER, 2004, 95.
18. Cf. CRENSHAW, 1987, 106f.; Seow, 1997, 187.
19. VONACH, 1998, 237.
20. Since in third century BCE synagogues with established religious services were of course in use in many diaspora communities already, but not yet in Judah itself (cf. Stemberger, 2007, 257; Hoffman, 1994, 247), here the term “house of the God” without any doubt refers to the temple.
21. KRÜGER, 2004, 107, citing WHYBRAY.
22. Ibid.; the positive statement is to be held with Crenshaw, 1987, 116.
23. Ibid.
24. Cf. ibid.
25. VONACH, 1999, 46.

26. KRÜGER, 2004, 107.
27. Ibid., 108.
28. Cf. MICHEL. 1989, 286; LAUHA, 1978, 99; e.g. Already 1 Kg 8:27ff. clearly states that God hears from heaven prayers spoken in the temple.
29. VONACH, 1999, 47.
30. KRÜGER, 2004, 108.
31. The Hebrew word abodah literally means cult, but after 70 CE it was also in use for “prayer” (see Marti / Beer, 1927, 7f.).
32. “... die Liebestätigkeit, welche ein viel breiteres Feld umspannt als die Gerechtigkeit, die sich im Almosengeben erschöpft ..., da sie nicht nur wie diese dem Armen, sondern auch dem Reichen (z. B. in Krankenbesuch, Gastfreundschaft ..., Tröstung im Leide ...), nicht nur dem Lebenden, sondern auch dem Toten (Bestattung bes. fremder Toten ...) zugute kam, und nicht nur mit Geld und anderen Gaben abgemacht werden konnte, sondern auch persönliche Dienstleistung erforderte” (ibid., 8).
33. HOFFMAN, 1994, 252.
34. “Nicht auf die Worte, sondern auf die Taten kommt es an, ... nicht das Reden, sondern das Leben entscheidet” (ibid., 29).
35. The so called Shema is a prayer composed of Deu 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num 15:37-41, which from rabbinical times on was seen as the jewish profession of faith. Therefore the recitation of it twice a day (morning and evening) was – and still is in orthodox Judaism – required from every pious Jew.
36. For more details see STEMBERGER, 2007, 264f.
37. ARNDT, 2007, 194: “Die israelitischen Kulteinrichtungen ermöglichen Kommunikation zwischen der Welt und ihrem Schöpfer: Sie ermöglichen das Gebet und die Erkenntnis dessen, der Gebete hört. Sie dämpfen und kanalisieren Seine Stimme, so dass diese den Menschen zum Leben dient und nicht zum Tode.”
38. HOFFMAN, 2004, 255.
39. When taking this as a model for today’s Christianity it should not be understood as a critique of priesthood; it only serves the insight that the more democratic and the less centralistic a believing community is organized, the more moral values like solidarity and fellowship are practiced voluntary. It is not a question of priests or not, it is a question of the form of organization and the possibilities of participation.
40. LEVINE, 1987, 7.

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## **Towards an Enlightened and Enriched Humanity: Rays of Hope from Critical Interaction with the Contemporary Science**

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**Abstract:** Science is, no doubt, a powerful force that cannot be just ignored, while considering human and Christian communities. It is indeed a great asset, not only for making our lives comfortable, but quenching the inborn curiosity to know better and to achieve more. However, science, being aware of its own limits and limitations, is cautious in claiming to be absolute; being led by the spirit of interdisciplinary approaches it realizes more and more the need not to be autocratic; and above all, being a social enterprise, which is by humans and for humans, science realizes its moral and ethical responsibilities and this last realization, in turn, emphasizes the serious commitments of humans towards safeguarding nature, as humans are supposed to be the custodians of nature, rather than exploiters of it.

In the first section, the author focuses on one of the important areas of the contemporary science that pose challenge to the human identity and dignity: Artificial Intelligence. After a brief exposition of this enterprise, he argues that though this is quite challenging to the understanding of the human person. Its shortcomings and inabilities seem to suggest that science cannot handle these issues alone, but need to collaborate with other disciplines. Then, in the second section, the young scholar discusses the limits and limitations of science, showing the need and the urgency of the interdisciplinary approaches to fathom reality and to enhance humanity. This learning experience has made science rather realistic in its

claims and approaches. In the Concluding Remarks, after briefly explaining what he means by 'hope', 'enrichment' and 'enlightenment', our scholar shows how the deeper awareness of the intrinsically complex issues of the mind-body relationship and the limits of science make science more realistic in its claims, more cautious in its investigations and, above all, more humble in its self-image. This, according to the author, enables us to see the rays of hope for the betterment of humanity and the Cosmos.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Enriched humanity, Hope, Limits and Limitations of Science.

Many people are really alarmed that the advancement of science and technology is threatening to damage the dignity of humans. The sacredness and the significance of life in general, and human life in particular, are at a serious stake. Endorsing this view strongly, Daniel Dennett shows how the stem cell research, various reproductive technologies, organ transplants and so on do pose a serious threat to human dignity. While arguing for safeguarding the dignity of human person, he points out that we generally treat the corpse of a dead person with great care and respect, affirming the dignity of the person. Though we know that it is just a matter that cannot feel or think anymore, still we do take care to give a decent farewell. Similarly those who are in coma, though we are not fully sure whether their sense are at work, still we like to give the dignity that he or she deserves.<sup>1</sup> Similarly Paul Feyerabend insists that the time has come for us to liberate human society from the clutches of science, as it was once needed to liberate it from the domination of religious forces.<sup>2</sup> The growth of science in the last 300 years has surpassed what has been achieved in the past 3000 years. Similarly, what has been achieved in the past 300 years has been conquered by the developments of the past 30 years. Science has been so far busy with external things, about having more comfortable and sophisticated things. Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it has reached out to the inner realm of humans, touching upon the core issue of the identity of being human and the nature of self. 20<sup>th</sup> century was said to be a *century of Physics*, while 21<sup>st</sup> century is said to be a *century of Biology*. All such developments are, unfortunately, not always

towards the enhancement of human dignity or the enrichment of the environment either.

In this paper I wish to show that in spite of challenges to human values, say, due to economic globalization, and threats to the very human existence, perhaps, due to the thoughtless and ruthless damage done to the environment, and a callous attitude towards genetic engineering and manipulations, still there seems to be some rays of hope from the world of contemporary science. More and more researches in various fields of science tell us in strong terms that we cannot be the masters of the destiny of life in the universe. No matter how far we advance in the world of science, mysteries remain; when one is solved, perhaps, many others pop up. More and more intricacies are revealed in the micro and macro worlds. The more we come to know about the world the more we realize that a lot more remains to be known and understood.

In the first section, I wish to focus on one of the important areas of the contemporary science that poses a challenge to the human identity and dignity: Artificial Intelligence. After a brief exposition of this enterprise, I argue that, though this is quite challenging to the understanding of the human person, its shortcomings and inabilities seem to suggest that science alone cannot handle these issues, alone, but need to collaborate with other disciplines. Then I proceed, in the second section, to discuss some of limits and limitations of science, showing the need and the urgency of the interdisciplinary approaches to fathom reality and to enhance humanity. This learning experience has made science rather practical in its claims and approaches. In the Concluding Remarks, after briefly explaining what I mean by 'hope', 'enrichment' and 'enlightenment', I shall try to show how a deeper awareness of the intrinsically complex issues of the mind-body relationship and the limits of science make science more reasonable in its claims, more cautious in its investigations and, above all, more humble in its self-image. This, in turn, I believe, enables us to see the rays of hope for the betterment of humanity and the cosmos.

## **1. The World of the Artificial Intelligence and a Critical Appraisal**

Since 1950s many investigations have been undertaken in the area of Artificial Intelligence (AI), which aim at constructing machines that can think and decide, imitating human ability. Several disciplines, like Computer Science, Cognitive Science, Neurology, and Psychiatry, work together in the area of AI. They undertake the challenge of constructing machines that would perform activities, which we would consider intelligent. Such machines, or highly sophisticated computer programmes, are expected to imitate human thoughts and understand speech, to respond in an ‘intelligent’ manner and this implies that the machines will study the situations at hand and decide upon the course of action to augment the chances for success. Though the interests in such machines have been fascinating human minds for long time, in the recent decades such interests have grown substantially due to the breakthroughs in the various fields of neurology and biotechnology.

Alan Turing’s article, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” (1950), showed the possibility of making machines that can analyze a set of data to produce predictable output, which was, in a way, the forerunner of modern computers. John McCarthy coined the term, *Artificial Intelligence*, in 1956, at a conference at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, USA, in which great stalwarts, like Allen Newell, Marvin Minsky and Herbert Simon, participated. All these pioneers of AI continued to contribute to the growth and the development of the field. The contemporary medical world witnesses explosions of knowledge in the fields of neurosciences in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The idea of making a thinking machine, which can outshine even human thinking, has been fulfilled to a large extent in 1996, when an illustrious chess player was greatly challenged by a machine (Garry Kasparov and Deep Blue). Further, researchers in the USA explore the possibility of constructing an artificial brain, known as bionic brain. They are into developing micro-chips to replace brain cells; and these chips, they claim, would understand the language of the brain and in a way, they talk to the neurons in the brain. The fundamental claim of the researches in the realm of Artificial Intelligence is that brain is a super-sophisticated and super-

programmed computer, where brain is seen as the hardware and the mind as the software. For, computer can be made to react to events on the basis of the knowledge available now; computers seem to learn from experience and they can even acquire a new language. Therefore, according to many experts, it is no more *whether* it is possible, but only *when and where* ‘the thinking machine’ is going to be manufactured.

The West is, by and large, used to treat mind and consciousness in naturalistic terms, to see them as purely physical products. Cognitive science treats human mind as a computer (computational view of mind). Another version sees the mental states as function within neural networks (connectionist model). The assumption that the human intelligence can be fully described in physical terms is not acceptable to everyone in the circles of philosophy. For human intelligence involves a spectrum of human activities, like reasoning, arguing, knowing, planning, learning (even learning how to learn and learning from mistakes), remembering, intentionally hiding something, telling lies, controlling one’s emotions and so on. All these contribute to the

very understanding of our human existence. Thus AI does not seem to be purely physical and neurological issue. Some of the philosophical issues and basic challenges involved in the whole approach are discussed below.

## A Critical Appraisal

As it is the case with any new breakthroughs, AI also has great admirers who believe that a thinking machine is really possible, if not today, tomorrow. In spite of all such tall claims and dear hopes, one does not see, in computers, the capacity to feel or to express emotions. They don’t exhibit any sign of consciousness, much less self-consciousness. Computers operate on the pre-programmed data, while mind operates with the meaning and meaningfulness of the events. Brain is complex to the core. It is more intricate and sophisticated than the whole structure of the stars and galaxies in the universe. Anne Harrington affirms the idea that our studies in neuroscience reveal the very complicated and strange nature of the human brain: “...Our exploratory curiosities, our aesthetic

orientations toward order and pattern, our primal needs to connect to other human beings, our penchant for violence, even cruelty, our imaginative capacity to discover meaning and purpose in the ambiguous realities of our existence".<sup>3</sup> AI assumes that by changing quantitative aspects, it expects to change the qualitative aspects. Science is not able to explain this factor of coordination. Spiritual experiences and mystical dimensions seem to be far beyond what has been explained by science. Belief in the freewill is so important that one cannot visualize a meaningful life, at the personal level, or at the social level, without the dimension of the free will. That is why Paul Davies has shown that it may be a 'fiction worth maintaining'.<sup>4</sup>

Staunch critics like John Searle, Chalmers, McGinn and many others have astutely argued that this kind of approach to mind cannot explain the first-person experience, as the mental states are seen from the third-person point of view. Identifying different areas of the brain for different activities is really helpful for therapeutic purposes. But this cannot explain the unified and coordinated functions of the brain.

## Searle's "Chinese Room Argument"

It is claimed that if computer programmes can defeat human chess players and if they can converse in at least some natural languages, then they should be taken to be intelligent. But John Searle strongly denied the possibility of artificial intelligence in any real sense. He devised 'The Chinese Room Argument', to argue against the possibility of true artificial intelligence:

Imagine a native English speaker who knows no Chinese locked in a room full of boxes of Chinese symbols (a data base) together with a book of instructions for manipulating the symbols (the program). Imagine that people outside the room send in other Chinese symbols which, unknown to the person in the room, are questions in Chinese (the input). And imagine that by following the instructions in the program the man in the room is able to pass out Chinese symbols which are correct answers to the ques-

tions (the output). The program enables the person in the room to pass the Turing Test for understanding Chinese but he does not understand a word of Chinese.<sup>5</sup>

The argument shows that while suitably programmed computers may appear to converse in natural language, they are not capable of understanding language, even in principle. Searle's argument is a direct challenge to the proponents of Artificial Intelligence, and it also has broad implications for functionalist and computational theories of meaning and mind. According to *the Computational Theory of Mind*, minds are just information-processing systems. Further, Searle argues that computers can understand only the syntax (symbols) and not the semantics (the meaning of those symbols). Computers can respond to the strings of the symbols, while human minds have mental contents. Formal symbols cannot have meaning, nor interpretation or semantics by themselves, but they need someone from outside to give meaning to them. Humans respond to signs on the basis of the association of meanings with the words, not because of their mere physical appearance. While computers just decode the signs and produce some output, humans *understand* them; syntax alone is not enough for semantics, nor does it constitute semantics. Searle presents a three-premise argument that because syntax is not sufficient for semantics, computer programs cannot produce minds : a) Programs are purely formal (syntactic); b) Human minds have mental contents (semantics); c) Syntax by itself is neither constitutive of nor sufficient for semantic content; and d) Therefore, programs by themselves are not constitutive of nor sufficient for minds.

## Chalmer's "Hard Problem" of Consciousness

According to David Chalmers<sup>7</sup> the highly complicated problem for science is the mental phenomena, and within that, to explain consciousness is the most baffling challenge for the scientists. First of all, there is no unambiguous definition or understanding of the term 'consciousness'. Scientists and philosophers vary widely in their understanding, and it is not uncommon to label it as 'mystery' due to the queer intangibility and ineffability of the subjective experience of consciousness. While dealing with the intricacies of

the issue of consciousness he categorizes two sets of problems: the *easy* problem and the *hard* problem; the former includes certain phenomena of consciousness, which can be explained in terms of computational or neural mechanisms, the standard methods of cognitive science. For instance, the ability to discriminate, categorize and react to environmental stimuli, the integration of information by a cognitive system, the reportability of mental states, the ability of a system to access its own internal states, the focus of attention, the deliberate control of behaviour and the difference between wakefulness and sleep - all these issues may be satisfactorily handled by nuerophysiological approaches.

However, our visual or auditory experiences, various emotions, and bodily sensations of pain or orgasms and so on, are obviously mental states of experience, but cannot be fully explained in physical terms. One may mechanically explain how the sound or light is transmitted and processed by the brain, but it is not easy to explain why and how we *have* that experience, say, of vision or sound. There seems to be no explanation *as to why should physical processing gives rise to a rich inner life in us*. And this is the *hard* problem of consciousness. Of course, there are experts<sup>8</sup> who argue that once we come to know what really consciousness is, then this hard problem will no more be hard. Instead of conscious experience, terms like "phenomenal consciousness" and "qualia" or simply "experience". Even lighter terms like 'awareness' (by Newell<sup>9</sup>) is also used. The Vedantic theory of mind, as explicated by Sri Aurobindo, envisages non-intentional objectless mental content which is pure and self-revealing. In spite of human embodiment, mind and consciousness are seen as independent of the body. This trend can be an alternative to the Western philosophy of mind.

## **Artificial Intelligence – A Part of the Wider Mind-Body Problem**

Artificial Intelligence is seen as a part of the much wider problem of mind-body relationship, which occupies the central stage, not only in the realm of Philosophy of Mind, but also in the realm of cognitive sciences. Today, the functions of the brain are mapped with various advanced technology of neuroimaging, like computed tomography

(CT), positron emission tomography (PET), single photon emission computed tomography (SPCET), Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). With all these advancements now science has begun to explore into what mind/consciousness is, which has traditionally been kept out of the bounds of science.

In the world of Philosophy and Cognitive Sciences, at present, there are various approaches and theories regarding the issue of mind-body relationship. In general terms, they can be grouped under three major categories: *Metaphysical Dualism Model*, *Reductive Materialism Model* and *Emergentist Model*.

## Metaphysical Dualism Model

This view argues for strict compartmentalization between body and mind (soul). Both are ontologically real and existing independently. Empirical sciences have nothing to do with the latter, as these sciences simply lie beyond the scope and purview of materiality. The dualists insist that “soul or mind... is forever inaccessible to natural scientific study, even in principle, and that is the basis for and possessor of all mental events: ideas, wishes, emotions, intentions, and the like”.<sup>10</sup>

There are several problems with this dualistic approach. One of the most serious ones is that if mind and body are completely separate, having nothing in common, how is it that the material body makes an impact on the mind/soul, which is purely immaterial. Karl Popper, himself a dualist, wonders: “What we want is to understand how such non-physical things as purposes, deliberations, plans, decisions, theories, tensions and values can play a part in bringing about physical changes in the physical world”.<sup>11</sup> Similarly if both are totally dichotomized, how on earth can one explain the causal impact of our mental / conscious decisions upon our physical nature, the problem known as, ‘mental causation’? Jerry Fodor wonders: “If the mind is non-physical, it has no position in physical space... How can the non-physical give rise to the physical without violating the laws of the conservation of mass, of energy and of momentum?”<sup>12</sup>

## **Reductive Materialism Model**

Only matter is real and there is no other phenomenon called mind /spirit/soul found in us. They try to explain all non-material phenomena, thoughts, memory, consciousness and so on only in terms of materiality of the neurons in the brain. Therefore, “to understand why regions of the brain react in the ways they do would be to understand human thought, human emotions, human religious experience”<sup>13</sup>.

There are several problems with this kind of approach. Some of them are: a) There must be some coordinating agent / factor to unify the different experiences that the brain processes, at various regions of the brain, in a very complex manner. The material approach does not leave any room for a centralized agent who will synchronize all the activities, and this is known as ‘binding problem’, according to Hardcastle.<sup>14</sup>; b) If we are only a ‘bundle of neurons’, how come the cultural and social ethos play an undeniable role in our lives? Further, in spite of such strong influence, we do experience a sense of freedom. The experience of making a choice is something one cannot deny in one’s daily life. As John Searle rightly points out, one experiences the possibility of alternatives in one’s daily activities. It is as simple as that I can now choose to type this paper or to watch television or to relax and enjoy a piece of my favourite music. If everything is determined by the neurons how is that I experience this kind of alternatives from where I can choose something?<sup>15</sup>; c) How can one explain awareness and the awareness of this awareness? In other words, as Abrahman Thanniyiel explains, my consciousness of the world outside of me and my consciousness, which is conscious of the world, are beyond any materialistic explanation<sup>16</sup>; d) The mental world and all that is connected with it are, as William Stoger, a Jesuit scientist explains, very personal and private to the person who has them. Others have no way of getting into the world directly and they can only infer, from the symptoms or indications of the expressions, what is going on in that private mental world of the person concerned. These subjective or inner experiences, and we as the one who integrates them, cannot be explained satisfactorily in physical terms,<sup>17</sup> though they may be usually considered to be related to the brain.

## Emergentist Model

Under the Emergentist model we find two approaches: *Non-reductive Physicalism* and *Emergent Monism*.

*Non-reductive physicalism*<sup>18</sup> basically claims that there are higher level properties, which cannot be reduced to the lower level properties; the higher level properties are in some manner dependent on the physical properties. Something new arises, but no new being is involved. There is no ontological status to all these mental/spiritual properties. For example, digestion is a function of the digestive tract, but no new non-material entity is present in the tract. Similarly, when the brain reaches a level of complexity, it reveals higher level properties. However, this does not need any metaphysical or nonmaterial or spiritual entity to explain the higher level properties. The non-reductive physicalists use the concept of '*supervenience*' to explain the relation between mind and body, whereby the physical and mental are treated as the properties of one united human person. It is an attempt to show a relationship of dependence without giving into reducibility; a collection of component systems gives rise to two different systems, where the second system relies on the first for its existence. They also use the concept of *Ontological Reductionism*, which sees no need for any intervention of a metaphysical entity to account for the higher level properties.<sup>19</sup> Though there are variations within this view, the main emphasis is that it rejects *Causal Reductionism* (the activities of the parts at the higher level in a system are reducible to lower level entities) and *Reductive Materialism*<sup>20</sup> (the mental and spiritual qualities of the higher level entities are nothing but the sum total of the lower level realities, which only are real). Many scientists and philosophers subscribe to this view of nonreductive materialism.

*Emergent Monism* is held by authors like Philip Clayton and Ian G. Barbour. They use the concept of emergence, which can be understood as a phenomenon in which new and coherent structures, patterns and properties arise during the process of self-organization in complex systems. These new properties cannot be reduced to the components. In the words of Clayton: "Genuinely new properties emerge which are irreducible to what came before, although they are continuous with it".<sup>21</sup> According to O'Conner, an emergent

property is “a simple, non-structural, natural property that is exemplified by objects or systems that attain the appropriate level and kind of organizational complexity and that exerts a causal influence on the behaviour of the possessor.”<sup>22</sup> A number of characteristics are associated with this phenomenon of emergence: Radical novelty, Coherence/correlation, Global/macro level Production, involving a dynamic process, Perception, Unpredictability, and Self-maintenance. Further, one can see a multi-level process of complexification, including organizational complexification taking place. All these yield hierarchy of levels and new and higher properties. Thus the internal interactions form a new high-level reality, known as consciousness. However, one may wonder how is it that mind/consciousness emerges all of a sudden, if it is totally alien and unconnected with matter.

In short, various theories on the mind-body problem escape our full comprehension and understanding. Robert Miller<sup>23</sup> has sufficient reasons to show why it is that the very concept of conscious mind lies beyond the realm of the physical description. He shows it in four steps: a) A physical system cannot observe itself; b) Physics is not possible without making observations (or an observer); c) Any observation essentially requires a conscious mind; and d) Thus, it is not possible to decipher the working of the conscious mind in purely physical terms.

One thing seems to be very clear: the mysterious dimension of the mind-body relations will ever be there; we use our mind to learn about mind, and we can never see it as an objective reality, external to us, as our ‘mind’ is also involved in seeing the mind, so much so, that the quantum physics instructs us that ‘observer creates reality’. No observation is possible without the interaction between the observer and the observed reality. Not only mind/soul/ consciousness is mysterious, even matter is mysterious to the core. Matter does no more seem to be ‘material’ in the usual sense of the word, as matter is said to be ‘energy dancing at the bottom’. Einstein has made a breakthrough in showing how matter (mass) and energy are convertible with the famous  $E=mc^2$ . Whatever approach one might adopt, one has to encounter the mysterious nature of reality. As Abraham Thanniyiel puts it: “In the reductionistic understanding

*nothing is a mystery*, in the dualistic understanding *God is a mystery* and in the non-dualistic understanding *the whole reality is a mystery*".<sup>24</sup> One way to bring together science and religion is to look at the human person as psychosomatic unity. The new developments in science don't seem to remove the element of mind/soul, rather they give a new understanding of it. Many quantum physicists speak about a new sort of wholeness<sup>25</sup> and interconnectedness in the whole of reality. David Bohm sees 'undivided wholeness' in creation, while N. Herbert holds that quantum wholeness "is a fundamentally new kind of togetherness, undiminished by spatial and temporal separation".<sup>26</sup>

## 2. Limits and Limitations of Science

With all the present feats and thrilling promises for future achievements in science, say, in the field of nanotechnology, one may be easily led to think that science has already crossed, or is at least on the threshold of crossing, all its limits. Science, with its unbelievable success, has made a great impact on the every sphere of human life. But a closer and deeper examination of science reveals the limits of science, and this revelation indicates that science cannot be the *all-in-all* enterprise. The basic argument for the limits of science is grounded on the fact science uses many axioms, which are taken for granted by science. It is further shown that "When you use an axiom, then you start on the wrong foot. You cannot prove axioms, and if you base everything on them, then you guarantee that your whole theory cannot ultimately be proved".<sup>27</sup>

John Barrow<sup>28</sup> has done an extensive exploration into the limits of science, starting from the practical limits to the cosmological ones. While the former includes cost, technology, mathematical computability and the extreme complexity of the universe, the latter involves the restrictions in learning about the origins, end, nature and structure of the universe. Our position in the universe, the evolutionary growth that the human has achieved over millions of years impose their own restrictions. Our brain, obviously, did not evolve having science in mind. There is no way to go outside of the universe to observe and all that we learn about it has to be done from within. There is no *God's-point-of-view* to see the universe as

it is<sup>29</sup>. The most fundamental limit in the cosmos is that the universe became visible only when photons were emitted from it; that happened only 300,000 years after the big bang expansion. Till then the universe was opaque and even light did not come out of it. To study the universe before that we need to study the neutrinos, it is possible if at all. Even then we can go back to the time of one second after the expansion. That time the universe was ten billion times smaller than what we observe now. At the most we can go back, if technology allows it, and see when the universe was  $10^{32}$  times smaller than what it is now.

Further, the very nature of our thinking, the very neural wiring that our brain has developed during the process of evolution places a limitation. The limitations of inductive reasoning, for instance, which gives only probable knowledge, and never absolute knowledge, have to be tolerated by science. Due to this predicament and many other such shortcomings, contemporary philosophers of science prefer to speak of reasonableness in science, rather than the strict and traditional notion of rationality in science. As being just rational is not enough for a happy, healthy and holistic human life, for a comprehensive and realistic picture of science also we need reasonableness.<sup>30</sup>

If one is reasonable one will not impose undue limitations upon science. For instance, as Hempel points out, the inability of science to justify inductive reasoning is *not a limitation* for science. Science being an empirical enterprise always “seeks knowledge that reaches far beyond the supporting evidence... (so) the ideal of empirical knowledge with certainty is logically self-contradictory”<sup>31</sup> and hence the inability to meet such a logically inconsistent requirement of certainty can never be a limitation for science. He also shows that there are certain questions (e.g. the question of the existence of ghosts or God) that lie beyond the purview of science, as no empirical assertion can be made to confirm or deny. Therefore, this incapability too is *not a limitation* to the scope of science, as science is expected to prove or disprove only empirical claims. Some charge science of incomplete explanation, as science never actually explains everything. For instance, it explains that the rainbow is due to the diffraction of the sun light as it penetrates the water drop, but it does

not tell us *why* it happens so: “A scientific explanation is thus always incomplete in the sense that the explanatory facts it adduces are left unexplained and thus ununderstood. It may even seem that, as a consequence, an explanation in science never does more than reduce the problem of explaining one fact to the problem of explaining several others”<sup>32</sup>. An explanation is a set of statements which explain a phenomenon at hand with the help of some supporting facts. But if one expects further explanation for these supporting facts then it will lead to infinite regress. Any type of explanation, scientific, metaphysical or religious, has to stop at some point or the other, so called brute fact which is accepted unexplained. Therefore, the fact of incompleteness of explanation is also *not a limitation* for science.

It is true, as Hempel points out, that all these may not be *limitations of science*<sup>33</sup> as such, but I believe that they teach us another strong lesson: human cognitive powers are limited and therefore we cannot take our destiny into our hands. This situation might lead one either to a total despair, as Sartre and Nietzsche ended up in pessimism, or to look at life filled with surprises, opening up ways to transcend, as Gabriel Marcel did. There are dimensions in life that are not, even cannot be, touched by science, no matter how advanced it gets. Life is interesting and worth living, because there is always more to know and to cherish; at no point of time, we’ll know whether we have known everything, because we’ll never know how much is yet to be known.

All these go, I hope, to show the need for science to include non-rational, human and social considerations in understanding the real picture of science. This fills humanity with a sense of hope of getting relieved from the clutches of scientisitc attitudes.<sup>34</sup>

### **3. Concluding Remarks: Rays of Hope for Enlightened and Enriched Humanity**

*Hope*, as an existential experience, cannot be adequately defined. Without an act of hope life becomes impossible. Not only as believers, as philosophers, as theologians, as scientists, but also as human beings we all need hope in our lives, as hope is something that touches the core of our being. Hope in its deeper sense, cannot be taken to be ‘wish’ or ‘desire’, because the latter are oriented

towards something external to us, and they have not much impact upon our ontological being. Hope is not an expression of a sort of pride, nor of ignorance of the state of affair. Hope is a strong orientation towards some ‘good’ for oneself or others. It implies a strong sense of ‘possibility’ and some element of certainty. Hope is the inner strength that gives clarity and vision even in the midst of despair and meaninglessness.<sup>35</sup> This inner strength cannot be shaken by the scientific tendencies.

By *enlightenment* I mean the state of being with better realization and wisdom about the deeper realities of lives. Accumulating more and more knowledge must lead us to the level of wisdom, which alone will teach us how to use the knowledge acquired. Today, we have an ocean of information at our finger-tips, but wisdom still seems to be a rare commodity. That is why, T.S. Eliot rightly wonders: “Where is the knowledge that we have lost in information? Where is the wisdom that we have lost in knowledge? And where is the life that we have lost in living?” Precisely because we lack wisdom we have put science to wrong use, whereby it distorts human dignity instead of enhancing it.

By *enrichment* I don’t just mean better amenities for life, which are also very important. I include all basic human rights to be respected more dearly and valued more diligently. All sections of humanity may enjoy the freedom of speech and the freedom to follow any religion. Human and humane care and concern for the whole of suffering humanity must be given. Equal opportunities must be given for quality education to all sections of the society. Unfortunately, In India, we have many educational structures like the State Board, the Central Board, the Matriculation Board, the Anglo-Indian Board, the CBSE system. This creates a fundamental difference in the quality of education and the opportunities for higher education and jobs in future. We must not allow such a cruel discrimination, which is systematically designed to suit the vested interests of some sections of the people in our country.

The need and the urgency to be ecologically concerned is very seriously felt today more than ever before. Various biotechnological advancements threaten not only the identity and the dignity of human beings, but also the very balanced-fabrics of ecology. The intrinsic

value of nature seems to be very badly ignored, as the modern researches and technologies seem to be focused only on the economic considerations. For instance, those who are in favour of Genetically Modified Food (GMF) claim that this will eradicate hunger in the world. But we need to realize that the world, on the whole, produces more food-grains than what is necessary for the whole of the population, but still people die of starvation. It is because of other reasons, like the unequal distribution of the resources and the opportunities, exploitation of various sorts and so on, that hunger deaths take place. *In fact as responsible citizens of the world and the members of the human family, we need to be ashamed even if one person happens to die of hunger in any corner of the world.* Genetically modified crops cause irreversible damage to the land and the earth's biosphere. For instance, the toxic materials used in the plants to kill the pests or to eradicate weeds poison the land in course of time. Further, the pest gets used to the toxic materials and they are not deterred by the plants, as it has been recently shown that the worms get immune to the bt-toxin. So the uncertainty of the full consequences and the risks of biotechnology far outweigh the benefits. Humanity needs to be very cautious in all its undertakings in the realm of biotechnology.

Along with the inability to meaningfully solve the mind-body problem, science encounters many other limits and limitations. All these caution us not to rely on science blindly. For instance, I believe that the traditional understanding of rationality seems to have not paid attention to non-cognitive elements of thoughts and feeling. Formal, impersonal ways of expression in social interactions have sidelined women and children down the centuries. Men and women, as recent studies on human psychology and behaviourism seem to show, are certainly complementary to one another, in more than one sense of the term. The rational mind of men and the intuitive mind of women need to be in collaboration with each other for the betterment of humanity. But unfortunately very important decisions and policies are, by and large, finalized and executed by men. Women are systematically ignored in this whole process. If they are also taken into confidence and their views are taken seriously one can certainly expect a better 'human touch' in all those policies. For instance, it is a painful paradox to see in India that while there is a

surplus of food-grain production (about 60 million tons), there are thousands of deaths of starvation every day. Due to lack of efficient way of storage, about 20% of the stuff is eaten away by rats or destroyed by rains. The glaring mistake lies with the callous attitudes of bureaucrats and politicians. The government machinery does not seem to be bothered about the starving people when such an enormous amount of food-grains are in excess. If women are involved more and more in the administration and the decision-making process, I strongly believe, that, with their intuitive and maternal touch, they will not easily allow the wastage of the good grains and the starvation deaths.

Science is, no doubt, a powerful force that cannot be just ignored. It is indeed a great asset, not only for making our lives comfortable, but quenching our inborn curiosity to know better and to achieve more. However, science, being aware of its own limits and limitations, is cautious in claiming to be the absolute; being led by the spirit of interdisciplinary approaches it realizes more and more the need not to be autocratic; and above all, being a social enterprise, which is by humans and for humans, science realizes its moral and ethical responsibilities *and this last realization, in turn, emphasizes on the serious commitments of humans towards safeguarding nature, as humans are supposed to be the custodians of nature, rather than exploiters of it.* All these instances of realization in the field of science, I am sure, can keep the hope for an enriched and enlightened humanity alive, and we are called upon to work towards realizing that goal.

## Notes

1. Daniel DENNETT, "How to Protect Human Dignity From Science", in Adam SCHULMAN(ed.), *Human Dignity and Bioethics: Essays Commissioned by the President's Council on Bioethics*, 2008. See: <http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/dignityscience3.pdf>. Accessed on 1 Feb, 2011.
2. See: Paul FEYERABEND, "How to defend Society against Science?", in E. D. KLEMEKE, E. D., et al., (eds.), *Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), 54-65.
3. Anne HARRINGTON (in the foreword), in James B. ASHBROOK and Carol Rausch ALBRIGHT, *The Humanizing Brain: Where Religion ad Neuroscience Meet* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1997), xii.

4. See: Paul DAVIES, "Undermining free will", [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2004/09/01/undermining\\_free\\_will](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2004/09/01/undermining_free_will), 2004 (Visited on 31, Jan, 2011).
5. John SEARLE, 1999, 'The Chinese Room', in R.A. WILSON and F. KEIL (eds.), *The MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (See: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/chinese-room/> Accessed on 18 Jan, 2011). John Searle first proposed this argument in "Minds, Brains and Programs" in the journal *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1980. In the past two decades, over hundred papers have been written on this topic.
6. "The Chinese Room Argument", <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/chinese-room/> (accessed on 18 Jan, 2011).
7. David J. chalmers, "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness", *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2(3):200-19, 1995. (see: <http://consc.net/papers/facing.html>).
8. For instance, Daniel, DENNETT, "Commentary on Chalmers: Facing Backwards on the Problem of Consciousness". (See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hard\\_problem\\_of\\_consciousness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hard_problem_of_consciousness); accessed on 19 Jan, 2010).
9. NEWELL, *Unified Theories of Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
10. Philip CLAYTON, "Neuroscience, the Person and God: An Emergentist Account," in *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory Publications, 1999), 191.
11. Karl POPPER, *Of Clocks and Clouds* (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1966), 15.
12. Jerry FODOR, "The Mind-Body Problem", in R. WARNER and T. SZUBKA, eds., *The Mind-Body Problem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 25. Quoted in Tim Crane, *The Elements of Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 41.
13. Philip CLAYTON, "Neuroscience, the Person and God: An Emergentist Account," in *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory Publications, 1999), 191.
14. Valerie Gray HARDCASTLE, "The Binding Problem", in William BECHTEL and George GRAHAM, eds., *A Companion to Cognitive Science* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 555.
15. John R. SEARLE, *Minds, Brains and Science: The 1984 Reith Lectures* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1984).

16. Abraham THANNIYIEL, "Neuroscience and the Human Person", in *Omega* IV (2005) 1, 84-105, 90.
17. William R. STOGER, "The Mind-Brain Problem, The Laws of Nature, and Constitutive Relationships," in Robert John RUSSELL et al., eds *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000).
18. One of the main proponents of non-reductive materialism thesis is Maurice K. D. SCHOUTEN. See his work, "Theism, Dualism, and the Scientific Image of Humanity", *Zygon* 36, 4 (December 2001).
19. All the complex nature of mental and conscious properties of humans don't entail any necessity of mind or soul. See: Nancy Murphy, "Nonreductive Physicalism: Philosophical Issues", in Whatever Happened to the Soul?: Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).
20. Daniel DENNETT holds on to such a view as he argues that all the mental phenomena or properties can be comfortably explained with the help of physical laws and fundamental materials, as Physics is able to account for the phenomena of radioactivity, photosynthesis, reproduction, nutrition, growth etc. Humans are nothing but an compilation of billions and billions of macromolecular machines. See his work, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little Brown, 1991).
21. Philip CLAYTON, 1999, 211.
22. Timothy O'CONNOR, "Emergent Properties", *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol 2, No 34, 1998. See: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/20014490> (accessed on 3 Feb, 2011).
23. R. C. MILLER, *Space, Time and Quanta* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1994).
24. Abraham THANNIYIEL, 2005, 100.
25. David BOHM, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).
26. Nick HERBERT, *Quantum Reality – Beyond the New Physics* (New York: Anchor Books, 1987), 55-56.
27. See : [http://knol.google.com/k/the-limits-of-science#III\(2E\)\\_Limitations\\_of\\_exact\\_science](http://knol.google.com/k/the-limits-of-science#III(2E)_Limitations_of_exact_science).
28. John D. BARROW, *Impossibility – The Limits of Science and the Science of Limits* (London: The Random House Group Ltd, 1999).
29. An analogy may in be in order here: A baby-fish while swimming in the ocean asked the mother fish, "What is the ocean?". The mother-fish replied, "This is the ocean, you are swimming in it", to which the baby fish objected: "Don't tell me a lie. This is only water, where is the ocean?"

Similarly, as long as we are in the universe we will never be able to have the full picture of it.

30. See: Stephen JAYARD, "Reasonableness: The Defining Characteristic of Human Beings", in *Satya Nilayam – Chennai Journal of Intercultural Philosophy*, No. 17, Feb 2010, 123-145; See also: "Rationality", in Johnson J. PUTHENPURACKAL, *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ATC, Bangalore, 2010, 1133-1138; and "Reasonableness in Science", ibid., 1138-1143.
31. HEMPEL, "Valuation and Objectivity in Science," in Fetzer, 2001, 331.
32. HEMPEL, "Science Unlimited?", in Fetzer, 2001, 335.
33. HEMPEL points out a transcendent riddle which cannot be solved by science or any other discipline: namely, 'why is there anything at all, rather than nothing?'. It is not answerable because any answer or explanation would always be in terms of something that already exists. Even to answer in terms of primary cause or uncaused cause presupposes the agency of that cause. Therefore to expect science to answer this question is a logically inconsistent requirement, as "no theory, no conceptual scheme, can explain the existence of anything without assuming the existence of something" (See: Hempel, "Science unlimited?", in Fetzer, 2001, 341).
34. Scientism is the tendency to hold science to be absolute and final in giving answers to all the questions that humanity faces and the world of metaphysics is not under the purview of science and it is not worth the while for science to look into it.
35. For a short exposition of hope, please see: Vincent AIND, "Hope", in Johnson J. PUTHENPURACKAL, 2010, 621-625.

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## **'With Boundary beyond Boundary:' Towards a New-ward Journeying**

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**Abstract:** We, humans, have made great strides in investigative thought and scientific achievement. There has been growth and development in all realms and dimensions of human existence. Humans have been creatively growing in thought and action, since they have been creative and dynamic in their being. This aspect of humans' creative dynamism may be referred to as their 'new-ward journeying,' a theme very close to Kunnumpuram's theology. This paper takes a philosophical look at the 'what' and the 'how' of this journeying—a journeying 'with boundary beyond boundary.' The author begins with a philosophical clarification of the dynamic character of human existence, and then proceeds to show that human life and thought is a 'journeying.' Finally he dwells on the meaning of journeying 'with boundary beyond boundary'.

The author concludes this philosophically reflective study with a twofold plea—a plea to keep on creatively journeying ahead in our thinking and acting, and a plea to break open the boundaries that are human constructs.

**Keywords:** Boundary; Beyond boundary; Creativity; *Grenzsituation*; Human existence; Journey.

Humans have made great strides in investigative thought and scientific achievement. There has been growth and development in all realms and dimensions of human existence. Humans have been creatively growing in thought and action, since they have been

creative and dynamic in their being. This aspect of humans' creative dynamism may be referred to as their 'new-ward journeying.' This paper takes a philosophical look at the 'what' and the 'how' of this journeying—a journeying 'with boundary beyond boundary.' We shall begin with a philosophical clarification of the dynamic character of human existence (1), and then proceed to show that human life and thought is a 'journeying' (2), and finally dwell on the meaning of journeying 'with boundary beyond boundary' (3).<sup>1</sup>

## 1. The Dynamic Character of Human Existence

In contemporary thought the human is considered a movement, a dynamic process, an ever-moving and never-ending journeying—all these meanings are summed up in one term 'existence,' as understood in existentialism, which needs to be clarified.

Existence, according to the existentialists, is to be taken in the active and dynamic sense of the act of being human, as different from its passive meaning of the fact of being human.<sup>2</sup> Existence in the active and dynamic sense can be applied only to humans; only they are able to exist. By being born of humans I do not necessarily exist as human; only insofar as I exist as human, I am human and I become human. I exist as human by choosing to be human—by dynamically making choices every moment to grow in my being human. This dynamic meaning of existence can be better expressed and clarified with the help of its etymological meaning of 'standing-out' (ex + stare). I exist as standing out. But where does the human stand out from and stand out to? A cursory look into the whence and the whither of existence will enable us to better understand the human as dynamic and creative.

Taking cue from the trend of thinking unfolded in contemporary philosophy, and with the help of a few creative coinage of expressions, we shall elucidate the various dynamic aspects implied in the meaning of existence. By virtue of existence human being 'stands out' from the '*uniform*' of a being to its '*uniqueness*.' Humans cannot just be levelled down to the level of other beings. The human is not just one of the various beings, rather it is uniquely different from every other being;<sup>3</sup> humans have something *extra* that other beings do not have; and this 'extra' in humans consists in their

ability to be dynamic and creative. But even by being uniquely different from all other beings, humans tend to remain anonymous and ‘faceless’ in the crowd. From such ‘*anonymity*’ existing humans stand out to their ‘*individuality*.’<sup>4</sup> To be anonymous in and to flow with the crowd one does not need to make any choice. By being submerged in anonymity one loses one’s identity; one becomes no one, from which situation the humans as existent stand out. Although humans are thrown into some situation, they are not condemned to it; as existing beings they can stand out, to a certain extent, from the ‘*staticity*’ of their givenness to the ‘*dynamism*’ of growth. It is this ability that explains the growth and development that humans have been achieving in comparison to the non-human creatures that remain perennially stagnant.<sup>5</sup> As human beings are constantly in a process, we cannot encapsulate or ‘enframe’ them in dead concepts and statements. In other words, humans stand out from the ‘*fixity*’ of their nature to the process of ‘*becoming*;’ they are constantly *journeying*. Humans as existing stand out from the spatio-temporal limit as well;<sup>6</sup> standing out from the ‘*stagnancy*’ of the now (time) and from the ‘*boundary*’ of the here (space), humans widen their spatio-temporal horizon. By virtue of their existence, humans have the ability to extend themselves from the ‘now’ to the ‘every-when’ and from the ‘here’ to the ‘every-where.’

The meaning of the ‘whither’ of existence—where one is journeying to in one’s life—elucidated along with that of the ‘whence’ of it, can be summed up in one phrase: by one’s existence human being stands out into oneself, into one’s ability to be oneself; in other words, one is journeying to oneself. My being is characterized by a ‘can be’ aspect, because of which I am free and able to choose from the indefinite possibilities to create myself. Almost all the existential thinkers hold to the priority of self-creativity in the humans. For Nietzsche (1844-1900), human existence is characterized by ‘overcoming oneself,’ a ‘tight-rope walker’ who is always on the move. Human existence as the never-ending movement consists in one’s fundamental ‘can be’ or ability to be oneself, to create oneself in freedom—in the language of Kierkegaard (1813-55), an existential choice<sup>7</sup> to be oneself, and in the language of Heidegger (1889-1976), ontological transcendence or self-transcendence.

Existence, the creative ability of the humans, is given an ontological depth by Heidegger in his existential analysis. He shows that the human has an ontic priority over other entities because of ‘existence’ (*Existenz*) and ‘mineness’ (*Jemeinigkeit*). Existence refers to Dasein’s [human’s] Being as ‘having-to-be’ (*Zu-sein*) which combines its twofold nuance: can-be (*pouvoir-être*) and ‘ought-to-be’ (*devoir-être*).<sup>9</sup> Existence is not a category, but ‘the relation of Dasein to its potentiality-for-Being’ (*Seinkönnen*). As existence, Dasein has the character of ‘having-to-be;’ but having to be, what? Here comes the role of the other characteristic, ‘mineness.’ As having-to-be, Dasein has the ‘can-be’ of choosing from the possible ways for it to be, and the ‘ought-to-be’ of choosing its ‘ownmost’ (*das eigenste*) possibility. When Dasein chooses itself in its ownmost possibility, it is said to be authentic (*eigentlich*), or else in-authentic (*un-eigentlich*). Combining both the existential characteristics of ‘existence’ and ‘mineness’ we can say that Dasein is ‘mine-to-be’—having to choose to be myself. As the human is ordinarily prone not to be itself in its dynamic choosing, there is engrained in the very Being of the human a constant call—a call from itself to itself to be itself.<sup>10</sup> This ontological call is ontically responded to by the human by means of its ‘resoluteness’ (*Ent-schlossenheit*),<sup>11</sup> which is a personally and individually made choice to be oneself.

The meaning of existence, as elucidated above in a rather abstruse and technical language, sings the same chorus: human being is primarily and essentially dynamic and creative. Humans become human, not by maintaining themselves in existence, but by growing in their existence; and this ‘dynamic becoming’ is the philosophical meaning of existence. Humans are able to be; they are gifted with transcendence or ‘can be’ aspect. The animals merely are; we the humans exist insofar as we can keep on growing in what we are. The ability to create oneself is not merely a gift to be preserved, but a moral responsibility to be constantly responded to. What we are, we can be; if we can be what we are, then we ought to be so—the trilogy of is-can-ought! A little explanation seems to be in place. My being human is not something that is statically given to me; it is given to me with a ‘can-be’—with my ability to grow in my being human. If I am given that ability, I ought to make use of this ability. Thus ‘can-be’ goes with ‘ought-to-be.’ This fundamental moral

responsibility or ought-character is ingrained in the ‘can-be’ character of every human being. Thus human existence as a new-ward journeying towards itself implies and involves the fundamental responsibility of the humans to be human.

## 2. Human Life and Thought Is a ‘Journeying’

As delineated above, humans in their being are creative and dynamic; *a fortiori* their life and thought can rightly be characterized as a way, as a *journeying*, as a *process*. ‘Way’ implies ‘movement’—the ‘whence’ and the ‘whither’ of the movement are not of importance; the *moving* is of real importance. In order to highlight the relation between movement and way, Heidegger has beautifully made use of the archaic form of the German term for ‘movement’ (*Bewegung*)—its archaic form is *Be-wëg-ung* (way-making movement). The ‘way’ goes on, but there is the constant temptation to ‘fix’ a goal or a ‘whither’ for it. Thus we have different schools of thought, each school giving their own ‘fixed label’ to the way. The ‘way’ remains the same, but different people appropriate it differently, as a result of which the ‘way’ gets stagnated.

