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# jnanadeepa

## Pune Journal of Religious Studies

## Inter-Religious Dialogue

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*Pune Journal of Religious Studies*

# Inter-Religous Dialogue
# Contemporary Relevance

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Pune Journal of Religious Studies

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## Fostering Culture of Dialogue

In a time when the world is mired in conflicts, religious leaders have a duty to show that it is possible to set aside differences and work together for the common good, Pope Francis said.

"Dialogue and cooperation are essential at a time like our own when complex and unprecedented factors have led to increased tensions and conflicts, accompanied by violence on both a small and a large scale," the pope said May 16, 2018.

Before attending his weekly general audience, Francis met with a delegation from the Dharmic religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism - who were in Rome attending an interreligious conference.

Participants of the conference released a joint declaration in the afternoon reaffirming their commitment to "mutual human solidarity" and respect for religious traditions "to effectively confront the challenges of our time and to build a culture of encounter and dialogue."

"We appeal to religious leaders, professors and followers of our religions to build bridges and unite our hands with all people of good will to contribute in building peace in the world today and tomorrow," the statement said.

The pope thanked the delegation for their efforts in creating "a culture of encounter" through dialogue that is "in the service of life, human dignity and the care of creation."

"I thank you for what you have done by coming together, in accordance with your respective religious traditions, to promote goodness in our world," he said, "and upon you and your communities, I invoke an abundance of divine blessings."

Francis also met with a group of Buddhists from Thailand who gave him a translation of an ancient text that was given as a gift to Pope Pius XI in 1934 by the late Thai King Rama VII, the last absolute monarch of the country.

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# Editorial: Dialogue as Way of Life

As you know Prof Noel Sheth SJ was a man of ahimsa, compassion and dialogue. Calm and sober in his attitude, he reached out to others respectfully and reverentially. His meticulous and methodological nature and analytic-synthetic mind made him a humble servant, erudite scholar, efficient teacher and responsible administrator. He reached out to other traditions, religions and cultures with a warm heart and open arms, so that our world may be better and more peaceful place.

He mastered Sanskrit so well that he could authoritatively read and interpret the Indian religious texts. This made him reach out to the Hindu scholars. He learnt also Pali which made him reach out to the Buddhist teachers. His scholarship enabled him to build bridges between Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity, so that we could understand and appreciate each other (including our differences and diversities) better.

Prof Noel Sheth SJ, sadly and unexpectedly, passed away on July 8, 2017. To commemorate meaningfully his 75th birthday (October 31, 2018), some of us, his friends, well-wishers and colleagues, decided to bring out this memorial volume.

In the Call for Papers send out to the writers, the following mission and vision of the life of Prof Sheth were emphasised.

- Unwaveringly compassionate
- Reaching out to the other

- Dialoguing differently
- Compassionate and reverential dialogue
- Compassion (karuna), dialogue and service;
- Good teacher; gentleman; calm and sober;
- Respect and reverence for all
- Meticulous, analytic-synthesis
- Passionately compassionate

The general thrust was to convey the message and mission of Noel Sheth, Accordingly we also proposed tentatively the following titles of the articles that could be written:

1. "Divinity of Krishna:" An Appraisal
2. Hindu- Christian engagement
3. Muslim-Christian dialogue
4. Identity-Conflict-Development
5. Buddhist Concern