In the East the notion of the ‘way’—its corresponding terms: *Mârga* in India, and *Tâo* in China—has been in use from ancient times to refer to the ‘philosophy of life.’ Although the term, *Mârga*, is used mainly in the religious context and *Tâo* in the social context, they are not confined only to these limited contexts; these have become general notions referring to humans’ philosophy of life. Irrespective of religions and philosophies, the thought-pattern of the East, specifically that of India and China, has been in the mode of ‘way.’ Everyone is in the stream of way—stream of life and thought; everyone is ‘moving’ or ‘journeying.’ As the ‘way’ cuts across the barriers of religious and philosophical boundaries, Eastern thought has been generally known for its openness and tolerance.

In the West only in the contemporary period philosophy began to be considered as a way, as a movement—as a process of thinking, rather than as a product of thought. It is evident from the increased use of the term ‘philosophizing’ rather than ‘philosophy.’<sup>13</sup> Although even in philosophical circles these terms are mistakenly used as synonymous, they are very much different from each other in their

*meaning* and *content*. The term ‘philosophy’ is nominal in its structure, static and dead in its meaning, and refers to the finished product of thought, while the term ‘philosophizing’ is verbal in its structure, dynamic and alive in its meaning, and refers to the process of thinking. Philosophy refers to a set of stagnated meaning, characterized by ‘sameness’ every-where and every-when—universal and perennial. Such an understanding is slowly disappearing. This change from a static to a dynamic meaning cannot be easily maintained in the term ‘philosophy,’ as it is laden with an established traditional meaning. Contemporary thought-pattern has destroyed such a myth, and has opted for a more dynamic and humble attitude: *dynamic*, because every reality is philosophically seen as becoming; *humble*, because there is no dogmatism of absolute certainty about what is philosophically seen. The term ‘philosophizing’ reflects such a philosophical *dynamism* and *humility* of being constantly in search, taking serious consideration of the elements of time and space. From what is explained above, we are not proposing that the term ‘philosophy’ be replaced with ‘philosophizing’; rather we want to bring to attention that there is a difference in the meaning of these terms, and that in the contemporary understanding ‘philosophy’ should have a meaning with a philosophical dynamism and humility, which is better reflected in the term *philosophizing*.

Philosophy today in the West, especially with the advent of phenomenology, existentialism, and postmodernism, is increasingly considered as a *way*, a movement. To refer to a few of the thinkers, Marcel (1889-1973) considers philosopher as a ‘*viator*’ (one who is journeying) and philosophy as ‘*via*’ (way); Nietzsche (1844-1900) refers to the movement-aspect by his use of poetic expressions, such as ‘bridge,’ ‘tight-rope-walker,’ ‘becoming,’ ‘overcoming,’ etc. Heidegger, together with Nietzsche, has prepared the ground for the destruction of the myth of ‘absolutism’ in philosophy, and Derrida (1930-2004) and other postmodernists have executed it. Thus we find that, of late, there is a growing tendency towards considering philosophy as a ‘movement,’ as a ‘way.’

Just as thought is a *way* (*via*) and thinker is a *wayfarer* (*viator*), so also the life of thinking can rightly be considered as a ‘wayfaring’ or ‘journeying.’ The ‘way’ goes on; the journeying too goes on. Such

a journeying is characterized as a ‘*new-ward* journeying,’ which is not same as a journey in search of mere novelties. We take ‘*new-ward* journeying’ as a constant and authentic growth of one’s being, whereas ‘journeying for novelties’ is an uprooted jumping from novelty to novelty.<sup>14</sup> In this case one takes hold of anything that one finds as novel, which need not necessarily fall along with one’s being. Such a journey of life is a ‘*wayward* journeying,’ rather than ‘*new-ward* journeying.’

It is by constantly making existential choices to be one’s authentic self, one’s being, that human being keeps on making new-ward journeying. This process of choice is an ‘ontological transcendence’—it is *ontological* because it is a choice for one’s *Being*, in response to the call from one’s *Being*, as a result of one’s proneness of falling from one’s *Being*.<sup>15</sup> The journey is always towards one’s very being, creating oneself, and thus becoming oneself. It is a new-ward journeying since it is a ‘growing in one’s being,’ as different from ‘straying from one’s being,’ which is but a wayward journeying.

### 3. Journeying ‘with Boundary and beyond Boundary’

We have delineated that humans are, and are called to be, on the way in a new-ward journeying. But does this journeying or ontological transcendence take the human away from oneself, away from the finite being that one is? It is a journeying that refers, at the same time, both to one’s going *beyond* and to one’s standing *with* one’s being. We characterize this specific process of movement with the expression: ‘*with boundary beyond boundary*.’ What is intended by this expression can be clarified only by elucidating the notion of ‘boundary.’<sup>16</sup>

The notion of ‘boundary’ is relatively of recent origin and in the wake of the philosophy of finitude in the contemporary period, it is gaining greater importance.<sup>17</sup> Instead of delving into the philosophy of finitude, we shall limit ourselves to taking a reflective look at the philosophical meaning of ‘boundary.’ The ordinary meaning of *boundary* as ‘limit-line’ was carried further into a philosophical meaning by Karl Jaspers in his notion of ‘*Grenzsituation*’ (limit-situation), which was taken over by Heidegger in his analysis of

Dasein with a deeper meaning of the radical finitude of humans.<sup>18</sup> The basis of any philosophy of finitude is the radical finitude of humans; and Heidegger's philosophy is nothing but a loud meditation on human finitude. Hence by making a reflective journey along with him and beyond him, we will have some grip on the philosophical meaning of boundary.

Through an existential analysis of death Heidegger takes his thought to an ontological characterization of human finitude.<sup>19</sup> Human being, as primarily existential, has always some possibility or ahead-of-itself. The ultimate possibility or *not-yet* of the human is its death. Death as the ultimate 'not-yet' is already always present as soon as and as long as the human being is. In the ordinary conception, death is considered as an event of a moment in the distant future. But death cannot be limited to just a moment, it is rather a constant and certain possibility into which I am irrevocably thrown! Death is both the ultimate *not-yet* and the ultimate *already*. The ultimate possibility and facticity of the human encircles and demarcates its total *that-it-is* or wholeness, which is but its 'limit-situation' or 'boundary-situation' (*Grenzsituation*).<sup>20</sup> As the human is constantly with its ultimate possibility, the encircling 'line' that demarcates its limit-situation remains constantly closest to it. Human finitude is nothing but this permeating presence of the limit in its Being. I am, so to say, saturated with *death* as the boundary or limit. Death is the permeating presence of the limit in every fibre of the human being. It is the *way* the humans exist—the finite *way* of human existence. Human being is thus characterized by radical finitude—human being is *with boundary*.

Traditionally human finitude has been considered as a 'lack,' as a 'less' in relation to the *Infinite*. Such an approach may show the fact of human finitude, but it falls short of showing the essence of human finitude. Humans are finite not because they are less than the Infinite; humans are finite because they *are finite in their very Being*, that is to say, there is present a '*finis*' (limit, boundary) in the Being of the humans. According to Heidegger, boundary is not that at which something comes to a stop, rather it is that from which something begins or wells out. Boundary is not the end, it

is the beginning. Hence humans are finite, not because of the approaching end (*Ende*), but because of the essentially finite (*endlich*) way they are. Boundary is not around us; it is permeatingly present in us, and hence we are ontologically finite. This ontological finitude is manifest in all the ontic situations as well.<sup>21</sup> Thus the human being is saturated with boundary or limit, and hence s/he is finite.

After having dwelt, in the first two parts this study, on the aspect of the human's 'new-ward journeying,' we have introduced here the notion of 'boundary' or finitude. Does the new-ward journeying come to a stop with the boundary? The acceleration of the forward movement of human existence is decelerated with human finitude. The genius of Heidegger has perfectly blended in his philosophy these apparently opposed movements as the twofold tension of the same movement. This twofold tension, in the terminology of this study, is referred to as 'with boundary beyond boundary.' This is solidly based on Heidegger's words: human existence is "thrown into the indefiniteness of its 'limit-situation'..."<sup>22</sup> On the one hand, the human is thrown into limit-situation, and thus it is with boundary; on the other hand, the existential movement to the limit-situation is a movement to indefiniteness, as 'the limit is indefinite,' and hence 'beyond boundary.' The boundary of my boundary remains always indefinite. The beyond boundary is always with boundary. This twofold tension between 'with boundary' and 'beyond boundary'—givenness and choosing, facticity and existentiality, rootedness and openness—is referred to also in another of his expressions 'being stretched along and stretching itself along' (*erstrecktes Sicherstrecken*).<sup>23</sup> I am able to keep on moving in my existence and transcending myself (I am stretching myself), and thus I am able to be beyond every (definite) boundary. But in stretching myself along, I am stretched along as well. I do not and cannot get away from my boundary.

To put it in simpler language, human being as existence is dynamic and self-creative. It keeps on growing and journeying ahead in its existence. But while journeying ahead into the indefiniteness of its being, the human continues to be radically

finite. In spite of the multifarious growth and development of humans, they can never get rid of their finitude. Hence the newward journeying of the humans is a finite journeying—a journeying *with boundary beyond boundary*.

#### 4. Concluding Plea

We conclude this philosophically reflective study with a twofold plea—a plea to keep on creatively journeying ahead in our thinking and acting, and a plea to break open the boundaries that are constructed by humans.

The first plea for creativity in human existence, which is implicitly proposed in this paper, is fast becoming a rarity in today's culture. As against the popular belief that humans are on a fast track towards creative growth and development, we find that contemporary culture is in fact stagnating human thinking and acting. We live in a culture of ready-mades. Our markets are flooded with ready-mades of every kind: apparently a sign of human growth and development! It is true, the struggle of life is very much taken away, and life can be lived with greater ease and comfort; we have today ready-made dresses, ready-made sermons, ready-made decorations, ready-made gardens, ready-made everything... But, to the thinking people, the life of ready-mades stagnates human growth. Why do I say so? By having recourse to the ready-mades, our ability to do anything and to decide anything is being taken away. Gradually and systematically we are made *incapable* persons—unable to calculate, calculators do it; unable to prepare any curry, ready-made is available; unable to prepare a sermon, they are available as ready-made; unable to reflect philosophically or theologically, ready-made thoughts are available on the website; ...thus, we are made thoughtless and useless. The success of the market consists in making us as incapable as possible. Our inability is their ability! Besides making us incapable to do many things, the market-culture takes away from us the ability to think and to decide for ourselves. We can no more decide what to wear, what to eat, what to drink, what to preach...the creativity and variety due to individual reflections, thoughts and decisions is taken away from us. We do not decide anymore; it is decided for us. Gradually our

ability to think and decide is drained out from us; and we are becoming useless dolls!

It is against this background that we say: ‘the new-ward journeying of creative thinking is becoming a rare phenomenon!’ The constant temptation with the vast majority of the humans is to fall back on the readily available, and thus they do not take the risk of creative thinking and acting; and hence this plea is relevant and makes sense. In the creative journeying ahead (beyond boundary), one has to keep oneself constantly reminded of remaining fully rooted in one’s finite givenness (with boundary). While creatively taking a step ahead, one does not uproot oneself from the given. It is I myself—the I who have been with all my givenness and tradition, the I who have been empowered and enabled by my givenness—who keep on taking creative steps in my life of thought and action. My being<sup>24</sup> ‘with boundary’ and ‘beyond boundary’ cannot be separated.

The second plea is with regard to the ‘boundary’ of human existence. The human is a finite being because of the boundary *within*, which is not in fact a lack or limitation. But there is another type of boundary—the boundary *without* that makes them really limited and mutilated! Humans have been creating numerous<sup>25</sup> boundaries around them for various reasons of human construct. As a result, a strong feeling of ‘we’ as different from ‘they’ is created, and those outside the boundary are looked at with suspicion. It is because of the powerlessness or limitation of those within the boundary that they keep on creating more boundaries, and others are looked at as a threat. The more boundaries, the greater the limitation! On the other hand, the boundary-less persons are more secure and less limited. Only when humans are able to transcend the boundary of *here* and *now* in their very being—manifested in thinking, speaking and dealing—do they become *cosmic persons* in a cosmic home. Instead of creating more limiting boundaries, the cosmic persons keep on breaking open the various concentric circles of boundaries and open themselves out to the wider horizon of the cosmos. Humans cannot do away with their ontological boundary of finitude; but should they become really ‘smaller’ and ‘mutilated’ by creating more boundaries around them? Hence our plea: create

not boundaries around us, and break open those that are already there; humans with their inner boundary are thus called to be cosmic persons without any outer boundary!

As the immediate reference of this study is the new-ward journeying of theological thinking, let it be reiterated that there are no ready-made theologies to be preserved and to be transmitted. Just as the way comes to be as one journeys and the song comes to be as one sings, so also theology comes to be as one theologizes. A responsible journeying of theologizing comes about when one theologizes in response to the reality of the ‘here’ and ‘now’ of one’s life and world—a theologizing in full acceptance of one’s boundary without any pretence or claim of absolutism. It should vibrate as a constant ‘echo’ in one’s life, and should send ripples of this vibration beyond the ‘here’ and ‘now’ to every-where and every-when. Such a responsible theologizing is made possible by a life of new-ward journeying with boundary beyond boundary.

## Notes

1. As this article is for a Festschrift in honour of Rev. Dr. Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ, who has been, during the past several decades, making a creative journeying of theologizing supported by his investigative thirst and intellectual acumen, the present author considers it a privilege reflectively to delve into the question of ‘humans as journeying’—the foundation of all investigative creativity [Author’s own.]
2. In the traditional understanding, existence (is-ness) has been understood in opposition to essence (whatness), which is applied to everything including the humans. In this traditional sense the mere fact of being human is one’s existence.
3. The existentialists have limited the use of ‘existence’ only to the humans. Only the humans ‘exist;’ all other things are. Heidegger goes to the extent of saying that even God too is; only Dasein (the human) exists.
4. The main spokesperson for this position is Kierkegaard; while clarifying the meaning of existence, he refers to the act of standing out or choosing to be an individual from being anonymous in the crowd.
5. Look at the way the birds make their nests, the bees collect honey, the dogs bark, the fishes swim: there is absolutely no growth in the way these activities are carried out. On the contrary, the humans have been making progress in every aspect of their life.

6. This does not mean that they become beyond space and time; the humans while transcending the limit do not overcome the limit.
7. Nietzsche refers to the human being also as a ‘rope’ that is tied between, or a bridge between, the animal (at times, the ultimate man) and the superman.
8. It is Kierkegaard, and to a lesser degree Heidegger, who have worked it out in their philosophy. Kierkegaard takes choice as a ‘leap.’ It is in proportion to the gravity of the question on which I make a choice that there will be the greater or lesser struggle of choice. In every leap, in an eminent way, in the leap of faith, I am in the grip of anxiety or struggle of choice: should I, should I not? This struggle is created by ‘objective uncertainty’ and ‘subjective certainty,’ insofar as that which I choose or leap to remains in darkness, I am repelled by it, and insofar as I am subjectively clear about it I am attracted by it. This experience of attraction and repulsion, sympathy and antipathy, is the existential struggle of choice—the experience of anxiety. I am as though sitting on a precipice, attracted to and repelled from taking the leap. Faith as leap links and dissolves the objective uncertainty and subjective certainty. It is the struggle of choice to be oneself. Cf. *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed., Johnson J. PUTHENPURACKAL. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010, s.v. “Choice, Existential.”
9. For a more elaborate consideration of this point, cf., Johnson J. PUTHENPURACKAL, *Heidegger, Through Authentic Totality to Total Authenticity: A Unitary Approach to His Thought in Its two Phases* (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1987), pp. 8-10; see also, footnote 33 on page 9.
10. Cf., HEIDEGGER, *Being and Time*, trans., John Macquarrie and Edwards Robinson, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), pp. 317-23.
11. Ibid., p. 343. The term, *Entschlossenheit*, combines in itself the twofold nuance of the ordinary meaning of ‘decision,’ and the etymological meaning of ‘opening.’
12. Cf. Johnson PUTHENPURACKAL, “Way-Mârga-Tâo,” in *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010), pp. 1513-15.
13. What is said here about ‘philosophy’ and ‘philosophizing’ is equally valid with regard to ‘theology’ and ‘theologizing.’
14. The inspiration for this thought is Heidegger’s characterization of historicality, according to which authentic historizing is a choosing of possibilities that are inherited from one’s being, whereas inauthentic historizing takes place in terms of mere novelties. Cf. Martin HEIDEGGER, *Being and Time*, trans., John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), pp. 443-44.

15. The reference here is Heidegger's analysis of conscience as a call 'from itself to itself to be itself.'
16. The following section is largely based on a study that the present author has carried out in the article: "Boundary," in *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010), pp. 191-92.
17. Although there are many philosophers who vouch for a philosophy of finitude, Heidegger stands prominent among them with his philosophy in the form of meditation on human finitude.
18. Heidegger refers to Karl JASPERS in his *Sein und Zeit* (15th ed., Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1979, footnote on pp. 301-02). Jaspers speaks of three types of 'limit-situation' that exhibit the pathos of human existence: its striving, the opposing contradictions and the resultant antinomies. Heidegger takes inspiration from Jaspers and gives the term a rather different meaning. Cf. David F. KRELL, "Toward Sein und Zeit: Heidegger's Early Review of Jasper's 'Psychologie der Weltanschauungen,'" *Journal of British Society for Phenomenology* 6 (1975): 150.
19. Heidegger carries out his analysis of death in the first chapter of the second division of his *Being and Time* (pp. 279-311).
20. Cf. Martin HEIDEGGER, *Being and Time*, p. 356.
21. My ontological finitude consists in the presence of 'limit' in my ability to be myself—in my ontological 'can.' Such an ontological 'can'—the 'can' that is saturated with 'cannot'—qualifies every 'can' of mine. In other words, I am finite—I am with boundary—both ontologically and ontically.
22. "...in die Unbestimmtheit seiner 'Grenzsituation' geworfen ist..." Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (15th ed., Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1979), p. 308; *Being and Time*, p. 356.
23. HEIDEGGER, *Being and Time*, p. 427.
24. A rather detailed study on this question is carried out by the present author in a paper titled "Rooted in Tradition – Open to Innovation: Philosophical Reflections," presented at the ACPI Annual Seminar Held at Faridabad on 23-27 October 2010.
25. On this question of 'creation of boundaries' as one of the reasons for human violence, cf., Johnson PUTHENPURACKAL, "Humans as Violent: A Philosophical Look," in *Violence and Its Victims: A Challenge to Philosophizing in the Indian Context*, ed., Ivo COELHO (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010), pp. 30-32.

## Crossing Borders: Report on an Indian-German Experiment

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**Abstract:** This article deals with a particular experience of crossing borders, a cross-cultural conference on *Faith-formation* in India and Germany, which took place in Mumbai about a decade ago. In fact, it became a performative adventure across cultural borders. This report by Christian Bauer reflects on that Mumbai-experience, organised by the JDV in Pune and the *Faculty of Catholic Theology* of the University of Tübingen. As the narrative “we” in the beginning shows, the author of this report had a double-role as participant and as observer of the conference at the same time. This participant observation is connected with the delightful experience of meeting Kurien Kunnumpuram for the first time.

The author describes the dynamics and nuances involved in such a complex encounter on faith formation. Reflecting theologically he concludes that inter-religious dialogue will not have to seek an utopic identity of the different, but instead it will have to mediate real differences of the identical. This theological turn from abstract identities on the level of theoretical ideas to concrete differences on the level of practical problems brings about changes within the religions taking part in that kind of dialogue – as an Indian participant illustrated at the conference in Mumbai. Many *Small Christian Communities* shift from being “agents for a change within the church” towards *Small Human Communities*, becoming “agents for a change in society”, who discover common concerns in the light of the gospel, since there is “no Muslim-electricity, no Christian-toilet, no Hindu-road”

**Keywords:** Borders; Cross-cultural encounter; Faith-formation; Inter-religious dialogue; Practical theology.

We experienced practically what we knew theoretically, because we were doing what we were talking about. Our cross-cultural conference on *Faith-formation* in India and Germany, which took place in Mumbai (January 12-17, 2003), happened to become a performative adventure across cultural borders. This report reflects on that Mumbai-experience, organised by the JDV in Pune and the *Faculty of Catholic Theology* of the University of Tübingen. As the narrative “we” in the beginning shows, the author of this report had a double-role as participant and as observer of the conference at the same time. This participant observation is connected with the delightful experience of meeting Kurien Kunnumpuram SJ for the first time. He is one of the most impressive theologians I ever met.

## **1. Universes of Meaning**

In his welcoming speech at the beginning of the conference, Prof. Francis D'Sa SJ pointed out that two different “universes of meaning” would be going to meet in Mumbai – the German universe of meaning, represented by seven participants from Tübingen, and the Indian universe of meaning, represented by 28 participants from all over India. These 35 participants of the conference constituted an extremely diverse audience, including academic and non-academic theologians of both sexes: men (mainly priests: 17 participants) and women (mainly religious: 8 participants) – only decision-takers as bishops were missing. “Each culture we are representing”, D'Sa said, “is a universe of meaning on its own and the entire world is constituted by many different universes of meaning – that means by a radical plurality of different cultural mind-sets.” In other words: When German ‘Geist’ meets Indian ‘Atma’, this plurality of differences demands a human openness in the spirit of cross-cultural encounter, that first of all means to respect the universe of meaning of the Other attentively and patiently: “We are not here for teaching doctrines, but for sharing experiences and reflections.” (Francis D'Sa). This wise opening remark helped to understand and manage

the “clash of cultures” we had to face during the conference, namely that clash of different styles of discourse. Thus our Indo-German experiment was not only an intellectual endeavour, but also an existential challenge.

## 2. Reciprocal Fascination

At first there was more fascination for the Other than cultural irritation on both sides. It was just great to meet each other – and the papers at the beginning of the conference were enriching the enthusiastic start. The first three sessions were dealing with pastoral practices of faith-formation in India, that is the *Small Christian Communities* (= SCCs) represented by Ashley Nazareth, Aloysius D’Souza, Patrick D’Mello, Felix D’Souza, Gilbert de Lima, their practice of *Gospel Sharing* (Elvin Colaco), the *Bombay Archdiocesan Catechetical Project* (Aniceto Pereira) and the *Christbhakta Movement* in Benares (Anil Dev, Sajeev Rakesh). The German participants were fascinated by the richness of that large field of pastoral work during the first day of the conference. This was culturally embodied and spiritually deepened by the rite of the lighting of the lamp at the beginning, the ‘dramatised’ celebration of the Eucharist (Michael Gonsalvez) before lunch and a performance of Classical Indian Dance (Kala Darshini) in the evening. Especially the inculturated style of liturgy, confronting the “drama of the last supper” with the “drama of our life”, was a deep spiritual experience for us: “Germans are less inculturated in their own culture”, as Dean Ottmar Fuchs said. This holistic approach of the conference opened the first doors of understanding for the German participants.

## 3. Bridging a Gap

After that first day, marked by a shared euphoria, the participants experienced a certain disillusionment during the second day of the conference. The day was opened by a brilliant theological overview by Prof. Kurien Kunnumparam of *Faith-Formation in the Context of India Today*, trying to bridge the discursive gap between the more experience-based Indian papers of the first day and the more reflection-based papers from Tübingen that were to follow. Of course, all Indian contributions of the first day were also – in some

cases (e. g. the SCC-paper) explicitly – theological papers as well as all German papers of the second day were also – again in some cases (e. g. Kilian Nuss) explicitly – practical papers. Nonetheless, the main focus of the first papers was on practical problems, whereas the following papers mainly focused theological problems.

## 4. Discursive Irritations

As the first German, Prof. Bernd Jochen Hilberath (Systematic Theology) spoke about *The Shift in Dogmatics*, followed by Fr. Kilian Nuss on *Training for the Priesthood in the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart*, Dr. Bernhard Nitsche (Systematic Theology) on *What Philosophical Approaches does Contemporary Theology Encounter and Need?* and Prof. Ottmar Fuchs (Practical Theology) on *Identity and Relevance of Practical Theology*. In this long day of lectures – without much discussion because of the shortage of time – the participants enjoyed a change only during the celebration of the Eucharist and the performance of Classical Indian Dance. There was a certain note of discontent coming up, because the German contributions seem to have caused this clash of discursive styles. These contributions were criticised as being too many and too long, academically abstract and didactically unprepared. There was a great need for more communication, interaction and participation in group-discussions that brought up a real danger to fall off dialogue during the second day.

## 5. New Dynamics

The third morning with German and Indian speakers offered various forms of discussion – open general sessions, discussions in small groups – and a certain ease of the previous day's tensions. Prof. Albert Biesinger (Religious Education) decided to change the issue of his paper and spoke more experience-based about *Family Catechesis in Latin America and Germany*. When Kilian Nuss spoke about his parish-priest experiences with this pastoral concept in the following discussion, the conference arrived at its crucial turning-point. Many Indians got involved for the first time, because finally they came in touch with German experiences in an existential way. This pastoral statement functioned as an eye-opener for the Indian

perception of the European church, which had mainly been seen as an old and dying church. This fruitful dialogue was followed by two papers focused on interreligious and intercultural questions of faith formation: Dr. Clemens Mendonca (Institute for the Study of Religion) spoke about *Interreligious Education in India* and Prof. Monika Scheidler (Religious Education and Catechetics) about *Catechesis and Intercultural Competence*. It seems to be a significant detail that each of these two contributions of women was able to combine “Indian” practicability and “German” reflexivity within an integral way of discourse.

## 6. Group Discussions

From now on both sides were learning from each other, and a deeper understanding could take place. A general session for the gathering of subjects for further group discussions followed, that constituted small groups on *community, faith formation and theology* with Fr. Ashley Nazareth, Sr. Patricia Santos and Fr. Joy Pulickan as speakers. Focusing on these exemplary issues, it became possible to sum up the following process by combining three key-words: Church, dogma and borders. These topics emerging from the dynamics of the three discussion groups and the following plenary sessions are deeply interrelated to each other, because as “de-finitions”<sup>1</sup> of a community’s belief dogmata “de-fine”<sup>2</sup> the borders of the church – and raised the following, very lively discussed questions:

- Church as community: United diversity or diverse unities?
- Dogma as de-definition: Borders to be crossed or sources of experience?
- Borders of the church: Necessary limits or caging boundaries?

## 7. Church as Community

Because of the diversity of the conference’s participants and their experiences, the tension between unity and diversity became a virulent topic: What does “catholic” mean? Is the value of unity superior or inferior to the value of diversity? Should the church be a community in the sense of “unity integrating diversity”? Or better in

the sense of “diversity searching for unity” (Jacob Theckanath)? Questions like these led the discussion to some constitutive ambiguities, which characterise the dialectical character of any community, within and outside church. There is a great need of balancing introverted and extroverted groups, centripetal and centrifugal forces, individual and social options at every level of the church, from the Curia in Rome to the Indian SCCs. Members of a mature, well balanced community should neither be dependent nor independent of one another but rather be “interdependent” (Francis D’Sa). As such an interdependent community of local communities, the global church is no end in itself – because its own mission turns the church to a community, that is pushed beyond all borders by its founding vision. It is a decisive experience, witnessed by the SCC-representatives, that shared visions and missions automatically “unite communities” (Patrick de Mello). “It is our mission that heals”, added Jakob Theckanath, quoting the Roman post-synodal document *Ecclesia in Asia*: “Community is for mission, mission for community” (EA 24).

## 8. Faith Formation as a Crossing of Borders

The Roman “re-definition”<sup>3</sup> of the church’s boundaries and the Indian vision of a “church without boundaries”<sup>4</sup> were the two poles of our discussion about faith formation. There was a mediating position, arguing that the question should not be, whether we needed church-constitutive boundaries at all, but rather: What kind of boundaries do we need? As Prof. Rudi Heredia said, without boundaries “we are lost in space”. Borders constitute the “inside” and “outside” of the Church as a community, uniting and dividing things and people at the same time. Despite this basic need of any community, all participants agreed that Jesus Christ has to be seen as a true “boundary-breaker” and that the Church needs “liminal persons” (Jacob Theckanath), who follow his way of reaching out beyond borders. Fr. Anil Dev’s project of a Christian Ashram in Varanasi, which offers a place for “liminal identities as Hindu-Christian or Christian-Buddhist”<sup>6</sup> within the Church, was mentioned as a good example of that. This project stands in a theological line with Raimon Pannikar’s existential Credo of crossing over: “I left

as a Christian, I found myself a Hindu and I return a Buddhist, without having ceased to be a Christian.”<sup>7</sup> Liminal persons like Pannikar could help us to create a borderline-theology, which enables Christians to develop their own identity by crossing the boundaries of their communities’:

“Crossing the borders is a way of finding one’s identity [...]. It is a way of enriching oneself, widening one’s horizons, broadening one’s knowledge, discovering oneself in this process.”<sup>8</sup>

The most used metaphor during the conference was that of “border” – and related words as boundary, frontier and limit. These words show, that there is no single English translation for the polyvalent meaning of the German word “Grenze” (= border, boundary, frontier or limit). That fact of language is a sign of the general problem, that we cannot have only one single border-practice in the church, but rather many plural practices: God’s people has to respect foreign borders, pull down old boundaries, discover new frontiers and reach out to its limits at the same time.

## 9. Theology as Critical Hermeneutics of Dogma

The lively debates on dogma and experience during the conference revealed that – using a basic distinction of Gottlob Frege – defining the sense of the word dogma is no major problem, rather its meaning causes theological differences. One could easily get the impression that for many Indian participants of the conference dogma and experience were contradictory notions and that good theology in general has to be experience-based and thus of necessarily dogma-critical. In contrast to this, Systematic and Practical Theology in Tübingen stand for a project of working out the existential dimension of dogma as a source and fruit of personal and social experience. The aim is to make dogma relevant for new experiences (and the other way around!), against all dogmatism of doctrine and beyond any identification of theology and doctrine. In order to mediate these to different uses of the word dogma, it may help to speak of dogma (in singular) and dogmata (in plural) in the line of Karl Rahner’s distinction of mystery and mysteries<sup>9</sup>. According to a basic distinction in the Cultural Anthropology of Michel de Certeau<sup>10</sup>, that difference

of both constitutes “places” of stable dogmata within the “space” of dynamic dogma – just see the concepts of “loci theologici” and “lieux théologiques en acte” in Melchior Cano and M.-Dominique Chenu. Dogmatic “de-finitions” circumscribe places structured by the spatial outside of the Other, that means by non-discursive practises, which enable to cross their borders. This transcendence of discursive borders allows an experience- and dogma-based theology at the same time, that is tracing significant places of God’s mystery named “makom”<sup>11</sup> in the space of the mysteries of our daily life, that is a taking place (“stattfinden”) of God, when and where he takes a place (“Statt finden”).

## 10. Different Language Games

What really happened in Mumbai? No doubt, all of us experienced the very basic necessities of this cross-cultural encounter as a real challenge. We had to face more simple problems caused by the limitations of language, for instance the problem of speaking and understanding Indian English (“Hinglish”) and German English (“Ginglish”). More complex, compared to this challenge, was the problem of translating senses and meanings from one discursive language game to the other. All these different languages build up universes of meaning within their own world, the games of which follow different rules: “The limits of my language are the borders of my world”<sup>12</sup>.

## 11. Productive Misunderstandings

Even our misunderstandings became debate-energizers which brought about vital and lively discussions. As Francis D’Sa said at the end of the final session: “It was fascinating, how we misunderstood each other”. A striking example of these productive misunderstandings he gave during a reflection after the conference. In his article *Mystery of Christ and Doctrine of Avatarā*<sup>13</sup> Joseph Neuner interpreted the Hindu doctrine of Avatarā in the light of the Christian heresy of Docetism, summed up by Francis D’Sa in the sentence “As if God became man”<sup>14</sup>. He argued against his fellow Jesuit, that not only the title of this article should be *Mystery of Avatarā and Doctrine of Christ*<sup>15</sup>, but also that the judgement of

Avatar as Docetism is based on a misunderstanding of Indian anthropology. For Hindus man basically means an unredeemed being within the circle of birth and rebirth – and Krishna was really man, transcending all these contingencies precisely like Christ, who – according to scripture and tradition – was “similar to us in all, except sin” (Heb 4, 15/Council of Calcedon).

## 12. Internal Differences

We had not only to face linguistic misunderstandings along cultural borders, but also differences within our cultures. The latter line of conflict crossed the basic borderline between India and Germany, because often not only Germans and Indians disagreed in certain points, but also Indians and Germans among one another. There were, for example, Indian voices in contradiction to the other voices quoted above, who named the “high level” of the German reflections “stimulating” and “exciting”. So one specific cross-cultural borderline was uniting academic theologians from India and dividing them from non-professional theologians from their own culture. This way Mumbai became a meeting point for different movements within the Indian church, representing its great “power in diversity” (Clemence Mendonca). As a result of that, there was a certain consciousness coming up during the conference that within God’s people not only Indians and Germans can learn from each other, but also Indians from Indians and Germans from Germans.

## 13. Embodied Hermeneutics

Even if we did not manage to understand each other completely in this complex learning process, we experienced a personal encounter in Mumbai, which is the embodied condition of the possibility of any dialogue. Incarnating the abstract idea of dialogue into flesh, we have to turn Immanuel Kant’s transcendental problem into an embodied discourse, defusing Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hidden idealism. There is no cultural hermeneutics of ideas as “fusion of horizons”<sup>16</sup> without real encounter of bodies, even pure hermeneutics of texts is not possible without an existential encounter with these texts. During the conference this constitutive need brought about a “compassionate listening”<sup>17</sup> among the participants, which made a

real – that is: embodied<sup>18</sup> – dialogue in the sense of Nelle Mortons concept of a theological “hearing to speech” possible: “In the beginning was hearing”<sup>19</sup>.

## 14. Concluding Feedbacks

At the end of the conference we had a final sharing by giving feedback to the conference. Many participants highlighted the importance of the face-to-face-experiences – especially during meal-times, tea-breaks and get-togethers in the evening. These moments of informal dialogue helped to bridge the gap between different mind-sets and enabled many participants to “enter the universe of the other” (Monika Scheidler). We not only experienced an intellectual sharing of ideas, but also an existential sharing of life “and cigarettes” (Ottmar Fuchs). These shared cigarettes’ are a symbol of the theological significance of the conference as an hour of grace, which made us encounter new Indian or German “friends” (Sr. Teresa Peter). The development of this cross-cultural friendship was not hard work to be done, but rather a gift to be received – because at least it was granted by grace. As far as there is no grace separated from nature, we have experienced gratefully this encounter of heads and hearts: “Your heart is warmer than your brain” (Sr. Jaisy Varickamthotty). It was also mentioned in the final sharing, that it was encouraging to see that “all these great theologians are also struggling” (Sr. Lucy Kurien), or more ironically: “Even intellectual theologians have stories to tell” (Fr. Michael Gonsalves). This heart-touching quality of encounter leads, as Bernd-Jochen Hilberath said, to the spiritual experience of the Easter encounter with the living Christ on his way to Emmaus, which made the hearts of the disciples burn.

## 15. Theological Outlook

Speaking for the German participants at the end of the conference, Dean Ottmar Fuchs concluded: “This conference was a first step and we cannot calculate its impact for the future yet.” A first step towards what? In what direction do we have to go? What kind of theology do we need for stepping forward? This question, raised during our final session, leads back to another crucial point of the

conference, which made many Indian participants get in touch with German experiences existentially. At the end of the final session, Ottmar Fuchs confessed that the Nazi-experience during the ‘Third Reich’ (1933-1945) is a central motivation for his generation, born between 1944 and 1948, for doing theology with an ideology-critical approach, that aims to uncover the “subversive power of dogma” (Ottmar Fuchs) as a source of resistance. This includes the insight into its relativity in the sense of a relational involvement into the contingency of its own socio-historical context – with consequences for our concept of interreligious dialogue, for example:

“When people speak about community among religions they [...] say: All religions [...] lead to the same God as all rivers lead to the sea. [...] Such a view [...] does not take seriously the differences among religions. [...] Precisely because of such serious differences it is not possible to adopt a superior point of view that talks about [...] the religions from a higher level. Such a [...] neutral point of view is not maintainable.”<sup>20</sup>

Because of that, inter-religious dialogue will not have to seek a utopic identity of the different, but instead it will have to mediate real differences of the identical. This theological turn from abstract identities on the level of theoretical ideas to concrete differences on the level of practical problems brings about changes within the religions taking part in that kind of dialogue – as an Indian participant illustrated at our conference in Mumbai. Many *Small Christian Communities* (SCCs) shift from being “agents for a change within the church” towards *Small Human Communities* (SHCs), becoming “agents for a change in society”, who discover common concerns in the light of the gospel: “There is no Muslim-electricity, no Christian-toilet, no Hindu-road” (Allwyn D’Silva).

## Notes

1. From Latin “finis” = limit, border.
2. In the sense of a “circum-scription” of its borders.
3. Cf. EA 14 and Dominus Jesus.

4. Cf. A. AMALADASS and R. ROCHA (Ed.), *Crossing the Borders. Essays in Honour of Francis X. D'Sa on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, Chennai 2001.
5. J. PARAPPALLY, "Jesus, the boundary-breaker: The revelation of what it means to be human," in: AMALADASS and ROCHA: *Crossing Borders*, 243-254, 243.
6. M. AMALADASS, Do we need borders between religions? A reflection on identity and difference, in: Amaladass and Rocha: *Crossing Borders*, 12-24, 24.
7. R. PANNIKAR, *The Interreligious Dialogue*, New York 1978, 4.
8. AMALADASS, "Conquest of the quarters (digvijaya). The quest for identity," in: AMALADASS and ROCHA: *Crossing Borders*, 151-167, 167. See also Kuruvilla PANDIKATTU, *Dialogue as Way of Life*, Mumbai, 1998.
9. K. RAHNER, "Über den Begriff des Geheimnisses in der katholischen Theologie," in K. RAHNER: *Schriften zur Theologie* (Band IV), Einsiedeln-Zürich-Köln 1967, 51-99.
10. Cf. M. de CERTEAU: *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley 1974.
11. "Makom", the Hebrew word for place, is used in Jewish tradition as a name of God (cf. Philo of Alexandria: *De Somniis I*, 63). According to Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jacques Derrida one can understand "makom" as a name of God in the double-sense of the French expression "avoir lieu", that means "taking place" as well as "taking a place" (cf. J.-F. LYOTARD, *Philosophie und Malerei im Zeitalter ihres Experimentierens*, Berlin 1986, 20f; J. DERRIDA, *Wie nicht sprechen. Verneinungen*, Wien 1989, 48).
12. Cf. *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* 5.6.: „Die Grenzen einer Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt" (L. WITTGENSTEIN: *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Tagebücher 1914-1916. Philosophische Untersuchungen [Werkausgabe Band I]; Frankfurt/M. 2000, 67).
13. Cf. P. NEUNER, "Das Christus-Mysterium und die indische Lehre von den Avatars," in: A. GRILLMEYER and H. BACHT (Ed.): *Das Konzil von Chalkedon. Geschichte und Gegenwart III*, Würzburg 1954, 785-824.
14. Emphasis: Ch. B.
15. Cf. F. D'SA, "Christian Incarnation and Hindu Avatar," in: *Concilium* 2 (1993), 77-85 (fn. 8).
16. "Horizontverschmelzung" (cf. H.-G GADAMER: *Truth and Method*, New York 2000 [1960], 397). Gadamer defines 'horizon' as the „range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (*ibid.*, 302).

17. Cf. M. ROSENBERG *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion*. Del Mar 1999.
18. Cf. Ch. BAUER. "The Railway Bridge of Shirampur. 'Hearing to Speech' (N. Morton) as Embodied Hermeneutics," in: K. PANDIKATTU and J. PONNIAH (Ed.), *The Dancing Peacock. Indian Insights into Religion and Development*, New Delhi 2010, 259-263.
19. Nelle Morton created a feminist theology of liberation on the basis of experiences in women-groups: „In the beginning was not the Word. In the beginning was the hearing. [...] We experienced God, as Spirit, hearing human beings to speech – to new creation. [...] The creative act of the Spirit was not Word speaking, but hearing – hearing the created to speech.” (N. MORTON, *The Journey is Home*, Boston 1985, 41/82). In that context Nelle Morton invented new metaphors for God: „It was in a small group of women who had come together to tell our own stories that first I received a totally new understanding of hearing and speaking. [...] [God as a] great ear at the heart of [...] our common life – hearing human beings to speech – to our own speech.” (ibid., 127). See also Kuruvilla PANDIKATTU, *TAMAS*, Jnanam 2005.
20. AMALADOSS, Do We Need Borders between Religions?, 13.

## **Exploring the Boundaries of Bodiliness: A Theological Challenge to Transhuman Advances**

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**Abstract:** Human beings have now the power to alter their very nature through a programmed change in their biological character. Earlier humans wanted to resemble the gods, separate themselves from their body or get near the arena of higher spirits on the ladder of low and higher natures. Today's cutting-edge technologies may overtake the performances of human limitations with the rise of biotechnological developments, like genetic engineering, gene therapies, nanotechnologies and stem cell researches. Now "superhuman" performances can be achieved by altering bodily elements. Humans want to be creators. This new power of "Playing God" brings forth many ethical problems.

This article discusses the ethical dilemma connected with bodily enhancements, transhumanism and instrumentalisation of the human body. It pleads for greater human sensitivity and responsibility in fostering human dignity while engaging in technological innovations. It asks for a "permanent confrontation with technology," for technology should not overtake humans but should always remain a human act. It recalls the plea of Pope John Paul II: "If the scientific research in this area should serve the person, it must be accompanied by a careful ethical reflection on every step, which reflects in corresponding legal norms for keeping the human life intact. Life can never be degraded to an object."

**Keywords:** Bodiliness, Body; Dignity of humans; Ethics of body enhancements; Human life; Transhumanism.

## 1. New Creators

Humans have now the power to alter the nature of their existence through a programmed change in their biological character.<sup>1</sup> As Ludwig Siep writes in an angelic language: “Humans want[ed] to resemble the gods, separate themselves from their body or near themselves to the arena of higher spirits on the ladder of low and higher natures.”<sup>2</sup> Technologies may overtake the performances of human limitations with the rise of biotechnological developments, like genetic engineering, gene therapies, nanotechnologies and stem cell researches. Now “superhuman” performances can be gained by altering the human bodily elements. Humans want to be creators. This new power of “Playing God” brings forth many ethical problems.

Here are a few examples of biotechnologies which sprang up powerfully all over the world in the late 90s: Today there are genetically engineered plants. The pesticide manufacturers can make more money with their products. About 70% of genetic engineering falls into this category. There are plants genetically engineered to produce plastic. There would not be much of a dependency now on the Middle East for petroleum. The Chinese tried with human genes into tomatoes and peppers to make them grow faster. One may not thus be a pure vegetarian any more. In Canada geneticists put human genes into fish to make them grow faster. In the United States several companies tried to place human genes into pigs in order to genetically match them to human individuals with a view to organ compatibility. Will they be human-pig or pig-human? Are humans disturbed by such projects? Not everything may be bad with genetic engineering. The question would always be a matter of demarcation.

In the bioethics discussion one argues about the difference between therapy and enhancement, between the fight against illnesses and the improvement of physical structures and performances, between making people better and making better people. While the therapy aimed to reduce pain and suffering may be morally allowed

and may appear anyway quite safe, but the permission to improve upon or better the human body is ethically problematic.<sup>3</sup> This article asks a few moral questions with regard to the enhancements of human bodiliness. Is it immoral to alter the biological nature of the human being? To what extent can we set limits to the moral understanding of human body in the wake of new biotechnologies?

## 2. Going beyond the Boundary: Transhuman Enhancements

The word “enhancement” is used in biological sciences in the sense of improvement or expansion of diagnostic, therapeutic, preventive or palliative possibilities. The enhancements of human beings can happen not only intergenerationally in the heredity process, but also already during the life-time within one’s own bodily existence. Enhancements in this sense, whether it is already now possible or considered possible in future, can aim at expanding physical qualities like the physical attractiveness (“physical enhancement”), or increasing cognitive abilities like memory performance (“intellectual enhancement”) or formation of certain behavioral attributes like for example the aggression (“moral enhancement”).<sup>4</sup> Such human enhancements raise questions regarding the boundaries of human bodiliness.

To what extent can we make justifiable changes while treating illnesses in the human bodiliness is a central question in genetic engineering, especially in pediatrics, application of psychotropics, cosmetic surgery and doping of the sport.<sup>5</sup> The enhancement debate raises three ethical questions:<sup>6</sup>

- Firstly, regarding the compatibility with the objectives and goals of medicine which are traditionally seen as the restoration and protection of health.
- Secondly, regarding the worthiness of enhancement in a health system against the background of scarce resources in public health.

- Thirdly, regarding the principal ethical legitimacy of enhancement and the moral status of the *conditio humana*.

Are we allowed to do what we can do? Is it necessary to creatively alter human nature, or invent a new generation of human beings? The fundamental newness of the human being is not just about altering bodily functions and performances but also about the imitation of performances beyond human nature. In this way human nature, whose abilities would be as different as the abilities of a new biological species from those of the existing human being, may have other capabilities and performances of a technical application, which might appear to be a different “generation.”<sup>8</sup> Hence the basic question is to what extent human creativity can be applied and allowed to the transmogrifying of the human body while maintaining the integrity of the human bodiliness?

### **3. Arguments for and against the Transhuman Enhancements**

The prevailing arguments for and against a foreseeable human enhancement are:

- a. The enhancement through biotechnical measures may be seen necessary so that the mankind does not perish because of inner conflicts and problems.
- b. It may be necessary for aesthetic reasons to increase the abilities of humankind in order to bring about perfection and ennoblement.
- c. It may be allowed for hedonic reasons so that experiences of the increased pleasure as well as the fulfilment of one's dreams of the luck becomes possible.
- d. It may be allowed for moral reasons so that more good actions become possible in the world.

- e. It may be allowed for theological reasons, as though the creator wanted the perfection of his creation that is the further development of the natural evolution through his capable creatures to bring into completion.

*Arguments against these premises:*

- a. The increase of intellectual abilities as a solution to the problems of ever complex social, economic, technical and ecological interactions is held as a survival necessity. It is a caricature of human contingency. The increase of intelligence is likewise considered to be a solution to the genetic problems, although concepts like “increase in abilities” and “problem solution” are quite vague and uncertain. It is really a want of the elites. A biotechnical improvement of humans may create more and new problems than solutions.
- b. Naturally one could admire the performances of a biomechanically improved human being like that of a “high-bred” car. But whether the biotechnical complement or perfection of a person is a desirable goal in itself doesn’t follow from it. Creating a human being with superhuman biological qualities may be an aesthetic ideal for some, but these subordinate subjective aesthetic reasons for it are not objectively or broadly recognized.
- c. The hedonistic premise appears more convincing. It is hardly disputed that all people strive for happiness. However, we don’t know what joys and disappointments of elevated physical capabilities are in store. The promising privilege of elites could lead to a reinforced reign over the “not-improved.”

- d. We don't know how human emotions and wishes would change through an improvement of genetic manipulations and installations. There is no compulsory ethical command to manufacture higher humans.
- e. In modern times, technical options like the utilization of nuclear energy may be brought as justification of a task to bring creation to its completion. However, a matter of creation moving towards perfection could be spoken only with the reference to the power of an infinite Creator. This understanding itself makes humans to be within creation and to avoid creating new inventions beyond any boundary. To lead creation back to completion by humans appears a far too daring thesis. We can neither protect creation nor bring it to completion. Neither is it a human task.

## **4. Prohibition of Transhuman Enhancements**

The arguments for the biological expansion of the human body are far from convincing. The fundamental reasons for the prohibition against human enhancements are:<sup>10</sup>

### **4.1 It harms the interests of others**

By manufacturing new humans with extension of basic physical possibilities, the people with inferior competences would be pushed to the periphery. The danger appears in competition that the “supermen” would lose respect for the less fortunate and would possibly oppress them with the prosperity of their new talents and with the domination over the common wealth. Biotechnical interventions to a highly productive improvement of the genome, especially the cloning of favorable genome, are technically extremely costly. So it becomes a commercialization of genes by the elites. Thus, the public virtues of justice, equality and solidarity are forced into greater problems.

## 4.2 It violates human dignity

The cure is accepted as legitimate goal, because it restores health. But the fundamental alteration of human nature would go against human dignity. Whereas a therapy is viewed as ethically justified, even if it involves interventions in human nature, as the purpose is the correction of a defect or illnesses, but the enhancement is, in contrast, thought to disturb the qualities and abilities of future human natures, as it would have an enormous influence on the natural development of humans with an attempt to play God.<sup>11</sup> As Heyd says, "An enhancement is rejected because it implies the refusal to accept the given natural qualities of the humankind and because it is presumptuously striving to create new types of natures, of which it could be established, that they are not human."<sup>12</sup> The dignity of the human being is violated with such enhancement of intellectual or physical abilities, because the identity of the human nature is disfigured. Genetic alteration attacks the very plan of life directly.

## 4.3 It damages the common good

The private acquisition of an improved biological provision would place society before the problems of equality and justice, when we hold that the biological disadvantages are reduced through the idea of social justice.<sup>13</sup> The standards for public equality would be lost through a biological constitution, whose joys and sorrows, performances and deficits, health and illness would seriously deviate from the previous experience and these would only be subsidiary. A number of public goods would be endangered. This does not mean that the development of medical therapies against degenerative processes of the body would be forbidden altogether. They are however to be avoided if they are performed through a mechanically manipulated superman, for no good reasons can be adduced in its support.

# 5. The Human Nature within the Boundaries of Bodiliness

What is the nature of the human being, and how does it show itself? Can nature be directive of the orientation for a being,

that it may be artificial or culturally conditioned? How can a reference be taken on nature in practical sense, if nature is equally understood in the double aspect of interior and exterior, of predetermined and socially given, of naturalness and artificiality as well as culturality? The founding fathers of the philosophical anthropology agreed upon an opinion, that the “nature of the human being” would distinguish itself through a “double character.”<sup>14</sup> The human being intervenes in nature since the beginning of his existence. He must even do this in order to assert himself against the aduerseness of the nature and in order to be able to survive. On the one hand, the nature of the human being is regarded as naturally given, on the other hand from the creativity perspective as culturally made.<sup>15</sup> Eric Parens puts it in different terms of distinction as “gratitude” and “creativity”:

As it emphasizes on one side our obligation to hold it before eyes, that the life is a gift and that we must learn to let things just as they are, on the other side it emphasizes also our obligation to change this gift and to demonstrate our creativity.<sup>16</sup>

For Reiss and Straughan:

Nature and all things, which are natural, are valuable and good in themselves; on the other hand all forms of genetic manipulation are unnatural in a sense that they are directed against nature and above all when they intervene to cross over the borders of their types; all forms of genetic manipulation therefore are wrong in its very essence.<sup>17</sup>

We understand by moralization of the human nature with Wolfgang van Daele: “What has become technically available through science should be made again through a moral-control normatively unavailable.”<sup>18</sup> A new regulation demand originates mostly with new technical developments. The human creature is a protection-good and it belongs to the human creature that it has the same protection-worthiness in his various stages. The Arguments of Species-belongingness, of Identity, of Potentiality and of Continuity can be considered as decisive guide for the application of the protection-worthiness of all born and unborn humans.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, a new development of transhuman enhancements might create new

problems in the principles of the protection-worthiness of humans. For human nature is an “indisputable part of our basic moral assessments provided we want to hold on to the subject-being as principle of morality.”<sup>20</sup> Charles Taylor says that nature is a constitutive property of us, which has a morally decisive role on life-goods and as such a moral source of its own kind.<sup>21</sup> Hence, nature, which plays an indisputable normative role, cannot be reconstructed.

Further, Habermas defends humanity in his critique of human nature against enhancement technologies, and he is correct as the enhanced individuals would have no ethical freedom and autonomy.

Eugenic interventions aiming at enhancement reduce ethical freedom insofar as they tie down the person concerned to rejected, but irreversible intentions of third parties, barring him from the spontaneous self-perception of being the undivided author of his own life.<sup>22</sup>

Human cloning is the most unnatural of all types of gene-technology and is consequently the most controversial. Cloning is not only unnatural, but it is also totally artificial. It goes against human nature. Enhancing natural bodiliness of humans is going against the very nature of humans. Protecting human bodiliness is to protect human nature and humanity.

## 6. Instrumentalizing Human Bodiliness Goes against Human Dignity

The human being is an end-in-himself. He is never to be treated only a means, but as an end. Therefore all interventions are morally forbidden which use humans as mere means (= Total Instrumentalization). In a pluralistic society, where there is no one single or uniform human picture, the dignity of the human being is preserved and safeguarded by the wisdom of the people through the Constitutions of Nations. It is a suitable criterion. In the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), recognition “of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” is said to be “the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.” At least thirty-seven national constitutions ratified since 1945 refer explicitly to human dignity. The moral

criterion of self-purposefulness or end-in-itself or dignity of the human being is founded and justified both philosophically as well as theologically.

Theologically the dignity, the self-purposefulness or being end-in-themselves of the human being results from the God's image and likeness. Every human being is endowed with this dignity and therefore to be loved for their own sake. Dignity demands charity and protection, for it is a genuine example of the love for the neighbor.<sup>23</sup> As Fukuyama says, "Denial of the concept of human dignity – that is, of the idea that there is something unique about the human race that entitles every member of the species to a higher moral status than the rest of the natural world – leads us down a very perilous path."<sup>24</sup> Human dignity can become the necessary prerequisite for every moral action, as it is the embodiment of morality. When we go beyond the boundaries of human bodiliness with the use of technology, then the human image and dignity gets into danger.

In the words of the moral theologian Josef Schuster, the arguments can be summarized as in the following:

The human image doesn't get into danger if the goals of genome research and its application to the human being serve therapeutic purposes. However it would be strange, if we would turn down the genetic engineering completely, for it can heal the illnesses genetically. But it becomes controversial and debatable if the human being is defined by his genome. That is biologically unacceptable and philosophically nonsensical.

Certainly the human image stands in danger, if we want to produce a new design of the human being through genetic engineering... If we clone Einstein, can we be certain, that the copy would not become a playboy or a crafty rogue or a proficient carpenter out of this intelligent man, but definitely it wouldn't be a second Nobel laureate for physics.

Again the human image gets into danger if it decreases the acceptance of disabled and sick people...

the human image gets into danger if being human is reduced to a biological thing.<sup>25</sup>

In the context where genes alone are enough and capable of making new humans with sounding-good slogans like “new genes – new humans”, the German bishops have come out very strongly with their positions safeguarding the human dignity:

Because the human being is not a product of coincidence, and because he didn't make himself, he doesn't exist in an absolute autonomy. As the final creature, he can guarantee himself neither sense nor value of his life. He lives within an already given boundary, which he may not cross over. His dignity is founded on God's image and likeness of humans. It means that he is unconditionally loved and approved by God for all his performances, abilities and inabilities. The human dignity is therefore inviolable and comes to all human beings, independently of the assessment of others or his own self-assessment, to the born and unborn, to the healthy and sick, to the disabled and dying.<sup>26</sup>

The question of human dignity should not be decided by the vote of the majority. Human dignity is not available for voting. The Article.1.1 of *Grundgesetz* (the Fundamental Law) of Germany says: “The dignity of the human being is inviolable. The obligation of all the state force is to preserve and protect it.” This value of human life from its beginning to the end belongs to this pre-givenness, over which there can be no voting. (Art. 19. 2 GG). As Fukuyama says:

Human beings had dignity because they alone had free will – not just the subjective illusion of free will but actual ability to transcend natural determinism and the normal rules of causality. It is the existence of free will that leads to Kant's well-known conclusion that human beings are always to be treated as ends and not as means... It would be very difficult for any believer in a materialistic account of the universe – which includes the vast majority of natural scientists<sup>27</sup> – to accept the Kantian account of human dignity.

## **7. Need for a Greater Human Sensitivity and Responsibility**

Theologically it is well-founded that each human being is unique and distinct, that each one is called by the creator into the existence and that s/he can answer this call in freedom. The Bible expresses this in the act of naming: God calls each and everyone with a name and wants that we answer him. In this ability to answer, our reason must take responsibility. Reason has to take its own course. The potential of the genetic engineering leads some to promises of everything-makeable-euphoria; while others turn to it with a total refusal. Both are wrong. It is necessary to support ethically correct goals and methods in the genetic engineering; and to look through the wrong objectives of the genetic engineering for evaluation and correction. We need neither to believe everything that it promises nor to do everything that it may make possible. Sensitivity and moral competence are required.

It is not disputed that the prenatal diagnostics protect the life of many children in the womb, as mothers and fathers expect a healthy child. At the same time the information of a certain hereditary illness in unborn children may become a death sentence. The problem is that through diagnoses more problems are created than promising therapies. People do have the right to have children if they are biologically capable, but they do not have any 'right' to use cloning, or genetic engineering. Rights don't exist in a vacuum; they are socially negotiated within a context of fundamental values. The question of access to particular technologies is a matter of public policy and depends on the social consequences of allowing that access, for example, to the nuclear technology, or dangerous pathogens and drugs. Science is at the service of humans and we have the right to choose the science which we want and to define our own vision of good progress. We should reject a science which is not in the public interest and which disfigures human dignity and destroys God's creation. Nor do we need a science which would create more divisions among humans. As the WTA FAQ states:

If some form of intelligence amplification becomes available, it may at first be so expensive that only the wealthiest can afford it. The same could happen

when we learn how to genetically enhance our children. Those who are already well off would become smarter and make even more money. This phenomenon is not new. Rich parents send their kids to better schools and provide them with resources such as personal connections and information technology that may not be available to the less privileged. Such advantages lead to greater earnings later in life and serve to increase social inequalities.<sup>28</sup>

In his book “Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution,” Francis Fukuyama raises the broader issue of performance enhancement: “The original purpose of medicine is to heal the sick, not turn healthy people into gods.”<sup>29</sup> He and others point out that increased use of such drugs could raise the standard of what is considered “normal” performance and widen the gap between those who have access to the medications and those who don’t — and even erode the relationship between struggle and the building of character.

## 8. Conclusion

Technology will always be a part of human life. It will be an important part of our future, but not the future. The human being as rational, reflective nature will always remain a superior to the technology. Technology should not decide for humans. Technology must have progress and enrichment. It may not be thrown away or pushed to an oppression or suppression. If it is properly used and ethically guided, then “technology as a part of human nature will not become a danger to them.”<sup>30</sup> The existing atomic weapons have the potential to wipe out all the life on our planet many times immediately. It is therefore in no way that we win only more power through science and technology; but we also become ourselves more and more victim of this power increase. Therefore let us not forget what Franz Böckle said: “The more science and technology place us in a position to reach what we want, all the more helplessly we come before the question, what we actually want.”<sup>31</sup>

Erik Strub inspires us with a positive note, “Technology would remain a human act in the sense of human when we give serious

thought to its concrete possibilities with constant discussions. Our task is the permanent confrontation.”<sup>32</sup> Moral consciousness for it may, should, must, can and will grow with such concrete possibilities. I would like to end this paper quoting Pope John Paul II who states categorically:

The latest developments in the area of the genetic engineering entail a danger, which excites a deep apprehension. If the scientific research in this area should serve the person, it must be accompanied with careful ethical reflection on every step, which reflects in corresponding legal norms to the protection of the integrity of human life. Life can never be degraded to an object.<sup>33</sup>

In his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, Pope John Paul II defends human life and dignity from a theological view point and categorically states that the human person is precisely a unique, singular and unrepeatable being, who cannot be manipulated or subjected to transformations that alter his/her given bodiliness. There is a boundary. That boundary should be respected. Problems in human conditions do not give us an unwarranted freedom to seek the solutions outside the boundary tarnishing human nature, bodiliness and dignity. If we cross the boundary, it goes against the very foundational aspect of humanity. Science and technology need religion and ethics. Science can help protect human bodiliness and religion can protect science from distorting human bodiliness.

## Notes

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3. Cf. A comprehensive report of “President’s Council on Bioethics of USA: Beyond Therapy. Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness. A

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  13. Cf. John RAWLS, *Eine Theorie der Gerechtigkeit*, trans. by H. Vetter, Frankfurt/M. 1975.
  14. Cf. E.M. ENGELS, "Natur- und Menschenbilder in der Bioethik des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Einführung," in: E.M. ENGELS (ed.) *Biologie und Ethik*, Stuttgart, 1999: 1-42; here 30. Also Cf. Jans Clausen, "Die Natur des Menschen: Geworden und gemacht.." 391.
  15. Jans CLAUSEN, "Die Natur des Menschen: Geworden und gemacht. Anthropologisch-ethische Überlegungen zum Enhancement." *Zeitschrift für Medizinische Ethik* 52 (2006): 391-401; here 392.
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## **Human Genome Project: The Role and Responsibility of Human Beings Today**

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**Abstract:** Human Genome Project unfolds our collective identity as humankind. We progressively seem to acquire more power and greater responsibility. Our collective identity reminds us that all our actions have a profound effect on the environment and on virtually all forms of life. We become stewards of our own Genome and this calls us for greater responsibility. With the discovery of the nature of DNA and the genetic code, a new previously unknown world was opened up that lies within each of us; within the cells of all other living creatures. Insights into all that was considered to be human nature, from disease possibilities to dispositions were poised to enter humankind's collective consciousness. Our explorations of the then unknown world which now have initiated unfolding in and through Genetic Revolution impels us to delve into the anthropic implications of the genome mapping and of the project of being human.

In the middle of the 20th century, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin viewed human beings as “Evolution become conscious of itself.” Today in the beginning of the 21st century we can well broaden this understanding as “Evolution become capable of consciously extending or eliminating itself.” So too in the reflections ahead, the author probes into the shift that has taken place in our understanding of Human beings as co-creators; Human understanding of God; Human longing for fulfilment; Humans as being at-home in the universe; human capability to affirm life; human urgency to make choices as well as human vocation as trailblazers of self-extinction or self-extension.

After focussing on the unique role and responsibility of humans in the universe of life, the author says that it is the task of the present humanity has to make constant and responsible choices collectively to determine our destiny – to extend or to extinct. In this sense today's human beings are the trailblazers for the whole of life. We have reached the level of consciousness that other living beings can hope for. Either we can foster the evolution in all living creatures or we can wipe out evolution and consequently life itself from earth.

**Keywords:** Enhancement of life; Extinction of life; Evolution; Human choice; Human dignity; Human Genome Project.

“The DNA structure initiated an intellectual revolution that has given us answers to questions that have exercised the human mind since the dawn of reason”. – *Walter Gratzer*

“The further the spiritual evolution of mankind advances, the more certain it seems to me that the path to genuine religiosity does not lie through the fear of life, and the fear of death, and blind faith, but through striving after rational knowledge... My religion consists of a humble admiration of the immeasurable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble mind.” – *Albert Einstein*<sup>2</sup>

Watson and Crick's model of the structure of DNA opened the door to discovering how genes are copied and passed on from parent to offspring, and how they direct development from embryo to adult. When they discovered the complementary base-pairing of the DNA double helix, Watson and Crick realised that genetic information contained in the sequence of bases could be copied with one strand of DNA forming the template for the making of a new strand. The new information could then be transferred from the nucleus to the cytoplasm to instruct the making of proteins. These ‘work houses’ make up the architecture of cells and tissues, and carry out vital tasks such as energy uptake and use, hormone synthesis, and sending and receiving messages. Over the next five decades, molecular biologists were elucidating the mechanisms involved to make enormous advances in biology, genetics and medicine. They now have a vast tool kit for manipulating and cloning genes, producing pure proteins on an industrial scale and ‘reading’ DNA sequences; ultimately to understand the full set of information stored in the ‘books of life’- the genomes of entire organisms.

Human Genome Project unfolds our collective identity as humankind. We progressively seem to acquire more power and greater responsibility. Our collective identity reminds us that all our actions have a profound effect on the environment and on virtually all forms of life. We become stewards of our own Genome and this calls us for greater responsibility. With the discovery of the nature of DNA, and the genetic code, a new previously unknown world was opened up that lies within each of us; within the cells of all other living creatures. Insights into all that was considered to be human nature, from disease possibilities to dispositions were poised to enter humankind's collective consciousness. Our explorations of the then unknown world which now have initiated unfolding in and through Genetic Revolution impels me to delve into the anthropic implications of the genome uprising and of the project of being human.

## **1. Humans as Evolution Capable of Extending/ Eliminating Itself**

The technological and moral evolutions have caused a great shift in our understanding of us. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin viewed human beings as "Evolution become conscious of itself." Today at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century we can well broaden this understanding as "Evolution become capable of consciously extending or eliminating itself." So too in the reflections ahead, I would like to probe into the shift that has taken place in our understanding of Human beings as co-creators; Human understanding of God; Human longing for fulfilment; Humans as being at-home in the universe; human capability to affirm life; human urgency to make choices as wells as human vocation as trailblazers for self-extinction or self-extension.

## **2. Humans as "Created Co-Creators"**

The Biblical account of creation depicts the creation of human beings in the image and likeness of God, which gives to each individual an intrinsic value. For Christians God as creator implies that the universe of space, time and humanity is dependent on God. Contemporary Christian view holds the position of "Continuing Creation" which affirms God's immanence and participation in the ongoing world. Universe and everything in it moment-by-moment depends on the sustaining activity of God and provides us the faith that we, as men and women, are created in the image of a personal God.

“‘To create’ is a verb describing the origin of novelty in the world through the continuing activity of God. In principle it could occur either as a continuous process susceptible scientifically. Creation with a spontaneous act of God is not describable scientifically. Creation with a capital C refers to a foundational biblical world-view based on faith in God.”

Creativity, which is the central part of human personhood, finds its source within God, the creator who continues His creative activity throughout human history. Reciprocally, humans reflect God in their creativity. God does his creative work through immanent means; the emergence of the new species through the law of genetics is God’s creative work. “Humans are often partners with God in producing what comes to be, “imaging forth” artifacts as God did in creation. God’s initial creation becomes a paradigm for the ongoing creative process in the world.”

In fact, HGP, is the best example and model for such creativity and ingenuity, where humans can truly claim to be “created co-creators.” So we need to explore the complexity of life with wonder and gratitude. “If the ‘glory of God is [hu]man fully alive,’ then obviously a human being who more ingenuous and creative gives ‘more’ glory to God. Such humans become the image of God better. Such astounding possibilities make us ‘created-co-creators’ in its most appropriate sense. This implies that the God we believe in is not the ‘God-of-the-gaps’, the God who satisfies one only at the limit-situation of one’s death. We do not need crisis moments to lead us to God. It is the conviction of a genuine believer that God can be found in the depths of the daily lives and not necessarily at the end of daily lives.”

We have an instinctual drive to worship other gods, made of our own *liking*. Only genuine mysticism can free us from our tendency to create gods that suit us, gods in our own likeness. We are prone to fashion gods with our own hands or intellect that fit our own expectations, conveniences and fancies. But God cannot be manipulated by our physical, emotional or intellectual powers. Only when we can bend down before the Ultimate (Other) can we abandon ourselves and in the process foster forgiveness, trust, innovations, fondness and creativity. The HGP and other related developments in the biological sciences could be looked upon as an enhancement of human dignity. It raises humans from the level of mere creatures to that of co-creators or partners in the ongoing process of creation, or ‘created co- creators’.

### **3. Human Longing for Fulfilment**

Even as co-creators, humans exist and evolve in a dynamic relationship with the rest of nature. As evolved mammals we are dependent on biological process to sustain our individual and collective lives in spite of our technological abilities. The created world despite being so breathtakingly startling still remains incomplete with almost infinite possibilities for further developments. Humans with their powerful and innovative resources of science are called upon to collaborate in completing the most transcendent task of finding fulfilment by being co-creators.

The HGP emphasises this positive aspect of scientific developments. Scientific developments have led to a paradoxical tension as science reveals more and more the complexity of living beings. Human Genome Project reveals that different species of living organisms are linked to each other intimately. The complexity of our human constitution builds interconnectedness. Human beings have undergone cultural evolution along with biological evolution. Biological evolution is based on the transmission of genetic information encoded in DNA by means of sex cells, while cultural evolution is based on our technological prowess. Therefore human beings are a symbiosis of genes and culture'; physiology and technology.

In such a prevailing scenario, the role of religion is not just to follow the path of science but also to evaluate, guide and shape human explorations and nurture hope for the future. What is called for is creative appreciation, critical guidance, prophetic fostering of life in its totality. Above all such a society and religion has to be a voice for all life forms. Such a society nurtures values, fosters life and promotes community from the awareness that we are all children of God.

Far beyond all these material progress, the deepest human longing for fulfilment is intimately embedded in the cave of our hearts. It is much more than material and is often met in the spiritual realm of encountering the Divine within one's own self and in the other. Moreover, there is a collective search for fulfilment where community is the focal point of encountering the sacred, which is actualised in the community of the faithful, in various human communities. Our holistic search for wholeness affirms our embodiment. Human hope and fulfilment has to begin with this present world, in the 'inaugurated eschatology', in the here and now.

## **4. At-Homeness in the Universe**

In spite of the perceptible contradictions and anxiety we feel in this world, religion gives us the certitude that “everything is good.” This feeling good brings in us a sense of being at home in this universe. This feeling of at-homeness stems from our deepest rootedness in the universe and our openness towards our fellow living beings. Being at home, we can safely reach out to all in need from the singularity we experience from our interconnectedness. Without negating a future eschatological vision, but affirming inaugurated eschatology, this sense of belonging urges us to transform this world with deepest commitment, with responsible freedom and fullest hope in the present. “For it is only by putting to death what is old that we are able to come to a newness of life.”

The HGP has provided reliable support to the theory of evolution by reconfirming the view that all living beings have a common origin, have originated from the same primordial stuff. The Genome Project and related developments show this unity in diversity of the living world. Just as atoms of different material elements are made up of the same fundamental particles, the DNA of different beings is made up of the same kind of nucleotides. Even in the sequencing also one can see a remarkable similarity. The prophetic vision of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin sheds light that, “However long it may endure the human world will hence forth only be able to continue to exist by organizing itself evermore tightly upon itself”. We need to uphold the insight that we are earthly beings and the entire cosmos is our habitat.

Ethical and moral issues arising as a spin off from contemporary developments in modern technology can act as trailblazers to evolve policies of fairness and justice, to reflect on and to ensure the well-being of the entire Cosmos. The breakthroughs in the genetic revolution impel us to think what we are and what we want to become. Genetic research, it is hoped, will help us ultimately to unlock the secrets of life processes and understand human destiny. Contemporary theories of evolution have provided us with a new sense of our place in the universe.

## **5. Affirming Life Unconditionally**

The more we explore the complexity of life the more we come to realise the complexity of our own make-up. For instance we are beginning to understand genome as the complex distributed system. The cytoplasm and the environment determine even gene expression in the production of proteins. Unfolding of one level of complexity

presents another level of complexity. Human existence is totally dependent on God and is contingent. Even if the genetic advancements can enable human immortality, these human constructions itself entail that human construct necessitates dependency on God who enhances life.

God is the God of the living. The crucial question to pause at this juncture is whether immortality can be identified with eternity; whether human immortality essentially eradicates human suffering and pain; for eternal life implies fullness of life. Hence immortality that the scientific advancements offer does not disqualify ontological dependency on God who is the fullness of life. Moreover Ethical concerns also take precedence with regard to human behaviours in an immortal human society.

Seeking immortality holds credibility both from a scientific perspective as well as from a religious perspective since God affirms life that “I have come that you may have life, life in fullness.” This Human task and responsibility to enhance life can never be substituted as humans ‘playing God’ from the mere fact that though immortals we are dependent on God. We find ourselves often moved to praise God and worship him because of the various affirmations of life in us not from the frustrations that we will die. Future is born from the present and the concerns of the present affirm God in the here and now rather than the concerns of the future which are still beyond our comprehension and are uncertain even if humans becomes immortals.

## 6. From Casual Chance to Creative Choice

Genetic revolution not only influences what we as human beings want to have, but also what we can become and what we are. This calls for a responsible and careful discernment rather than arriving at ready-made decisions. “Developments like HGP render the situation even more significant and relevant, since they bring in a new and important dimension to this area. Not only does the HGP confirm the main conclusions of evolution, it offers the real possibility of the appearance of a new true *Homo sapiens* species in a much shorter time. This can bring about a serious qualitative change in the status and destiny of humans, involving extremely important, social, ethical and religious implications.”

Advance in genetics presents us with a promise and predicament. The promise is that we may soon be able to treat and prevent a horde of debilitating diseases. The dilemma is that our new found genetic knowledge may also enable us to manipulate our own nature to enhance our muscles, memories and moods; to choose the sex,

height and other genetic traits and to make ourselves “better than well”. Even though immortal human beings may emerge with scientific advancements, the vital elements for our curiosity and quest would be to look into the emotional possibilities of these ‘super-humans’- their ability to hope for something; to trust in someone; to approach the divine mystery with awe and gratitude.

The larger society has a role to play in determining the future of society and shaping the destiny of life. We might dynamically deny or passively confront the scientific advancement, but this position of blocking all types of progress will only become counter productive in the long run keeping religion and science as opponents to each other. Moreover the inactive, uncritical submission to the dictates of Technology will not lead to true progress and development of human destiny. A scientist has to be one who pays attention to the existential concerns and promote spiritual values and respect ethical norms. And the religious person has to be one who respects scientific technologies without overlooking their social consequences that imply. Further, religions help us to realise that we are not the sole masters of the universe and we cannot take responsibility fully of the chaos and disorder of the universe. We need to turn our hearts towards the power beyond us, then we are in a better position to bring about the Kingdom of God.

Humanity has to make constant and responsible choices collectively to determine our destiny – to extend or to extinguish ourselves. Genetic advancements put before us the need to make decisive choices as we plunge into tomorrow’s horizons throbbing with promises.

## **7. Humans as Trailblazers of Own Extinction/ Extension**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is full of promises and perils. Genetics and molecular biology are decoding the formulas of life itself. As humans embark upon large-scale genetic engineering of other species and of ourselves, this new pattern of evolution becomes the driving force of the future evolution of the planet. The “struggle of survival” is inherent in nature. Biologists see the emergence and progressive evolution of life as a result of this struggle. Some of the contemporary scholars like Richard Dawkins hold the view that goes to the extent of postulating that life is the quest of “selfish genes” to perpetuate itself.

Unlimited technological progress coupled with rampant moral lethargy seems to be leading us to our own annihilation. We refuse to see the side effects or “collateral damages” of our technological

advancements. The present generation with its scientific dynamism and religious vision, it is hoped, will trace a more authentic and viable cosmic and human future. Our destiny is truly in our hands. The choice is open to us! Standing at the threshold of life – human, animal, vegetative – we can decide for the whole of life, whether to enhance it beautifully or to annihilate it violently! That is a tremendous spiritual responsibility and task!"

Human beings extend ourselves through our cultures, through technological innovations as well as become the cause of our extinction. As well as there is 'natural' extinction like diseases, and 'natural extension through the biological productions of natural production. Human made self-extinctions include warfare; genetic manipulations. We can consciously contribute to extend us to the whole of life, which is evolving. "When religion is a quest to communicate with the transcendent and a commitment to balance individual needs with service to others, it brings out the best in others."

One of the most renowned evolutionary biologists Richard Dawkins has eloquently proclaimed, "Evolution is an enchanted loom of slotting DNA codes, whose evanescent patterns, as they dance their partners through geological deep time, weave a massive database of ancestral wisdom, a digitally coded description of ancestral worlds and what it took to survive in them". Our explorations of and access to this ancestral wisdom would enable us to have a better explanation of human origins, interconnectedness of human beings within the species, with other forms of life without annihilating ourselves but enhancing our embodiedness.

In this sense today's human beings are the trail-blazers of the whole of life. They have reached the level of consciousness that other living beings can hope for. Either they can foster evolution in all living creatures or, <sup>or</sup> they can wipe out evolution and consequently life itself from earth.

## 9. Conclusion

In this article we have focussed on the unique role and responsibility of humans in the universe of life. Some of our salient findings are:

- The unique role of human beings as created co-creators has endowed them with unparalleled responsibility. Given the fact that humans are also prone to worship idols, we need to strive to use this responsibility cautiously and compassionately.

- Our longing and fulfilment is deeply embedded in the cave of our hearts. Human aspirations and longing will be fulfilled only at the eschatological moment when “every tear will be wiped away.” Genetics alone is inadequate to contribute to such a fulfilment.
- Ethical and moral issues can act as the trail-blazers to evolve policies, to reflect on and to ensure the well-being of the entire cosmos.

It is the task of the present humanity to make constant and responsible choices collectively to determine our destiny – to extend or to extinct (or better, extinguish), to enhance or eliminate ourselves. In this sense today’s human beings are the trail-blazers of the whole of life. We have reached the level of consciousness that other living beings can hope for. Either we can foster the evolution in all living creatures or we can wipe out evolution and consequently life itself from the earth.

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  6. Kuruvilla PANDIKATTU, “God Among Immortal Humans!,” in *Expanding Humanity’s Vision of God: New Thoughts on Science and Religion*, (ed.) Robert L. Herrmann (London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001).
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7. Humans in this age of mastery over nature are not content with conforming to the laws of nature, but want to have a say in determining the destiny of nature. Humans became far more ambitious and aimed at controlling nature along the lines determined by them. They want to go further to become its masters, channelling the resources of nature along their desired paths and selfish motives. Regarding our own contemporary civilization, Toynbee asserts “ we have been God-like in our planned breeding of our domesticated plants and animals, but we have been rabbit like in our unplanned breeding of ourselves.” [Peter G. HELTZEL, “Divine and Artificial Life: A Theological Exploration,” in *Expanding Humanity’s Vision of God: New Thoughts on Science and Religion*, (ed.) Robert L. HERRMANN (London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001), 231]
8. J.H Brooke speaks of a “god-of-the-gaps” concept where statements of God are used to fill the gaps in scientific explanation assuming that God would fill the gaps in scientific explanations. This assumption presupposes that God acts on the same level as the natural causes. This is objectionable because if such gaps exist, there would have been phenomena that remain unexplainable and mysterious, holes or gaps in the causal nexus. “To worship God as creator is to emphasise both His transcendence over the natural order and His imminence in the natural order.” Therefore a scientist, who is a believer has to encounter a dialectical tension between faith and reason; two intellectual activity, namely science and theology; two communities that is the community of faith and the community of scientific enquiry. He/She has to be awakened to the fact that “all believers of whatever religion have already heard His revealing voice in the discourse of creatures.” [Vatican II Documents, *Gaudium et Specs* 36].
9. More on cultural evolution will be seen in the first section of chapter seven.
10. Genesis 1: 1-9. The essence of the priestly account of creation in the Bible is that everything is created by God as good.
11. An excellent book on this theme is David TOOLAN, *At Home in the Universe* (New York: Orbis Books, 2003).
12. Vatican II document, *Ad Gentes* 8.
13. The Bible, John 10:10.
14. Job KOZHAMTHADAM, “The Human Genome Project and Human Destiny,” *Omega: Indian Journal for Science and Religion* vol 1, no.2 (December 2002), 45.
15. Cf. Kuruvilla PANDIKATTU, “Death of Death: Physical Immortality, Scientific Evidence & Religious Insights,” Kuruvilla PANDIKATTU (ed.), *Human Longing and Fulfillment: East Encounters West* (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2002), 216-218.

16. Kuruvilla PANDIKATTU, "Science-Religion Dialogue in India: Creative Challenges and Enabling Possibilities," Kuruvilla PANDIKATTU (ed.) *Together Towards Tomorrow: Interfacing Science and Religion in India* (Pune: Association of Science Society and Religion, 2006), 420.
17. One useful site where information is regularly updated for the dangers of human existence is <http://thebulletin.org/>. Retrieved on April, 2009.
18. Varadaraja V. RAMAN, "The Quest for Unity: Between Science and Religion and among Religions," in *Modern Science, Religion and the Quest For Unity*, (ed.) Job KOZHAMTHADAM (Pune: Association of Science, Society and Religion Publications, 2005),26.
19. Richard DAWKINS, *Climbing Mount Improbable* (New York: Norton, 1996), 326.
20. These insights are close to Daniel QUINN, *Ishmael* (New York: Bantam/ Turner Books, 1992).

## Folly by Another Name: Foucault and Lyotard on Knowledge

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to study the nature and significance of knowledge. He treats the subject from the perspectives of postmodern authors Foucault and Lyotard. The paper discusses first the ideas of Foucault followed by Lyotard's understanding of knowledge. Then it tries to show how their perspectives on knowledge affect the information-knowledge distinction and their relevance for contemporary society. Foucault's and Lyotard's extensive treatment of knowledge rests on a very important principle, that is, knowledge is necessarily a matter of social relation. They differ in their view of what type of social relations underlies knowledge. While for Foucault, it is power and techniques associated with power, for Lyotard, it is related to the shifting language games. However it is quite clear from their analysis that the distinction between information and knowledge gets blurred in postmodern perspectives. Knowledge is not pre-given or internalization through appropriation but is already and always interwoven with information we receive depending on our social position and on the language game we are playing.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Social nature of knowledge, postmodernism.

### Introduction

We live in the age of information and we often speak of the right to information. With the computerization of the contemporary society and with the easy availability of information, there emerges a need

to redefine our understanding of knowledge. In a certain sense the way we understand knowledge also shapes our understanding of information. From a common sense point of view, it seems that while information in as much as it is data remains exterior to the knowing self, knowledge because it is appropriation of information becomes part of the knowing subject. Knowledge is a result of the conjunction of the knower and the known. Knowledge and knower, though they are different, are nevertheless inseparable. However, knowledge because it needs to meet the criteria of certainty and truth must necessarily be free from the subjective influence of the knower. Irrespective of who the knowing subject is, knowledge must be the same. Knowledge cannot be false because falsity belongs to error while knowledge by definition is true. Thus knowledge is presented as an objective commodity available to all intelligent beings.

This paper attempts to study knowledge from the perspectives of Foucault and Lyotard. We shall first discuss the ideas of Foucault followed by Lyotard's understanding of knowledge, trying to show their perspectives on knowledge affect the information-knowledge distinction.

## I. Michel Foucault

Foucault employs the term “archaeology” to his study of knowledge. Archaeology does not deal with origin but probe into archive. Archive is a set of discourse that determines what can be accepted in a particular period. It refers to certain rules and practices, in a specific historical period, which are necessary in dealing with what can be accepted as scientific knowledge. However, in order to understand Foucault's ideas on knowledge, we need to turn to his understanding of folly or madness.

### 1. The History of Madness

His well-known book *The History of Madness* is an account of why and how madness came to be identified with mental illness in contemporary society. To achieve this purpose, he analyses history and identifies exclusion and confinement of the mad people – the significant features of the classical age, distinct from the ancient

and middle ages – as responsible for the present intolerable situation. He draws a parallel between leprosy in the Middle Ages and madness in the classical age. Just as leprosy induced fear among people and those affected by leprosy were expelled from the city in the middle ages, in the classical age, madness grew as an object of fear, and the mad people were excluded from others and were confined to a mad house.

Thus, the modern age is characterized by the monologue of reason on madness. Psychiatry is a clear example of monologue construed by reason to dominate insanity. In fact, psychiatry can thrive only on the dominance of reason over unreason. The moralizing psychiatrists exercise control over the mad people who resist domination. Thus Foucault's *The History of Madness* is characterized by the struggle between dominating psychiatrists and resisting mad people. According to Fink-Eitel, the instrument of suppression is no longer a specific social structure, but rather an entire culture (from the time of 'classical period') in which the dominant rationality, philosophy and science combine together to form, through social and political practices, a single repressive complex. Knowledge in the modern age has come to be a monologue of reason exercising power and domination. Thus knowledge is inevitably related to power relations.

## 2. Power-knowledge Relationship

Power is one of the central concepts in Foucault's Philosophy though he does not give a clear definition of power in his writings. However, he describes power in many ways. Power, for him, is not an outcome of political structures or social institutions. It is not primarily an imposition of authority of the dominant on the subjects; it is not merely a force exerted on the periphery by the centre. This does not mean that Foucault denies the relation between political structures and power. But power does not originate from the political structures. In fact, power underlies all human relationships in which one directs the behavior of another. He argues that power is omnipresent . . . because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere . . . because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault 1990, 93). However, Foucault is careful not to reify power:

“power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised at innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations” (Foucault 1990, 94).

In *Discipline and Punish*, he examines the disciplinary power. “Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise. It is not a triumphant power, which because of its own excess can pride itself on its own omnipotence; it is a modest, suspicious power, which functions as a calculated, but permanent economy” (Foucault 1991, 170). Disciplinary power involves new techniques of surveillance. Gradually these techniques are so internalized that each person becomes his/her observer. Foucault claims that the disciplinary power is exerted continuously and is subtler and more immense than power that underlies all forms of human relationship. It is “absolutely ‘discreet,’ for it functions permanently and largely in silence” (Foucault 1991, 177). It is more in this sense of disciplinary power that Foucault speaks of knowledge as related to power. He contends that knowledge is used to define others and thus it becomes another mode of surveillance. The Latin root of the word (*disciplina*) has a dual meaning: it refers both to an area of knowledge and to issues of control or power. Important to discipline are the techniques of individualising, ranking, ordering and tabulating, spatially, administratively and in a multitude of other ways: “The organisation of serial space was one of the great technical mutations in elementary education... by assigning individual places it made possible the supervision of each individual and the simultaneous work of all. It organised a new economy of the time of apprenticeship. It made the educational space function like a learning machine, but also as a machine for supervising, hierarchizing, rewarding” (Foucault 1991, 147). Knowledge, as a tool of control, opens up further possibilities for intrusive inquiry. Power and knowledge are so intertwined that one intensifies the other.

Foucault contested the conventional view that acquisition of knowledge makes us more powerful, and stated that the relationship between power and knowledge is more complex than this. He proposed that a more accurate representation of the relationship was

the term *pouvoir-savoir*, which he believed more appropriately reflected the single, inseparable configuration of ideas and practices that constitute educational discourse. The discourses of schools and other institutions serve to define and perpetuate “normal” and “acceptable” behaviour through a process of discipline that is imposed simultaneously from a variety of sources, including the individual’s self-discipline. In educational institutions, not only are the participants subject to the usual constraints of any social discourse, they are additionally involved in the propagation and selective dissemination of discourses for a variety of social contexts outside of education: “Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them” (Foucault 1991, 46).

### 3. Normalisation

The education system monitors our progress, passes judgements on us and moulds our attitudes and behaviours in certain ways to ensure that this exercise of arbitrary power is largely undetectable, yet tacitly accepted. “The Normal is established as a principle of coercion in teaching with the introduction of a standardized education” (Foucault 1991, 184). The punishment of misdemeanours and gratification of desirable behaviours ensures that the arbitrary definitions of behaviour as ‘good’ or ‘evil,’ ‘normal’ or ‘abnormal’ becomes, in the first instance, possible, then enforceable, and lastly, presumed to be ‘natural’ and incontestable; The classification and ranking of individuals – their reward and punishment are taken as the normal or natural order of things.

The art of punishing, in the regime of disciplinary power, is aimed neither at expiation, nor even precisely at repression. It brings five quite distinct operations into play: it refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals one from another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum

towards which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchises in terms of value the abilities, the level, the ‘nature’ of individuals. It introduces, through this ‘value-giving’ measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal. The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchises, homogenises, excludes. In short, it normalises (Foucault 1991, 182-3)

#### 4. Examination

Disciplinary techniques reach their educational pinnacle in the examination. It is through the examination, the test, that the ‘economy of visibility’ is transformed into the exercise of power and of control. “The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalising judgement. It is a normalising gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualised.” (Foucault, 1991, 184)

The exercising of power has to do with knowledge, its ownership and transmission: “the examination in the school was a constant exchanger of knowledge; it guaranteed the movement of knowledge from the teacher to the pupil, but it extracted from the pupil a knowledge destined and reserved for the teacher.” (Foucault, 1991, 187) The examination holds teacher and pupil in ‘a mechanism of objectification’. Examinations lock into place the disciplines of the school, creating of them a ritual, a spectacle, a ceremony. Marks and scores ‘formalize’ or fix the child within power relationships.

#### II Jean-Francois Lyotard

Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* addresses issues raised by the rise of modern science, particularly the legitimisation of scientific

knowledge. It is a reflection on the conditions of legitimization as such. Lyotard looks at the changing relationship between science and philosophy in the course of the unfolding of modernity.

## 1. Language Games and Social Bonds

Lyotard attempts to analyze different responses given to the question of legitimization of the scientific knowledge from the perspective of the philosophy of language. This method, however it may seem to adopt the approach of the analytical philosophy that brings together language and logic, falls in line with reflections on the language of the continental hermeneutical tradition according to which language as the very possibility of existence and of openness to Being. In so far as the legitimization of the scientific knowledge depends on discourses formed by different types of enunciations ordered coherently, scientific knowledge adopts the method of language games to address the specific problem of research. This method classifies enunciations as denotative, performative, prescriptive, interrogative, narrative, literary, etc. The transition from one type of statement to another, says Lyotard, is a playground marked by linguistic rules legitimized by a tacit agreement among the participants of this game. In this sense, for Lyotard “to speak is to fight, in the sense of playing, and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics” (Lyotard 1984, 10). The speech acts are indeed engaged in a struggle that requires a confrontation between players, although it does not result in a direct opposition among protagonists.

However, according to Lyotard, these very speech acts form the social bond. The language game is constitutive of social relations that define society by bringing together individuals. The representations of modern society can be grouped into two sets, either society as a unified organic whole or as divided into class groups. Lyotard seeks to avoid this dichotomy by proposing a third alternative. Termed as the postmodern perspective on the nature of social bonds, it gives specific emphasis on language games in order to define the bond between individuals. According to the modern approaches to the nature of social bonds, the organization of society is based on the integration of individuals, either through unity and totality or

through division and dissent. In both cases social bonds cannot account for the society as it has developed in the second half of the twentieth century.

Towards the turn of the twentieth century, society has undergone dramatic changes thanks to the technological development leading to the volatility of social attachments and to the instability of identity in individuals. Hence there is a need to adopt other approaches to envisage the nature of social bonds. The volatility of social bonds characteristic of our times is symptomatic of society's mutation since society no longer remains as a unified whole or as divided groups. Changes introduced in social practices represent a transformation of social relations, a shift from modernity to postmodernity. Individuals, therefore, are no longer part of a fixed and permanent social group or class. The postmodern approach to the nature of social bonds, as defined by Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*, lays emphasis on the mobility of individuals within the linguistic space in relation to knowledge. From this perspective, "a *self* does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before (Lyotard 1984, 15). Society consists of individuals participating in various language games. Social institutions also participate in language games by regulating the constraints of these games and the social relations established under their influence. Thus the principle of legitimacy is essential for understanding social change. Among the social institutions influenced by the principle of legitimization, Lyotard is interested in the institutions of contemporary knowledge, specifically scientific knowledge.

## 2. Narrative and Scientific Knowledge

In order to understand the Lyotard's arguments on the legitimacy of scientific knowledge, it is important to understand the distinction he makes between narrative and scientific knowledge. Science, in its modern development, was constantly confronted with the question of its own legitimacy, an issue having both socio-political and epistemological implications. In this sense, scientific knowledge makes use of other types of knowledge to ensure its legitimacy. In Lyotard's own words,

Knowledge [*savoir*] in general cannot be reduced to science, nor even to learning [*connaissance*]. Learning is the set of statements which, to the exclusion of all other statements, denote or describe objects and may be declared true or false. Science is a subset of learning. It is also composed of denotative statements, but imposes two supplementary conditions on their acceptability: the objects to which they refer must be available for repeated access, in other words, they must be accessible in explicit conditions of observation; and it must be possible to decide whether or not a given statement pertains to the language judged relevant by the experts (Lyotard 1984, 18).

Neither science nor learning thus defined can claim to account fully for knowledge. The criterion of truth adjusts both, since they are organized according to the difference between true and false statements under different conditions. According to Lyotard, both learning and scientific knowledge based on the criterion of truth are only part of knowledge in general, which includes also other types of knowledge based on other criteria such as efficiency, justice, beauty, happiness, etc. It is therefore necessary to distinguish scientific knowledge from narrative knowledge, the latter involving criteria other than truth.

Narrative knowledge is opposed to scientific knowledge in many ways. It is generally associated with traditional forms of knowledge, and thus it brings together denotative, prescriptive and evaluative knowledge. The best form of narrative knowledge is story telling or narratives. Lyotard identifies four main features of such stories, which characterize narrative knowledge. First, stories give legitimacy to social institutions and enable people to be integrated into these institutions. In deciding upon the socially accepted criteria both for institutions and for the participation of individuals in these institutions, stories contribute to the formation of social relationships by defining what is considered a success or failure based on the rules of language games. The second feature of stories, as opposed to scientific knowledge, is that they allow plurality of language games. Thirdly, the special relationship between narrator, narratee

and narrative involved in stories, therefore narrative knowledge is remarkably different from that of the scientific knowledge. “The knowledge transmitted by these narrations is in no way limited to the functions of enunciations; it determines in a single stroke what one must say in order to be heard, what one must listen to in order to speak, and what role one must play (on the scene of diegetic reality) to be the object of a narrative” (Lyotard 1984, 21) Thus, the roles of the participants in the language games of stories are not clearly distinguished from one another as is the case in scientific knowledge, they are rather embedded in the specific dynamics of narrative knowledge. In this sense stories and narrative knowledge lay foundation to social relations by defining the very rules of language games. Finally, stories bridge the present time of the individuals in a given society and the age-old culture that gave birth to them. The pragmatics of narrative knowledge therefore determines the conditions for legitimizing discourses in a particular culture to which this knowledge belongs.

In the case of scientific knowledge the relation between the sender, addressee and referent is very specific. First, the sender must speak the truth about the referent; this means that he must be able to prove his claim and refute contradictory claims. The addressee must accept or refuse what he hears; this means that the addressee must be able to judge the evidence presented by the sender, formulate his own position and turn out to be a potential sender. Finally, the referent about which the enunciation is made is deemed to provide necessary proofs to validate or refute enunciations made by different senders. Moreover, the referent should not be capable of providing contradictory proofs. Thus the referent, even though not considered to be in full conformity with supportive enunciations about it, is still supposed to provide the necessary elements to develop a coherent set of enunciations on the subject matter.

This specific relation between sender, addressee and referent, which is characteristic of scientific knowledge determine two main components of this knowledge: they are research and teaching. Concerning research, the referent deemed to be consistent and is supposed to provide proofs for this consistency, allows the possibility of a consensus among various individuals who are both senders and

addressees with regard to the referent. In teaching, the participants are trained on the language game involved through didactics, that is through the transmission of enunciations on which consensus has been reached in research. A sender can now teach these enunciations to an addressee and this is a one-way relationship.

While there are major differences between the pragmatics of narrative knowledge and those of scientific knowledge, these two types of knowledge are not isolated, but are in fact related. With the development of modern science, the space occupied by scientific knowledge has reached extraordinary dimensions, entering into conflict with other kinds of knowledge grouped here under the term narrative knowledge. However, the relation between these two forms of knowledge is not confined to conflicts. The problem of legitimization of scientific knowledge paves the way for us to identify a close relation between these two kinds of discourse. Scientific discourse consistently makes use of narratives to justify its methods and to legitimize its knowledge. Lyotard gives Plato's allegory of cave as an example. Scientific knowledge, in its quest for legitimacy, bases itself on the narrative form, hence on narrative knowledge. In classical science, the use of narrative in the legitimization of scientific knowledge is characterized by a reference to God or other transcendent principles. Modern science rejects all such transcendent principles. The language game of the modern science does not appeal to a transcendent authority to establish rules. Its rules rely instead on the complementary relation between the sender and the addressee, both supposedly qualified to be enunciators about a certain referent. The rules of the language game of modern science are considered to be immanent in that game. However modern scientific knowledge, according to Lyotard, appeals to narrative knowledge, to legitimize its discourse. He claims that the advent of scientific modernity has accentuated the recourse of scientific knowledge compared with the classical science that operated under the aegis of a transcendent principle. In the absence of a transcendent principle, authority of legitimization is shifted to human narratives as history. "Narration is no longer an involuntary lapse in the legitimization process. The explicit appeal to narrative in the problematic of knowledge is concomitant with the liberation of the bourgeois classes from the traditional authorities. Narrative knowledge makes a resurgence in

the West as a way of solving the problem of legitimating the new authorities" (Lyotard 1984, 30). In its modern form, scientific knowledge is equally dependent on narrative knowledge, when it comes to its legitimacy.

### **3. Modern Legitimation and Delegitimation**

Lyotard is particularly interested in the narrative knowledge, the source of the legitimation of modern science. There are two main legitimizing narratives that have shaped the development of scientific knowledge in modernity: the narrative that emphasizes practical knowledge in the pursuit of the freedom of humanity and the narrative that gives a major role to speculative knowledge in the development of the Spirit as was the case in Hegel's Idealism. Both narratives have contributed to the legitimation of the tremendous growth of science during the last two centuries.

The first of these two narratives focuses on the practical knowledge as a means to achieve human freedom. In this version of the legitimation of scientific knowledge, science contributes to the stabilization of learning, of the social order and of social behavior. Thus it helps improve the lives of individuals in a society ruled by the State that relies on scientific knowledge in the conduct of the affairs of the City. This scientific knowledge is then legitimized by freedom and progress made possible by scientific knowledge itself. "The State resorts to the narrative of freedom every time it assumes direct control over the training of the 'people,' under the name of the 'nation,' in order to point them down the path of progress" (Lyotard 1984, 32). Science educates people to get out of superstition and ignorance, thus leading to greater autonomy, and the training of administrators and professionals who can lead the society in its march towards freedom. This is the narrative that has been the hallmark of the Enlightenment and many liberation movements that spanned over the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Scientific knowledge is legitimized because in its practical form it contributes to the achievement of these goals of liberation.

The second narrative which legitimates of modern science is that which emphasizes the contribution of scientific knowledge to the development of the Spirit. Here, there is no question of placing

science at the service of the liberation of humanity, as in the first story. Rather, the individuals by participating in the development of science are at the service of the Spirit, or Life. “In this perspective, knowledge first finds legitimacy within itself, and it is knowledge that is entitled to say what the State and what Society are. But it can only play this role by changing levels, by ceasing to be simply the positive knowledge of its referent (nature, society, the State, etc.), becoming in addition to that the knowledge of the knowledge of the referent – that is, by becoming speculative. In the names ‘Life’ and ‘Spirit,’ knowledge names itself” (Lyotard 1984, 34). Kant, Fichte, Schleiermacher and Hegel are, according to Lyotard, the main founders of this narrative of legitimization. Nietzsche and the hermeneutics of the twentieth century also participate in this narrative. According to this narrative, the legitimization of scientific knowledge is based on its participation in the development of the Spirit in which human person takes part in so far as he gets integrated into the language game of science and he thus exercises the Reason of science.

However, Lyotard argues that in the contemporary society, these grand narratives can no longer fulfill the role of legitimization they assumed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The technological development that followed World War II and the computerization of society have greatly undermined the credibility of these legitimizing narratives. The two world wars, the Holocaust, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the globalization of the economy have also done significant damage to these grand narratives, especially to their promise of emancipation and freedom. This loss of credibility of the modern meta-narratives marks the contemporary issue of the legitimacy of scientific knowledge. The contemporary society is characterized precisely by the disbelief in the grand narratives of legitimization. Thus, as the social bond consists of language games and since the particular language game of the modern science has occupied a considerable space in the language games of modernity, the illegitimacy of these grand narratives is often interpreted as a disintegration social bonds. For Lyotard, it is irrelevant to mire in nostalgia of the modern legitimization of science, but it is necessary to take note of the process of de-legitimation of the discourse that prevails in our contemporary society if we are to

properly consider the problem of the legitimacy of scientific knowledge in this society.

#### 4. Contemporary Legitimation

Given this contemporary disbelief in the modern meta-narratives of legitimization of scientific knowledge, several new approaches emerge to envisage the legitimacy of science. Lyotard identifies two approaches, functionalism and consensus through communication, both of them unsatisfactory for him and then proposes a postmodern perspective of a legitimization of scientific knowledge and the language game of science.

The first contemporary approach identified by Lyotard is functionalism whose principle is performativity. Luhmann, for example, adopts this approach. The criterion that gives the language game of science its legitimacy is the power made possible by technology. Science, from this point of view, is considered a self-referential system, so it would work according to its own rules and only in fortuitous relation to other social systems. Scientific knowledge would be accountable only to itself in terms of its optimal performance. The second approach to contemporary legitimization of scientific knowledge discussed by Lyotard draws on the second modern narrative of legitimization, that of emancipation. It is consensus through communication proposed by Habermas. This approach legitimates scientific knowledge through its contribution to a search for social consensus and to the unity of society. It focuses on the empowerment of individuals through transparent communication that allows everyone to participate, and as the results of this communication to establish universal standards that are democratically defined.

Lyotard rejects both these approaches as unsatisfactory. As regards functionalism and performativity, he holds that the technological criterion does not adequately justify scientific knowledge since it remains silent about the criterion of the truth of the enunciations of the scientific language game and about the criteria of other language games such as justice, happiness, etc. As regards consensus through communication, Lyotard argues that the universality implied by consensus through a transparent

communication does not reflect the diversity of language games of the contemporary society. This approach allows neither dissent nor invention residing in the heterogeneity of language. Both these approaches remain close to the modern grand narratives of legitimization, which are de-legitimized.

The postmodern response to the contemporary problem of the legitimization of scientific knowledge proposed by Lyotard lays stress on sensitivity to differences and search for instabilities. It does not promote efficacy or optimal performance of a scientific system, nor does it subscribe to the idea of science as an instrument for human emancipation, but promotes the invention of counter-examples, the discovery of the unintelligible and the research of paradox. Unlike the narratives of modern or contemporary legitimization, which assume the stability and permanence of science, the postmodern perspective of the legitimacy of the scientific knowledge is in favour of mobility and volatility which are characteristics of the contemporary era. And the model of legitimization it suggests is not one of optimal performance, but of difference understood as paralogy. Thus the postmodern science and the postmodern perspective of legitimacy of science highlight the scope of the ineffable, the unknown, the Other. They invite us to bear the incommensurable in determining the forms of knowledge, especially the forms of scientific knowledge. In this sense, “the postmodern would be that which in the modern alleges the unrepresentable in presentation itself, which refuses itself the consolation of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would allow nostalgia for the impossible to be felt in common, which requires new presentations, not in order to enjoy them, but the better to convey that there is the unrepresentable” (Lyotard 1984, 32).

## 5. Conclusion

Both Foucault’s and Lyotard’s extensive treatment of knowledge rests on a very important principle, that is, knowledge is necessarily a matter of social relation. They differ in their views of what type of social relation underlies knowledge. While for Foucault, it is power and techniques associated with power, for Lyotard, it is related to the shifting language games. However it is quite clear from their analysis that the distinction between information and knowledge gets

blurred from postmodern perspectives. Knowledge is not a pre-given or internalization through appropriation but is already and always interwoven with information we receive depending on our social position and on the language game we are playing. If there are any differences at all, they are only superficial as at the depth dimension, they are closely linked. If knowledge is based on power relation, information is one important technique that maintains the power relation; if knowledge stands in need of legitimization, information plays a vital role in the process of legitimization, whatever the language game may be. There is a paradigm shift from either-or to both-and.

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## Circulation of Ignorance: A Tool for Oppression or Liberation?

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**Abstract:** Epistemology and ignorance are intimately related. We might naively construe the relationship as hostile because epistemology deals with operations of knowledge, the goal being the elimination of ignorance. It appears that epistemology and ignorance are radically opposed to each other. But a deeper scrutiny will manifest some of the complexities involving the two. Perhaps a juxtaposing of the two, as in 'epistemology of ignorance', might offer an effective semantic tool that will assist us in drawing out the nuances implied and prove to be educative and transformative.

So this article studies the complex phenomenon of ignorance, exploring its different forms, examining how it is produced and sustained. It problematizes the role that they play in knowledge production and circulation, and seeks to understand how they impact the power relations in our society. Epistemologies of ignorance certainly widen the understanding of ignorance that is often construed as a gap in knowledge or an epistemic oversight that can be remedied once it is noticed. While this kind of ignorance does exist it is not the only kind. There are also other forms of ignorance that can put on the mask of knowledge and produce domination and exploitation. Sometimes these 'unknowledges' are deliberately produced while at other times they are unconsciously generated.

The production, maintenance and circulation of ignorance in our society generates oppression and exploitation. Ignorance is not merely a tool of oppression employed by the powerful.

It is also a strategy of survival for the victims. Often the victims of oppression use it to unlearn the ways of the oppressor. This is widely known as the 'strategy of resistance'. In the context of our exploration of how a witness of Christian values can liberate society, we explore how ignorance, in multiple ways, can re-produce oppression. However, we are not merely interested in the understanding of this issue, but also in its remedy. Hence, our study is both diagnostic and therapeutic. The motivation for this study flows from our mission to bring forth the kingdom of God in our society. It is in this regard that we feel that our study of the epistemologies of ignorance can redeem our society, leading to a praxis of life deeply fuelled by the values of the kingdom.

**Keywords:** Casteism; Epistemology; Epistemology of ignorance; Liberatory epistemology; Manufactured ignorance; Ignorance.

Epistemology and ignorance are intimately related. Yet it is not easy to discern the contours of this complex relationship. We might naively construe the relationship as hostile because epistemology deals with operations of knowledge, the goal being the elimination of ignorance. It appears that epistemology and ignorance are radically opposed to each other. But a deeper scrutiny will manifest some of the complexities involving the two. Perhaps a juxtaposing of the two, as in 'epistemology of ignorance', might offer an effective semantic tool that will assist us in drawing out the nuances implied and prove to be educative and transformative.

The 'epistemologies of ignorance' study the complex phenomenon of ignorance exploring its different forms, examining how it is produced and sustained. It problematizes the role that they play in knowledge production and circulation, and seeks to understand how they impact the power relations in our society. Epistemologies of ignorance certainly widen the understanding of ignorance that is often construed as a gap in knowledge or an epistemic oversight that can be remedied once it is noticed. While this kind of ignorance does exist it is not the only kind. There are also other forms of ignorance that can put on the mask of knowledge

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## 1. Survey of Ignorance Studies

Ignorance Studies have begun to make their presence felt and have been instrumental in the exposition of new insights into the relations of various forms of oppression.

### 1.1 Racial Oppression

Racial oppression has been investigated and exposed as an unjust practice by many scholars, but few have fully examined how it is linked to conceptions and productions of knowledge. Even less attention has been paid to the epistemically complex processes of the production and maintenance of ignorance and its relationship to racism. As the underside of knowledge calls for a thorough examination, this becomes imperative in the context of race and in particular of racism.

Attention to racialized ignorance is found in the work of Charles Mills. In his book, *The Racial Contract* (1997), Mills presents the epistemology of ignorance as part of a white supremacist state in which the human race is divided into full persons and sub-persons. Since both the full persons and the sub-persons do not fully understand the racist world they live in, the racist white people are to fully benefit from their racial hierarchies, ontologies and economies.<sup>1</sup> In 1983, Marilyn Frye, in her book, *The Politics of*

*Reality*, had already observed that ignorance impoverishes the oppressors. Far from being accidental, the ignorance of the racially privileged (e.g., whites) is often deliberately cultivated by acts sustained by institutional systems supporting the white people's sense of the world of the people of colour.<sup>2</sup> This world itself is a product of the ostrich ignorance of the white.

## 1.2 Manufactured Ignorance

Sensitive attention to manufactured ignorance can be found in the work of Robert Procter (1996). Proctor examines the 'cancer wars' in the United States and exposes the political factors which had negatively influenced cancer research, deliberately creating confusion and uncertainty about the carcinogenic risk of products such as tobacco, meat and asbestos.<sup>3</sup> Influenced by the work of Procter, Mills and Frye, Nancy Tuana (2004) studied the value of epistemology of ignorance for a better understanding of the ways in which sexism informs the science of female sexuality.<sup>4</sup> Invoking the notion of 'agnontology', i.e., the study of what is unknown, Londa Schiebinger examined the sexual politics behind the creation of ignorance of abortifacients (abortion facilitators) in Europe.<sup>5</sup> This attention to manufactured or socially engineered ignorance complements the racialized ignorance introduced by the work of Fyre and Mills.

## 1.3 Re-contextualization of the Epistemologies of Ignorance

One can notice attempts to re-configure and re-contextualize ignorance studies flowing from the exposition that they are based on a lingering foundationalism. Harvey Cormier and Mariana Otrega disclose their stubborn reliance of binary systems like 'inside /outside' and 'center /margin'. In view of the same, Nancy J. Holland attempts a remediation relying on the work of Martin Heidegger.<sup>6</sup>

Heidegger thought that Truth (aletheia) is possible only against the background of what is forgotten or unknown. Thus, in his view knowledge depends in important ways on what is implicitly known but cannot be thematized, e.g., background assumptions, practical skills, cultural understandings, etc. This means we cannot know

everything at the same time and what we cannot know shapes the outline and provides the supporting framework for what we can. This shows that Heidegger believed that truth is dependent on context and largely contingent. It is also dependent on a wide range of background conditions, including language, social practices, pre-existing knowledge and current conditions of knowledge acquisition. From this point of view all epistemologies become epistemologies of ignorance and all knowledge claims conceal as much as they reveal. This brings in a humble epistemology – it accepts an openness with regard to the possibility of error and the limits of human knowing. Thus just as a work of art reveals itself as work, so also knowledge is challenged to own its own contingent and partial status.

Building on an ontology of ignorance, Nancy Holland teaches that any given case of ignorance will have an ‘ontic’, that is, a concrete, contingent history. This history allows us to distinguish between ignorance induced by unavoidable limits (such as the absence of the telescope) and ignorance that conceals what could under power relations be revealed, e.g., belief in geo-centrism after Galileo.<sup>8</sup> Often in our times science that is grounded on speculation lingers for some time on account of the authority of the scientist or sheer institutional force of science. Thus, for instance, Einstein’s cosmic constant survived till it was finally dislodged by the empirical evidence provided by Edwin Hubble in 1929.<sup>9</sup> This shows that the reliance of knowledge practices on power relations urges the power relations to undergird the truth they produce.

## 2. Understanding the Epistemology of Ignorance

Studies of ignorance are rare but the question of epistemology of ignorance has thrown light on our need to bridge the gap in our own ignorance of the role and importance of ignorance. Some obscurantist scholars who are anti-intellectual posit ignorance as a positive alternative and antidote to intellectual elitism. Besides this promotion of willful ignorance, there are interesting ignorance studies emanating from feminist epistemologies, social epistemologies, social studies of sciences, critical theory, subaltern studies, postcolonial studies and other forms of postmodern

perspectives that have engaged in a piercing critique of western rationalities. Thus, there are many epistemologies of ignorance. But we choose one that operates at the ‘ontic’ level which allows us to take the question of power seriously. This means that we are not concerned with the irremediable background conditions but with the historical, sociological, political conditions that can distort and interfere with our knowledge enterprise, and as such can be resolved.

## 2.1 Epistemic Location and the Epistemology of Ignorance

It is not that mainstream epistemology had not considered ignorance. It did see ignorance as a bad epistemic practice. What is revolutionary is the perspective on ignorance not as a feature of neglectful epistemic practice, but as a substantive epistemic practice in itself. It is substantive in the sense that it is an epistemic practice that produces a condition of knowledge. The epistemology of ignorance attempts to uncover the fact that the substantive practice of ignorance is structural.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed all epistemologies are epistemologies of ignorance. All knowledge claims conceal as much as they reveal, including the conditions of their production and the power relations that they serve. Hence, an epistemology of ignorance studies how the dominant elite depend on the condition of ignorance to produce and maintain this unequal power relation.<sup>11</sup> This had already been theorized by Michel Foucault when he exposed the power-knowledge relation. In our context we attempt to make a profound analysis of the same in the light of what can be called power and ‘un-knowledge relation’. In other words, we shall strive to securitize the power and ignorance relation. Hence, we do not understand ignorance as a lack of knowledge or erroneous knowledge in the sense of seeing the world wrongly that can be remedied but as a substantive practice that differentiates the dominant group. That is, it is concerned with how we fail to know certain things that are of vital importance to us and our society.<sup>12</sup>

It is often said that the members of the dominant group within a society lack the ability to critique its oppression—the epistemic position of the dominant elite brings limitations that can debilitate self-criticism. Such an incapacitating condition inherited from the

social location can be seen as substantive practice of ignorance, that is, it produces a perceptual attentiveness that produces truncated versions of knowledge that fails to see its blind spots. This means that the social location of the dominant elite provides a sort of apriori disposition which is trapped in a deductive logic based on the premise that one has less ability to question. This suggests that the dominant elite lives in a fantasy land and remains in need of a leap of consciousness that can be triggered mainly by the victim. Hence, it is the victim that chiefly has the vantage point that can redeem the oppressive power relation.

The experiences of Gautama Buddha, Emperor Ashoka, and many others expose how the question of redemption is raised by the victim, triggering a leap of consciousness and then leading them to question their oppressive structures. Similarly the brutality of caste, sati and child marriage could not be substantively discerned from within, and had to wait for the entry of the notions of the dignity of the human person, and ideals of freedom, fraternity, and equality to raise the consciousness of our nation with the entry of Christian culture. Hence, attention to what we have called an epistemology of ignorance is urgent and can save our society from its debilitating consequences.

## 2. 2 Socially Engineered Ignorance

Today, we are beginning to be sensitive to the fact that some of us are in fact responsible and even culpable for the production of what can be called useful ignorance that generates power equations in society. As early as 1921, Walter Lippmann had spoken of the process of the manufacture of consent through which the powerful and the privileged clandestinely carry their agenda further<sup>13</sup>. Noam Chomsky states that propaganda is to democracy what violence is to totalitarianism.<sup>14</sup> The techniques of mass deception have become subtle and have been sharply honed as information dissemination is controlled, and might is sought to be efficiently controlled to a sustained construction of obviousness that puts a mask of normalness and naturalness. The art of mass blinding is effectively mastered by the dominating minority. We might see how the Brahmin supremacist social location is socially engineered and religiously legitimized in our country.

The inability of the majority to look past the deceptive structure seemed to have drawn them into a contract where they have unknowingly become signatories. This contract gets the majority sucked into the intellectual domination games of the minority but obviously without their knowing and willingly submitting to the same. This means the majority gets doubly blinded: blinded to the obvious deception and blinded to the fact that they are blinded to the obvious deception. Thus, the ulterior motives that hide the ulterior motives of the minority remain opaque to the majority as they become partners in the social contract of their domination by the minority. This unknowledge or the lack of knowledge operates as the epistemology of ignorance. It becomes the lingua franca of the oppressed majority and converts the minority into an epistemic community whose voice is repeated without any reflection.

How are we to let the domesticated majority become aware that the counterfeit currency that is in circulation amidst them is enslaving them? How could the silent majority reject the framework of life designed for them by the minority? A response to these questions leads us to believe in the victimized majority. The majority is not merely a victim that is consumed and exhausted by systems of oppression. It has in fact the ability to resist and fight back. Instead of subjecting itself to the logic of domination, it can stand up and assert itself.

### 2.3 Circulation of Ignorance

There is another type of construction of ignorance. Some shades of epistemologies of ignorance attempt to uncover the strategies that withhold the access of the majority to certain knowledge and thus produce a condition of submission. These epistemologies of ignorance attempt to reclaim the knowledge systems that were denied legitimacy and were suppressed to invent the relation of domination.

The complexities of knowledge production are artfully engaged by the elitist minority to produce a gap in knowledge that can become a cultural lag that will work for their advantage all the time. It is in this context that the epistemologies of ignorance examine the ways in which ignorance is both constructed and sustained, and attempt to critique and transform it.

This brings our attention to the sites of knowledge production and circulation. Often it is vital to notice what is not deemed worthy of the status of knowledge and as such has no room in the familiar channels of circulation. Hence, deliberate shutting off of certain configurations of knowledge is indeed a circulation of ignorance in a given society.

Often the current interest, beliefs, and theories in circulation in a community can distract and misrepresent reality, but what grips our attention is that what is kept away from circulation becomes only a circulation of ignorance..

In our country the casteist monopoly of the Brahmins that once kept every other community away from the noble teaching profession demonstrates the circulation of ignorance. Hence, the demarcation of knowledge, the transparency of information and the opening up of opportunities to all can become effective antidotes to all forms of circulation of ignorance.

### **3. Epistemologies of Ignorance in Indian Society**

One can trace that epistemologies of ignorance have studied gender, race, and science issues quite effectively. I think it is time to study how the epistemologies of ignorance affect our country and our people.

#### **3.1 Production of Casteism**

The culture of India sets itself towards overcoming all ignorance (*avidya*), so that one is oriented towards the ultimate goal of life, i.e., liberation (*moksha*). Paradoxically, it is the same culture which is trapped in a chain of ignorance that has produced many indignities and committed several crimes that have put on the mask of ethical uprightness. Many of our citizens are chained to an attitude and behaviour of caste discrimination and are blissfully captive in thinking that it is a noble way of living a life of high moral excellence. It was only with the invasion of the ideals of the Enlightenment from the West and the encounter with Christianity that the deluded moral uprightness of the so-called high castes began to melt like ice. Unfortunately, the wounded tiger of casteism still survives and

appears to be reinforced within the social elite who seem to be aware of its moral depravity and yet choose to stoop to the filth only to maintain the politics of the status quo that guarantees their dominant social location. Fortunately, there are signs that India is undergoing collective enlightenment since caste discrimination has become criminalized by our Constitution. Yet the fangs of the caste system have entered our polity and caste is very often used for vote mobilization. The scientists of our country tried to show that caste-based division is merely a human invention as there are no ‘caste genes.’ This means that the so-called high castes were shown to be biologically the same as the so called low castes since no biological difference has been shown to exist. Thus the circulation of the socially engineered ignorance produces and maintains caste relations in our country.

### 3.2 Divisive Politics

The vote bank politics that reigns in our country is based on the construction and maintenance of the politics of ignorance. The mobilization of votes manifests a construction of the demon. The BJP demonizes the minorities to build its vote banks only to be demonized by the Congress in return to swell its vote share. Both depend on shades of ignorance and force a contract with the voters. Along with them, the other parties too evoke regional or casteist loyalties and suck their voters in their favour. This reveals that our people have become unreflective signatories of the contract with political parties as they keep voting for them along the divisive lines drawn by them. Thus identity politics has taken the driver’s seat while issues like governance and law and order have become secondary in our country. The epistemologies of ignorance working on the canvas of our society have led the people to sign a social contract with certain divisive political tendencies and our voting patterns are indicative of this undergirding ignorance.

### 3. 3 Illiteracy Divide

Although education for all has been a popular slogan, what one notices is only a rising tide of the divide of illiteracy. With the commodification of education the chances of the poor to access

education have become bleak. Corruption seems to have become a way of life and has entered the educational portals. Education has been put on sale, thus sealing off the door of the educational institutions to the poor. The epistemic goods of our society are unequally distributed and the system ends up with the social construction of illiteracy, which in turn produces misery and poverty.

Historically, Brahmanism produced its domination through its control of the production and circulation of knowledge. Today those who have the social and economic capital produce illiteracy through their control of the production and circulation of knowledge, and thereby carry further the chain of oppression through a social construction and management of ignorance.

## 4. Responding to the Epistemologies of Ignorance

The imperative to be a witness of Christian values draws every Christian to arrest the circulation of ignorance and thus to strive to bring about the kingdom of God in our society.

### 4.1 Epistemologies of Ignorance and Epistemic Justice

The epistemologies of ignorance demonstrate that there is distributive injustice in respect to the epistemic goods like knowledge and information in our society. Social agents who have an interest in the political and economic goods of a society are also interested in the epistemic goods. It is through the control of the epistemic goods in a society that the social elite produces and maintains its power relations.<sup>15</sup>

Like knowledge, ignorance too is socially located. Understanding its various manifestations and how it intersects with power requires that we pay attention to its permutations in different contexts.<sup>16</sup> Habermas has already shown that knowledge is interest laden. Thinking along the same lines we might understand that ignorance is also a configuration of interests. The circulation of ignorance can serve the interest of the dominating minority. Attention to this can help us to subvert and dismantle the vicious agenda of the dominating minority and restore epistemic justice.

Therefore, it is important to examine the politics of epistemic practice. Unfortunately, the mainstream ethics exhibits a kind of inattention to the nuances of our epistemic lives. Hence, we need to re-negotiate on the borders of epistemology and ethics. Some trends of postmodernism have built a theoretic space for an investigation of the ethics and politics of our epistemic practice. The attention to the epistemologies of ignorance we notice in our times is one important product of these re-negotiations. Raising questions of epistemic practices is automatically linked with contextual issues of justice and power.

## 4.2 Promoting an Epistemology of Resistance

All knowledge is political. It is a source of resistance to the politics of ignorance. The very insight into the operation of epistemologies of ignorance can become the site of resistance to the politics of ignorance and become a springboard for a plurality of responses. The epistemology of ignorance becomes a powerful location that can enable us to generate a response, subverting the logic of the domination of the minority.

The fact that we are challenged to produce epistemologies of resistance that reject the chain of oppression generated by the circulation of ignorance leads us to a transformative praxis motivated by the obligation for the other. It leads us to a praxis that will enable every victim to reject the position offered by the epistemologies of ignorance. This means that epistemologies of resistance are founded on the non-appropriative strength that they offer the victims of the epistemologies of ignorance.

## 4.3 Producing ‘Liberatory’ Epistemologies

Feminist theories have focused their energies in the production of ‘liberatory’ epistemologies. These go beyond the warrantability of knowledge claims to the uncovering of the power dimensions of knowledge practices. Power-driven knowledge practices often construct some people as ignorant or ‘not knowers’. This is effectively achieved with the employment of the logic of purity. The logic of purity allows the social elite to discredit the knowledge claims of the oppressed and render them invisible. Indeed, people engaged in

alternate epistemic practices are misconstrued as incompetent and even ignorant. Thus, 'liberatory' epistemologies critically study the dominant ways of making sense of the world as they often become strategies of propagation of oppression. Thus, 'liberatory' epistemologies do not merely resist oppression but seek its total transformation. This means that they are epistemologies of resistance with a clear aim of transformation.

Thus 'liberatory' epistemologies look at the production of knowledge that is intertwined with the daily practices of exclusion and oppression. The knowledge practices that involve the epistemic disadvantaging of some have to be shunned. The democratization of knowledge needs to be assured everywhere. It is in this context that liberatory epistemologies can become tools of the transformation of the power relations in our society.

## 5. Conclusion

The study of the epistemologies of ignorance has exposed the power of ignorance. The production, maintenance and circulation of ignorance in our society generates oppression and exploitation. The motivation for this study flows from our mission to bring forth the kingdom of God in our society. It is in this regard that we feel that our study of the epistemologies of ignorance can redeem our society, leading to a praxis of life deeply fuelled by the values of the kingdom.

## Notes

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2. See Marilyn FRYE, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (C A: Crossing Press, 1983), pp.118.
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8. Ibid, pp. 123-124.
9. See Simon SINGH, *The Big Bang: The Most Important Scientific Discovery and Why You Need to Know About* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005)pp. 144-161.
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11. See Lorraine CODE, "Taking Subjectivity into Account" in Linda ALCOFF and Elizabeth POTTER, Eds., *Feminist Epistemologies* (New York: Rutledge, 1993) pp. 15-48.
12. Ibid.
13. See Walter LIPPMAN, *Public Opinion* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1922)
14. See Edward S. HERMAN and Noam CHOMSKY, *Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of Mass Media* (London: Vintage 1994)
15. See Miranda FRICKER, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and ethics of Knowing* (Great Claredon Street: Oxford university Press, 2007), pp. 1-5.
16. See Jürgen HABERMAS, *Knowledge and Human Interest* (Boston; Beacon Press, 1971).

## **Caring for Mother Earth: Ecology and Folk Religions of India**

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**Abstract:** In this age of post-modernity and post-development, humans have finally come to realize that the future of humanity and the future of the environment are intrinsically, inseparably and indefinitely related to each other. But the folk and indigenous cultures have always believed in this inalienable relationship and manifested it through their religious and symbolic schemes. This essay endeavours to delve into their religious universe by deploying their frames of conceptualisation and their meaning-schemes of strategic action that reveal their collective self's integration with the natural environment. It does this by engaging in a discussion on various questions and topics such as why study "religion" for ecology?, The relationship between humans and nature, conservation of nature in folk religions, folk ritual realm as a form of indigenous environmentalism, ecological concerns in folk world-view, shaman: an ecologist?, and the role of religion in the conflictual relationship between development and ecology.

While celebrating the sovereignty of the common folk in India, the essay demonstrates how religion can play a vital role in the conservation of endangered bioregions through the folk religious forms and imaginative acts like 'Ganv' and 'Sacred Grove'— which are characterized by their regional discursive formation. It further shows how they are closely related to the natural environment and the human habitat of

the place. While modern environmental studies make us increasingly aware of nature's ability to influence and affect human lives, such a truth has always been part of the heritage of folk world-view. It describes religious beliefs and practices as cultural-ecological adaptations that are systemically involved in the maintenance of human ecosystems. It transmits habits, and attitudes of mind to succeeding generations, thereby guaranteeing the perpetuation of an ecologically sustainable religious world-view. Folk religions and their rituals basically aim at generating, maintaining, preserving and upholding a world-view that sees a fundamental unity between god, nature and humans. It is built on a philosophy that these different dimensions can affect each other, influence each other, and take care of each other. By making nature as an entity with power and by endowing on its objects such trees, hills and waters varying degrees of power, the Indian folk-world-view has constructed nature and its parts as manifestations of diving power, *shakti*. Thus it has made humans respect nature, while modernity has reduced nature and its various parts to 'powerless' objects.

The article further argues that folk religion needs to be understood as an interface between development and ecology. It also shows that the indigenous or folk forms of religious resources can be both prophetic and transformative as well as conservative and constraining.

**Key Words:** The Indigenous People, Imaginative Acts, Rituals, Ecology, Development and Folk Religions of India.

## 1. Introduction

We are on the threshold of a new era, witnessing unprecedented emergence of new trends and new debates which call for rethinking in different fields. As regards modernity, on the one hand, there is a growing awareness that "we can and we should leave modernity behind—in fact, we must if we are to avoid destroying ourselves and most of the life on our planet."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, there develops among modern human beings an increasing appreciation for the wisdom of traditional societies "as we realize that, while they (indigenous cultures) have endured *for thousands of years*, the

existence of modern civilization, by contrast, seems doubtful even for *another century*<sup>2</sup>

One of the things that makes the continuation of the present as grim and precarious is the question about the future of the natural environment. While such eco-concerns of the modern human beings emerge from a belief that the future of humanity and the future of the environment are intrinsically, inseparably and indefinitely related to each other, the folk and indigenous cultures have always believed in this inalienable relationship and manifested it through their religious and symbolic schemes. This paper endeavours to delve into their religious universe by deploying their frames of conceptualisations and the meaning-schemes of their strategic action of integration with the natural environment. It does not propose a return to the pre-modern, rather it highlights the folk-sensibility towards the environment and their schemes of practice-oriented engagement with the nature.

## 2. Clarification of Terms

The two key terms that are central to this paper, as we see in the title, are *ecology* and *folk religion*. Firstly, the very meaning of the term ‘Ecology’ in relation to indigenous/folk religion has to be contested and clarified. This is because ‘ecology’ emerged as a “hindsight” concept after the modernization project came on the scene in human history. Here, it referred to a science studying the interrelationships of organisms in bio-systems, after having done enough damage to the mother earth. But concern for the mother earth has always been constitutive of the people’s scheme of things, and ‘ecological concerns’ always remained as unarticulated conceptual referent for human-earth interactions. The indigenous peoples have always had their own way of imagining, reasoning and interacting with the natural world and the eco-systems in their indigenous settings since time immemorial. Their discursive and non-discursive practices can very well point out to the conceptualisation and application of alternative epistemologies to western classical, medieval, enlightenment, postmodern modes of rational analysis.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, as regards *folk religions*, the term is used to refer to the whole realm of the symbolic religious universe

of the agrarian rural folk that encompasses their beliefs, practices, myths, symbols and rituals. Each folk religious form is characterized by its regional discursive formation, and it is closely related to the natural environment and the human habitat of the place.

### 3. A Methodological Note

One of the important schools which provided the theoretical framework to understand the relationship between pre-modern religions and ecology is the Cultural Ecological School. It explains religious beliefs and practices as cultural-ecological adaptations that are systemically involved in the maintenance of human ecosystems. It explains how cultures historically develop patterns of internal and external adjustments and adaptations to food environments.<sup>4</sup>

During the middle of twentieth century, cultural-ecological theories acquired significance through the writings of Leslie White (1900-1975) and Julian Steward (1902-1972). Marvin Harris and Roy Rappaport are the important contemporary American anthropologists who have attempted to apply cultural-ecological theory to explain religious beliefs and behaviour. Rappaport, who made a study on the pig-raising community in New Guinea, shows in his book, *Pigs for the Ancestors*, how ritual links the various subsystems to maintain or regulate the total ecosystem's equilibrium. Here ritual is linked to factors such as welfare, protein requirements of the community, and land use. It functions as a regulatory mechanism and a protective device.

The cultural ecology, though, has gone well beyond the earlier evolutionary theories, it is however seen as inadequate because “the foundational studies in cultural ecology suggested a closed system accommodating internal and external pressures as the religious ideal”<sup>5</sup> and it fails to see the role of resistance played by the indigenous religions in confronting the external pressures of market economy.

Given the diversity of indigenous environmental knowledge within and between cultures, the prominent issues that need to be addressed in the relationship between ecology and folk (indigenous) religion are the sovereignty of indigenous peoples and the conservation of their respective endangered bioregions with their animals and plant habitats. From the methodological point of view,

as Grim notes, these concerns cannot be covered only by formalist rational patterns. We have to involve ‘the imaginative act’ as a significant cognitive arena for the interpretation of indigenous life.<sup>6</sup> The questions posed here regarding the indigenous patterns of thinking regarding a place and its sovereignty vie with the conceptual subtleties and power relations posed by the contemporary intellectual scene.<sup>7</sup> The ways the traditional environmental knowledge relates to animal-plant-mineral life cannot be that easily comprehended by contemporary “eco-management.”<sup>8</sup> Hence we need new ways of seeing and understanding the environmental issues like ‘imaginative acts’. And for our paper we will focus on two such imaginative acts of the Indian folk world-view. They are: The concepts of “Ganv” and “Sacred Grove.”

## 4. Two Imaginative Acts

### a. The Ganv

In most of the Indian villages, the *Ganv*<sup>9</sup> stands for the community which is constituted by the land (*Ganv*), the people (*Ganvkar*) and the *Devi* (the god/goddess). The *Ganv devi* in Konkan region is called *Devi – Sateri*, the anthill deity that emerges from the land. She was there before anybody came. She is a person in several very concrete ways. She is bathed and fed daily. She is vivified through a ritual called *Pratishthana* and maintained in this state for the sake of the *Ganv*. There is an intimate relationship between the *Ganvdevi*, *Ganvkari* and the *Ganv* (the land). All three are made of the same substance and attributes. The *Devi* is the icon of the *Ganv*. She is the *Ganv*. She does not represent the *Ganv*. People and Land *belong to the Devi.*<sup>10</sup>

*Ganv* always has ritual and territorial boundaries and may not be in possession of any land. There have always been and continue to be *Ganvkars* who do not own land. The term *Ganvkar* comes from *Ganv + ‘karne’* ( radical of the verb ‘to do’, ‘to perform’). The *Ganvkars* are those who do or make the *Ganv* by their dedicated work in the land. The meeting of the *Ganvkars* is known as *Ganvpon* = ‘Village-ness’ or ‘Village-osity.’ The *Ganv* is constituted and generated through ritual and symbolic performance of its *Ganvpon*.

The *Ganv* is a dynamic entity and it is continuously *generated* through the ritual harmony between the deity, the territory and the people.<sup>11</sup> The deity is sovereign: the centre of moral and social obligations and the authority to command and redistribute economic and social and political resources. Issues of rank, honour and authority associated with the deity have repercussion on every aspect of social and political life. The *myth* (as a profound truth) of the *Ganvpon* constitutes and continually reproduces the *Ganv*, its multifarious beings, both ritually and materially.

Thus the imaginative act of ‘*Ganv*’ is very crucial to the very understanding and functioning of village life in most of the villages in India. This view of the *Ganv* has enormous implications for conservation of the environment. People have tremendous respect for the land, and for the flora and fauna in it. They cannot alienate, eliminate and manipulate any of them as they wish. Since the land and the environment is very much part of identity of the village, they constitute the collective self of the villagers. The natural environment is not an object to be tampered with, but part and parcel of the subjectivity of the *Ganv*.

## b. The Sacred Groves

If the *Ganv* is the imaginative act which operates as a mechanism of protection of the natural environment in the plains, another imaginative act namely, the *Sacred Groves*, does the same function but mostly on the hills and mountains. Sacred groves are patches of forest dedicated to local deities. They vary in nomenclature, size and expanse. They vary from a clump of trees to large tracts of forests with a residing deity. They are unique and distributed all over India. There are seventeen thousand known sacred groves in different geographical regions and forest types of India. These protected forest patches—dedicated to gods and goddesses—have survived the axe of development, political turmoil and natural calamities because of the conservation ethics coupled with taboos and traditions. Hence, in the present context “sacred groves” are not merely a patches of forest, but are islands in desolated landscape. They represent the past status of vegetation and biotic as well as abiotic diversity of the region. Annual ritual in the sacred groves often take the form of a

blood sacrifice. The ritual is performed on behalf of and for the welfare of the society. There are beliefs and taboos associated with the Sacred Groves. Sanctity of the forests is maintained for the sake of collectivity which helped in maintaining the ecological conditions of the environment.

The above two imaginative acts reveal the fact that the common folk live their life in tune with the principle of unity of life. Their notions of gods, land, plants and animals etc. are in consonance with the notions of harmony, inter-connectedness and sacredness of all living things enfolded in the loving arms of mother nature. Thus the village/hill folk in India rightly understand the value of environment, the need to preserve the ecological balance, and the need to practise sustainable life-styles in order to survive. And they manifest and maintain these eco-friendly value systems through their imaginative acts such as *Ganv* and *Sacred Groves*. Having discussed the concrete phenomena in the sub-continent cultural soil, let us move on to theorise on folk religions and its role in the preservation of nature.

## 5. The Significance of “Religion” in Ecology

To begin our inquiry, let us find out why the study of religious beliefs and practices should acquire importance in the ecological perspectives. To answer this question, we must, first of all, note that religious beliefs/practices and the earth’s ecology are inextricably linked, and organically related.<sup>12</sup> Human beliefs about nature are the distinctive contribution of the human species to ecology itself. Secondly, some of the religious rituals, especially the agrarian folk rituals, fashion human relations with the nature, and transmit habits of practice and attitudes of mind to succeeding generations, thereby guaranteeing the perpetuation of the ecologically-oriented religious world-view. “Religious world-views propel communities into the world with fundamental predispositions toward it because such religious world-views are primordial, all-encompassing, and unique.”<sup>13</sup> Religious perspectives are *primordial* because they probe behind the secondary appearance to focus human attention on realities of the first order, life at its source. Religious worldviews are *all-encompassing* because they fully absorb the natural world

within them, thereby providing human beings “both a view of the whole and at the same time a penetrating image of their own ironic position as the beings in the cosmos who possess the capacity for symbolic thought: the part that contains the whole—or at least the picture of the whole—within itself.”<sup>14</sup> Finally religious world-views are *unique* because only religious perspectives enable human beings to evaluate the world of nature in terms distinct from all else. “[T]he natural world is evaluated in terms consonant with human beings’ own distinctive (religious and imaginative) nature in the world, thus grounding a self-conscious relationship and a role with limits and responsibilities.”<sup>15</sup> We will understand ecology better when we understand the religions that form the rich soil of memory and practice, belief and relationships with mother earth. The knowledge of religious views about nature will help us reappraise our ways and reorient ourselves toward the sources and resources of life.

Before we proceed further, we have to add a footnote here, namely the above mentioned characteristics of religion resonate more with the folk/indigenous religions than with the world religions, because the former are fundamentally earth-bound while the latter claim to be more universal, not tied down to any particular geographical or socio-economic context. Further it is the realm of folk rituals, and not of the doctrines or dogmas, that effectively translates these features into human actions and embody them in a particular local context. Nevertheless, environmental studies have not adequately explored the role of religions, especially folk religions, in sustaining ecology. By leaving out religion, they leave unprobed essential wellsprings of human motivation and concern that shape the world.

## **6. Folk Ritual Realm as a Form of Indigenous Environmentalism**

One cannot claim that folk rituals basically *originated* to preserve environment. However, one of the functions of folk religious rituals in the agrarian or costal setting is to tackle the threats and deal with the hazards that endanger the agricultural land or the sea, and to take care of the environment. The agrarian folk rituals, which often emerge out of agricultural concerns, are in fact a reflection of people’s keen interest in the maintenance of agriculture. Similarly the folk

rituals of the fishermen are often the display of their concern for mother sea. These rituals are genius and innovative mechanisms and strategies by which environment is cared for and its resources are effectively managed. E.N Anderson, who has documented the indigenous practices with impressive details, notes that “All traditional (indigenous) societies that have succeeded in managing resources well, over time, have done it in part through religious or ritual representation of resource management.”<sup>16</sup> He notes, in various case studies, how ecological wisdom is embedded in myths, symbols, rituals and cosmologies of these people.

Folk rituals also instill a sense of fear among the folk, which leads them eventually to venerate and thus protect nature. Folk religions make sure that familiarity with nature obtained through the agro-based economic activities does not breed contempt for the environment. By instilling among the members of the ritual community a strong sense of veneration toward nature, the rituals stop the folk from destroying the environment according to their whims and fancies. Thus they ensure the non-exploitation and protection of nature.

Further, various folk religious rituals performed throughout the year accompany changes in the seasons and subsequently in nature. They commemorate the gifts of the past that nature has provided to human beings in the previous season, and celebrate the advent of new seasons with a hope for the future. These rituals open up the minds and hearts of human beings to the rhythms of nature, and enhance the human sensitivity for the environment by synchronizing their celebrations with the changes in the seasons. For the famers, fishermen and the nomadic shepherds, it is the change in the seasons that brings about the change in the quality of their life. The basic economic activities of human beings cannot defy the logic of nature and cannot go against the rhythmic cycles of nature. It is nature which determines when humans can sow, plough, cultivate and reap in the field or fish in the sea or take their sheep for grazing. Thus nature dictates to humans when they can work, and how they can work; when they can rest and relax. This indicates the process of synchronization of human life with the nature, a far cry for the situation of modern humans. Folk religious rituals such as Bihu in

Assam or Pongal in Tamilnadu play a major role in making humans realize the inalienable relationship between nature and humans and the inevitable dependency of humans on nature for their destiny. Thus such various folk religious rituals operate as mediating categories that bring about the harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

Besides, these rituals reinforce the already existing folk world-view which brings about a holistic view of the reality around them where everything is interconnected and interdependent. By the performance of rituals, they affirm and confirm their indigenous world-view, where environment is viewed as part of their third space<sup>17</sup>, a lived social space, not a mere first space (geographical space)—an understating of which has led to the commodification of nature in the modernization project. By doing this, folk religions have generated among the rural village folk, a sense of responsibility towards nature. Folk religions and their rituals basically aim at generating, maintaining, preserving and upholding a world-view that sees a fundamental unity between god, nature and humans. It is built on a philosophy that these different dimensions can affect each other, influence each other, and take care of each other. By making nature an entity with power and by endowing on its objects (such as trees, hills and waters) varying degrees of power, the Indian folk-world-view has constructed nature and its parts as manifestations of divine power, *Eakti*.

The scheme of the hierarchy of powerful beings, wherein each being with its share of power is capable of influencing the other, is in fact an innovative design that reflects the fundamental relation between humans and the nature (environment) as a two—way process of control. It does not place human beings at the helm of creation with their power of reason. Rather, it puts them as one among many in the taxonomy of powerful beings. It shows that it is not the case that humans alone can control and influence nature, but nature and its objects can also influence and control humans. While both Abbot (1932) and Susan Wadley (1985) have demonstrated the existence of such belief systems among the Hindus, the former has also shown how such beliefs are prevalent among Muslims in India. Francis Jayapathy (1999) and P.T. Mathew (2001) have shown how powerful

beings are effective agents in the life-worlds of Mukkuva Catholics too.

Thus folk religious practices have made humans respect nature, while modernity has reduced nature and its various parts to ‘powerless’ objects. Through its repertoire of rituals, folk religion embeds the ‘*deep time*’<sup>18</sup> metaphors of interconnectedness of the universe in the collective unconscious of the cultural members. It teaches them that one aspect of reality can harm or help, make or break another dimension of reality. The project of ‘modernity’ has forgotten this dimension of ‘inter-connectedness’ as Heidegger pointed out<sup>19</sup>.

However, folk beliefs and rituals are often seen by the moderns as irrational and superstitious. Does it mean that we have to throw out folk rituals totally? Perhaps we need not. Because folk religions are justified and right in telling us *that* different dimensions of reality can affect each other, but perhaps they are not scientifically well founded ( hence appear to be at fault) in their understanding of *how* they can affect each other and *how* they can be related to in the process of ritualisation. Likewise, some scholars have highlighted the inadequacy of science to understand the totality of the universe and its nitty-gritty which local forms of knowledge believe in.

Science, with its quantum mechanics methods.. can never address the universe as a whole; and it certainly can never adequately describe the holism of indigenous knowledge and belief. ....Technology has used the banner of scientific “objectivity” to mask the moral and ethical issues that emerge from such a functionalist, anthropocentric philosophy<sup>20</sup>

## 7. Ecological Concerns in the Folk World-view

Most cosmologies of the folk world-view seek to achieve harmony and equilibrium among the components of the cosmos. A wide range of their activities, both economic and non-economic, aim at providing a “balance for well-being of all” through relationships not only among people, but also between nature and deity as it is implied in the case of the two imaginative acts, the *Ganv* and the *Sacred Grove*. All their activities are synchronized in

such a way that they become an inseparable part of life where the highest value in their world-view is harmony with the earth and nature. “Most folk traditions recognize linkages between health, diet, properties of different foods and medicinal plants, and horticultural/natural resource management practices—all within a highly articulated cosmological/social context.”<sup>21</sup>

Now folk religions translate this world-view into action by bringing the whole of nature into the sphere of moral and ethical concern, and demands humility and respect toward living nature in return for its gifts of sustenance and shelter. It is an ancient, venerable way of seeing, based on countless generations of intimate experiences with the local environment. Our modern age with the rise of rationality and advancements in science is marked by an inexorable trend towards the abandonment of this once universal understanding of nature, and a loss of the ‘sense of the sacred’ in nature. The study of the relationship between indigenous/folk religions and ecology has to be understood as “a part of a vital and growing effort to arrest this sweeping pattern of change and loss.... a powerful testament to the environmental wisdom braided through traditional cultures on every inhabited continent.”<sup>22</sup> The study will indicate that “spiritual beliefs are combined with sophisticated ecological knowledge to foster carefully managed, sustainable uses of the environment.”<sup>23</sup>

The folk world-view and its local knowledge embraces information about location, movements, and other factors explaining spatial patterns and timing in the ecosystem, including the sequence of events and cycles of seasons. Direct links with the land, the sea or the mountains are fundamental, and obligations to maintain those connections form the core of individual and group identity.<sup>24</sup>

The basic principles of these indigenous/folk world-views are contained, more often than not, in bodies of oral literature passed down from ancient times. The modern mind tends to trivialize these cultural traditions by regarding them as mere human inventions, rather than honouring them as sacred truths. They should not be looked at as wonderful creative fantasies or analysed merely as dreamlike fictional tales that undergrid systems of irrational beliefs and values. Such approaches vastly underestimate the power and significance of the traditional stories and deny their due place in

their power of evocation of the sense of the sacred and the reverence that humans must have towards nature. This moves our discussion to the relationship between humans and nature, which is an important concern in ecological studies.

## 8. The Relationship between Humans and Nature

The relationship between humans and nature—displayed at a particular point of time through a particular human practice be it scientific or religious—has to be located in a continuum characterized by two poles: the *pole of care*, consisting of positive attitudes of wonder, respect and concern, that aims at integration of humans with nature; and the *pole of exploitation*, consisting of negative attitudes of greed accumulation, utilitarianism and a kind of neglect, which result in alienating humans from nature. While religion with its ethics lays emphasis on the ‘care’ side, modern science, with its lack of ethical principles (which is the case more often than not), belongs more to the pole of exploitation. But not all scientific practices are meant to exploit nature with a utilitarian agenda and alienate humans from nature. Some of science’s practices definitely belong to the other side of the continuum. A considerable amount of scientific theories and discoveries, such as the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics, have created a sense of awe, wonder and respect towards nature and the cosmos. They have not only revealed the incomprehensible nature of reality but have also exposed the fragility and incapacity of the human mind to grasp nature in its entirety. Thus it has struck a big blow to the positivistic litany of triumphalism over nature. However, on the whole, science and technology bisects, divides and exploits nature *at the level of application*.

On the contrary, religion, by and large, endeavours at harmonization of human lives with nature. Therefore it belongs to the ‘care’ pole. No doubt, major religions like Hinduism make people perceive and accept nature as parts of god’s creation or part of divine self (*Brahman*). But the official version of universal religions, such as Christianity or Islam, do not offer local conceptual constructs or indigenous cultural categories of rituals, myths etc.. by which people can embody their beliefs into geographically-related meaningful

actions. But this is done by folk religions. Folk religions offer perspectives and practices towards the care of nature which are closely related to the soil, flora and fauna. Through folk ritual practices people remember, confirm and affirm their symbiotic relationship with nature. Folk religions, as one of the components of culture and cultural patterns, can function at the pragmatic level<sup>25</sup> as an effective and vibrant ideology. At that level, it operates not only as a “historically created system of meaning in terms of which we form, order, point and direct our lives,” as Clifford Geertz<sup>26</sup> notes, but it also brings about an effective and positive relationship between humans and nature. This is not to deny the element of magic in the folk religious realm which reveals an exploitative tendency towards nature. Similarly among classical religions too, we find a negative tendency towards nature in concepts such as *mâyâ* in Hinduism or in the famous Greco-Christian dichotomy between the sacred and the profane leading to the hierarchisation of the sacred over the profane, mind over body, the spiritual over the corporeal, and humans over nature.

## 9. Conservation of Nature in Folk Religions

Another way by which folk/indigenous religions contribute to ecology is through their emphasis on ‘conservation of nature.’ Modern humans have to learn about the folk’s intricate knowledge of ecology, religiously and empirically based conservation ethic and sustained practices (like the sacred groves of India). The indigenous people apply their ethic in their various economic activities, agricultural or otherwise. Conservation is a pervasive element in the common woman/man’s sustenance of life, governing her/his entire relationship with the natural world. Conservation of nature is not a matter of great concern for major religions such Christianity, Islam etc... either at the conceptual level or at the level of performance of rituals. Folk rituals, on the contrary lay great emphasis on the ‘conservation of nature.’ The folk religious rituals, such as *Vettai* (ritual hunt) in Tamilnadu, and other rituals for the sake of good rain or a good crop etc., do reinforce the idea that the folk care for the nature and conserve its resources. What is obvious in all these conservation practices and religiously based environmental ethics is

the fact that stewardship of the environment is prevalent more among the folk/indigenous people all over the world than among the modern humans. Accordingly, this indicates that the local forms of folk/indigenous religions, much more than the universalizing world religions of modern human beings, effectively embrace humanity and nature as one.

Furthermore, it is to be noted that people view their knowledge about conservation and management practices as emanating from a spiritual base as mentioned earlier. All creation is sacred, and the sacred and the secular are inseparable. Their relationship with fellow human beings and with the environment is both physical and spiritual. “The unseen is as much part of reality as that which is seen—the spiritual is as much part of reality as the material. In fact, there is a complementary relationship between the two, with the spiritual being more powerful than the material.... And in nature, behind visible objects lie essences, or powers, which constitute the true nature of those objects”<sup>27</sup> The many ‘dimensions’ of nature for indigenous peoples become an extension, not merely of the physical world, but of human society. The modern human being may find this difficult to understand, as in the modern era, the extension of self is through ‘hard technology’, hence man-made not naturally given.

## 10. Shaman: An Ecologist?

The shamans, the key figures in the folk religious realm, function as effective ecologists, in the sense that they are peculiarly aware of nature’s organizing principles. They are deeply attuned to nature and extremely attentive to its dynamics, which become signs for their interpretation, heralding the advent of new situations. They claim to have learnt to listen to the plant’s talk, and to confer with the plant spirits in order to heal. Often, these communications come through the transformative powers of altered states or trances. They are able to see ‘the links between life, land, and society’ identified as a “Sacred Balance” by some thinkers.<sup>28</sup>

During the folk rituals, the shamans extol the importance of plants and animals as keys to the health energies of the human community. They instill a sense of respect for their overall role in the socio-ecological balance. They know that the future well-being of the

community is dependent upon plants and animals and the forces of nature. They have perceived the innate power of the material world, with its flora and fauna, to harm or to enhance life on earth. Their indigenous systems of knowledge have taught them that plants and the different manifestations of nature have both curative and destructive powers (can cause blindness, insanity, and even death). Modern science and the rational human mind may not be able to understand the workings of shamans and the rationale of their thinking processes. Posey, based on his field experiences of the shamans among the Kayapo peoples of Brazil, attempts to highlight “the notional and mythic character of indigenous environmental knowledge and the manner in which those ways of knowing are largely unavailable to Western categories of linear, historical analysis.”<sup>29</sup> This paper will be incomplete if we do not deliberate on the question of the role of folk religion in the relationship between the developmental process and ecology.

## **11. Folk Religion as an Interface between Development and Ecology**

Living in the age of globalisation and in the post-modern era of identity assertion of ‘differences’, and going beyond cultural ecology as noted earlier, we need to take into account the contestations and negotiations of the indigenous communities with the process of modernization or globalization. At this juncture, we need to explore the roles of indigenous religions in their efforts to maintain a spiritual balance with larger cosmological forces while creatively accommodating current environmental, social, economic, and political changes. John Grim takes note of the small-scale native communities like Andeans who, through the insights of elders and the revelations of dreamers and visionaries, manage acceptable forms of modernization, mount resistance to development schemes in which they have no voice.<sup>30</sup>

With the increasing globalization of capitalist economics in the late twentieth century, indigenous peoples have come under intense pressures to assimilate themselves into mainstream cultures and to open their homelands for resource exploitation. However, indigenous peoples have alternative development models that value homelands

very differently from the capitalist sustainability models. They embody alternative models of sustainable life, even though the natives use those lands and living beings for food, habitat, and trade. Such alternative models of sustainability are most boldly demonstrated in their symbolic and religious realm. Besides, they also appropriate the religious realm for the confrontation with outside forces and contestation of their powers. The emergence of phenomena such as the “Cargo Cults” of the Pacific region, the “Ghost Dance” of the North American plains or the “Mau-Mau” uprisings of East Asia, and the Devî movement in North India are all social movements which manifest strong religious expressions whose inner dynamics is connected deeply to the local ecology.

The effort to subvert indigenous ‘lifeways’<sup>31</sup> by development agendas is the subject of a broad-based analysis called political ecology.<sup>32</sup> The perspective is much more receptive to considering indigenous religions and other cultural knowledge systems as contributing more to production than earlier Marxist-oriented political economy analyses conceded.<sup>33</sup> The focus here is on the imaginative act (closely connected to indigenous /folk religions), which is present in indigenous societies, whereby local environments become central to ethnic identity. Richard Peet and Michael Watts call this imaginative act as “environmental imaginary,” which means a way of *imaging* nature, including visions of those forms of social and individual practice which are ethically proper and morally right with regard to a particular natural environment. Environmental imaginaries are frequently, indeed usually, expressed in abstract, mystical, and spiritual lexicons, and typically developed through regional discursive formations. In this line, they propose a programme of praxis, called *Liberation Ecology*, which should study the processes by which environmental imageries are formed, contested, and practised in the course of specific developments of political and economic structures. Liberation ecology would look at nature, environment and place as the *source* of thinking, reasoning, and imagining.<sup>34</sup>

## 12. Conclusion

This paper reveals that the study of folk/indigenous religions can enable us to identify resources from within a particular culture for a more ecologically sound cosmology and environmentally supportive ethics, as these religions can provide the transforming energies for the ethical practices to protect endangered ecosystems, threatened species and diminishing resources. It shows that the indigenous or folk forms of religious resources can be both prophetic and transformative as well as conserving and constraining.

Before I conclude this paper, let me add a note on its limitation. It is impossible to map the complex nature of the relationship between ecology and folk/indigenous religions in a few pages. A lot more needs to be explored with regard to the trajectories of the dynamic relationship between these two components. What is missing in this essay is an extensive concrete example of such relationships in the Indian context. While such a limited approach widens the theoretical scope of the arguments for the application, it lacks concrete context-based deliberations. Perhaps, we need more field-based studies from the viewpoint of political ecology to investigate the emerging patterns of relationship between folk religion and ecology in the context of the globalization process rapidly affecting the subcontinent.

## Notes

1. GRIFFIN, 'Introduction to SUNY Series', vii.
2. Ibid.
3. GRIM, 'Introduction', xxxviii-xxxix.
4. PANDIAN, *Culture, Religion and the Sacred Self*.
5. GRIM, 'Introduction', xxxv.
6. GRIM, 'Introduction'.
7. Ibid.
8. GRIM, 'Introduction', liii.
9. The term *Ganv* is used for villages in north India while the term *Gramam* is used in South India.
10. This insightful idea of *Ganv* was shared by Prof. Alito Sequeira in his talk on "The Troubled Land: Religion and Deep Ecology" in a nation seminar

on *Science-Religion Dialogue and Ecological Concerns* at Goa from 10th to 11th of March, 2007.

11. FULLER in his famous book also shares the same view. See FULLER, *The Camphor Flame*, 128.
12. SULLIVAN, 'Preface', xi.
13. Ibid., xi-xii.
14. Ibid., xii.
15. Ibid., xii.
16. ANDERSON, *Ecologies of the Heart*, 166.
17. SOJA in his book *Postmodern Geography* (See pages 74-85) refers to the third space as lived space. It is created by social practice and it is known by experience. Third space, lived space in the case of oral/segmentary societies, is produced through living in the first space. It is constructed through material practices such as hunting, gathering, pasturing, farming, wandering, and the like.
18. Dusan BORIC in his article 'Deep Time Metaphor' uses the term 'deep time' to describe the cultural attitudes and practices that relate to the past through retrospection and deepening temporal surface. It refers to the memory of the past envisaged as a non-linear temporal network where objects, ideas and material fragments of memory are disseminated in multidimensional time and space.
19. LOVITT, *The Question Concerning Technology*.
20. POSEY, 'Intellectual Property Rights', 5.
21. Ibid., 4.
22. NELSON, 'Environmental Wisdom', ix.
23. Ibid.
24. POSEY, 'Intellectual Property Rights', 4.
25. Michael AMALADOSS in his article on "Ecology and Culture" ( See pages 45-47 )speaks of religion's mediating role between culture and nature
26. GREETZ, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 52.
27. POSEY, 'Intellectual Property Rights', 4.
28. David SUZUKI and Peter KNUDTSON hold such a view. See SUZUKI, *Wisdom of the Elders*.
29. GRIM, 'Introduction', xliv.
30. Ibid., xxxv-vi.
31. 'Lifeways' refer to the remarkable diverse ways of a central, seamless organizing orientation of the indigenous peoples, and stresses on the

interrelatedness of diverse aspects of individuals, community, and natural life and maintains a balance or harmony between them. Each particular lifeway is an ongoing, creative practice that is simultaneously rational, affective, intentional and ethical.

32. The Anthropologist Eric Wolf introduced the expression, 'political ecology' in 1972. Both anthropologists and geographers have shown interest in this field, which is growing in the contemporary world. Several journals started by activists carry the title 'Political Ecology' in Germany, Mexico, France, Austria, Italy and in other countries since the 1980s and early 1990s. See MARTINEZ-ALIER, *Environmentalism of the Poor*, page 71.
33. GRIM, 'Introduction', xl.
34. PEET and WATTS, *Liberation Ecologies*, 263.

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## **Reality as Relational: Scientific, Philosophical and Theological Bases**

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to study relationality as an integral aspect of reality. For this the author bases himself on scientific and philosophical perspectives, with a view to understanding theology more adequately. The worldview of science plays a significant role in shaping the philosophical and theological worldview and vice versa. In this paper he starts with the Western perspective on relation and relationality with specific reference to the views of Stoics, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. It is followed by the idea of relationality in process philosophy. We bring to light the notion of relationality in Indian Philosophical schools with special emphasis on Sankara's notion of relation. Relationality is further substantiated by the Vedic myth of *Purusa Sukta* which underscores the relatedness of the living and non-living beings of the universe. We move on to the scientific grounding of relationality with special reference to Newtonian Mechanics, Einstein's Theory of Relativity and Quantum Mechanics. It is shown that the concept of relation has been a food for thought in the schools of science and philosophy both in the East and in the West. The scientific and philosophical grounding of relationality enable us to create an adequate platform for interfacing science, philosophy and theology.

The scientifically and philosophically inferred analogical sparks of divine nature on the world also set forth a new scientific framework for theology and an incentive to rethink its traditional conceptions of Theological doctrines and dogmas. In this paper we tried for a historical synthesis of the concept of relation from scientific and philosophical perspectives.

**Keywords:** Relationality, Relation, Aquinas, Panikkar, Cosmotheandric vision, *Imago Dei*.

## 1. Introduction

Theologians have always freely borrowed concepts and terms from the philosophies of the day.<sup>1</sup> In the process, philosophy shapes theology, and theology contributes to the development of doctrines and thought forms. In this paper we are trying to make a historical synthesis of the concept of relation<sup>2</sup> from scientific and philosophical perspectives. In the process of synthesizing there is criss-crossing and overlapping of the worldviews of both science, philosophy and theology. The worldview of science plays a significant role in shaping the philosophical and theological worldview and vice versa. In this paper we start with the Western perspective on relation with specific reference to the views of Stoics, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. It is followed by the idea of relationality in process philosophy. We bring to light the notion of relationality in Indian Philosophical schools with special emphasis on Sankara's notion of relation. Relationality is further substantiated by the Vedic myth of *Purusa Sukta* which underscores the relatedness (*bandhuta*) of the living and non-living beings of the universe. We move on to the scientific grounding of relationality with special reference to Newtonian Mechanics, Einstein's Theory of Relativity and Quantum Mechanics. It is shown that the concept of relation has been a food for thought in the schools of science and philosophy both in the East as well as in the West. The scientific and philosophical grounding of relationality enable us to create an adequate platform for interfacing science, philosophy and theology.

## 2. Philosophical Base to Relationality: A Historical Synthesis

Philosophers have always argued about questions of relation. Pythagorus in the fifth century B.C. divided all that existed under three heads: the absolute substance; the opposites (life and death, light and darkness, etc.); the relative.<sup>3</sup> It was under this designation

that relation or “the relative” entered into the thought of Plato, Aristotle and the Hellenistic philosophers. Plato, however, gave no place to “the relative” in his five categories.<sup>4</sup> But Aristotle recognized it as a category in its own right.

## 2.1 Aristotle and Stoics on Relation

The Aristotelian text *Categories* was one of the very few pieces of ancient Greek philosophy available in the Latin West between the seventh and twelfth centuries, and the only one to contain a systematic philosophical treatment of relations. In the Book 1 of the *Categories*, Aristotle lists 10 categories of being (*Categories*, 4, 1b, 25). The first category is divided into primary and secondary substances. Primary substances are individual substances (e.g. that tree); secondary substances are kind of substances (that tree is an Oak). The difference between primary and secondary substances would become critical in the late fourth century as theologians were pushed to clarify the meaning of *homoousios*, and thereby to distinguish more sharply between the substance (*ousia*) of God and the three divine persons (*hypostases*). The remaining nine categories of being are accidents, that is, characteristics that may reside in a substance but are not essential to it. These include quantity, quality, relation, place, time, posture, having, acting, and being acted on.

Aristotle attempted to characterize relations on the basis of the differences between statements containing relational (or ‘relative’) terms and those containing only non-relational (or ‘absolute’) terms. In addition to the characterization of relations in the *Categories*, Aristotle also suggests a general model or paradigm for analyzing what we shall call ‘relational situations’.<sup>5</sup> It means the situations or states of affairs that explain the truth of genuinely relational statements. Although the analysis of relational situations that Aristotle suggests in the *Categories* is perfectly general, it is clear from his later writings that he does not think that all relational situations conform to it. Thus, in the *Metaphysics* he claims that there are relational situations in which substances are related not in virtue of a *pair* of accidents, but rather in virtue of a *single* accident possessed by just one of the substances.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, philosophers throughout the medieval period denied that all relational situations conform to

the *Categories* paradigm. The basis of the medieval denial was largely theological in nature. Considerations associated with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity forced them to admit that, in certain relational situations, even substances themselves can qualify as relations. The Aristotelian model exercises enormous influence during the Middle Ages, and until at least the fourteenth century, medieval philosophers develop their own analysis of relational situations in terms of it.

The Stoics, Plotinus and the whole of the Christian middle ages included relation in their lists of categories. In Stoic philosophy there are four categories.<sup>7</sup> The first is substance or substrate which corresponds to matter. Second, there is the quality that differentiates the matter. Third, there is a ‘being in a certain state’ or disposition. This is the category of relation, which distinguishes relatively impermanent or accidental dispositions of individuals. Finally there is a relative disposition which classifies properties that one thing possesses in relation to something else. This fourth category can be bifurcated into relative state and relative. In a relative state one object is defined by something outside it, for example; in the father-son relation or the relation of left to right. The relative refers to things capable of change where the relation is given by comparison of two states.

The Stoic and Aristotelian understandings of relation are not identical. In Stoic philosophy, to know the object’s relative dispositions does not inform about the object’s existence as an object. “Relative dispositions are the relations of an individual thing to other individual things that are associated with it in the world, but on which its continuing existence as an entity does not depend.”<sup>8</sup> In the case of the father-son relation, if the child dies, the man ceases to be a father, but he does not cease to exist. By contrast, in the use made by theologians of Aristotelian philosophy, a father is constituted as father by his son, and vice versa. In the Latin Trinitarian tradition, which would rely on Aristotelian rather than Stoic Philosophy, relation would be identified with substance: relation shows *what* something is. In Greek Trinitarian tradition, relation will show only *how*, but not *what*, some thing is. The sense that relation is a ‘toward

another' (*esse-ad*) whether in Stoic or Aristotelian made it ideal for the Trinitarian problematic.

## 2.2 Thomas Aquinas on Relation

In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas made one of the most exhaustive studies of the concept of relation ever undertaken. For him creatures are related to God by a real relation, whereas God is related to them by a mere relation of reason. When a substance acquires a new relation without undergoing any real change this is often explained by saying that the substance acquired a mere relation of reason. Aquinas says:

A man is really (and not merely conceptually) identical to himself, even though his relation (of self-identity) is a being of reason. And the explanation for this is that the cause of his relation is real - namely, the unity of his substance, which our intellect considers under the aspect of a relation. In the same way, the power to compel subjects is really in God, and our intellect considers this power as ordered to the subjects because of the subjects' order to God. It is for this reason that he is really said to be Lord, even though his relation is a mere being of reason. And for the same reason it is evident that he would be Lord (Creator, etc.) even if there were no created intellect in existence. (*De potentia* q. 7, a. 11, ad 3-5)<sup>9</sup>

Aquinas applies the notion of relation to the Trinitarian God. According to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, God exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As this doctrine was typically understood during the Middle Ages, it implies not only that God possesses certain relations - such as fatherhood and sonship - but also that he possess them independently of the activity of any mind. As Aquinas says in his *Summa Theologica*:

Someone is said to be a father only by virtue of his fatherhood, and someone is said to be a son only by virtue of his sonship. Therefore, if (the relations of) fatherhood and sonship are not really

in God, it follows that God is not a Father or Son really, but merely according to a concept of the mind - which is the Sabellian heresy. So if God is good, he is identical to his goodness; if he is wise, he is identical to his wisdom. By parity of reasoning, therefore, if God is a father or son, he must be identical to his fatherhood and sonship. Whatever is in God *is* his nature ... It is thus clear that a relation really existing in God is identical to his nature according to reality, and does not differ from it except according to a concept of the mind (*Summa theologiae* I, q. 28, a. 2, corpus).<sup>10</sup>

With the doctrine of the Trinity we arrive at what is perhaps the medieval's greatest departure from Aristotle. Gilbert de la Porree, Duns Scotus and the Scholastics in general show considerable interest in relation because of the use made of it by Aquinas with reference to the inner mystery of the Godhead.<sup>11</sup>

By the end of the Middle Ages, Ockham eventually adopts a view according to which all relations depend for their existence on the activity of the mind; that is relations of reason. In more modern times, Spinoza and Locke offer us three categories - substance, modes and relations - and Leibniz six: substance, quantity, quality, activity, passivity and relation. In their thinking relation is still present, but no longer preponderant as in the theologically oriented philosophy of the Middle Ages. With Kant, however, the perspective changes. Relation with all the other categories is relegated entirely to the realm of reason, serving only to spell out the phenomena which one reads as experience.<sup>12</sup> With the rationalization of whole of philosophy and the acceleration of the strongly mathematical tendency initiated by Descartes, relation stretched its hands to all domains including metaphysics, psychology and theology. This growing exaltation of relation in modern philosophy seemed to receive final confirmation from the Einsteinian theory of relativity.<sup>13</sup> In the light of the modern physics that everything changes and everything is relative acquired axiomatic status. Yet with the exception of Aristotle, Aquinas, Gilbert de la Porree and Duns Scotus hardly any of the line of Western philosophers from the Pythagoreans to the present day have made any serious attempt to define the nature of relation as such.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.3 Relationality from Process Philosophy Perspective

Alfred North Whitehead (1861- 1947), British mathematician,<sup>15</sup> logician and philosopher is the founder of process philosophy. Process philosophy is characterized by an attempt to reconcile the diverse intuitions found in human experience such as religious, scientific, and aesthetic into a coherent holistic scheme. This reconciliation of the intuitions of objectivity and subjectivity, with a concern for scientific findings, produces the explicitly metaphysical speculation that the world, at its most fundamental level, is made up of momentary events of experience rather than enduring material substances. According to Whitehead the fundamental elements of reality are actual occasions or actual entities or occasions of experience.<sup>16</sup> The experience model is in contrast to the early philosophical model - “bit of matter model” - of understanding the fundamental reality as a static reality. Process thought instead states matter is self-sustaining, externally related, valueless, passive, and without an intrinsic principle of motion; on the contrary actual occasions or ‘organisms’ are interdependent, internally and externally related, value-laden, active, and intrinsically active. Whitehead’s basic insight is that reality is a series of interrelated becomings. How a thing *becomes* constitutes what a thing *is*. The process of becoming is more fundamental than the being that is achieved. Now let us have a brief look at the important terms in the Whiteheadian vocabulary.

Process philosophy explains both the processive and the relational character of reality and the essential integration of reality as a whole. The past actualities are still describable as processive and experiential, but their moment of experiencing and becoming is past. They do not endure from the past into the present and on into the future. But to say that these experiences are distinct is not to say that they are independent and separable. On the contrary, a momentary experience is essentially related to previous experiences. In fact it begins as a multiplicity of relations, and achieves its individuality through its reaction to and unification of these relations. It is not first something in itself, which only secondarily enters into relations with others. The relations are primary. The present occasion *prehends*

the previous occasions.<sup>17</sup> The present occasion is nothing but its process of unifying the particular *prehensions* with which it begins.

It should be noted that every level of Whiteheadian thought is relational.<sup>18</sup> Dynamism and process are essential aspects of reality. Reality is organic and interrelated. Calling his system the philosophy of organism Whitehead suggests that the basic analogy for interpreting the world is not a machine but an organism, which is a highly integrated and dynamic pattern of inter-dependent events. “The world is an interrelated web of spatio-temporal process”.<sup>19</sup>

## 2.4 Reality as *Cosmotheandric* Relation: Panikkar’s Perspective

Raimon Panikkar has portrayed a new perspective of reality with a dynamic worldview that comprises God,<sup>20</sup> human and nature which he calls a *cosmotheandric* experience.<sup>21</sup> The term denotes the intertwining of the “cosmic,” the “human” and the “divine” - all interpenetrating one another as different dimensions of the Whole. The *cosmotheandric* principle could be formulated by saying that the divine, the human and the earthly are the three irreducible dimensions which constitute reality.<sup>22</sup> This principle reminds us that the parts are parts and they are not just accidentally juxtaposed, but essentially related to the whole. Applying the *cosmotheandric* principle in thee daily context he says that a piece of bread is *cosmotheandric* in so far it is real.<sup>23</sup> A piece of bread is a *piece* of bread, which implies that it is a piece, not the totality of bread. Further the bread is also a piece of all those things which serve as bread or food. The real bread of the piece of bread is more than an isolated monad, and its *breadness* does not exhaust all that the bread *is*. The *piece* of bread is the *bread* of the piece, and this bread of the piece is the *is* of the bread. The “*is*” of the piece of bread is intrinsically connected with everything that *is*. In this view the piece of bread becomes integral bread, bread that contains entire reality, bread that is divine, material and human at the same time. It is the revelation of the *cosmotheandric* nature of reality.<sup>24</sup>

The parts are real participations and are to be understood according to an organic unity. They are the constitutive dimensions

of the whole, which permeates everything that is and is not reducible to any of its constituents. Everything that exists, any real being, presents this triune constitution expressed in three dimensions. It means that the three dimensions of reality are neither three modes of a monolithic undifferentiated reality, nor three elements of a pluralistic system. Though three fold, there is one relation which manifests the ultimate constitution of reality.<sup>24</sup> The *cosmotheandric* intuition is not a tripartite division among beings, but an insight into the threefold core of all that is, insofar as it is.

## 2.5 Relationality: An Indian Philosophical Perspective

Though thinkers of every Indian school have necessarily disputed “the relative” the end results are much the same as in Western philosophy. Each school dealt with its own specific problems of relation in a somewhat empirical fashion. For the Indian schools the problem of relation was not epistemological, but metaphysical.<sup>25</sup> According to the Indian schools of philosophy, the two basic aspects of experience are identity and difference, to which all pairs of categories, subject/object, body/soul, universal/particular, one/many, can be reduced. Relation implies one seems to belong to the other or one seems to imply the other. There is change, yet there is somehow permanence also. This is our (Indian schools of philosophy) common belief and we do not feel bothered about their relation except when we become reflective and metaphysical.<sup>26</sup> When we reflect, immediately we are confronted by the question: “Is the relation between the two real?” If so, how can both belong to one and the same thing, diametrically opposed as they are to each other? The various systems of Indian metaphysics seem to be different attempts to answer the above question.

All the possible basic approaches to the above questions can be formulated *a priori* as follows: 1. identity, difference and relation are equally real; 2. all are equally unreal; 3. both *relata* (the objects/things/entities in relation) are real but the relation between them is false; 4. all - identity, difference and the relation - are equally false.<sup>27</sup> Every one of the Indian philosophy can be brought under one or other of these four views. According to Sara Grant:

That all the three - relation as well as *relata* - are real is the fundamental metaphysical doctrine of all the realist systems: the *Nyaya*, *Vaisesika*, the *Mimamsa*, Jainism and all the realist interpretations of Vedanta such as *Dvaita*, *Visistadvaita*, *Suddhadvaita*, etc. This is because a pluralist view of reality cannot be sustained without accepting the reality of relation. The question raised here is: "How<sup>28</sup> can there be an unreal relation between two reals?"

The *Samkhya* system on the other hand, held that although the terms are real, the relation between them is false:

Relation cannot be of the same status as the *relata*. *Purusa* and *Prakrti*, the one representing identity and the other representing difference are both real, but the relation between the two is not real or ultimate; it can be removed by *viveka* or discriminating knowledge. There is no real relation either between *purusa* and *prakrti* or between two *purusas*. The question here is: 'How can there be a real relation between two such incompatible and exclusive realities as *purusa* and *prakrti* or identity and difference?'<sup>29</sup>

The *Bauddha* and *Vedantin* schools held that the relation, and necessarily, therefore, one of the terms, is false - the Vedantins rejecting difference and Buddhas identity; while the Madyamika Buddhists rejected all three.<sup>30</sup>

## 2.6 Sankara's Views on Relation

In India, no single philosopher except Sankara has given serious priority to investigation of the specific ontological status and function of relation. The difficulties experienced in the philosophical minds when the question of relation is raised is addressed by Sankara in unique way. According to Sankara, to be free from contradiction, reality (*tattva*) must be transcendent; yet to be realized it must also be immanent in experience. This is the corner-stone of Advaita position. Sankara introduced the relation (*sambandha*) existing

between *Atman-Brahman*. *Sambandha*, *Samyoga*, *Samvaya* and <sup>31</sup> *Svarupa* are the relational terms used by Sankara in his philosophy.

Sankara's *Advaita Vedanta* is strictly the denial of dualism (*Advaita*).<sup>32</sup> It affirms the unity of the absolute (*Brahman-Atman*) which alone is being (*Sat*) in the supreme sense of the term (*paramarthatah*). *Brahman* is the internal Cause (*upadana*) and Supreme *Atman* (*Paramatman*) of all. If *Brahman-Atman* is the Cause, the creation is its effect.<sup>33</sup> The existential unity of human person derives absolutely from this innermost *Atman* through the mediation of its reflection, the *Jivatman*, which diffuses it into the intellect (*buddhi*), mind (*manas*), senses (*indriyas*) and body (*sarira*). The reality of the world is totally from *Brahman*. Creation is the effect (*karya*), extrinsic denominator, and name and form (*nama rupa*).<sup>34</sup> Thus in Sankara's *Advaita Vedanta* on the one hand there is total dependence of human person and the rest of creation upon *Brahman-Atman* and on the other there is total grace from the part of *Brahman-Atman* upon humans and the whole of creation. It is this total dependence and total grace which gives meaning to life. Total grace and total dependence is possible only in non-dualism.<sup>35</sup>

According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, the problem of relation between *Brahman* and the unreal world is imaginary and illegitimate, and so impossible of solution.<sup>36</sup> But for Sankara, the question of relation between *Atman-Brahman* and the world was clearly legitimate. Because from a metaphysical point of view the detached observer who prescinds to some extent both from his own personal experience of absolute existence and also from immersion in the empirical world of sense-experience and tries to trace the hidden bond of experience which he is convinced must exist between these two levels of experience, and to express his findings in conceptual terms.<sup>37</sup> For Sankara the world is not "unreal" in the sense of pure illusion or non-existence: though not real in the absolute sense in which *Brahman* is real, and wholly dependent upon *Brahman* for its existence, it nevertheless has objective reality as manifestation of *Brahman*. If it were absolutely non-existent Sankara would certainly agree that its relationship to *Brahman* would be unreal. If it has objective existence, the question of that relationship is not only

legitimate but also imposes itself a matter of the most acute urgency,  
insistently demanding a solution.<sup>38</sup>

## 2.7 Relationality: A Vedic Perspective

The concept of relationality in the Indian philosophical schools is abstract and ambiguous as in the Western schools. But a Vedic-mythological perception of relationality transcends the abstraction and ambiguity to a great extent. The concept of relationality is rich in the Vedic myths especially in the *Purusa Sukta*.<sup>39</sup>

According to this myth, creation of the universe is the result of a dismemberment of the cosmic giant, *Purusa*. The main thrusts of the myth are twofold: first to affirm the totality of *Purusa* and the primordial unity he breaks to give form to creation and secondly to affirm the creation as a divine sacrifice thereby bringing everything under ‘sacrifice’, the *nabhi* (navel) of the world (*RV* 1.164.35). The hymn speaks of a mysterious oneness, a symbolic correlation between the humans and nature. In the words of Subhash Anand the hymn says, “Humans and the rest of creation are *bandhus* (relatives), and the bond (*bandha*) that bind us together is the belief that we all have our birth from a common parent.”<sup>40</sup>

The striking thing about the Hindu universe of meaning is that on the one hand it does not divide the world into the sacred and the profane and on the other hand it embraces everything beginning from the highest order of beings and reaching to the lowest. Time and timelessness, space and the sky, sun and moon, wind and lightning, the four classes of society, the sense organs and the cosmic elements, the scriptures, sacrifice and sacrificial straw etc. are part and parcel of this holistic worldview.<sup>41</sup> The wholeness of the Hindu worldview is manifested in the myths and metaphors, in the interconnectedness and inter-dependence of all beings and happenings, in the sacredness of the secular and the secularity of the sacred. In Hindu experience the world of the Divine pervades that of the Human and the Cosmic, and the world of the Human includes the Divine and the Cosmic, and the cosmos is the cosmos of the Divine and the Human.

We have seen a brief synthesis of the concept of relationality in the philosophical systems of East and West.

## 2.8 *Sunyata*: The Symbol of Relationality in Buddhism

The ultimate reality for Buddhism is *Sunyata*. Its literal meaning is vacuum, emptiness, voidness or absolute nothingness. It is unobjectifiable and non-conceptualizable. *Sunyata* has its etymology in “svi or “sva, means to swell or to grow.<sup>42</sup> For Mahayana Buddhism, *Sunyata* is not negativity and not annihilator.<sup>43</sup> For them *Sunyata* is non-*Sunyata*.<sup>44</sup> In *Sunyata* everything is realized as it is. There is no distinction between the self and the other, person and nature, divine and human. Everything is suchness in the realization of *Sunyata*. Suchness realized in *Sunyata* encompasses every thing including human beings, nature and the Divine.<sup>45</sup> The state of *Sunyata* is without any center. It is free from anthropocentrism, cosmocentrism and theocentrism. There is no dominant – subordinate relationship and no subject - object relationship. Everything is dominant over everything else and at the same time every thing is subordinate to every thing else. This is complete freedom and emancipation from bondage. Because of it there is interpenetration and mutual reversibility in *Sunyata* including all the opposites. It is a synthesis of opposites.<sup>46</sup>

*Sunyata* is not a static and dead state.<sup>47</sup> The most dynamic spontaneity is realized in *Sunyata* without any will, self or other, human or divine. It is the fundamental ground for both humanity and nature, for change in both human life and nature. In *Sunyata* time is beginningless and endless.<sup>48</sup> It is potentiality in actuality. It is more than a defined concept. In *Sunyata* reality is a non-dual continuum. True *Sunyata* empties itself. It is a pure dynamic function of self-emptying. Through self-emptying it makes everything to exist as it is and works as it does. It makes self and the other to manifest their suchness. It is an occurrence in time. It is a happening, establishing, controlling, uncovering and concealing. It is enduring, elusive fullness and liveliness.

According to Buddhist philosophy every phenomenal reality is a net of interconnectedness or causal connections. The interrelated whole as the sum total of all parts is not the whole. The whole is a

different quality altogether. The implicate order within the beings<sup>49</sup> refers to the interrelatedness of phenomenal (explicate) reality. Reality is beyond the dualism of implication and explication. Reality is an interrelated whole, a continuous process of self-movement. In *Sunyata* there is both the interpenetration and the mutual reversibility of all things. *Sunyata* is oneness in differentiation. It is the unified awareness that comprehends and transcends both oneness and differentiation. It is emptied of all duality. It includes and transcends spatiality and temporality. *Sunyata* is a relationship and continues itself as a universal relationship. The transcendence, the interrelatedness, the suchness, the spontaneity and the self-emptying features of the symbol of *Sunyata* enables one to have a holistic understanding of the ultimate reality.

### **3. Scientific Base to Relationality: A Historical Synthesis**

Here we trace the historical and philosophical roots of science during the pre-modern times, modern times and contemporary times.

#### **3.1 Philosophical Roots of Science till the Middle Ages**

The contemporary science leads us today to a worldview which is essentially mystical and relational. In a way, it is a return to its beginning, 2,500 years ago.<sup>50</sup> The roots of all Western science are to be found in the first period of Greek philosophy in the sixth century B.C., in a culture where science, philosophy and religion were not separated. The sages of the Milesian school in Ionia were not concerned with such distinctions. Their aim was to discover the essential nature, or real constitution, of things which they called ‘*physis*’. The monistic and organic view is also seen in the philosophy of Heraclitus of Ephesus.<sup>51</sup> Heraclitus believed in a world of perpetual change, of eternal ‘*Becoming*’. He taught that all changes in the world arise from the dynamic and cyclic interplay of opposites and he saw any pair of opposites as a unity. This unity, which contains and transcends all opposing forces, he called the *Logos*. The split of this unity began with the Eleatic school, which assumed a Divine Principle standing above all gods and humans. This principle was first identified with the unity of the universe, but

was later seen as an intelligent and personal God who stands above the world and directs it. Thus began a trend of thought which led, ultimately, to the separation of spirit and matter and to a dualism which became characteristic of Western philosophy.

### 3.2 Scientific Development since Renaissance

Western science started flourishing during the renaissance. Galileo was the first to combine empirical knowledge with mathematics and is therefore seen as the father of modern science.<sup>53</sup> The birth of modern science was preceded and accompanied by a development of philosophical thought which led to an extreme formulation of the spirit/matter dualism. This formulation appeared in the seventeenth century in the philosophy of Rene Descartes who based his view of nature on a fundamental division into two separate and independent realms; that of mind (*res cogitans*), and that of matter (*res extensa*).<sup>54</sup> The ‘Cartesian’ division allowed scientists to treat matter as dead and completely separate from themselves, and to see the material world as a multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine. Such a mechanistic world view was held by Isaac Newton who constructed his mechanics on its basis and made it the foundation of classical physics.

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed a tremendous success of Newtonian mechanics in the form of the development of the Mechanical Philosophy of Nature (MPN). This theory affirmed the Newtonian view and believed in the mechanistic explanation of the natural phenomenon. According to MPN, the universe is a gigantic machine which functions like a clock. All living beings in the universe are nothing but machines.<sup>55</sup> It led to a large scale reduction of all organisms in the universe, including the human body and human beings themselves, to mere machines. However, the MPN collapsed towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century under its own weight: it claimed to do too much, but was unable to explain even the common phenomena like sensation, irritability, etc. However, in many ways it reincarnated in the form of Logical Positivism (LP) in the twentieth century. According to LP all true knowledge must be based on empirical experience and the scientific truths were considered permanent and immutable.<sup>56</sup> However, it is fascinating to see that

twentieth century science, especially the theory of relativity and the quantum theory, which originated in the Cartesian split and in the mechanistic world view overcame the fragmentation and led back to the idea of unity expressed in the early Greek and Eastern philosophies.

### 3.2.1 The Theory of Relativity

The theory of relativity, or simply relativity, generally refers specifically to two theories of Albert Einstein: the special theory of relativity and the general theory of relativity. The special theory of relativity is a theory of the structure of space-time. It was introduced in Albert Einstein's 1905 paper "On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies".<sup>57</sup> The special theory of relativity has many surprising consequences. According to the special theory of relativity theory, space is not three-dimensional and time is not a separate entity. Both are intimately connected and form a four-dimensional continuum, 'space-time'. The following are the other consequences of this theory:

**Relativity of simultaneity:** Two events, simultaneous for some observer, may not be simultaneous for another observer if the observers are in relative motion.

**Time dilation:** Moving clocks are measured to tick more slowly than an observer's "stationary" clock.

**Length contraction:** Objects are measured to be shortened in the direction that they are moving with respect to the observer.

In 1915, Einstein proposed his general theory of relativity in which the framework of the special theory is extended to include gravity, i.e. the mutual attraction of all massive bodies.<sup>58</sup> Whereas the special theory has been confirmed by innumerable experiments, the general theory has not yet been confirmed conclusively. However, it is so far the most accepted, consistent and elegant theory of gravity and is widely used in astrophysics and cosmology for the description of the universe at large. The force of gravity, according to Einstein's theory has the effect of 'curving' space and time. This means that ordinary Euclidean geometry is no longer valid in such a curved space, just as the two-dimensional geometry of a plane cannot be applied on the surface of a sphere. Einstein's theory says that three-

dimensional space is actually curved, and that the curvature is caused by the gravitational field of massive bodies.

### 3.2.2 The Quantum Understanding of Relationality

In the 1920s an international group of physicists including Niels Bohr from Denmark, Louis De Broglie from France, Erwin Schrodinger and Wolfgang Pauli from Austria, Werner Heisenberg from Germany, and Paul Dirac from England found the precise and consistent mathematical formulation of quantum theory.<sup>59</sup> The effect of quantum theory on the physicists' imaginations was truly shattering. Rutherford's experiments had shown that atoms, instead of being hard and indestructible, consisted of vast regions of space in which extremely small particles moved, and now quantum theory made it clear that even these particles were nothing like the solid objects of classical physics. The subatomic units of matter are very abstract entities which have a dual aspect. Depending on how we look at them, they appear sometimes as particles, sometimes as waves; and this dual nature is also exhibited by light which can take the form of electromagnetic waves or of particles. Later Max Plank discovered that the energy of heat radiation is not emitted continuously, but appears in the form of 'energy packets'. Einstein called these energy packets 'quanta' and recognized them as a fundamental aspect of nature.<sup>60</sup>

The quantum theory called in question the very foundation of the mechanistic world view, especially the concept of the reality of matter. At the subatomic level, matter does not exist with certainty at definite places, but rather shows 'tendencies to exist', and atomic events do not occur with certainty at definite times and in definite ways, but rather show 'tendencies to occur'.<sup>61</sup> In the formalism of quantum theory, these tendencies are expressed as probabilities and are associated with mathematical quantities which take the form of waves. This is why particles can be waves at the same time. They

are not ‘real’ three dimensional waves like sound or water waves. They are ‘probability waves’, and all the laws of atomic physics are expressed in terms of these probabilities. We can never predict an atomic event with certainty; we can only say how likely it is to happen. Quantum theory has thus demolished the classical concepts of solid objects and of strictly deterministic laws of nature.<sup>62</sup> At the subatomic level, the solid material objects of classical physics dissolve into wave-like patterns of probabilities, and these patterns, ultimately, do not represent probabilities of things, but rather probabilities of interconnections. The exploration of the subatomic world in the twentieth century has revealed the intrinsically dynamic nature of matter.

### 3.3 Theological Grounding of Relationality

In this session we shall be dealing with the Trinitarian relationality in theology with reference to the doctrine of *imago dei*.<sup>63</sup>

#### 3.3.1 *Imago Dei*: The Metaphor of Relationality<sup>64</sup>

The Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium make clear the truth that human beings are created in the image of God. The doctrine of the *imago Dei*<sup>65</sup> refers to the immediate relationship of humankind to God. The metaphor of image and likeness expresses how humankind is related to God, the other and the World. The image of God refers to the way in which God intends human beings to live in the world.<sup>66</sup> The metaphor, ‘image and likeness’ is a dynamic one. It is not something imprinted on us. It is not that God created human beings once for all in His image but that God is creating us in His image and likeness. It refers to an ongoing relationship and reveals to us that the human person is not a finished product but a becoming.

God *ad intra* becomes God *ad extra* in creating the body-persons, who can give and receive life in relationship. According to Matthew Jayanth creation reveals God’s self *ad extra*.<sup>67</sup> It is in creating the human being as relational, sexual, creative and dialogical in structure that the Godhead revealed its own relational and dialogical nature to the world. The focus of the creation stories in Genesis is not the origin of the human being in itself. But it is a presentation of the

vision of an authentic human existence in relation to God.<sup>68</sup> To have been created means a profound relationship to God.<sup>69</sup> The creation of human beings is a deliberate choice of God. For it is written, “Let us make human beings.” This deliberation of Godhead points to the uniqueness and the privileged choice of human existence as related to God. The image and likeness of God refers to the human capacity for a dialogical relationship. Among the whole of creation, only humankind have the capacity to enter into dialogical and personal communion and relationship with God. The very fact of being created in the image and likeness of God shows that dialogical existence belongs to the very structure of human beings and this capacity for a dialogical relationship with God is central to being human. Relatedness to God, which is essential to man, becomes a living dialogue and man’s being is a “response-giving” existence.<sup>70</sup>

### **3.3.2 God as Persons in Communion: The Mode of Human Relationality**

The age-old deliberations on the Trinity as one substance (*ousia*) and three persons (*hypostasis*) use the term ‘person’ to denote the distinctive existence of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Starting with Tertullian, the term ‘person’ is used down the centuries to explain the Trinity. The Cappadocian Fathers used for the first time the idea of person as relation mainly to speak of the unique hypostatic identity of Christ and also to express the distinction within God without postulating a difference in substance between divine persons.<sup>71</sup> For the Greek Fathers, personhood and relationality of the Father, the Son and the Spirit<sup>72</sup> are the ground for the divine substance - the immanent Trinity.

Both the Greek and the Latin traditions affirm communion of persons as the nature of the Trinity. For the Latin tradition the starting point is the one divine substance.<sup>73</sup> The idea of person and its relational aspects are present in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. However, the Latin theology speculates on the Trinitarian communion as an intra divine occurrence and Greek theology speculates on this communion as an extra divine occurrence.<sup>74</sup> LaCugna observes that with Rahner that “the economic Trinity is immanent Trinity and vice versa,” the intra divine communion of persons and the extra divine

communion of persons in the Trinity become the manifestation of the one and the same substantial and distinctive unity of the three persons in the Trinity.<sup>76</sup> This juxtaposition of the economy of salvation and the theology of the Trinity in the doctrine of the Trinity brings out the ontology of relation that makes the doctrine of the Trinity more intelligible to people and pertinent to Christian life. LaCugna writes, “A relational ontology understands both God and the creature to exist and meet as persons in communion. The economy of creation, salvation, and consummation is the place of encounter in which God and the creature exist together in one mystery of communion and relation. The meaning of to-be is to-be-a-person-in-communion. This relational ontology follows from the fundamental unity of *oikonomia* and *theologia*; God’s To-Be is To-Be-in-relationship, and God’s being-in-relationship-to-us is what God is.”<sup>77</sup> The Trinitarian communion communicated *ad extra* in creation reveals the meaning, value and purpose of the human person to be actualized in the present, hoping for the future fulfillment in God.<sup>78</sup> God, the creator, has given His own life as a vision of what human beings are called to become.

### **3.3.3 The Divine *Perichoresis*: The Source of Relationality**

In the dogmatic formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, the term *perichoresis* was first used in a Christological context, probably by Gregory of Nazianzus, to stress the mutual realtion of the two natures of Christ.<sup>79</sup> It gained importance in Trinitarian theology both in the Greek and the Latin traditions. In the eighth century the Greek theologian John Damascene used the term *perichoresis* to highlight the dynamic and vital character of each divine person, as well as the co-inherence and immanence of each divine person in the other two. Cyril of Alexandria called this movement a “reciprocal irruption” (Cyril of Alexandria, *Joannis Evangelium* 1.5, PG 73, 81).<sup>80</sup> LaCugna gives a sound explanation to the term *perichoresis* as revealing the true nature of God in its fullness. She writes:

While there is no blurring of the uniqueness of each person, there is also no separation. There is only the communion of love in which each person comes to be what he/she is, entirely with reference to

the other. Each person expresses both what he/she is and at the same time expresses what God is: ecstatic, relational, dynamic, vital. *Perichoresis* provides a dynamic model of persons in communion based on mutuality and interdependence.<sup>81</sup>

The Triune intimacy or *perichoretic* communion is an ever-rich symbol and model for human life. This Triune intimacy is an imperative model for meaningful existence as we are created in the Trinitarian image of the Godhead. The Trinitarian revelation invites us to be in loving communion and interconnectedness.

### **3.3.4 Jesus: The Key to Divine-Human Relationship**

Jesus is the meeting point of divinity and humanity in its authentic fullness and, thereby, he reveals that every human person is the locus of an encounter between the divine and the human.<sup>82</sup> Relationality of God incarnated is Jesus Christ. In the discovery of his authentic self in relation to God, other humans and the entire creation, Jesus discovered the meaning of every human existence. God sends his only Son Jesus, to make it known to humanity that God desires a life of interpersonal relationship with the human person. The life and mission of Jesus is the manifestation of the divine will of building up a cosmic communion through love and service. In the Last Supper, Jesus shared his embodied relatedness with the humankind making them sharers in the embodied relatedness of God, human beings and the World. The sharing of his body and blood makes us partakers of the divine mode of existing in relationship as persons. The symbol of the Cross is actually the expression of the self-emptying and inner relationship of the Trinity.<sup>83</sup> The death of Jesus has revealed a power in the world that is transforming all our relationships from within. By his own death and resurrection, Jesus restored wholeness to humanity. In Jesus, human beings encounter the full actualization of the multiplicity of the embodied relatedness in the divine, human and cosmic realms.

### **3.3.5 Spirit as the Principle of Relationality**

The Holy Spirit is the principle of relationality. Karl Barth develops the relational nature of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity with

the dynamism of love. The Father loves the Son and the Son the Father, and the love and communion which exists between them and unites them is the Holy Spirit. This love which is God in himself (*ad intra*) from all eternity is the basis of God's love for us (*ad extra*).<sup>84</sup> The Holy Spirit is God himself relating himself to the specific details of human existence and relating his people to one another in fellowship and communion. The relational dynamism of communion effected by the Spirit is reiterated in the second Vatican Council. It shows in its documents that the Father's initiative of salvific revelation led to the mission of the Word, the Son and that of the Spirit (*LG* 2-4; *AG* 2-4), making people one in the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (*LG* 4). The council emphasizes the activities of the Spirit in the world enabling the humankind in different ways to achieve the true relational nature of being human in a collective effort.

The Holy Spirit is God's outreach to the world. The Holy Spirit teaches us to relate to one another. The doctrine of the Spirit especially with Augustine and Aquinas, presents the Spirit as the principle that unites the Father and the Son in the intra divine life and it is the same Spirit that unites the human person to God, the other and the world.<sup>85</sup> He is the Spirit of truth and he leads all humanity to the fullness of Truth (Jn 16:13). In the Spirit the Triune God opens God's self to humans. A new life is brought about, and a person becomes a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, a living temple of God (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 6:19), living in God and for God. The Spirit of life, a fount of water springing to life eternal (Jn 4:14, 7:38-39) continues to sanctify (Rom 8:28) and renew (*EA* 15) the Church and leads her to perfect union with Christ (*LG* 4). The Spirit being the animator and guide of the Church unites all its members with Christ and among themselves. Speaking of the Spirit's activity in the Church, the fifth Plenary Assembly of the FABC states, "the Spirit sent by the Father and the Son and ever present and active in the Church, in the world and in the heart, leads all to their unity and fulfilment."<sup>86</sup>

#### **4. Rationality as a Platform for Interfacing Science, Philosophy and Theology**

For a Christian believer, the notion of interrelatedness (relationality) in science is analogically and metaphorically correlated to the Trinitarian ways of thought.<sup>87</sup> I understand that the analogies and metaphors by no means prove the Trinity, but they are profoundly consonant with a theology that sees the relation of *perichoretic* exchange between the divine persons as lying at the heart of the Source of all created reality. The mystery of the Holy Trinity offer us profound metaphors to account for the mysterious properties of the reality of the cosmos. The cosmic proximity of the *perichoretic* Trinity enables us to look for the Trinitarian footprints on the cosmos. The Trinitarian communion must resemble a Trinitarian cosmos within it. In identifying the cosmic attributes of a Trinitarian mystery, the metaphysical insights of the natural sciences put us on a very advantageous position today. We have seen how the sciences have come to conceive of the entire universe as a unity. On stronger accounts of this unity, the scientific language seems to echo certain Trinitarian nuances. A critical integration of the scientific attributes not only explores the meaningfulness and relevance of the Trinitarian doctrine in our times but provides new incentives for a more authentic view of the entire reality.

From a philosophical perspective, substance is defined as that which is able to exist in itself. The term substance was first introduced into theology by Tertullian. He spoke of God as the divine substance with “three coinhering,” which he called persons. Thus theologically the term person referred to what is triply unique and interrelated in one God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. A person is regarded as an existence proper and perfect in itself, a distinct and objective way in which God is. Since the Scholastics, each of the Trinitarian persons is identified as a subsistent relation of opposition; the Father is paternity, the Son filiation, and the Spirit spiration. Thus this view was able to uphold the interrelated and independent reality of the three persons.<sup>88</sup>

The explanation of the Trinity in terms of substance and persons, despite its strategic power to combine unity and distinction tends to be closed, with less communication outside the Trinity. However,

the modern response to the Trinitarian problem in terms of eternal *perichoresis* - mutual indwelling - seems to promote better outlets and communication and consequently a better understanding of the universe. The doctrine of *perichoresis* holds that in God there is reciprocal indwelling and mutual interpenetration. The Johannine formulations offer the key to it: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (Jn. 14:11). "The Father and I are one" (Jn. 10:30). The dynamic pattern of *perichoresis*<sup>99</sup> can be considered as the wellspring of life of the world. "We must not view the Trinitarian *perichoresis* as a rigid pattern. We should see it at once the most intense excitement and the absolute rest of the love which is the wellspring of everything that lives, the keynote of all resources, and the source of the rhythmically dancing and vibrating worlds."<sup>90</sup>

Any attempt to reduce the rich allusiveness of the perichoretic communion to subatomic interconnections or a cosmological domain alone is tantamount to the worst form of reductionism.<sup>91</sup> But from a theological perspective it is our contention that the inner dialectic of the Trinitarian *Perichoresis* is also constitutive of the ontological structure of diverse forms of existence. Trinitarian *Perichoresis* is the ultimate archetype of wholeness whereby every being shares in absolute ontological mutuality, reciprocity and communion with one another. There is a trans-relational self-manifesting mutuality between God and the world whereby Trinitology is also cosmology and cosmology is also Trinitology. Parts are parts of the whole. To be is to be related. Being is inter-being and existence is mutually-existing. The overarching Trinitarian wholeness places the entire cosmos into a supra-relational fabric permeated with an indescribable interwoven mode of being: "all relationships which are analogous to God reflect the primal, reciprocal indwelling and the mutual interpenetration of the Trinitarian *perichoresis*: God in the world and the world in God; heaven and earth in the kingdom of God, pervaded by his glory; soul and body united in the life-giving spirit to a human whole, woman and man in the kingdom of unconditional and unconditioned love, freed to be true and complete human beings."<sup>92</sup> Only a Trinitarian communion can uphold the individuality, identity, uniqueness and fullness of each being. While affirming the individual identity of each being, the ontological

intercommunion of the world enhances the ontological dignity of the world, owing to its participation in the divine mode of being.

### 3.4 Conclusion

The scientifically and philosophically inferred analogical sparks of divine nature on the world also set forth a new scientific framework for theology and also to rethink its traditional conceptions of Theological doctrines and dogmas. In this paper we tried for a historical synthesis of the concept of relation from scientific and philosophical perspectives. We started with the Western perspective on relation with specific reference to the views of Stoics, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. It was followed by the idea of relationality in process philosophy. We brought to light the notion of relationality in Indian Philosophical schools with special emphasis on Sankara's notion of relation. Relationality is further substantiated by the Vedic myth of *Purusa Sukta* which underscores the relatedness of the living and non-living beings of the universe. We moved on to the scientific grounding of relationality with special reference to Newtonian Mechanics, Einstein's Theory of Relativity and Quantum Mechanics. We understood that the concept of relation has been a food for thought in the schools of science, philosophy and religion both in the East as well as in the West. The scientific, philosophical and theological grounding of relationality would enable us to interface these disciplines for a holistic understanding of reality.

### Notes

1. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, ed. A.S. HORNBY, Oxford University Press, 1974, the word 'relation' has several meanings: "The act of relating," "connection" between one thing, person, idea, etc., "dealings" or "affairs," and "kinship," etc. We will be choosing mainly the aspect of relationality which means relationality is the state of being related or having a relation. We use the words "relation", relationality, interrelatedness etc. synonymously. However it is acknowledged that the concept of relation / relationality in philosophy, science and theology are unique structurally, substantially and conceptually.

The word ‘constitutive’ has three meanings: “Constructive,” “formative,” and ‘essential.’ Here we will be choosing the constructive and essential dimensions of “constitutive”.

2. This is true for terms that became supreme in Trinitarian theology: relation (*shesis*); person (*hypostasis*), and nature (*ousia*). Refer Catherine Mowry LACUGNA, *God for Us: Trinity and Christian Life*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1991, 57. Hereafter this book will be abbreviated as *GU*.
3. Refer Sara GRANT, *Sankaracharya's Concept of Relation*, Motilal BanarsiDass Publishers, Delhi, 1999, 2. Hereafter this book will be abbreviated as *SCR*.
4. Ibid.
5. A category is a predicate, a way of talking about being. Refer LACUGNA, *GU*, 58.
6. Refer Sara GRANT, *SCR*, 2,3.
7. For details refer J.M. RIST, *Stoic Philosophy*, Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1969, 152-72.
8. Ibid., 170.
9. Refer “Medieval Theories on Relations,” in <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/relations-medieval/>, downloaded on 04-02-2010. Also refer <http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&q=thomas+aquinas+summa+theologica-+I%2C+q.28%2C+9.2%2C+corpus&btnG=Search&meta=>, accessed on 05-02-2010.
10. Ibid.
11. Sara GRANT, *SCR*, 3.
12. Ibid.
13. We shall work out the Einsteinian theories on relation while we deal with the scientific grounding of relationality below.
14. Refer Sara GRANT, *SCR*, 4.
15. Refer Robert B. MELLERT, *What Is Process Theology?* Paulist Press New York, 1975, 4. Abbreviated *WPT* hereafter.
16. Refer Alfred North WHITEHEAD, *Process and Reality*, The Free Press, New York, 1929, 18. Abbreviated *PR* hereafter.
17. Refer Alfred North WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1933, 70. Abbreviated *AI* hereafter. According to Whitehead *prehensions* are the concrete fact of relatedness of an actual entity to its datum. It is the action of a subject perceiving an object and evaluating its import for the future. However, before a subject can take hold of and understand an object, it must be related to that object. *Prehension* indicates that the relatedness of the elements to the emerging

actual entity is determinative because the relatedness constitutes the entire data available to the entity in its process of becoming. A new actual occasion is constituted by its *prehensions* of the past but it is not necessarily a repetition of the past. It can be constituted into a new and novel synthesis because it can prehend the elements of its past in different ways. Refer Whitehead, *AI*, 70.

18. Refer John COBB Jr. and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1976, 14.
19. Refer D.D WILLIAMS, "Christianity and Naturalism," in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Union Theological Seminary, New York, XII, April 1959, 49.
20. Refer R. PANIKKAR, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1993, 10. Abbreviated *CE* hereafter.
21. Ibid., 60.
22. Ibid., 68.
23. For details refer PANIKKAR, *CE*, 55-57.
24. Ibid., 59-60.
25. Refer Sara GRANT, *SCR*, 82.
26. Ibid., 82.
27. Ibid., 82-83.
28. Ibid., 83. For details refer R. V. TRIPATHI, "The Central Problem in Indian Metaphysics," *Philosophy East and West*, vol. XVI, no. 1, January 1969, 27-35.
29. Ibid.
30. Refer Sara GRANT, *SCR*, 83-85. The Buddhas and Vedantins recognized immediately the impossibility of the hypothesis of two independent realities or absolutes. They both agreed that relation could not be as real as the *relata*, first, because it is not immediately given in direct experience like the *relata*, and secondly, because if it also were "real" then it would itself become a term.
31. Ibid., 91.
32. Refer K.P. ALEAZ, *The Relevance of Relation in Sankara's Advaita Vedanta*, Kant publications, Delhi, 1996, 29.
33. Ibid., 74.
34. Ibid., 29.
35. Ibid., 218.

36. Refer Sara GRANT, *SCR*, 86 and also refer S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2, second edition, Allen and Unwin, London, 1960, 565.
37. Refer Sara GRANT, *SCR*, 87.
38. Ibid., 88.
39. We follow the translation from F. STAAL (ed.), *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, vol. I, Motilal Banarsi das, Delhi, 1983, 113-115. Also refer R. PANIKKAR (ed.), *The Vedic Experience, Mantramanjari: An Anthology of the Vedas for Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1977, 75-76.
40. Refer S. ANAND, "Purusa - Yajana: Self-giving as the Mystery of Being," in *Third Millennium*, vol. 5, 2002, 26.
41. Refer Francis X. D'SA, "Christian Eucharist and Hindu Yajna," in *Co-Worker for your Joy*, eds. S. Painadath and Leonardo Fernando, Vidyajyoti College and ISPCK, Delhi, 2006, 100-124.
42. Refer Michael VON BRUCK, "Buddhist Sunyata and the Christian Trinity: The Emerging Holistic Paradigm," in *Buddhist Emptiness and Christian Trinity*, eds. Roger CORELESS and Paul F. KNITTER, Paulist Press, New York/ Mahwa, N.J.1990, 53. Abbreviated *BECT* hereafter.
43. Refer Masao ABE, "Kenosis and Emptiness," in *BECT*, 20.
44. Ibid., 22.
45. Ibid., 20.
46. Ibid., 21.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., 23. Also refer Daisetsu T. SUZUKI, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, George Allen and Unwin LTD, London, 1970, 50.
49. Refer the idea of holomovement proposed by Modern Physicist David BOHM where reality is expressed in terms of implicate and explicate order. For details see Richard D'SOUZA, "The Undivided Universe: Underlying Unity through Diversity," in *Dancing to Diversity: Science-Religion Dialogue in India*, ed. Kuruvilla PANDIKATTU, Serials Publications, New Delhi, 62-84. Abbreviated as *DD*.
50. Refer Fritjof CAPRA, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*, Flamingo, 1992, 24. Hereafter this book will be abbreviated as *TP*.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., 25.
53. The telescopic confirmation of the Copernican theory of Heliocentrism is evidence to this claim. Refer Job KOZHAMTHADAM, "The Changing Face of Science Christianity Dialogue," in *STV*, 4, 8.

54. Refer CAPRA, *TP*, 27. Descartes' famous sentence 'Cogito ergo sum' - 'I think, therefore I exist' - has led Western man to equate his identity with his mind, instead of with his whole organism. As a consequence of the Cartesian division, most individuals are aware of themselves as isolated egos existing 'inside' their bodies. The mind has been separated from the body and given the futile task of controlling it, thus causing an apparent conflict between the conscious will and the involuntary instincts. The fragmented view is further extended to society which is split into different nations, races, religious and political groups. The belief that all these fragments - in ourselves, in our environment and in our society - are really separate can be seen as the essential reason for the present series of social, ecological and cultural crises. It has alienated us from nature and from our fellow human beings. The Cartesian division and the mechanistic world view have thus been beneficial and detrimental at the same time. They were extremely successful in the development of classical physics and technology, but had many adverse consequences for our civilization.
55. Refer KOZHAMTHADAM, "The Changing Face of Science Christianity Dialogue," in *STV*, 18-20.
56. *Ibid.*, 21.
57. Refer "Theory of Relativity," in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory\\_of\\_relativity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_relativity), accessed on 10-12-09.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*, 76.
60. Refer K. Babu JOSEPH, "Quantum Theology: A New Frontier," in *STV* 107.
61. As quoted in PAMPLANY, *TMSP*, 123.
62. Refer Richard D'SOUZA, "The Undivided Universe: Underlying Unity through Diversity," in *DD* 62.
63. For these insights I am grateful to Gino Job CST, Jnana-deepa Vidya Peeth, Pune.
64. No human terminology is adequate to articulate the mystery of '*imago dei*'. The term metaphor is used to comprehend the mystery to a certain extent at least. However the reality is beyond the metaphorical appropriation.
65. The metaphor 'image and likeness' is understood in three ways:  
 1. Substantive or Ontological Understanding, which refers to the spiritual faculties of the human soul or the person. The spiritual faculties like intellect, mind, reason, will, memory, love, justice, and freedom are seen as reflecting the image of God in the human person.  
 2. Functional Understanding, which refers to the manifestation of the image of God in the function of dominion-caring, nurturing, enhancing and promoting life

in the world, and 3. Relational Understanding, which refers to the manifestation of the image of God in the embodied relatedness of the human person. It calls for placing ourselves in the world in relation to others, nature and God. For details refer Mathew Jayanth, "Theology and Science on Human Person: Constructing A Theological Anthropology in Dialogue with Science," *Malabar Theological Review* 2, 2007, 6.

66. Refer John F. O'GRADY, *Christian Anthropology: A Meaning for Human Life*, Paulist Press, New York, 1976, 10-11. The Hebrew word for image is 'Selem' which implies a strict physical or external resemblance. Likeness (*demuth*) refers to the spiritual or internal resemblance. The image and likeness, thus, refer to the ongoing process of being created in the image of God acquiring the qualities of God and expressing it in dialogical relationship.
67. Refer Mathew JAYANTH, "Theology and Science on Human Person," 13.
68. Refer Leo SCHEFFCZYK, *Man's Search for Himself: Modern and Biblical Images*, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1966, 45-46. Leo Scheffczyk shows that the first account of creation was not intended to give Israel a cosmological knowledge concerning the beginning of world history. The deepest concern of this account was relating the Israelite belief in the divine election and the Covenant back to the very beginning of all history. Thus, it is the presentation of the vision of the authentic human being as essentially related to God.
69. Ibid., 44.
70. Refer Leo SCHEFFCZYK, *Man's Search for Himself*, 53-54.
71. Refer O'COLLINS, *TG*, 131-134. If we take the noun 'person' in its strict etymological meaning, we cannot attribute the term 'person' to God as a separate subsistent rational being among beings. We take the term analogically where we understand persons as centers of intelligence, love, compassion, graciousness, fidelity and especially the capacity for relationship. These divine qualities are fully expressed in the person of Jesus Christ. Also see Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, 349-350.
72. The interpersonal model of the Trinity as proposed by the Cappadocian Fathers is already mentioned in section 1.2.4.
73. Lacugna explains the difference in the starting point of the Latin tradition from the East. The main problem the Latin tradition was how to reconcile the oneness of the divine substance and the threefoldedness of the persons. Ibid., 10 & 246-248.
74. Refer sections 4.2.6 & 4.2.7 above on St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas.

75. Lacugna through her discussions concludes that the traces of communion are seen both in the Latin and the Greek doctrine of the Trinity - *ad intra* and *ad extra* respectively. She names them as the “ontology of theology” and the “ontology of the economy” respectively. Refer LACUGNA, *GU*, 248-249.
76. Ibid., 248.
77. Ibid., 250. From a theological perspective *Oikonomia* means the history of salvation and *theologia* means the eternal being of God.
78. Refer Mathew JAYANTH, “Theology and Science on Human Person,” 13. Mathew Jayanth presents the original vision of the authentic humanity as communicated to the humankind in creation, the *ad extra* communication of divine *perichoretic* and *kenotic* existence in the past, the present actualization of it, however limited it may be, of the future; and the future is the fulfillment of the present. He observes that the Christian vision of the past, the present and the future constitute a continuum: the present emerges from the past and the future is the flowering of the present. Refer Mathew JAYANTH, “Theology and Science on Human Person,” 13.
79. Refer LACUGNA, *GU*, 272.
80. Ibid., 271.
81. Ibid. and COLLINS, *TG*, 179.
82. Refer Mathew JAYANTH, “Theology and Science on Human Person,” 9.
83. Refer MOLTMANN, *CG*, 235-246. Moltmann presents the suffering of the Son as being experienced by the Father, the Fatherlessness of the Son being the Sonlessness of the Father and the like. And from the Father and the Son, the Spirit proceeds that fills the forsaken with love, the unconditioned and boundless love which proceeds from the grief of the Father and the dying of the Son and reaches forsaken men in order to create in them the possibility and the force of new life.
84. Refer John McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1997, 158. Karl Barth adopts Augustine’s account of the Holy Spirit as the eternal love.
85. Refer Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 12.
86. Refer Asian Bishops’ Meeting (Manila), 29 November, 1970, “Message of the Conference,” no.2, in *FAPA* 3. Quoted by James Thoppil, *Towards an Asian Ecclesiology: The Understanding of the Church in the Documents of the FABC-1970-2000*, Oriens Publications, Shillong, 2005, 120.
87. For these insights I am grateful to Dr. Augustine Pamplany CST.
88. Refer Brian M. MOLAN, “Person, Divine,” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komanchak, et. al., Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 1994, 758.

89. The dynamism and the life giving nature of the Trinity is explained in detail in Chapter 4, "The Mystery of Trinity: The Theological Grounding of Relationality."
90. Refer Juergen MOLTmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, SCM Press Ltd., London, 1985, 16. Hereafter this book will be abbreviated as *GC*.
91. Reductionism implies that any apparently higher levels, such as life, mind and even religious ideas about God, can be fully explained in terms of the lower level sciences of chemistry and physics. As explained in John F. Haught, *Science and Religion: From Conflict to Conversation*, Paulist Press, New York, 1995, 73. Hereafter this book will be abbreviated as *SRCC*. For details also refer Daniel C. Dennet, *Consciousness Explained*, Little, Brown, New York, 1991.
92. Refer MOLTmann, *GC*, 17.

## **Gandhi and Ambedkar: Relevant and Divergent Approaches to the Indian Religious Scenario**

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**Abstract:** This is an attempt to study critically the emergence and development of the new religious movement Neo-Buddhism from Hinduism, which has been facilitated by modern technology and education in India. As a powerful protest against the traditional cultural and economic order, as exemplified by caste system, and a serious effort to usher in a radically new social and cultural order, Neo-Buddhism is significant in understanding the contemporary Indian scenario. The two icons that we study are Ambedkar and Gandhi, both of whom have worked sincerely and tirelessly for the upliftment of those enslaved by the caste system. Their religious commitment and scientific openness are also discussed, with a view to understanding better the dynamics of Indian society.

This paper argues that one's social upbringing and personal experience shape, to a large extent, if not totally determine, one's religious commitment and scientific openness. Gandhi was deeply concerned about the untouchables and he wanted to uplift them by being faithful to the cultural and religious system of Hinduism. This made him rather conservative or withdrawn towards scientific and technological innovations. On the other hand, Ambedkar's passionate commitment to the cause of the untouchables made him even give up his original religion and opt for another. Their life-experiences and diverging responses, I believe, have something to teach to the Indian Church.

Where as in their lifetime Gandhi and Ambedkar were political rivals, now, decades after their death, it should be possible to see their contributions as complementing one another's. The history of Dalit emancipation, advocated by both leaders, is unfinished, and for the most part unwritten. It should, and will, find space for many heroes. Ambedkar and Gandhi will do nicely for a start. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi was not so much the Father of the Nation as the mother of all debates regarding its future. His fight with Ambedkar continues even today and Ambedkar seems to be winning in the contemporary India.

The article concludes by holding that India has sufficient space for many Gandhis, the social reformers, and many Ambedkars, the cultural revolutionaries. Together, even through their controversies, they will facilitate the emergence of a new cultural and economic order in India. The discourse of a multicultural, pluralistic and scientifically advancing India with different religious traditions will go on. This is highly desirable. The Catholic Church can contribute religiously and spiritually to such an on-going discourse in India.

**Keywords:** Ambedkar; Buddhism; Caste system; Dalits; Discourse; Gandhi, Neo-Buddhism.

## 0. Introduction

Given the dehumanising caste situation in India, how did Gandhi and Ambedkar attempt to bring about a more humane and just society in India? How and why did their methods and responses differ? What can the Catholic Church in India learn from these different but great personalities? These are some of the issues raised in this article. This is an attempt to study critically the emergence and development of the new religious movement Neo-Buddhism from Hinduism, which has been facilitated by modern science, technology and education in India. As a powerful protest against the traditional cultural and economic order, as exemplified by caste system, and a serious effort to usher in a radically new social and cultural order, Neo-Buddhism is significant in understanding the contemporary Indian scenario. The two icons that we study are Ambedkar and

Gandhi, both of whom have worked sincerely and tirelessly for the upliftment of those enslaved by the caste system. Their religious commitment and scientific openness are also discussed, with a view to understanding better the dynamics of Indian society.

This paper will argue that one's social upbringing and personal experience shape to a large extent, if not totally determine, one's religious commitment and scientific openness. Gandhi was deeply concerned about the untouchables and he wanted to uplift them by being faithful to the cultural and religious system of Hinduism. This made him rather conservative or withdrawn towards scientific and technological innovations. On the other hand, Ambedkar's passionate commitment to the cause of the untouchables made him even give up his religion and opt for another. Their life-experiences and diverging responses, I believe, have something to teach to the Indian Church.

### a. The Origin of the Neo-Buddhism of Ambedkar

BabhaSaheb Ambedkar continues to stir the hearts of tens and thousands of Indians even today as the battle against caste discrimination and the indignities suffered by the Dalits ("the broken or crushed ones"), is far from over. Ambedkarism has become the mainstay of the movement of Dalit liberation as well as the broad anti-caste struggles across India. Ambedkarism is profoundly committed the socio-economic liberation of exploited people in society.

Ambedkar clearly demonstrated that the Dalits, who are still looked down in India were, not a part of the whole, but were part – apart, separated, inferiorized and dominated – by themselves. Hence, he waged a relentless war against Hinduism and the Brahminical domination. His commitment to the Indian reality made him convinced that the eradication of the evil of the caste system required the repudiation of Hinduism. This led him to seek for an alternative, which he finally found in Buddhism.

His conversion brought about a revolution and thousands of Dalits embraced Buddhism. Even today the conversion of Ambedkar (in the year 1956) draws thousands of Dalits to publicly reject Hinduism and embrace Buddhism. These developments have led some Dalits

scholars like Kancha Ilaiah to proclaim and celebrate the death of Hinduism and inaugurate the dawn of Post-Hindu India (Ilaiah 2009).

Hence, we propose to study how Ambedkar and Ambedkarism have evolved from a socio-economic condition that is deeply moulded by religion and science. The Hindu ethics, it is claimed, produced a divisive society and caused the social, spiritual, economic, political and educational deprivation of the Dalits. The conversion of Ambedkar revived Buddhism and dented the caste system in Hinduism. It revived the King Asoka's mode of evangelical Buddhism. It established a strong relationship between faith and reason. It also brought in an openness to the English language which itself became an antidote to the caste laden Sanskrit of the Brahmins.

## b. The Structure and Method of the Study

In this article, we first focus on the semiotics of context of caste system in India. We attempt to trace the origin and development of the dehumanising caste system within the Hindu tradition. Then we move on the semantic choice available to confront the caste system in terms of reformation by Gandhi and revolution by Ambedkar. The hermeneutic response leading to the conversion of Ambedkar and the emergence of Neo-Buddhism is dealt with in the next section. Then we study the symbolic significance of such a venture in terms of the on-going debate in contemporary India and the tragic aspects of both these great leaders. Finally we see the different approach to the scientific openness as practised in Neo-Buddhism and classical Hinduism, one of total openness (Ambedkar) and the other of cautious tolerance (Gandhi).

The method that we follow is both historical and hermeneutical. After examining the historical context of the caste system and Neo-Buddhism, we attempt to study the significance of both Gandhi and Ambedkar and the primary role science and education have played in ushering in a new economic and social order. It may be mentioned that the author of this article is sympathetic to the Dalit aspirations, but is neither a practising Hindu nor a practising Buddhist. This enables him to be more objective.

## 1. The Semiotics of the Caste System

In this section we briefly see the tragic prevalence of the caste system in contemporary India and then trace its religious and social history. We see the caste system as the most powerful semiotics of contemporary religious and cultural India.

### a. The Present Situation

We begin with a recent report from Chennai, India, illustrating the pervasive nature of caste system as reported in India's National Daily, *Times of India* (Saju 2011), on May 11, 2011. When a group of Dalits (lowest group in the caste system) from R Palakuruchi village, near Chennai, lodged a complaint with the police, alleging the practice of the 'double-tumbler system' in the village, the non-Dalits reacted in a strange way. They hiked the rate of tea served to Dalits in village stalls.<sup>2</sup>

The tea stalls started charging Dalits Rs 7 for a glass of tea, while it cost just Rs 4 for a non-Dalit. Since most of the tea-stalls are run by non-Dalits, the dual price system has dealt yet another blow to the Dalits who have been facing oppression in the remote areas of Tamil Nadu for long. However, K Gowri, sub-inspector at the Ulagampatti police station, where the complaint was lodged, claimed he was not aware of any hike in the price of tea for Dalits. "We have to investigate and see whether any shop is selling tea at a higher rate to Dalits," he said.

However, social activists maintain the reason behind hiking the rate of tea is simple. They hiked the rate, so that no Dalit can come and have tea. "The poor Dalits can't afford to have tea by paying seven rupees. So instead of saying 'no' to serving tea to them, the shop owners have hiked the charge," says T L Ramu, a local activist. While every shop in R Palakuruchi keeps five 'steel' tumblers each for serving tea to Dalits, the non-Dalits are given tea in glass tumblers. "We are not allowed to sit on benches. We have been facing discrimination for a long time, but with this special rate for tea, it has reached another level," he says.

It all started on April 26, 2011, when a group of Dalits complained to the police about the practice of the 'double tumbler system' in

the village. Out of vengeance, the non-Dalits allegedly assaulted and tortured two Dalits after tying them with a rope. A case was also filed in this regard and they were later rescued by the police. The decision to hike the rate for tea followed soon after this incident.

The tragedy is that such incidents are not isolated ones and they portray the caste mentality that is so deeply ingrained in the Indian populace. Now we will trace the history of such grisly caste system, which threatens to destroy the Hindu, or even Indian culture.

## b. The Origin and Development of Caste System

Traditionally Hindu society is divided into four castes. These are first Brahmin (Priestly class), second Khashatriya (Soldiers or ruling class), then Vaisyas (Merchant Class) and finally, Shudras (Servant class). The Shudra category has innumerable sub-sections and at the lowest end are the untouchables, who do not even belong to this caste. These were named Harijans by M. K. Gandhi, the Father of Nation, who did not want to address them as untouchables, but chose a respectful word Harijans, meaning God's people. This term is not used now and today they are addressed as the Dalits. The first three castes which are called the upper castes have many groups and sub-groups.

According to many scholars, belonging to both high caste and low castes, the caste system has been “one of the most misrepresented, misinformed, misunderstood, and misused and the most maligned aspects of Hinduism.” (Rao 2009) In order to understand the larger historical context, the original purpose behind the caste system, one must go to antiquity to study the evolution of the caste system. Many socially reformed Hindus believe that the caste system, which has been the mainstay of the Hindu social order, has no sanction in the Vedas. The ancient culture of India was based upon a system of social diversification according to spiritual development, and enlightenment, not by birth, but by his karma.

Krishna proclaimed in Bhagavad-Gita that the Lord has created the system of four *varnas* (castes) according to one's own in-born traits and *karma* (fate). Thus the Varna system has not been sanctioned by birth. However, over a period of time the system has degenerated into the present state and continues to plague society.

Further, in the course of time, the system became hereditary and over the course of many centuries degenerated as a result of exploitation by some priests, and other socio-economic elements of the society. It is also alleged that the ruling class in league with the priestly class modified the scriptures to suit them and have complete control over the lower castes (Rao 2009). The scriptures (*Smritis*) were written by Brahmins who were controlled by Kshatriyas. Brahmins by nature are averse to warfare and were thus confined to living by patronage and begging. The Kshatriya community in order to keep the most intelligent class of Brahmins in good humour patronized them, bowed to them and made them royal priests. People have to bow to them after giving alms to Brahmins. Thus their superiority was confirmed as a class and their ego was not hurt. Or else, the most intelligent community would have turned against the Kshatriyas, and this they could ill afford. There is no reference to untouchability in Vedas and it is believed that the original inhabitants of India were called *dasyas* (slaves) and were conquered by the invading Aryans and these were subsequently downgraded to the class of untouchables.

Later this system got scriptural sanction and justification. Thus the scriptures described that Brahmins were born out of the mouth of the God while Kshatriya were the outcome of the shoulders. Vaisyas were born out of the thighs and Shudras emanated from the feet of the Lord.

A positive theological interpretation asserts that the above descriptions should be considered in a metaphorical way and not taken literally. Brahmins recite the Vedas (Scriptures) through mouth and are the embodiment of knowledge. Therefore they were considered to be the facial portions representing the face of the God. It does not mean that they were born from the mouth of the Lord. The Kshatriyas live by the power of their arms and therefore represent the arms of the Lord. Vaisyas sit at one place and do trading. Therefore they are identified with the thighs of the Lord. Shudras live by serving the others by doing various jobs and trades and thus they are identified with the feet of the Lord. It is tragic that in spite of trying to interpret the verse in the metaphorical fashion most

people took it literally “causing great commotion in the Hindu society leading to hatred and sectarian fissures” (Rao 2009).

The Dalits, justifiably, are up in arms against these writings. It is a usual practice that in the demonstrations of Dalits, that the Hindu scriptures are ridiculed and even burnt (Rao 2009). Most of the Dalits would whole heartedly agree that “caste system is not just racism, but it is much more vicious, venomous, evil and cruel” (Annamalai 2001), while many non-Dalits are convinced of the evil effects of the caste-system and try to change it. That is why the government has officially banned caste-system, though it is practised unofficially. Because it is all-pervading, it is practically impossible to eliminate it from the unconsciousness of the people. Therefore it will not go away easily, even from within the Christian Churches in India.

## **2. The Semantic Choice: Reformation or Revolution**

To respond to such a tragic and heinous system, two great personalities, with different tactics and philosophy, emerged in the last century. They have become icons in contemporary India for their response to the old economic, social and religious order, represented by the caste phenomena. After a brief introduction to Gandhi, who is sufficiently well-known, we give a more detailed history of Ambedkar, leading to varying semantics of the Indian cultural scenario.

### **a. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi**

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), also known as Mahatma Gandhi, was born in Porbandar in the present state of Gujarat on October 2, 1869, and educated in law at University College, London. In 1891 Gandhi returned to India and two years later an Indian firm with interests in South Africa retained him as legal adviser in its office in Durban (INC 2011).

Gandhi remained in South Africa for 20 years, suffering imprisonment many times. In 1896, after being attacked and beaten by white South Africans, Gandhi began to teach a policy of passive resistance inspired by Leo Tolstoy, the teachings of Christ and the

“Civil Disobedience” of Henry David Thoreau. From South Africa, he returned to India in 1915 and became a leader in a complex struggle, the Indian campaign for home rule and independence.

Gandhi became the international symbol of a free India. He lived a spiritual and ascetic life of prayer, fasting, and meditation. So Indians revered him as a saint and began to call him Mahatma (“Great-soul”), a title reserved for the great sages. Gandhi’s advocacy of nonviolence, known as “ahimsa,” was the expression of a way of life implicit in the Hindu religion. In fact, one can assert that Gandhiji’s life was dedicated to the ideals of Truth, Non-violence and Love. “The Bhagavad Gita is my mother” he once said. Truly, he was the architect of India’s freedom (1947) and one of the greatest men of last century (Ramana Murthi 1969).

Gandhi’s death (January 30, 1948) was a great tragedy. His place in humanity was measured not in terms of the 20th century, but in terms of history. The life of Gandhi came to inspire nonviolent movements elsewhere, notably in the U.S. under the civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. and in South Africa under Nelson Mandela (INC 2011)

## b. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956) contributed to the development of the Indian nation during the formative stages of its history in the first half of the twentieth century. Ambedkar was born into a low-caste untouchable family in Maharashtra state in Western India 14 April 1891. Because his father had been in the military service through a limited opening given by the British during the middle of the nineteenth century, young Bhimrao gained access to an education at a time when the majority of untouchables were excluded from education. He graduated in 1912 and later earned MA and PhD degrees from Columbia University in New York City and a degree in law and DSc from the University of London. His studies were facilitated by fellowships awarded in 1913 by the philanthropic king of India’s Baroda state (Thorat 2008).

Ambedkar himself faced discrimination in various stages of life as a student, as a government servant and lecturer, as a lawyer, and

occasionally even when he occupied high positions of power as a minister and on other occasions in his public life. India gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947 and adopted its own constitution in 1950. Ambedkar was at the forefront of Indian politics as a scholar, a civil rights activist, and a political leader from 1920 until 1956. His nation-building contributions were multiple, and included writing books and memoranda on a number of issues of national importance and serving as a chief framer of the Indian constitution and as a policymaker. Above all, he was a leader of the excluded group of untouchables (Thorat 2008).

Ambedkar began his civil rights campaigns against caste discrimination and untouchability in the 1920s, mobilizing untouchables for access to public water tanks in the town of Mahad and entry into temples in the cities of Amravati and Nasik. With these struggles and the symbolic burning of the Manusmriti in 1927, the movement spread to the countryside. In the 1930s, struggles of workers and tenants against landlords were organized.

From 1930 onward, the focus shifted to seeking adequate representation for low-caste untouchables in the legislature, public employment, and in educational institutions, as well as to seeking general economic empowerment. Ambedkar published weekly papers, created associations, and established political parties. His first organization was the Bahishkarit Hitkarni Sabha (Association for the Welfare of the Ostracized), founded in 1924. In 1936 he created the Independent Labour Party, which was renamed as the Scheduled Caste Federation in 1942, and converted finally into the Republican Party of India in 1956. Ambedkar also set up a Peoples' Education Society in 1946 beginning with a college in Bombay and he organized the Indian Buddhist Council to help spread Buddhism (Thorat 2008).

Ambedkar was a scholar as well as a man of action. His aim was to use insights from various studies on Indian history and society to restructure Indian society on the principles of equality, liberty, and fraternity. He had differences both with contemporaries like Mahatma Gandhi and with India's leftists. In Ambedkar's view, the problem of the untouchables was rooted in the caste system, which was based on the principle of inequality, isolation, and exclusion, with an

ideological support from Brahmanic-Hindu religious philosophy. Gandhi, in contrast, believed that the institution of untouchability had no base in Hinduism and treated it as an aberration. The leftists, on the other hand, believed that the caste system had economic foundation and could be resolved through industrialization and a move toward socialism. Solutions differed correspondingly. Gandhi emphasized moral solutions and a change of heart among Hindus. Marxists advocated economic equality for the annihilation of caste discrimination. Ambedkar, however, favoured dismantling both the religious-ideological and economic foundations of the caste system. At the social-religious level, he argued for the acceptance of the egalitarian Buddhist religious tradition in Indian society. Economically, he favoured a strong state, a democratic socialism oriented to rapid economic development, and a system of compensatory affirmative action policy that included “reservations” in legislature, public services and educational institutions to ensure equal access to economic opportunities. As a minister for energy and irrigation under the last British government, Ambedkar played a major role in initiating economic planning in India and encouraging science and technology.

Ambedkar turned toward Buddhism and converted with a large number of followers in 1956. Buddhism, in his view, was a harbinger of economic and social/cultural egalitarianism and political democracy. This perspective on the problems of Indian society had an immense impact on the issue of reform in Hindu society. Ambedkar also had a profound impact on the development of policies opposing discrimination and facilitating the empowerment of discriminated groups. He advocated for policies of social inclusion since Hindu society is discriminatory right from its inception. “The set of measures aimed at ending discrimination and increasing equal opportunity and economic empowerment included equal rights legislation, legal safeguards against discrimination and affirmative action to ensure fair participation to the discriminated and excluded groups of untouchables” (Thorat 2008) . Legal safeguards against discrimination came with the Anti-Untouchability Act of 1955, and affirmative action came with the Reservation Policy for representation in legislatures, educational institutions, and public jobs, measures that were instituted in 1935 and were finally

incorporated into the constitution of India in 1950. In support of economic empowerment, Ambedkar favoured a particular type of socialistic economic framework, which, according to him, would ensure economic equality to poor and marginalized groups. Ambedkar's contribution is, thus, valuable both in social thought and in the shaping of policies against discrimination. As chairman of the drafting committee of the Indian constitution, he helped to create the basic political, economic, and social framework under which Indians live today. **Ambedkar died in 1956**, and the Indian state recognized his unique contributions. Therefore, he was posthumously awarded the country's highest civilian honor, the *Bharat Ratna* (Jewel of India) on April 14, 1990.

While both these icons and leaders were convinced of the need to improve the situation of the Dalits, Gandhi advocated reform of Hinduism from inside while Ambedkar opted for revolution from outside.

### **3. The Hermeneutic Response: Challenging or Changing Religion**

'Inside every thinking Indian there is a Gandhian and a Marxist struggling for supremacy' asserts noted Indian historian and biographer Ramachandra Guha (Guha 2001). Briefly, this section examines and discusses the two prominent hermeneutic imperatives confronting the life of thinking Indians today.

#### **a. Divergent Approaches**

Gandhi came from the Kathiawad peninsula which is today a part of Gujarat. He belonged to the Vaishya caste known as the ModhBania, who were wealthy, influential and took tradition seriously. Gandhi's father, grand-father and great grandfather had served as Prime-Ministers in the princely states of the peninsula. Gandhi capacity to compromise was developed during his years in South Africa (Siddhartha 2010). By compromising one helped one's opponent not to lose face. It was an honourable way of resolving problems; for the dignity of all the contending individuals or groups was preserved. Thus, for example, when Ambedkar accepted to give

up his demand for a separate electorate, Gandhi from his part responded by conceding the claim for reserved seats (Limaye 1995).

Given his nature, Gandhi disliked conflict and struggle. The style of resolving differences where the two contending parties had to fight each other so that one of them might win was abhorrent to him. It has been argued by Lloyd and Susan Rudolph that Gandhi's preference for consensus and distaste for conflict has roots in village society. There was a constant search for consensus in village affairs and opposition to partisanship. De-emphasising open clashes, victories and defeats, appeared to be a widely prevalent way of resolving disputes. We are of the opinion, however, that the dominant castes potential for coercion contributed to the success of the consensus approach. One of the references in Gandhi's autobiography deals with his firmness on the question of admitting and untouchable family to his ashram near Ahmadabad in 1915. In 1920, Gandhi said: "*Swara* [self-rule] is unattainable without the removal of the sin of untouchability as it is without Hindu-Muslim unity." In 1921 he said, "I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an Untouchable" (Siddhartha 2010).

In 1937 Gandhi said, "Once born a scavenger must earn his livelihood by being a scavenger, and then do whatever else he likes. For a scavenger is as worthy of his hire as a lawyer or your President. That according to me is Hinduism." What is being implied is that all *varnas* have equal worth. Seen from another point of view, this would suggest a denial of equal opportunity: for few people will admit that a scavenger is the equal of a lawyer or a President in worldly status, Gandhi believed in *Varnashramadharma*, the religious division of society into four groups: Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. This four-fold ordering of society and the associated traditional duties were important for the preservation of harmony and the growth of the soul. "The law of Varna prescribes that a person should, for his living, follow the lawful occupation of his forefathers," Stated Gandhi (Siddhartha 2010). Thus he was a convinced Hindu, ready for reformation.

We shall now look at Ambedkar's early years and the gradual hardening of his position towards Hinduism and caste-Hindu society. To start with, there was a great difference in the respective family

situations of Ambedkar and Gandhi. While the latter's forefathers had served as Prime-Ministers, the former's grandfather and father had served in the lower, rungs of the British army. Ambedkar's father, Ramji Sakpal, was an intensely religious man. He regularly recited the Ramayana and the Mahabharata to his children. Inspired by the Bhakti traditions (way of devotion to God) of poet Kabir and other saints, the family sang the praises of Krishna and Rama. Values of equality before God appear to have played some importance in this system. His followers believed that caste and rank at birth mattered little to God. While employed in the armed forces, Ramji (and his father before him) had been exposed to liberal English values and education. Ramji had picked up enough of the English language to impart it to his son, Ambedkar. The fact that the Mahars, to caste to which Ambedkar belonged, had been given their own regiment, the 111th Mahars, contributed to the strengthening of horizontal ties among them in the army. Here they were not obliged to observe traditional practices which symbolised their Untouchability.

Life in the cantonments and in Bombay (where his father moved to during his last years of High school) permitted the space for young Ambedkar to develop ideas and attitudes which as a village untouchable youth, he could scarcely have hoped to arrive at. Thus, right from childhood, Ambedkar was influenced by the following factors: a Bhakti tradition which spoke of the individual's equality before God, the enchantment and inspiration of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and the liberal English values which filtered down to the Mahar regiment. This was also the time of the emergence of caste solidarities and the weakening traditional intercaste marriage relations. If Ambedkar had grown up in the ideological context of the untouchable Mahar quarters of a Hindu village, it is unlikely that he could have developed into the self-confident, determined and persevering youth that he became. Later in his life there were several unpleasant incidents which brutally brought home to him that he was not the social equal of caste Hindus (Siddhartha 2010).

Ambedkar's earlier attitude to Hinduism was ambivalent. On the one hand, he was slowly coming to realise that within Hinduism there could be no liberation from untouchability. On the other hand his own upbringing had been within an atmosphere where the Hindu

scriptures and epics were recited with great devotion. In the early 1920's he had some faith in the Untouchables changing their status through emulating higher caste practices. He gradually came to the conclusion that this process, which sometimes included wearing the sacred thread and celebrating marriages with Vedic rites (technically called 'Sanskritisation process), had little effect in changing the attitudes of caste Hindus. By 1927, his mind was already made up when the Manusmriti was burnt in his presence at a large public meeting. In 1935, he announced his decision to leave Hinduism (Siddhartha 2010).

On October 14th, 1956, Ambedkar renounced Hinduism and embraced Buddhism along with several hundred thousand of his followers. His choice of this particular religion, and not any other, was based on its rootededness to India. Furthermore, he felt that Buddhism espoused egalitarian values without resorting to the violent methods of communism (Ambedkar 1968).<sup>3</sup>

Thus, whereas Gandhi's path was one of rediscovering Hinduism, Ambedkar's was one of bitterness and eventual rejection of the religion of his forefathers, which will be seen more in the following section.

### b. The Religious Conversion of Ambedkar

Ambedkar's change of religion is a gradual, pre-meditated and convinced one. Ever since the 1935 Depressed Classes Conference, when he had shocked Hindu India with the declaration that though he had been born a Hindu he did not intend to die one, he had been giving earnest consideration to the question of conversion. The longer he thought about it the more he was convinced that there was no future for the Untouchables within Hinduism, that they would have to adopt another religion, and that the best religion for them to adopt was Buddhism. During his years in office it had been hardly possible for him to bring about so momentous a change, but he had lost no opportunity of educating his followers in the issues involved, and it became increasingly apparent in which direction he – and they – were moving. In 1950 he not only praised the Buddha at the expense of Krishna, Christ, and Muhammad but also visited Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, at the invitation of the Young Men's Buddhist Association,

Colombo. There he addressed a meeting of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Kandy and appealed to the Untouchables of Ceylon to embrace Buddhism. Further, in 1951 he defended the Buddha against the charge that he had been responsible for the downfall of the Indian woman and compiled the *Bauddha Upasana Patha*, a small collection of Buddhist devotional texts. Thus when his resignation from the Cabinet, and his failure to secure election to the Loksabha, finally left Ambedkar with the time and energy for his greatest achievement, the ground for which was already well prepared (Sangharakshita 1986).

In 1954 he twice visited Burma (or Myanmar), in order to attend the conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Rangoon. In 1955 he founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha or Indian Buddhist Society and installed an image of the Buddha in a temple that had been built at Dehu Road, near Pune, India. Addressing the thousands of Untouchables who had assembled for the occasion, he declared that henceforth he would devote himself to the propagation of Buddhism in India. He also announced that he was writing a book explaining the tenets of Buddhism in simple language for the benefit of the common people. When this book was finished, he promised that he would embrace Buddhism. The work in question was *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, on which he had been working since November 1951 and which he completed in February 1956 (Sangharakshita 1986). True to his word, Ambedkar announced that he would be embracing Buddhism in October of that year. Arrangements were accordingly made for the ceremony to be held in Nagpur, and on 14 October 1956. There the untouchable leader took the Three Refuges and Five Precepts from a Buddhist monk in the traditional manner. Then he administered the oath to the 380,000 men, women, and children who had come to Nagpur responding to his call. After conducting further conversion ceremonies in Nagpur and Chanda Ambedkar returned to Delhi knowing that the Wheel of the Dharma of Buddhism had again been set in motion in India (Rajshekhar Shetty 1983).

A few weeks later he travelled to Kathmandu in Nepal for the fourth conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists and addressed the delegates on 'The Buddha and Karl Marx'. On his

way back to Delhi he made two speeches in Benares and visited Kusinara, where the Buddha had died. In Delhi he took part in various Buddhist functions and completed the last chapter of his book *The Buddha and Karl Marx*. On the evening of 5 December 1956, he asked for the Preface and Introduction to *The Buddha and His Dhamma* to be brought to his bedside, so that he could work on them during the night. The following morning, December 6, 1956, he was found dead. He was 64 years and 7 months old, and he had been a Buddhist for only seven weeks (Sangharakshita 1986).

Still, during that period he had probably done more for the promotion of Buddhism than any other Indian since Ashoka. At the time of his death three quarters of a million Dalits had embraced Buddhism, and in the months that followed hundreds of thousands more took the same step – despite the uncertainty and confusion that had been created by the sudden loss of their great leader. So it is not surprising that when the results of the 1961 census were published it was found that in the course of the previous decade the number of Buddhists in India had risen by a staggering 1,671 per cent and that they now numbered 3,250,227, more than three quarters of whom lived in the State of Maharashtra. This was Ambedkar's "last and greatest achievement" (Sangharakshita 1986).

Even though it was as the Architect of the Constitution of Free India that he passed into official history and is today most widely remembered, his real significance consists in the fact that it was he who established a revived Neo-Buddhism on a firm foundation. It is therefore as the Modern Ashoka that he really deserves to be known, and the statue standing outside the parliament building in Delhi should really depict him holding *The Buddha and His Dhamma* underneath his arm and pointing in the direction of the Three Jewels of Buddhism. In order to appreciate the nature of Ambedkar's achievement, and thus the real significance of the man himself, we need to keep in background the diabolical system from which he sought to deliver the 380,000 untouchables, as well as to trace the successive stages of the road by which he, together with his followers, moved from Hinduism to Buddhism.

Thus the greatness of Ambedkar lies in leading his people to a more humanistic and liberated life and leading them to the new

religion of Buddhism. Throughout his journey and struggles, he was totally open to scientific and educational transformation and he tried as much as possible, to bring his people to an enlightened and democratic society.

#### **4. The Symbolic Significance: Two Differing and Towering Personalities**

Here we study the on-going debate that continues even after the demise of both Gandhi and Ambedkar and its relevance for contemporary India's religious depth and scientific progress. Truly there are the two symbolic figures with wide-reaching significances in the contemporary cultural and social scene of India.

##### **a. The Ongoing Debate**

In some ways the most intense, interesting and long-running of the debates that took place during India's freedom struggle was between Gandhi and Ambedkar. "Gandhi wished to save Hinduism by abolishing untouchability, whereas Ambedkar saw a solution for his people outside the fold of the dominant religion of the Indian people. Gandhi was a rural romantic, who wished to make the self-governing village the bedrock of free India; Ambedkar an admirer of city life and modern technology who dismissed the Indian village as a den of iniquity. Gandhi was a crypto-anarchist who favoured non-violent protest while being suspicious of the state; Ambedkar a steadfast constitutionalist, who worked within the state and sought solutions to social problems with the aid of the state and of technology" (Guha 2001).

Perhaps the most telling difference between them was in the choice of political instrument. For Gandhi, the Congress represented all of India, the Dalits too. He had made their cause his own, right from the time of South Africa. Ambedkar, however, made a clear distinction between freedom and power. The Congress wanted the British to transfer power to them. According to Ambedkar to obtain freedom, the Dalits had to organise themselves as a separate bloc, to form a separate party, so as to more effectively articulate their interests in the crucible of electoral politics and power. Thus in his life time and for long afterwards, Ambedkar came to represent a dangerously

subversive threat to the authoritative, and sometimes authoritarian, equation: Gandhi = Congress = Nation. Incredibly, Ambedkar dared to take a stand even against Gandhi in his noble pursuit of freedom, since the empowerment of the Dalits, he believed, cannot be left to chance. Here then is the stuff of epic drama, the argument between "the Hindu who did most to reform caste and the ex-Hindu who did most to do away with caste altogether" (Guha 2001). In these two towering personalities we can see the living metaphors of the "Argumentative Indian" (Sen 2005).

### b. Two Tragic Heroes

According to a contemporary historian both figures should be seen as heroes, albeit tragic ones.

The tragedy, from Gandhi's point of view, was that his colleagues in the national movement either did not understand his concern with untouchability or even actively deplored it. Many influential Hindu priests thought he was going too fast in his challenge to caste system. The opposition that he faced from his fellow Hindus meant that Gandhi had to force to move slowly, and in stages. He started by accepting that untouchability was bad, but added a cautionary caveat - that inter-dining and inter-marriage were also bad. He moved on to accepting inter-mingling and inter-dining (hence the movement for temple entry), and to arguing that all men and all *varnas* were equal. The last and most far-reaching step, taken only in 1946, was to challenge caste directly by accepting and sanctioning inter-marriage itself.

The tragedy, from Ambedkar's point of view, was that to fight for his people he had to make common cause with the British. Arun Shourie(1997) has made much of this and attempts to show that Ambedkar was a political opponent of both Gandhi and the Congress, and generally preferred the British to either. That Ambedkar preferred the British to the Congress is entirely defensible, according to Guha (2001). Relevant here is a remark of the 18th-Century English writer Samuel Johnson. When the American colonists asked for independence from Britain, Johnson said: "How is it that we hear the greatest yelps for liberty among the drivers of Negroes?" Untouchability was to the Indian freedom movement what

slavery had been to the American struggle, the basic contradiction it sought to paper over. Truly, Ambedkar is a figure who commands great respect from one end of the social spectrum. But he is also, among some non-Dalits, an object of great resentment, chiefly for his decision to carve out a political career independent of and sometimes in opposition to Gandhi's Congress.

In fact, for Ambedkar to stand up to the uncrowned king and anointed Mahatma of the Indian people required extraordinary courage and will-power. Gandhi also accepted it. Speaking at a meeting in Oxford in October 1931, Gandhi said he had "the highest regard for Dr. Ambedkar. He has every right to be bitter. That he does not break our heads is an act of self-restraint on his part." Writing to an English friend two years later, he said he found "nothing unnatural" in Ambedkar's hostility to the Congress and its supporters. "He has not only witnessed the inhuman wrongs done to the social pariahs of Hinduism", reflected this Hindu, "but in spite of all his culture, all the honours that he has received, he has, when he is in India, still to suffer many insults to which untouchables are exposed." In June 1936 Gandhi pointed out once again that Dr. Ambedkar "has had to suffer humiliations and insults which should make any one of us bitter and resentful." "Had I been in his place," he remarked, "I would have been as angry" (Guha 2001)

Gandhi's latter-day admirers might question Ambedkar's patriotism and probity, but the Mahatma had no such suspicions himself. Addressing a bunch of Karachi students in June 1934, he told them that "the magnitude of [Dr. Ambedkar's] sacrifice is great. He is absorbed in his own work. He leads a simple life. He is capable of earning one to two thousand rupees a month. He is also in a position to settle down in Europe if he so desires. But he does not want to stay there. He is only concerned about the welfare of the Harijans" (Guha 2001).

To Gandhi, Ambedkar's protest held out a challenging lesson to Hindus. In March 1936 he said that if Ambedkar and his followers were to embrace another religion, "We deserve such treatment and our task (now) is to wake up to the situation and purify ourselves." Not many heeded Gandhi's warning, for towards the end of his life Gandhi spoke with some bitterness about the indifference to Dalits

among his fellow Hindus: “The tragedy is that those who should have especially devoted themselves to the work of [caste] reform did not put their hearts into it. What wonder that Harijan [Dalit] brethren feel suspicious, and show opposition and bitterness”(Guha 2001).

One of the few Gandhians who understood the cogency of the Dalit critique of the Congress was C. Rajagopalachari (fondly called Rajaji). In the second half of 1932, Rajaji became involved in the campaign to allow the so-called untouchables to enter the Guruvayoor temple in Kerala, South India. The campaign was led by that doughty fighter for the rights of the dispossessed, K. Kelappan Nair. In a speech at Guruvayoor on December 20, 1932, Rajaji told the high castes that it would certainly help us in the fight for Swaraj if we open the doors of the temple [to Dalits]. One of the many causes that keep Swaraj away from us is that we are divided among ourselves (Guha 2001). Unhappily, while upper-caste Hindus thought that Gandhi moved too fast, Dalits today feel he was much too slow.

It is no wonder that a contemporary Dalit politician Mayawati has spoken of the Mahatma as “a shallow paternalist who sought only to smooth the path for more effective long-term domination” by the Brahmins. Likewise, Kancha Illiah (2005) writes of Gandhi as wanting to “build a modern cōsent system for the continued maintenance of Brahminical hegemony.” Definitely they are unfair judgements just as Arun Shourie’s on Ambedkar was!

It is our opinion that the differences between Gandhi and Ambedkar are not merely personal approaches. They continue to be debated and argued within Indian society today, which is a much needed enrichment to locate its own theoretical framework. In what follows we shall briefly see the Dalit critique of Hinduism with regards to the specific issue of science and technology.

## **5. The Scientific Tradition: Buddhist and Hindu Approaches**

Modern science is undoubtedly a contribution of the west. But it may be noted that there was a time in Indian history when Indian science was not only famous in the country, but it was so all over

the world. If the progress of Indian science would have been maintained unhindered after the sixth century A.D., claims some Dalit scholars, India would have been foremost in the scientific field. According to them the reason for the disappearance of science from India is the Brahmanic or Hindu religion (Jamanadas 2000).

Dr. Ambedkar had claimed: "It must be recognized that there never has been a common Indian Culture, that historically there have been three Indias, Brahmanic India, Buddhist India and Hindu India, each with its own culture. It must be recognized that the history of India before the Muslim invasions is the history of a mortal conflict between Brahmanism and Buddhism." From such a standpoint, we analyse the Indian scientific tradition and explore briefly and even simplistically its downfall, as suggested by Dalit critiques.

### a. Golden Era of Science in India

From the ruins of the scientifically advanced Harappa and Mohenjodaro (2600 to 1700 BCE) civilization it is clear that there existed a pre Aryan urban civilization of Dravidians, which went by the name of Nagas. It shows great development of town planning, water supply and urban facilities, sanitary drainage and granaries. Gold used for ornaments in Harrapan culture was from Kolar gold mines, the only source available, which is proved by a committee of metallurgical experts under Sir Edwin Pascoe, who performed chemical analysis, under the direction of Sir John Marshall. So gold mining was a flourishing industry of the time. This also shows the communicating links between south and north, Vindhya and forests of Dandakaranya were no bar. The copper used in Harrapan civilization was imported from Rajputana, and tin from Hazaribagh. It used various types of stones quarried all over India, and some imported from outside. Both the attempts to make Harrapan civilization Buddhist (Biswas 1999) or Arian (Agrawal 1993 & Bisht 1999) are to be rejected, since Harrapan civilization predates both Buddhism and Arian invasion.

The modern number system of 0 to 9 with use of decimal point is the contribution of Indian mathematicians. It spread to Europe via Arab countries. Further, Mauryan India also achieved remarkable success in fields of Engineering, town planning, architecture and

art. India's first irrigation dam belongs to this era. We know the importance of Ashokan pillars for aesthetic beauty, craftsmanship and religious declarations, but it was also known for the science of polishing of stones to such an extent that it became the distinguishing mark, the structures with high polish being ascribed to Ashokan period (ca. 304–232 BC). Such gloss and polish, Marshall says, "no modern mason can produce", Vincent Smith calls it "the despair of modern masons", Tom Coryat and Whittekar described it as of brass, Chaplain Terry as a pillar of marble, and Bishop Heber as pillar of cast metal (Jamanadas 2000).

In the first and third centuries A.D., two important texts were composed on medical science, namely Charak Samhita and Sushrutsamhita, which show the advanced stage medical knowledge in India. At the time of invasion of Alexander, India was famous for medicine and surgery (Soni 2008). In Buddhist books, we find mention of Jivaka who operated on the brain of a merchant. He was appointed by Emperor Bimbisara as a physician for Lord Buddha and cured him of constipation by making use of inhaling fragrance of medication on a lotus flower. The science of Inhalers in modern medicine is pretty recent. He cured diseases of head, a fistula by ointment, jaundice and performed surgery on brain and intestinal "entanglements" as per the Vinaya texts, which Radha Kumud Mukharji calls were "not given to exaggeration like a work of fiction" (Soni 2008). Up to seventh or eighth century A.D., Indian physicians and surgeons were respectfully appointed in Baghdad.

Indian medical books were popular in China. A Chinese work composed in 455 A.D., is derived from Indian text. A number of medical books are found in Chinese Buddhist collection. A text on Children's Diseases, named "Ravana-kumara-charita" was translated into Chinese as late as 11th century. Indian Medical science and arithmetic was highly valued in the west. Greek and Iranian physicians knew Indian medical texts. It is recorded that Barzouhych, a subject from Sassanid King Khusro I's court (531-579 A.D.) visited India for study of medicine (Soni 2008).

Mehrauli iron pillar, which is standing in the courtyard of Kutub Minar at Delhi, belongs to fourth century A.D. It is standing there, defying the ravages of times, for centuries but not a spot of rust or

corrosion on it. Its composition was examined by a committee of experts, who held that, it was beyond the capacity of any Iron foundry in the world of that time to manufacture such a masterpiece. From Periplus we know that the sword made of Indian steel is proverbial in Arabic literature, showing the highest skills and knowledge of metallurgy. The famous Damascus blade was made from Indian steel. (Jamanadas 2000). Ancient South Indian bronzes are praised even now in the whole world not only for their craftsmanship but also for metallurgy. Sultanganj colossal Buddha in copper is a metallurgical masterpiece and a marvel, still preserved in Birmingham museum (Soni 2008).

The great mathematician, Aryabhatta, born in 476 A.D., flourished in the centre of Buddhist heart land, i.e. Capital of Magadhanempire, at Pataliputra and his *Aryabhatiya* was composed in A.D. 499. He was first to treat Mathematics as a distinct subject and he dealt with evolution and involution, area and volume, progressions and algebraic identities, and intermediate equations of the first degree. He also arrived at a ‘remarkably accurate value of Pi, viz. 3.1416’ (Jamanadas 2000). Significantly, it was Aryabhatta, who for the first time regarded the earth was a sphere and rotated on its axis. For this, he gave a beautiful analogy that to a person travelling in a boat, trees on the shore appear to move in opposite direction, similarly because earth is rotating on its axis towards east, it appears to us as if the sun moves from east to west. He also explained that the eclipses were not the work of Rahu and Ketu or some other ‘rakshasa’, but were caused by the shadow of the earth falling on the moon.

One of the most important features of Aryabhatta’s mathematical system is his unique system of notation (Jamanadas 2000). It is based on the decimal place value system, unknown to other ancient people, but now in use throughout the civilized world. Whether Aryabhatta invented the system or merely improved on an existing one cannot be definitely stated. But with the doubtful exception of Bakhshali manuscript, which is referred by some to c. A.D. 200, the earliest use of the system occurs in *Aryabhatiya*, and it is found in all his later mathematical works.

Thus till that time, which was the golden era of Buddhism, science and technology flourished in India. It is clear from the dates, that the

age of progress of science in India was the age of glory of Buddhism. As a matter of fact, science spreads only when it is free from the fetters of traditions. Lord Buddha had given that freedom to Indian society, that freedom of thought and action (Jamanadas 2000). Liberated from the severe caste rules, society was taking keen interest in progress of scientific pursuits.

### b. Crusade against Science

It is evident that in the Middle Ages, before the coming of the Muslims and British to India, science in India was on the decline. Various reasons may be attributed to it, though we cannot be definitive about them. One of the Dalit assertions is that it is because of the Brahminic domination that science declined. According to these scholars, Brahmins opposed Buddhists, and their relations were so strained on the issue of caste supremacy, that they became bitter enemies of each other. They opposed everything in which Buddhists were experts, even the science, according to contemporary Dalit critiques.

According to them, putting themselves on the citadel of power, the Brahmins tried to eliminate all that Buddhism stood for, including science and opposition to caste. “After the fall of Buddhism, Brahmins dominated and they denounced, condemned, denigrated and maligned all those things in which the Buddhists had excelled” (Jamanadas 2000). A famous scientist of modern India, Dr. Neelaratna Dhar aptly observes that, the progress of science was obstructed by the decline of Buddhism in India. Further, thinkers like V. T. Rajshekhar Shetty (1987) and Kancha Ilaiah (2009) point out that Hinduism has failed to mediate between scientific thought and spiritual thought. Contrasting it with the productive ethics of Dalit people, he celebrates the demise of Hinduism.

Without fully subscribing to such a critique of Brahminic Hinduism, we can still hold that Buddhism and Hinduism had radically different approaches to science and technology and that could be one of the reasons for the decline of science in the pre-British India. Such a claim can be safely made, since the pre-Brahminic (or Dravidian) India was highly advanced scientifically and technologically.

## **6. Conclusion: Many Heroes of the Discourse**

In this article, we have been trying to see how the two icons of modern India have differently responded to caste system and consequently to both science (including technology) and religion. Based on our reflection we can recap our main findings as follows:

- Gandhian call for reformation of Hinduism from within was a genuine and committed one, demanding that religion be truly purified so that it realises itself in the social world around it.
- Gandhi's reformative agenda was also instrumental in taking up his cautious and organic attitude to science and religion. For Gandhi, he would encourage science and religion to a limited degree and not more. He, like many of his Hindu believers, does not believe that science can contribute anything to his spiritual quest, which is his primary duty.
- Gandhian approach to religious and social issues may not have borne fruit, as he wished them, but his political agenda has definitely been productive.
- Gandhi tried to be a man for all and from within his religious resource, he could treat Muslims, Christians and Dalits with respect and devotion. Since he tried to be a "universal leader" there is hardly anyone who will stand for him now. None really considers Gandhi as their leader.
- Ambedkar's radical approach has been successful as far as the lot of the Dalits has been concerned. But the fact remains that even his radical step has not ameliorated the situation of the Dalits fully, even after fifty years. They have not become equal citizens.
- Ambedkar is totally open to education, science and technology and for him science and technology do make a difference in his spiritual and religious life.

- Calling for total change of the system, Ambedkar tried his best to bring about radical transformation of society and he was partially successful.
- Unlike Gandhi, Ambedkar's commitment was clearly to the Dalits. This makes him still the favourite and exclusive leader of the Dalits, who are ready to give up their lives for him. The price he has to pay for this devotion of his followers is that he has become exclusive and is not regarded as "a man for all."
- Religious is deeply a social phenomenon and changing one affects the other. Both Gandhi and Ambedkar realised the contextual and social dimension of religion for the cultural and economic enhancement of the people.
- One's religious conviction and commitment directly affects one's perception and appreciation of science. A conservative religious vision (Gandhi) tends to give secondary importance to science, while a liberal understanding of religion (Ambedkar) tends to take science more seriously.
- The locus of science-religion interaction for both these personalities was the life of the ordinary people, the untouchables of India, including their social, economic and cultural context.
- Compared to the "lived experience" (*Lebenswelt*) of the people, the theoretical and metaphysical issues of religion were of less significance for both these leaders, though they did occupy themselves with the conceptual framework of their own religious traditions.
- Two good and well-meaning persons (Gandhi and Ambedkar), with the same goal (reforming caste system) can undertake activities that are at odds with each other and still each one can be effective in solving the problem. Such a hermeneutical principle may be applied also to the

case of individual religions, each of trying to make human beings whole.

One crucial aspect we are concerned of in this paper is their commitment to religion and openness to science. Both Ahmedkar and Gandhi were deeply rooted in India and committed to the untouchables. Their approach to science and religion were totally different. One wanted to remain totally faithful to his own religion and reform it. The other gave it up and embraced another religion. One was reluctantly accepted science and technology. The other embraced them wholeheartedly (Rajshekhar Shetty 1983). The root cause for this significant difference can be traced to their social upbringing and personal experience. Given their similar vision and shared concerns, why did they part ways and choose two different approaches to science and religion? The most important thing that separated them was their social upbringing and personal experience. Gandhi's never had to personally face the devastating pain of social segregation from the community. Nor did he experience the pain of traumatic personal rejection in his own flesh and blood, unlike Ambedkar. That, I think, was the crucial difference between these two great heroes.

Gandhi and Ambedkar are two great symbols of India's contemporary responses to science and religion. The former who was called the "half-naked fakir" focused on chakra (spinning wheel) and was not enthused with modern science and was a deeply committed and open Hindu (Pandey 1979). The latter had no difficulty in adopting to English customs and was open to modernisation and scientific progress of India. He radically gave up religion and embraced the Buddhism as a deliberate choice.

Questions are today raised about the greatness of Gandhi vs Ambedkar. "Ambedkar may not be an international figure like Gandhi – not as yet – but I think he has the potential to get there soon," said writer and social thinker, Purushottam Aggarwal. In fact, in the contemporary India, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's call for social justice has a lot more takers today and many would say that his idea of a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity is relevant now than ever before. Nilanjana Bosea contemporary critique puts it

succinctly: “The Mahatma may be the Father of the Nation, but Babasaheb is possibly the architect of a new India”.

May be we can take an inclusive approach. Where as in their lifetime Gandhi and Ambedkar were political rivals, now, decades after their death, it should be possible to see their contributions as complementing one another’s. A critic D. R. Nagaraj once noted that in the narratives of Indian nationalism the “heroic stature of the caste-Hindu reformer”, Gandhi, “further dwarfed the Harijan personality” of Ambedkar. In the Indian Epic, Ramayana, there is only one hero but, as Nagaraj points out, Ambedkar was too proud, intelligent and self-respecting a man to settle for the role of Hanuman or Sugreeva. By the same token, Dalit hagiographers generally seek to elevate Ambedkar by diminishing Gandhi. “For the scriptwriter and the mythmaker there can only be one hero. But the historian is bound by no such constraint. The history of Dalit emancipation is unfinished, and for the most part unwritten. It should, and will, find space for many heroes. Ambedkar and Gandhi will do nicely for a start” (Guha 2001).

Mahatma Gandhi was not so much the Father of the Nation as the mother of all debates regarding its future. All his life he fought in a friendly spirit with compatriots whose views on this or that topic diverged sharply from his. He disagreed with Communists on the efficacy and morality of violence as a political strategy. He fought with radical Muslims on the one side and with radical Hindus on the other, both of whom sought to build a state on theological principles. He argued with Nehru and other scientists on whether economic development in a free India should centre on the village or the factory. And with that other giant, Rabindranath Tagore, he disputed the merits of such varied affiliations as the English language, nationalism, and the spinning wheel (Guha 2001). His fight with Ambedkar continues even today and Ambedkar seems to be winning in the contemporary India. That explains the phenomenon that the highest political positions of India (including that of the President and Chief Justice) have been occupied by Dalits. That the most populous State in India, Uttar Pradesh, is currently ruled by a Dalit women, can only be explained the resurgence of a new social, cultural and religious order, unimaginable even fifteen years ago.

India has sufficient space for many Gandhis, the social reformers, and many Ambedkars the cultural revolutionaries. Together, even through their controversies, they will facilitate the emergence of a new cultural and economic order in India. The discourse of a multi-cultural, pluralistic and scientifically advancing India with different religious traditions will go on and it is highly desirable.<sup>4</sup> The Catholic Church with so much of cultural, education and social space it possesses, can significantly contribute to that on-going and diverse discussion.

## Notes

1. This is a modified article to suit this volume. The original article was requested by in order to study the relationship between science, Hinduism and Buddhism. Edited by Patrick McNamara and Wesley J. Wildman, both of Boston University. It is a three volume series tentatively entitled *Science and the World's Religions*. That thrust of the original article is drastically changed here, though the materials remain substantially same.
2. It is a tragedy that in spite of the Christian proclamation that we are all created in the image of God and so are equal, there is caste-system being practiced in the Indian Church. As Christians we need to take the situation realistically and respond to the tragic situation creatively.
3. Here Indian Christians have something to reflect on. The question we need to ask is: Why and how did he not find Christianity egalitarian and humanizing?
4. This is also the argument put forward by the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen about the Indian culture. See SEN, A.K. (2005). See also VATTANKY (1993), a longtime colleague of Prof Kunnumpuram..

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## **Towards a Christian World-View: Theological Explorations**

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**Abstract:** In this article the author briefly discusses some of the theological views he holds. He has been engaged in learning and teaching theology for about fifty years. During the course of these years he has gained some theological insights and acquired certain theological convictions. It is these that he tries to articulate here. What is said here is necessarily tentative and incomplete.

Then carefully and cautiously, he summarizes his theological position on the following topics: God; The Human Person; The World; Jesus Christ; The Church as a Divine-Human Reality; and The Mission of the Church. Essentially these reflections are liberative, life-affirming, future-oriented and hope-based.

His focus has been to evolve a vision of Church's understanding of mission as comprehensive, service-oriented and resonating with the Kingdom of God. It is possible that all our ministries – be they frontier mission, pastoral work, education, health services or social involvement – be directed to the fulfilment of this mission. This may, however, call for a radical reorientation of our ministries.

**Keywords:** Church; God; Human Person; Jesus Christ; Mission of the Church; Theology of Kunnumpuram; World.

I have been asked to write an article on my theology. I am not sure if I have a theology. And if I have one, will it be possible for me

to articulate it adequately in an article? So I do not intend to do such a difficult thing here.

Instead, I shall briefly discuss some of the theological views I hold. I have been engaged in learning and teaching theology for about fifty years. During the course of these years I have gained some theological insights and acquired certain theological convictions. It is these that I shall try to articulate here. What is said here is necessarily tentative and incomplete.

It was Raimon Panikkar who spoke of the cosmotheandric intuition which consists in this: The divine, the human and cosmic are irreducible dimensions of reality.<sup>1</sup> Following this I shall first deal with God, the human person and the world. I shall then go on to discuss Jesus Christ, the Church and the Mission of the Church today.

## 1. God

Faith in God is the foundation of my theology. This faith is based on my personal experience of God, and not on rational arguments for the existence of God. Besides, I find faith in God quite meaningful. For only God “meets the deepest longings of the human heart which is never fully satisfied with what this world can offer” (GS 41). And only God provides a fully adequate answer to the ultimate questions of humankind about life and destiny. Moreover, the common experience of humanity leads to faith in God. As Vatican II points out, “For their part, however, believers of whatever religion has always heard His revealing voice in the discourse of creatures. But when God is forgotten the creature itself grows unintelligible” (GS 36).

**1.1** Perhaps the most beautiful description of God in the Bible is this: “God is love” (1 Jn 4:16). The nature of God is love. It is remarkable that the official creeds of the Church usually speak of God as omnipotent, as all powerful. And the liturgical prayers are mostly addressed to almighty God, eternal King or supreme Lord and never to the all-loving God. And it is out of love that God created the world. Vatican I has given us a comprehensive explanation of our faith in creation:

This one and only true God, of His own goodness and almighty power, not for the increase of His own happiness, nor for the acquirement of His perfection, but in order to manifest His perfection through the benefits which He bestows on creatures, with absolute freedom of counsel, “from the beginning of time made at once (*simul*) out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and then (deinde) the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body.<sup>2</sup>

This statement makes it quite clear that God did not create the world in order to get anything for himself. In fact, there is no need of God’s that we can supply, no luxury of His that we can provide. Actually, God created the world in order to bestow his blessings on his creatures and to give them a share in his own goodness.

It is true that Vatican I powerfully affirms that “the world was created for the glory of God” (*ND* 418). Now the glory of God is the splendour of his being. As the council explains, God created the world “in order to manifest his perfection through the benefits he bestows on creatures” (*ND* 412). As Irenaeus points out, the glory of God is a human being fully alive. It is not when we constantly sing: “Glory, glory, alleluia” that God is glorified, but when we pulsate with life divine. Just as the beauty of a painting is the glory of the painter, so too will our life glorify God if we grow and blossom fully. There is another way of understanding this. If the world had a finite reality as its goal, then it has only a limited possibility of growth. But when the world has the Infinite God as its goal, it has endless possibilities of growth and development.

**1.2** Further, God’s saving work is based on love. As Vatican II has stated, God in His goodness and wisdom chose to reveal Himself and his plan of salvation. “Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God out of the abundance of His love speaks to humans as friends and lives among them, so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself’ (*DV* 2). The Fourth Gospel affirms: “For God so loved the world that he have his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life” (*Jn* 3:16). Thus, God’s saving plan, which was revealed gradually

and which culminated in Jesus Christ, was from beginning to end based on his love for humankind and the world.

It is usually asserted that God is immanent and transcendent. It is not easy to grasp this. This is the way I understand it. Transcendence is the way God is immanent. God is present in every created reality, without being identified with it. This is the meaning of God's transcendence.

**1.3** It is part of our faith that God is one and three. Obviously the Triune God is beyond the grasp of our finite minds. And human language cannot adequately express the mystery of God. This is what the Church means when it teaches that God is incomprehensible and ineffable. All the same, the doctrine of the Trinity has a great significance for the Christian community as well as the human society at large. As Vatican II points out: "Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father, 'that all may be one... as we are one' (Jn 17:21-22) opened up vistas closed to human reason. For He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons and the union of God's children in truth and charity" (*GS* 24).

In the Christian scheme of things, the Trinity is the great symbol of community. For us God is not a solitary but a community of Persons – Father, Son and Spirit. This is a community of life, since the three Persons share the same life divine. It is a community of love, because they love one another. It is also a community of work as they collaborate in the work of creation and salvation. But it is a unity in diversity – the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit.

All Christian communities are called to be communities of life and love as well as communities of work and prayer. They should strive for unity in diversity, respecting and cherishing the rich diversity to be found among the members of every community. Let them remember that uniformity is the death of life. Wherever there is life, there is diversity.

Leonardo Boff believes that the Trinity can be the prototype of the human community dreamed of by those who are oppressed but are longing for liberation. The oppressed eagerly seek equality, participation and the experience of communion all of which are

denied to them. They search for a just and egalitarian society which respects the differences between persons. “For those who have faith, the Trinitarian communion between the divine Three, the union between them in love and vital interpenetration, can serve as an inspiration” in their struggle for a free, just and humane society.<sup>3</sup>

In these days when people are becoming ever more sensitive to human equality and gender justice, the use of designations like God the Father and God the Son can be a bit problematic. In any case, we know that God is neither male nor female.

I have always been somewhat puzzled when I hear people praying to the Holy Trinity. I wonder why we don’t pray to the Holy Unity. Would it not be better if we prayed to the Triune God?

## 2. The Human Person

In the Church today, there is a consensus that the human person occupies a central place in the Christian scheme of things. According to Vatican II, “all things on earth should be related to the human person as their centre and crown” (*GS* 12). The Council is here merely echoing the Scriptural testimony that the human person is the most precious being on the face of the earth.

Genesis I highlights the dignity of the human person. There is something special about the way the human person is created. God deliberates before creating humans: “Let us make humankind in our image and according to our likeness” (*Gen* 1:26). Only humans are made in the image and likeness of God. The Psalmist, too, is keen on stressing the greatness of humans. “Yet you have made them a little less than God and crowned them with glory and honour (*Ps* 8:5). Jesus has a similar view: “The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath (*Mark* 2:27). All laws, doctrines and institutions exist for the welfare of humanity (see *GS* 26).

**2.1** One of the essential dimensions of the human person is freedom. It seems to be part of God’s plan that humans should shape their destiny in freedom and responsibility. As Vatican II has affirmed:

For its part, authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man. For God has willed that man be left “in the hand of his own counsel” so

that he can seek his Creator spontaneously, and come freely to utter and blissful perfection through loyalty to Him (GS 17).<sup>4</sup>

While human freedom is itself a gift of God, it has been damaged by sin and stands in need of the healing touch of grace. It is human freedom created by God, damaged by sin but redeemed by Christ, that we call Christian freedom. “For freedom Christ has set us free” (Gal 5:1; see also Jn 8:31-36). Paul also points out that the Spirit of Christ is the principle of freedom. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Cor 3:17; see also Gal 5: 13-26).

Christian freedom is not only a gift, but also a task. “For you were called to freedom brothers and sisters” (Gal 5:13). It is our Christian task to make ourselves increasingly more free. As one of the beautiful hymns has it: “It is a long road to freedom”. There is a great danger that we will give in to external force or internal compulsion, thus jeopardizing our freedom. Besides, we are always tempted to be selfish. That is why Paul sounds a warning: “Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence” (Gal 5:13).

It is noteworthy that we do not experience freedom when we refuse to make any commitments. It is rather in making commitments that we experience real freedom, for freedom cannot be experienced in a vacuum. As a result, freedom like time cannot be saved, it can only well spent. It is by choosing to commit ourselves to God and to a value-based life that we experience true freedom.

Finally, freedom is for love and service. Our ability to give ourselves away in love and service is the true measure of our freedom. After having declared: “For you were called to freedom”, Paul adds: “Through love become slaves to one another” (Gal 5:13).

**2.2** Further, a human being is essentially social. “For by his/her innermost nature a human person is a social being, and unless he/she relates to others he/she can neither live nor develop his/her potential” (GS 12). In a true sense it can be said that I am being created a human person by other persons. I shall not have such basic human characteristics as the ability to love in a human way and speak a human language unless I am first loved and spoken to by others.

Good interpersonal relationship can greatly humanize human persons. As John Sachs has pointed out: “In addition to all the ways in which we learn to assert ourselves, control our own lives and the world around us and therefore establish our independence, we must also learn to surrender control over a great many things, to depend on others, to defer at times to their desires and needs and to establish personal relationships of mutual love and trust. Only in such relationships are we truly human. I can only grow as a person to the extent that I learn to surrender myself in trusting love to the mystery of others”<sup>5</sup>.

Further, society can contribute to the growth of the human person in a variety of ways. Through interaction with others in society, through fulfilling one’s social duties and through brotherly/sisterly dialogue and collaboration with others, the human person develops himself/herself. It is from the family and the political community that a person acquires knowledge, imbibes values and learns to commit oneself to noble causes. Unfortunately, society can have a negative influence on the human person. It can divert one from doing good and spur one on to evil. Hence it is necessary for humans to be critically aware of the positive and negative impact of society on their lives.

There is an interdependence of person and society. The growth of the human person and the development of society hinge on each other. Society is for the welfare of the persons who have social obligations. Each one has to obey the legitimate laws of the State, pay taxes and fulfil other civic duties so that he/she becomes a responsible member of society.

**2.3** Besides, there is humans’ solidarity with all creatures in the planetary community. Humans are formed from the dust of the ground (see Gen 2:7). Out of the same ground God fashions birds, beasts and plants. The great creation Psalm (104) shows humans joining wild goats, lions and birds in looking to God for sustenance. Modern scientists, too, propose a vision of human beings as an integral part of the earth system. It is, therefore, quite easy to agree with the statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

We stand as God’s creatures within an orderly creation, our lives woven from threads of dependence

and interdependence. We depend upon God, who gives us existence through interdependence with other human beings and with the rest of creation. We cannot be persons without other persons;<sup>6</sup> we cannot be humans apart from other creatures.

In the past, there was a tendency to describe our relationship to non-human creation in terms of domination, possession, use and enjoyment. There was no awe and wonder before the mystery of the universe. It is this arrogant and irreverent attitude to creation that has landed us in a grave ecological crisis. We need now to develop a deep sense of wonder at God's beautiful world. Jesus spoke of the beauty of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. In fact, the earth itself is so beautiful. In the words of an unknown author:

If the earth were only a few feet in diameter, floating a few feet above a field somewhere, people would come from everywhere to marvel at it... people would walk around it... people would love it, and defend it with their lives, because they would somehow know... their own roundness could be nothing without it. If the earth were only a few feet in diameter...

### 3. The World

Right from the beginning the Church's attitude to the world was ambiguous.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand it looked upon the world as an object of God's love, since He created it and continued to care for it. On the other hand, it regarded the world as hostile to God, since it had closed itself against Him in its sinful self-sufficiency. Both John and Paul, among the New Testament writers, gave expression to this ambiguity. During the centuries of Roman persecution the Church adopted a very negative attitude to the world. It thought of itself as a community of believers surrounded by the wicked world. Baptism was the moment of decision when a person renounced the spirit of the world and embraced the spirit of Christ. The Didache has preserved a text which shows that the Eucharistic celebration concluded with the words: "Let grace come, let this world pass away".

The Church of the Middle Ages was somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand it fostered a spirituality based on a contempt for the world. As Alfons Auer has pointed out: “The basic attitude of the Middle Ages was one-sidedly that of flight from the world. The monastic ascetical idea prevailed in the world; medieval Christianity was predominantly shaped by monks”.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the Middle Ages sought to blend “the terrestrial and heavenly kingdoms into single universal order in which the temporal realms were directly ordered to the spiritual reality of the Church”.<sup>9</sup> The temporal order was directly or indirectly subjected to ecclesiastical regulation. This was a denial of the autonomy and the intrinsic value of earthly affairs.

In a way, the modern phenomenon of secularization is a reaction to this tendency on the part of the Church to absorb the world and not to respect it in its otherness. Gradually human beings, human society and its institutions, the arts and the sciences, work and professions began to assert their autonomy with respect to the Church and to affirm their intrinsic value. However, the Church reacted to this process quite negatively.

**3.1** All this changed with Vatican II. One of the most inspiring documents of the Council is the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. In it the Church has articulated a new understanding of the world and a positive attitude to it. Inspired by the Council Catholics today tend to look upon and relate to the world in a new way.

The world is the world of human beings, the whole human family along with the realities in the midst of which that family lives. This world is the theatre of human activities and bears the marks of human successes and failures. This is a world created and sustained by God’s love and redeemed by Jesus Christ (see *GS* 2).

The Council readily affirms the autonomy of earthly affairs. Human persons, human institutions, the arts and the sciences enjoy their own laws and have a value in and for themselves (see *GS* 36). “For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order” (*GS* 36). Hence one ought to acknowledge the legitimate autonomy of culture and especially of the arts and sciences (see *GS* 59).

The Church is called to be a servant of the world. In this she follows the example of Jesus who came not to be served but to serve (see *GS* 3). Vatican II is quite convinced that “Christians cannot yearn for anything more ardently than to serve the men and women of the modern world ever more generously and effectively” (*GS* 93). In a variety of ways the Church can render service to the human persons, human communities and human activity in the world (see *GS* 40-43). But this is not a one way affair. The Church not only offers assistance to the world, but it also receives help from the world:

Thanks to the experience of past ages, the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden ion the various forms of human culture, the nature of the human person is more clearly revealed and new roads to truth are opened. These benefits profit the Church, too (*GS* 44).

**3.2** Renouncing all superiority the Church shows respect for “all the true, good and just elements found in a very wide variety of institutions which the human race has established for itself” (*GS* 42).

The Church’s readiness to dialogue and collaborate with the world is a sign of her love for and solidarity with it (*GS* 3). Such a dialogue and collaboration can contribute to achievement of secular goals such as peace, freedom, justice and human dignity.

All this calls for a conversion to the world. Since the world is the object of God’s love, the Church, as the servant of God, should be at the service of the world in order to liberate it from its sinful alienation and lead it to its true destiny. This does not of course mean that she can neglect her duty to work for a better world here and now, since, as the Council points out, “the expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one” (*GS* 39). And our efforts to build an earthly city where all human beings can live together in freedom, equality, love, justice and peace are of vital concern to the Kingdoms of God. As the Pastoral Constitution confidently asserts:

For after we have obeyed the Lord, and in His Spirit nurtured on earth the values of human dignity,

brotherhood and freedom, and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise, we will find them again, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured. This will be so when Christ hands over to the Father a kingdom eternal and universal: “a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love, and peace.” On this earth that kingdom is already present in mystery. When the Lord returns, it will be brought into full flower (GS 39).

#### 4. Jesus Christ

It is the faith of the Catholic Church that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man, composed of a rational soul and a body.<sup>10</sup> But unfortunately, people have not always taken the humanity of Jesus seriously. For many Jesus is only the divine Lord. Long ago monophysitism maintained that the humanity of Jesus Christ is like a small drop of milk which gets lost in the vast ocean of the divinity.

But the New Testament pictures Jesus as a true human being. John unhesitatingly declares: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us” (Jn 1:14). And the Letter to the Hebrews says that Jesus was like us humans in all things except sin (see Heb. 4:15). In his life Jesus showed a lot of humanness. He warmly welcomed children and blessed them (see Mt 19:13). He loved the rich young man who was eager to gain eternal life (Mk 10:21). He loved John the Apostle deeply and clearly showed it to him so that John was able to describe himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Jesus had compassion for the multitude who followed him for three days without having anything to eat (see Mt 15:32). Besides, as Matthew reports, “when he saw the crowds he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt. 9:36). At the tomb of Lazarus, when he saw Mary and the Jews who were with her weeping, Jesus was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved and he wept (see Jn 11:33-35).

If to be human means to be kind, compassionate, friendly, available and approachable, Jesus was truly human. As Vatican II has pointed out:

For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man and woman. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin (GS 22).

**4.1** Normally we think that it was Jesus' mission to reveal the mystery of God to us. This he certainly did. But he also revealed to us the mystery of the human person. As the Council declares: "The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of the human being take on light" (GS 22). First of all, Jesus pointed out the God-dimension of human person. Only God "meets the deepest longings of the human heart, which is never fully satisfied by what this world has to offer" (GS 41). Hence, "the recognition of God is in no way hostile to human dignity since this dignity is rooted and perfected in God" (GS 21). Equally important for Jesus was our relationship to one another. That is why he asked us to love one another as he had loved us (see Jn. 15:12). In a pregnant passage Vatican II has stated:

For God's Word, through whom all things were made, was Himself made flesh and dwelt on the earth of humans. Thus He entered the world's history as a perfect man, taking that history up into Himself and summarizing it. He Himself revealed to us that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). At the same time He taught us that the new command of love was the basic law of human perfection and hence of the world's transformation (GS 38).

**4.2** Further, the Church also believes that Jesus Christ is truly divine. This is a mystery, and we humans cannot comprehend it. According to Paul, God was Christ Jesus reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor 5:19). In and through Jesus Christ God was present and active in this world. But we shall never be able to give an adequate answer to these questions:

How can the Infinite God become a finite human being? Or, how can a limited human being (Jesus) adequately manifest the

Infinite God? Fortunately for us we are only asked to believe in the mystery and not its mechanics.

In the history of the Church, the undue stress laid on the divinity of Jesus Christ has had negative consequences. Insistence on orthodoxy has led to the neglect of orthopraxis. In the gospels Jesus asked people to follow him and not believe in some dogmas. Many Christians in their eagerness to profess the orthodox faith have failed to be true disciples of Jesus. Often Christian love has been sacrificed while defending Christian doctrine.

I have great difficulty in accepting the traditional understanding of Jesus' redemptive death: was it part of God's plan that Jesus should endure so much suffering and die on a cross? Two different answers were given in the past: 1. Jesus suffered and died in order to placate a God who was angry with us sinners. 2. The passion and death of Jesus was necessary to satisfy the claims of God's justice. I do not think that I can agree with either of these answers. I am inclined to believe that Jesus was tortured and put to death by wicked men. Why did they do it? Because of what Jesus was and because of what he stood for. His life and teaching were a threat to the socio-religious system of the Pharisees and the scribes. Hence, they handed him over to the Roman governor and demanded that he be crucified. But God raised him up. And in and through the death and resurrection of Jesus God offered us his forgiving love (see Rom 4:25; 2 Cor 5:18-21). This is how I understand Peter's assertion: "This man (Jesus), handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law" (Acts 2:23). It was certainly not part of God's plan that the leaders of the Jews should commit the sin of murdering Jesus. Nor was it God's plan that Jesus should undergo such a painful death. But it was God's plan to offer his saving love to sinful humans through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the entire work of redemption is brought about by God's love for us sinners (Jn 3:16).

## 5. The Church: A Divine-Human Reality

For a casual observer the Church is just a social reality – an association of human beings who profess a common faith, who participate in a common worship and who endeavour to live by a common ethical code. But for believing Christians the Church is also a faith reality. There is a grace-filled depth to the Church. In the Apostles' Creed we profess: "I believe in the holy Catholic Church." It is this faith understanding of the Church that will be articulated here.

**5.1** The Church is not a purely human enterprise. God is at work in the origin and development of the Church. That is what we Christians believe. St. Paul speaks of "the Church of God that is at Corinth" (1 Cor. 1:2). This probably refers to the local Christian community there. In 1 Tim 3:15 "the Church of the living God" most likely denotes the entire world-wide assembly of the followers of Jesus Christ.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) spoke of the mystery of the Church. The Church is a mystery because it is part of God's plan of salvation. In the New Testament, particularly in the Letters of Paul, mystery refers to the divine design for the salvation of humankind. It was God's plan to offer to everyone the possibility of salvation and to assemble in the Church all those who would believe in his Son (*LG 2*). This plan was realized in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (*LG 3*). What was once achieved in Christ is now being effected in the lives of the faithful through the work of the Holy Spirit (*LG 4*). The Church is thus seen to be part and parcel of God's plan to save all humankind in Christ Jesus.

When we say that the Church is a mystery we not only mean that the Church is part of God's plan of salvation for humankind but also that God is at all times present and active in the Church. As Pope Paul VI stated: "The Church is a mystery. It is a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God".<sup>11</sup>

The expression, the Church of God, also signifies a Church that is rooted in the experience of God. Just as Israel originated in the experience of the liberating God in Exodus, so too the Christian Church sprang up from the experience of the saving God in the life,

death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. One becomes a member of the Church by sharing this experience. Against this background we can see how significant it is that in *Ecclesia in Asia* Pope John Paul II exhorts the Church to be ever more deeply “rooted in the experience of God which flows from a living faith”.<sup>12</sup> Only then can the Church fulfil its vocation to be a meeting place of God and human beings. As the Pope declares: “The Church cannot therefore be understood merely as a social organization or an agency of human welfare. Despite having sinful men and women in her midst, the Church must be seen as the privileged place of encounter between God and human beings, in which God chooses to reveal the mystery of his inner life and carry out his plan of salvation for the world”.<sup>13</sup>

**5.2** The Church of God becomes concrete and visible only in a community of people who have experienced the presence of God and responded to his saving activity. Vatican II has highlighted the idea of the Church as the People of God by devoting a whole chapter to it in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. In this idea there is a continuity between Israel and the Church of Jesus Christ.

Deeply embedded in the consciousness of the Israelites was the conviction that they were the people of God especially elected, called and covenanted by God (see Dt 7:6-10; Ex 19:3-6). Because of Israel’s failure to live according to the demands of the covenant, God spoke of making a new covenant which will lead to the establishment of a new people of God.

Behold the days shall come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jer 31:31-34).

Jesus Christ instituted this new covenant in his blood (see 1 Cor 11:25) and called into existence a new people of God made up of the Jews and the Gentiles (see Eph 2:11-20).

The Second Vatican Council highlights the main characteristics of the people of God (see *LG* 9). This people has Christ as its head. Its heritage is the freedom and dignity of the children of God in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells. Its law is the new command to love one another as Christ loved us. Its goal is the kingdom of God. Hence Christian believers are the pilgrim people of God, though they sometimes give the impression of being a “wandering people”. Vatican II affirms the basic equality of all the members of the people of God, though there are functional differences. In unmistakable terms it declares: “And if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, dispensers of mysteries, and shepherds on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ” (*LG* 32).

The Catholic Church is quite convinced that she is in many ways linked with the non-Catholic Christians, the people of other faiths and with the whole of humanity (*LG* 13). In the past the Church understood herself in contrast with others. Now she defines herself in relation to others. She looks upon herself as a community of people who are journeying together with the people of other faiths and ideologies. That is why she is eager to enter into dialogue with them.

**5.3** As is clear from the New Testament and early Christian history, the structures of the Church took shape gradually. This is how believing Christians understand these structures now (see *LG* 18-29).

Jesus chose and appointed twelve apostles to continue his mission here on earth (Mt 3:13-19; Jn 20:21). During his life he sought to instruct them and train them through practical experiences. He also made them sharers in his triple function, that is, priest, prophet and king (Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:15-18; Lk 24:45-48; Jn 20:21-23). The apostles were fully confirmed in their mission by the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost day. The mission entrusted to the apostles was meant to last till the end of time, since the gospel was to be

handed on to all ages (see Mt 28:20). Hence the apostles appointed successors and made provision for the orderly transmission of the ministry down the ages. The Catholic Church now believes that the bishops are successors of the apostles who participate in their triple function of teaching, sanctifying and governing the Church. A person becomes a bishop through episcopal ordination (*LG* 21).

In order that the episcopate might be one and undivided Jesus placed Peter over the other apostles and instituted in him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and fellowship (*LG* 18). This ministry of Peter, too, was to last till the end of the ages. The Church believes that, according to God's design, the bishop of Rome, the Pope, is the successor of Peter in the leadership of the Church. By divine plan, he has supreme, full, immediate and ordinary authority over all the faithful. 'Ordinary authority' is the authority a person has by virtue of his/her office. 'Immediate authority' is that which an office-holder (here the pope) exercises directly and not through an intermediary, say a bishop. But in the possession and exercise of supreme authority the pope does not stand alone. The bishops of the world are united with him. Just as Peter and the other apostles constituted one apostolic college, so in a similar way the pope and the other bishops form one episcopal college (*LG* 22). Together with and under the pope, its official head, the college of bishops has supreme and full authority over the universal Church (*LG* 22).

Individual bishops exercise pastoral authority over a portion of the people of God entrusted to their care. Without neglecting their responsibility as members of the episcopal college to be solicitous for the whole Church, they lead and guide the faithful of their diocese. In their pastoral leadership these bishops are assisted by priests and deacons, who participate in their ministry in different degrees. Priests do not possess the highest degree of the priesthood and are dependent on the bishops in the exercise of their ministry. All the same, they are ordained to preach the gospel, to celebrate divine worship and to lead and guide the faithful entrusted to their pastoral care. At a lower level, the deacons are entrusted with "a ministry of service." "They serve the people of God in the ministry of the liturgy, of the word and of charity" (*LG* 29)

All leadership ministries in Church are for service. Jesus, the servant, is the model of all ministers (see Jn 13:12-17; Lk 22:24-27). And he has left us an inspiring example of service by washing the feet of his disciples and by laying down his life for us. He has made it clear that there is no place among his followers for the kind of ‘lording it over’ others that takes place in the secular world (see Mk 10:42-45). Besides, Vatican II has pointed out that the various ministries in the Church are “for the nurturing and constant growth of the people of God.” The leaders are servants of their brothers and sisters. And their service consists in this that they coordinate and direct the activities of all towards a common goal, while respecting their Christian dignity and freedom (*LG* 18).

**5.4** In the first centuries of Christian history, lay people were actively involved in the life and mission of the Church. Paul had many zealous lay collaborators like Aquila and Priscilla (see Acts 18:2-3). There were lay theologians too like Tertullian. Lay people also played a significant role in preserving the true faith.

Gradually the role of the laity was ignored, and they became passive, probably because of the growth of clericalism. The clergy, especially the higher clergy, was thought to be the source of all power and initiative. The laity were defined negatively, as those who were neither clerics nor religious. They were considered carnal, worldly. In this they were quite different from the clergy who were thought to be spiritual. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, Stephen of Tournai declared: “In one city and under one king there are two peoples whose difference corresponds to two sorts of life...The city is the Church; her king is Christ; the two peoples are the two orders of clergy and laity; the two sorts of life are the spiritual and the fleshly...”<sup>14</sup>

All this has changed with Vatican II. The Council has a positive understanding of the laity. “The term ‘laity’ is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in a religious state sanctioned by the Church. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are established among the People of God. They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ. They carry out their own part in the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the

Church and the world” (*LG* 31). It acknowledges that they have their own vocation and mission: “But the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God” (*LG* 31). The laity derive their right and duty to engage in mission through their union with Christ and are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself (*AA* 3).

The call to holiness is addressed to the laity as well: “All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of love. By this holiness a more human manner of life is fostered even in this earthly society” (*LG* 40).

In spite of all this no adequate empowerment of the laity has taken place in the Church. The leaders of the Church need to invest a lot more time, energy and resources for the all round formation of lay people. And steps have to be taken to enable them to actively participate in the decision-making processes in the Church. It is good to recall here the inspiring words of Vatican II: “The Church has not been truly established, and is not yet fully alive, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ among humans, unless there exists a laity worthy of the name working along with the hierarchy. For the gospel cannot be deeply imprinted on the talents, life and work of any people without the active presence of lay people. Therefore, even in the very founding of the Church, the greatest attention is to be paid to raising up a mature Christian laity” (*AG* 21).

## 6. The Mission of the Church

From the earliest days of its existence the Church was aware that it has the same mission as Jesus: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (*Jn* 20:21). Now the Kingdom was central to the life and mission of Jesus. It is the main theme of his preaching (*Mk* 1:14-15), the referent of his parables (see *Mt* 13) and the content of his symbolic actions (*Lk* 11:20; 15:1-3). Hence, the Church too has the mission to work for the establishment of God’s kingdom.

Unfortunately, in course of time some change took place in the Church’s understanding of its mission. Many Catholics tended believe that the kingdom of God is already come and it is present in the

Catholic Church. This led to a different way of looking at mission. It was held that the goal of the Church's mission was the salvation of souls to be brought about through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, especially baptism. However, it gradually dawned on the Church that God can save souls (humans) without the help of the Church. This led to a new approach to mission. The purpose of the Church's mission, it was now believed, was the planting of the Church in ever new places and among ever new peoples and cultures (see *LG* 17; *AG* 6). In course of time even this understanding of the Church's mission was found to be not fully satisfactory.

Vatican II has stated that the Church has received from Christ the mission to proclaim and establish God's kingdom here on earth (*LG* 5). In the post-Council period both Paul VI and John Paul II held such a view.<sup>15</sup>

**6.1** Taking these developments into account, I wish to adopt a holistic approach to the mission of the Church. To my mind *the mission of the Church is to collaborate with God in God's work for the wholeness of the human person, the human community and the cosmos according to the pattern revealed in Jesus Christ.*<sup>16</sup> It is an essential element of the Judaeo-Christian tradition that God is present and active in this world of ours. The purpose of God's activity is the promotion of salvation. Wholeness is the nearest English expression for the biblical idea of salvation. But salvation is to be understood in a comprehensive sense. Lots of Catholics still think of salvation as something purely spiritual (salvation of the *soul*), merely individual (*my salvation*) and totally other-worldly (salvation in *heaven*). But Vatican II has rediscovered the richness of the biblical view of salvation. According to the Council, salvation is something personal (spiritual-corporeal), communitarian, societal, and both this-worldly as well as other-worldly (see *LG* 9, 16; *AG* 2, 3; *GS* 39). It is a process that begins here and now but which will find its final fulfilment in the age to come.

In recent times, we are becoming increasingly more aware of the cosmic dimension of salvation. The destiny of humankind and that of the cosmos are inextricably intertwined. In the past, Christians

often thought of their relationship to the world in terms of domination, possession, use and enjoyment. There was little awe and wonder before the mystery of the universe. This arrogant and irreverent attitude to creation is largely responsible for the serious ecological crisis we are facing today. But there is in the Christian tradition as well as in the Indian tradition a search for harmony and a quest for communion with nature. In fact, the final destiny of humankind is thought of as life in the new heavens and on the new earth. God is at work transforming the world so that the new humanity which God is fashioning may have a fit dwelling-place.

All this is to be understood according to the pattern revealed in Jesus Christ. What is revealed in Jesus Christ is God's offer of unconditional love to sinful human beings. The God of Jesus Christ is not an angry, avenging deity, but a God of mercy and compassion, who lets His sun shine on the good and the wicked. It is also revealed in Jesus Christ that a person, who accepts God's offer of love and surrenders himself/herself to this God of love, is totally transformed. He/she becomes genuinely free and is ready to give himself/herself away in selfless love and self-sacrificing service. It is finally manifested in Christ that death leading to a fuller, richer life is the law of human existence. As Vatican II succinctly puts it:

For it is only by putting to death what is old, that we can come to a newness of life. This applies first of all to persons, but it holds also for the various goods of this world, which bear the mark both of human sin and God's blessing (AG 8).

Now if the Church's mission is to collaborate with God in his work for the wholeness of the human person, the human community and the cosmos, then this demands that it care for the earth, that it be concerned about life and that it be committed to people. The Church's task is to work along with God for the creation of a new human society which is consciously rooted in God, which is characterized by freedom, equality, love, justice and peace and which lives in harmony and communion with nature.

By way of conclusion, it may be pointed out that the understanding of mission developed here is quite comprehensive. It is possible to direct all our ministries – be they frontier mission, pastoral work,

education, health services or social involvement – to the fulfilment of this mission. This may, however, call for a radical reorientation of our ministries.

## 7. Conclusion

As I remarked at the beginning, this paper is an incomplete statement of my theological positions. I began by discussing my understanding of God, the human person and the world. I then went to deal with Jesus Christ, the Church and its mission. There are many important theological themes that I have not discussed here.<sup>16</sup> It is my fond hope that what is exposed here will provoke some fruitful discussion.

### Notes

1. See his *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, New York: Orbis, 1993, pp.54-55. There has been some discussion about the term *cosmotheandric*. This is how Panikkar explains his use of it: "In describing this intuition the expression *theanthropocosmic* might sound more accurate, because *anthropos* refers to man as a human being. i.e., as distinct from the Gods, while *aner* tends to connote the male. This has not, however, always been the case. Further, the word *theandric* has a venerable history in western thought and has always stood for the union of the human and the divine without confusion. Besides, the expression *cosmotheandric* is rather more euphonic than *theanthropocosmic*". In a footnote he adds: "Before Homer, the term (*aner*) did not solely connote the masculine, and in compounds it stood for the human, a sense which is in accordance with its indo-european root (cf. the Sanskrit *na nar*, v.g., *narayan*) and which the consequent Latin *vir* did not conserve. So the expression could, and indeed should, be understood in its original meaning of a human being. Cf. the examples and the literature cited in P. CHATRAINE, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, Paris (Klincksieck), 1968 and also J. POKONY, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Woerterbuch*, Bern, Muenchen (Francke) 1959, *sub voce ner-(t-), aner-*, The fundamental idea of "*Lebenskraft*" later broadened to mean courage and strength as well, is important – and may also explain its monopoly by warriors and males. But we better serve the *humanum* by disentangling these positive values from their monopoly by the masculine half of the human race than by conceding defeat and inventing new terms for wo-men and fe-males.
2. J. NEUNER and J. DUPUIS, *The Christian Faith*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1981, n. 112.

3. Leonardo BOFF, *Trinity and Society*, New York: Orbis Books, 1988, p. 6.
4. The English translation of Vatican II documents does not use gender-sensitive, bias-free, language.
5. J. SACHS, *The Christian Vision of Humanity*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991, p. 80.
6. "Basis for Our Caring", A Statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as cited in R.S. GOTTLIEB, *This Sacred Earth*, New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 246.
7. See Joseph NEUNER, "The Role and Responsibility of Lay People in the Struggle for New Society" in D.S. Amalorpavadas, *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society*, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1981, pp. 447-449.
8. Alfons AUER "The Changing Character of the Christian Understanding of the World", in *The Christian and the World: Readings in Theology*, complied by Canisianum, Innsbruck, 1965, p. 6.
9. *Ibid.*, pp.8-9.
10. NEUNER-DUPUIS, *The Christian Faith*, n. 614.
11. As quoted by A. DULLES, *Models of the Church*, Garden City: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1974, p.16.
12. JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 1999, n. 23.
13. *Ibid.*, no. 24.
14. As quoted by Y. CONGAR, *Lay People in the Church*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964, p. 62.
15. PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* nos. 29-34; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, nos. 13, 15, 26, 31, 32, 57 and 59.
16. Some people may wonder why in the description of the mission of the Church I do not refer to the preaching of the good news of Christ. I am of the opinion that right now the situation in India is such that it may not be opportune to directly proclaim Jesus Christ. The rise of fundamentalism in different religions and the growth of communal hatred and violence in various parts of the country have created an atmosphere not at all conducive to such a proclamation. As Vatican II points out, the Church's mission can be fulfilled even in such a situation: "Closely united with men in their life and work, Christ's disciples hope to render to others true witness of Christ, and to work for their salvation, even where they are not able to proclaim Christ fully. For they are not seeking a mere material progress and prosperity for men, but are promoting their dignity and brotherly union, teaching those religious and moral truths which Christ illuminated with His light. In this way, they are gradually opening up a wider approach to God. Thus too they help men to attain to salvation by love for God and neighbour.

And the mystery of Christ begins to shine forth. In this mystery the new man has appeared, created according to God (cf. Eph 4:24). In it the love of God is revealed" (AG 12).

17. I have dealt with many theological themes in Kurien KUNNUMPURAM, *Towards the Fullness of Life: Reflections on the Daily Living of the Faith*, Mumbai: St. Paul's, 2010; see also my books: *The Indian Church of the Future*, Mumbai: St. Paul's, 2007; *Towards a New Humanity: Reflections on the Church's Mission in India Today*, Mumbai: St. Paul's, 2005.

## Kurien Kunnumpuram: The Person and Message

**Wikipedia Authors**  
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Rev. Kurien Kunnumpuram S.J.** (born July 8, 1931) is a Roman Catholic Indian Jesuit priest and theologian. Member of the academic staff of the Faculty of Theology at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV), Pune (India) he has contributed much in the field of ecclesiology, particularly its new understanding brought in by the Vatican II<sup>[1]</sup>

He was the founder-publisher-editor of *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies*,<sup>[2]</sup> from 1998 to 2010. He was also the founding editor of JDV's Encyclopedia of Indian Christian Theology, till 2009. He is currently the editor of *AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies*.<sup>[3]</sup>

### His Theology

After having taught Catholic theology for more than fifty years, the basic theological outlook can be summarised as follows:

### God: The Deepest Human Longing

Faith in God is the foundation of his theology. This faith is based on his personal experience of God, and not on the rational arguments for the existence of God. Besides, he finds faith in God quite meaningful. For only God "meets the deepest longings of the human heart which is never fully satisfied with what this world can offer".<sup>[4]</sup> And only God provides a fully adequate answer to the ultimate questions of humankind about life and destiny. Moreover, the common experience of humanity leads to faith in God. As Vatican II points out, "For their part, however, believers of whatever religion

has always heard His revealing voice in the discourse of creatures. But when God is forgotten the creature itself grows unintelligible”<sup>[5]</sup>. Perhaps the most beautiful statement on God in the Bible is this: “God is love”.<sup>[6]</sup> The nature of God is love. It is remarkable that the official creeds of the Church usually speak of God as omnipotent, as all powerful. And the liturgical prayers are mostly addressed to almighty God, eternal King or supreme Lord and never to the all-loving God<sup>[7]</sup>. And it is out of love that God created the world. Vatican he has given us a comprehensive explanation of our faith in creation: This one and only true God, of His own goodness and almighty power, not for the increase of His own happiness, nor for the acquirement of His perfection, but in order to manifest His perfection through the benefits which He bestows on creatures, with absolute freedom of counsel, “from the beginning of time made at once out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and then the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body”<sup>[8]</sup>. This statement makes it quite clear that God did not create the world in order to get anything for himself. In fact, there is no need of God’s that we can supply, no luxury of His that we can provide. Actually, God created world to bestow his blessings on his creatures and to give them a share in his own goodness.

Further, Kunnumpuram holds God’s saving work is based on love. As Vatican II has stated, God in His goodness and wisdom chose to reveal Himself and his plan of salvation. “Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God out of the abundance of His love speaks to humans as friends and lives among them, so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself”<sup>[9]</sup>. The Fourth Gospel affirms: “For God so loved the world that he have his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life”<sup>[10]</sup>. Thus God’s saving plan which was revealed gradually and which culminated in Jesus Christ was from beginning to end based on his love for humankind and the world. It is part of our faith that God is one and three. Obviously the Triune God is beyond the grasp of our finite minds. And human language cannot adequately express the mystery of God. This is what the Church means when it teaches that God is incomprehensible and ineffable. All the same, the doctrine of the Trinity has a great significance for the Christian

community as well as human society at large. As Vatican II points out: "Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father, 'that all may be one... as we are one'"<sup>[11]</sup> opened up vistas closed to human reason. For He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons and the union of God's children in truth and charity"<sup>[12]</sup>. It is the faith of the Catholic Church that Jesus Christ, whom God has sent to us, is truly God and truly man composed of a rational soul and a body.<sup>[13]</sup> But unfortunately people have not always taken the humanity of Jesus seriously. For many, Jesus is only the divine Lord. But the New Testament pictures Jesus as a true human being. John unhesitatingly declares: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us"<sup>[14]</sup>.

## The Church: A Divine-Human Reality

For a casual observer the Church is just a social reality – an association of human beings who profess a common faith, who participate in a common worship and who endeavour to live by a common ethical code. But for believing Christians the Church is also a faith reality. There is a grace-filled depth to the Church. In the Apostles' Creed we profess: "he believe in the holy Catholic Church." It is the faith understanding of the Church that will be articulated here. The Church is not a purely human enterprise. God is at work in the origin and development of the Church. That is what we Christians believe. St. Paul speaks of "the Church of God that is at Corinth" (1 Cor. 1:2). This probably refers to the local Christian community there. In The Bible "the Church of the living God"<sup>[15]</sup> most likely denotes the entire world-wide assembly of the followers of Jesus Christ. The Second Vatican Council (1962–65) spoke of the mystery of the Church. The Church is a mystery because it is part of God's plan of salvation. In the New Testament, particularly in the Letters of Paul, mystery refers to the divine design for the salvation of humankind. It was God's plan to offer to everyone the possibility of salvation and to assemble in the Church all those who would believe in his Son.<sup>[16]</sup>

1. This plan was realized in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

2. What was once achieved in Christ is now being effected in the lives of the faithful through the work of the Holy Spirit.
3. The Church is thus seen to be part and parcel of God's plan to save all humankind in Christ Jesus.

When we say that the Church is a mystery we not only mean that the Church is part of God's plan of salvation for humankind but also that God is at all times present and active in the Church. As Pope Paul VI stated: "The Church is a mystery. It is a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God."<sup>[17]</sup> The expression, the Church of God, also signifies a Church that is rooted in the experience of God. Just as Israel originated in the experience of the liberating God in Exodus, so too the Christian Church sprang up from the experience of the saving God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. One becomes a member of the Church by sharing this experience. Against this background we can see how significant it is that in Ecclesia in Asia Pope John Paul II exhorts the Church to be ever more deeply "rooted in the experience of God which flows from a living faith."<sup>[18]</sup> Only then can the Church fulfil its vocation to be a meeting place of God and human beings. As the Pope declares: "The Church cannot therefore be understood merely as a social organization or agency of human welfare. Despite having sinful men and women in her midst, the Church must be seen as the privileged place of encounter between God and human beings, in which God chooses to reveal the mystery of his inner life and carry out his plan of salvation for the world."<sup>[19]</sup>

## The Church: Its Vision and Mission

From the earliest days of its existence the Church was aware that it has the same mission as Jesus: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you"<sup>[20]</sup>. Now the Kingdom was central to the life and mission of Jesus. It is the main theme of his preaching<sup>[21]</sup>, the referent of his parables<sup>[22]</sup> and the content of his symbolic actions (Lk 11:20; 15:1-3). Hence, the Church too has the mission to work of the establishment of God's kingdom. Unfortunately, some change took

place in the Church's understanding of its mission. Many Catholics tended to believe that the kingdom of God is already come and it is present in the Catholic Church. This led to a different way of looking at mission. It was held that the goal of the Church's mission was the salvation of souls to be brought about through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, especially baptism. However, it gradually dawned on the Church that God can save souls (humans) without the help of the Church. This led to a new approach to mission. The purpose of the Church's mission, it was now believed, was the planting of the Church in every new places and among even new peoples and cultures. In course of time even this understanding of the Church's mission was found to be not fully satisfactory.

Vatican II has stated that the Church has received from Christ the mission to proclaim and establish God's kingdom here on earth. In the post-Council period both Paul VI and John Paul II held such a view.

Taking these developments into account, he wishes to adopt a holistic approach to the mission of the Church. To his mind the mission of the Church is to collaborate with God in God's work for the wholeness of the human person, the human community and the cosmos according to the pattern revealed in Jesus Christ. It is an essential element of the Judaeo-Christian tradition that God is present and active in this world of ours. The purpose of God's activity is the promotion of salvation. Wholeness is the nearest English expression for the biblical idea of salvation. But salvation is to be understood in a comprehensive sense. Lots of Catholics still think of salvation as something purely spiritual (salvation of the soul), merely individual (my salvation) and totally other-worldly (salvation in heaven). But Vatican II has rediscovered the richness of the biblical view of salvation. According to the Council, salvation is something personal (spiritual-corporeal), communitarian, societal, and both this-worldly as well as other-worldly. It is a process that begins here and now but which will find its final fulfillment in the age to come.

In recent times, we are becoming increasingly more aware of the cosmic dimension of salvation. The destiny of humankind and that of the cosmos are inextricably intertwined. In the past, Christians

often thought of their relationship to the world in terms of domination, possession, use and enjoyment. There was little awe and wonder before the mystery of the universe. This arrogant and irreverent attitude to creation is largely responsible for the serious ecological crisis we are facing today. But there is in the Christian tradition as well as in the Indian tradition a search for harmony and a quest for communion with nature. In fact, the final destiny of humankind is thought of as life in the new heaven and on the new earth. God is at work transforming the world so that the new humanity which God is fashioning may have a fit dwelling-place.

All this is to be understood according to the pattern revealed in Jesus Christ, according to Kunnumpuram. What is revealed in Jesus Christ is God's offer of unconditional love to sinful human beings. The God of Jesus Christ is not an angry, avenging deity, but a God of mercy and compassion, who lets Him sun shine on the good and the wicked. It is also revealed in Jesus Christ that a person who accepts God's offer of love and surrenders himself-herself to this God of love, is totally transformed. S/he becomes genuinely free and is ready to give herself/himself away in selfless love and self-sacrificing service. It is finally manifested in Christ that death leading to a fuller, richer life is the law of human existence.

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- 3.^ *AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol 50/6 November 2005, p. 2., a Pastoral journal published by Papal Seminary, Pune, India.
- 4.^ Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World *Gaudium Et Spes* (GS) 41)
- 5.^ Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World *Gaudium Et Spes* (GS) 36)
- 6.^ The Bible (1 Jn 4:16)
- 7.^ Refer to Indian Christian Theologian Samuel Rayan

- 8.^ Neuner-Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (ND)412 ISBN 0-8189-0893-9
- 9.^ Dogmatic Constitution On Divine Revelation Dei Verbum (DV)2
- 10.^ The Bible (Jn 3:16)
- 11.^ The Bible (Jn 17:21-22)
- 12.^ Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World Gaudium Et Spes (GS) 24)
- 13.^ Neuner-Dupuis, The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church (ND) 614 ISBN 0-8189-0893-9
- 14.^ The Bible (Jn 1:14)
- 15.^ The Bible (1 Jn 4:16)
- 16.^ See Antony D'Cruz, *Church as a Witness to the Kingdom: Towards an Ecclesiology in India According to G. M. Soares Prabhu, S.J.; M. Amaladoss, S.J.; K. Kunnumparam, S.J.* Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome. Defended on 3.02.2011.
- 17.^ As quoted in A. Dulles, Models of the Church, Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1974, p. 16
- 18.^ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), n. 23.
- 19.^ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), n. 24.
- 20.^ The Bible (Jn 20:21)
- 21.^ The Bible (Mk 1: 14-15)
- 22.^ The Bible (See Mt 13)
- 23.^ Pandikattu, Kuruvilla, and Rosario Rocha. 2002. *Visions and Dreams: New Horizons for an Indian Church - Essays in Honour of Professor Kurien Kunnumparam*. 1st ed. Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth. p. 274.

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- (2009) Towards the Fullness of Life: Reflections on the Daily Living of the Faith. Mumbai: St Pauls.
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- (2010) Selected Writings of Samuel Rayan, S.J.: Jesus - The Relevance of His Person and Message for Our Times. Mumbai: St Pauls.
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- Pandikattu, K & Ponniah, J (2010) *The Dancing Peacock : Indian Insights into Religion and Development*. New Delhi, India: Serials Publications.
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## Quotes of Kurien Kunnumpuram

### From Wikiquote

Prof Kurien Kunnumpuram SJ (born July 8, 1931) is one of the well-known Catholic Theologians of India. Currently he is the editor of AUC: Asian Journal for Priest and Religious. He has contributed substantially towards the formation of an Indian Church.

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## On God

\* God did not create the world in order to get anything for himself. In fact, there is no need of God's that we can supply, no luxury of His that we can provide. Actually, God created the world in order to bestow his blessings on his creatures and to give them a share in his own goodness. (Kunnumpuram, Kurien, 2011 "Theological Exploration," *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 14/2 (July-Dec 2011).

\* If the world had a finite reality as its goal, then it has only a limited possibility of growth. But when the world has

the Infinite God as its goal, it has endless possibilities of growth and development. (Kunnumpuram, Kurien, 2011 "Theological Exploration," *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 14/2 (July-Dec 2011).

\* Transcendence is the way God is immanent. God is present in every created reality, without being identified with it. This is the meaning of God's transcendence. (Kunnumpuram, Kurien, 2011 "Theological Exploration," *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 14/2 (July-Dec 2011).

\* It is our Christian task to make ourselves increasingly more free. As one of the beautiful hymns has it: "It is a long road to freedom". There is a great danger that we will give in to external force or internal compulsion, thus jeopardizing our freedom. (Kunnumpuram, Kurien, 2011 "Theological Exploration," *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 14/2 (July-Dec 2011).

\* Freedom is for love and service. Our ability to give ourselves away in love and service is the true measure of our freedom. After having declared: "For you were called to freedom", Paul adds: "Through love become slaves to one another". (Kunnumpuram, Kurien, 2011 "Theological Exploration," *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 14/2 (July-Dec 2011).

\* Normally we think that it was Jesus' mission to reveal the mystery of God to us. This he certainly did. But he also revealed to us the mystery of the human person. As the Council declares: "The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of the human being take on light" (GS 22). First of all, Jesus pointed out the God-dimension of human person. (Kunnumpuram, Kurien, 2011 "Theological Exploration," *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 14/2 (July-Dec 2011).

## On the Church

\* The Church of God becomes concrete and visible only in a community of people who have experienced the presence of God and responded to his saving activity. (Kunnumpuram,

Kurien, 2011 "Theological Exploration," *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 14/2 (July-Dec 2011).

\* I wish to adopt a holistic approach to the mission of the Church. To my mind the mission of the Church is to collaborate with God in God's work for the wholeness of the human person, the human community and the cosmos according to the pattern revealed in Jesus Christ (Kunnumpuram 2011).

\* In recent times, we are becoming increasingly more aware of the cosmic dimension of salvation. The destiny of humankind and that of the cosmos are inextricably intertwined. In the past, Christians often thought of their relationship to the world in terms of domination, possession, use and enjoyment. There was little awe and wonder before the mystery of the universe. This arrogant and irreverent attitude to creation is largely responsible for the serious ecological crisis we are facing today. (Kunnumpuram, Kurien, 2011 "Theological Exploration," *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 14/2 (July-Dec 2011)).

\* Now if the Church's mission is to collaborate with God in his work for the wholeness of the human person, the human community and the cosmos, then this demands that it care for the earth, that it be concerned about life and that it be committed to people. The Church's task is to work along with God for the creation of a new human society which is consciously rooted in God, which is characterized by freedom, equality, love, justice and peace and which lives in harmony and communion with nature. ( Kunnumpuram, Kurien, 2011 "Theological Exploration," *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 14/2 (July-Dec 2011)).

\* The one mission of the Church receives its specification from the actual context in which it is exercised in the concrete situations in which it is fulfilled. (Kunnumpuram, K. (2007) *The Indian Church of the Future*. Mumbai: St Pauls, p.26.)

\* Uniformity is the death of life. Wherever there is life, there is diversity. (Kunnumpuram, K. (2009) *Towards the Fullness of Life: Reflections on the Daily Living of the Faith*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* Mission of the Church is to collaborate with God in his work for the wholeness of the human person, the human community and the cosmos according to the pattern revealed in Jesus Christ. (Kunnumpuram, K. (2009) *Towards the Fullness of Life: Reflections on the Daily Living of the Faith*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* All this calls for an attitudinal change in the Church. An inward looking Church gives undue importance to rite and rubrics, orthodoxy and discipline. But God-ward looking Church is concerned with the great human problem of living together in freedom and equality, love, justice and peace as well as in tune with the rhythm of nature. For the world, not the Church, is the primary object of God's love. (Kunnumpuram, K. (2009) *Towards the Fullness of Life: Reflections on the Daily Living of the Faith*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* Christian hope asks us to regard every stage in the growth of a person and every phase in the development of the Church as merely provisional. It has to be transcended. We are still on our way to the final Kingdom. (Kunnumpuram, K. (2007) *The Indian Church of the Future*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* It [Vatican II] does not look upon the 'religious' as one dimension among other dimensions of human existence. The religious dimension intersects with other dimensions. That is why the Council could speak of 'the supremely human character' of the Church's religious mission. (Kunnumpuram, K. (2005) *Towards a New Humanity: Reflections on the Church's Mission in India Today*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

## On Spirituality

\* The term spirituality is misleading. It gives the impression that we are concerned only with the soul and its activities like prayer and contemplation. The realm of the spirit is thought of as distinct from the material realm, the realm of work, of science and economics. Underlying this dichotomy is the Greek understanding of the human person as a composite of soul and body or as a soul temporarily housed in the body. The classical example of this is Plato's image of the human person as the charioteer in the chariot.

(Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2006) *Life in Abundance: Indian Christian Reflections on Spirituality*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* The biblical understanding of the human person is holistic. It makes no distinction between body and soul. The human person is not a soul living in a body, but an animated body, so perfectly integrated that the person in his totality can express himself/herself and be apprehended in any part. “It is the body rooted in the cosmos and related to other human beings, which gives the person his or her identity.” (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2006) *Life in Abundance: Indian Christian Reflections on Spirituality*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* There is a lot of piety among us, but not enough spirituality. Piety consists in the performance of external devotional practices and is measured by one’s fidelity to these practices. Whether or not the faithful performance of these exercises of piety improves the quality of one’s Christian life is a question that is seldom asked. One is at times surprised that priests, sisters and lay people who are obviously pious are manifestly unfair in their dealings with other people. Some of them show so little of the compassion of Christ and are quite unwilling to forgive others. (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2006) *Life in Abundance: Indian Christian Reflections on Spirituality*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* Spirituality is a way of life. It is our total inward quest for growth, meaning and authenticity. And it is manifested in the quality of one’s life. In the last analysis, to be spiritual is to be touched and transformed by the Spirit of God. In a person who has been touched and transformed by God’s Spirit the fruits of the Spirit will be seen: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23). Besides, “where the Spirit of Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3:17). (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2006) *Life in Abundance: Indian Christian Reflections on Spirituality*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* To follow Christ is also to identify ourselves with the poor and powerless as he did. The Incarnation is the symbol of this identification. Through his incarnation he inserted himself into the human family and became one with us. As Soares-Prabhu observes, “Jesus ‘declasses’ himself and adopts the

life of an itinerant preacher without a home or means of subsistence." (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2006) *Life in Abundance: Indian Christian Reflections on Spirituality*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* Moreover, in the religious traditions of humankind there are at least four ways in which people have encountered the divine. First of all, there is the experience of God in nature, as the power behind natural phenomena. Such an experience usually leads to belief in nature gods. This is clearly seen in Hinduism. Secondly, there is the experience of God in the depths of one's being. God-ward movement often takes an inward direction. This leads to the cultivation of interiority. The Upanishads bear witness to this kind of an experience of God. It is also found among the Christian mystics. Thirdly, there is the experience of God mediated through the rites and doctrines of religions. This is probably the most valued form of God-experience in popular Catholicism, in which the frequent reception of the sacraments is highly esteemed. Such an approach to the experience of God is found also among the followers of other religions. Finally, there is the experience of God in inter-human relationships and socio-political involvements. This form of God-experience is, I believe, typical of the biblical tradition. The foundational God-experience of Israel was the Exodus – the experience of God in the liberation of slaves. Israel also experienced God as the one who was active on its behalf in the decisive moments of its history. And the early Christians experienced God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, who was done to death as a political criminal. For us Christians, the human person is the privileged locus of God-experience – we encounter God first of all in Jesus of Nazareth, and then in every man, woman and child. (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2006) *Life in Abundance: Indian Christian Reflections on Spirituality*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* Any genuine experience of God will send us out to serve those whom God loves. And working with people will make us aware of how much we are in need of God, of God's help and guidance. This will gradually usher in a rhythm of prayer and work – prayer leading to work and work leading to prayer. So the integration of prayer and work takes place existen-

tially. (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2006) *Life in Abundance: Indian Christian Reflections on Spirituality*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* Christian spirituality is a spirituality of hope. St. Paul believes that Christians are those who have hope (1Thess 4:13). Now to hope is to look forward to the new, to what is not yet there, and strive to bring it about. Hence hope is forward-looking and forward moving. That is why a spirituality of hope is a spirituality of change. According to Karl Rahner it is a sin against hope to refuse to change. Those who refuse to change regard the past or the present as the final state of humankind. We are not yet in the new heavens and the new earth. We are on our way to them. And so our spirituality is a spirituality of hope and change. (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2006) *Life in Abundance: Indian Christian Reflections on Spirituality*. Mumbai: St Pauls.)

## On Peace

\* The poor are becoming increasingly aware of the injustice of the system that condemns them to a life of indigence and misery. And they are opposing the system courageously, sometimes even violently. This leads to a situation of conflict. (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2007) *World Peace: An Impossible Dream?*, Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* The Church has consistently taught that justice and charity are the foundations of peace. It may be right to think of "charity as the soul and justice as the substance of international peace". (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2007) *World Peace: An Impossible Dream?*, Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* Peace is the gift of God who through the death and resurrection of Christ, reconciled humans with himself and with one another. However, peace is also a human achievement since it is to be ushered in through the practice of love and justice. (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2007) *World Peace: An Impossible Dream?*, Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* Pope John Paul II is a tireless champion of peace who has dealt with the theme of peace often and at some length. Like his predecessors, John Paul II sees a close connection

between justice and peace. John Paul II believes that justice is rooted in love and “finds its most significant expression in mercy”. Hence, justice, “if separated from merciful love, becomes cold and cutting.” (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2007) *World Peace: An Impossible Dream?*, Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* That is why individuals and peoples need a “healing of memories”. This does not mean that they have to forget past events. Rather, they have to learn to look at them in a new way. Instead of remaining prisoners of the past, they have to recover their freedom to forgive. As the pope says: “The deadly cycle of revenge must be replaced by the new-found liberty of forgiveness.” (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2007) *World Peace: An Impossible Dream?*, Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* To work for peace and reconciliation is central to the mission of the Church. For the Church exists in order to carry on the saving work of Jesus under the guidance of the Spirit. And his saving work is interpreted in the New Testament as reconciliation and peace-making. According to Paul, God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to himself. (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2007) *World Peace: An Impossible Dream?*, Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* The Church in India needs to take more seriously the option for the poor and take concrete steps to alleviate poverty and misery in India. (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2007) *World Peace: An Impossible Dream?*, Mumbai: St Pauls.)

\* The Church in India has to join hands with all subaltern groups – the Dalits, the tribal people and women – in their struggle for liberation and justice. For centuries, the Dalits have been victims of oppression. In recent years violence against them has grown. The tribal people, too, are subjected to various forms of injustice. (Kunnumpuram, K. (ed) (2007) *World Peace: An Impossible Dream?*, Mumbai: St Pauls.)

## Unsourced Quotes

\* As Indians we can be justly proud of our cultural heritage. All the same we need to recognise the fact that historically Indian culture was biased in favour of the dominant

minority, while the bulk of the people were marginalised and culturally deprived.

\* It seems to me that the clergy-laity divide and the consequent lack of power-sharing in the Church are largely responsible for the apathy and inertia that one notices in the bulk of the laity today. There is, to be sure, a small but growing number of lay people who are clamouring for a say in the decision-making process in the Church. But they are not really representative of the lay people of our country who are mostly passive. This is in striking contrast to what is happening in secular society. A large number of Catholics are making significant contributions in the professions, the media, the civil services, the police and the armed forces. The sad state of affairs in the Church, I believe, is the result of the concentration of all power and initiative in the hands of the clergy. In spite of all the inspiring things that Vatican II said about lay people and their share in the life and mission of the Church, no real empowering of the laity has taken place. Hence, it is necessary for us to examine the causes of the clergy-laity divide and find ways and means of overcoming it (Kurien Kunnumpuram "Beyond the Clergy-Laity Divide," *Vidyajyoti*, Vol. 63, n. 11, November 1999.)

\* There really was no clergy-laity divide during the patristic period. It was during the Middle Ages that some significant changes took place which had far-reaching consequences for the life of the Church (Kurien Kunnumpuram "Beyond the Clergy-Laity Divide," *Vidyajyoti*, Vol. 63, n. 11, November 1999.)

\* An increasing number of lay people are asking for a more active role in the thinking, planning and decision-making process in the Church. They are longing for a truly participatory Church. It is, however, surprising that whenever there is a plea for "democratic rule" in the Church, the invariable answer is that the Church is not a democracy. This is quite true. All the same it is noteworthy that Vatican II is quite keen that the structures of the Church should be in tune with the spirit of the times. While describing what the Church has received from the world, the Council states: Since "the Church has a visible and social structure, which is a sign of her unity

in Christ: as such she can be enriched ... by the evolution of social life. The reason is not that the constitution given her by Christ is defective, but so that she may understand it more penetratingly, express it better, and adjust it more successfully to our times" (GS 44). (Kurien Kunnumpuram "Beyond the Clergy-Laity Divide," *Vidyajyoti*, Vol. 63, n. 11, November 1999.)

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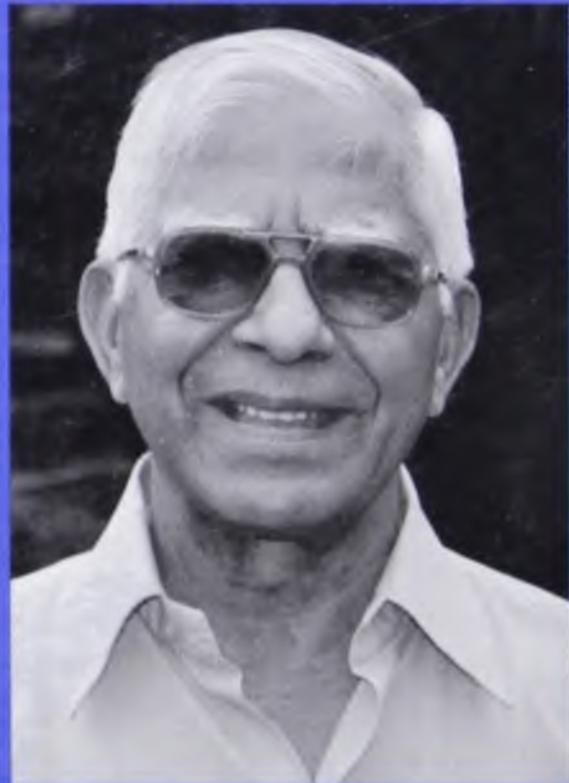
## Milestones in Kunnumpuram's Life

Date	Event
July 8, 1931	Birth at Teekoy, Kerala, India
July 11, 1950	Entered the Society of Jesus
March 24, 1963	Ordination to priesthood
1968	Completed Doctorate in Systematic Theology from the University of Innsbruck on "Ways of Salvation."
1969	Started teaching Theology at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV), Pune, India
1974-77	Dean of the Faculty of Theology, JDV, Pune
1987-1993	Rector of Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, India
January 1998	Founded <i>Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies</i> (Editor and publisher) <sup>[23]</sup>
January 2002	Started editing-and publishing <i>AUC: Asian Journal for Religious Studies</i>

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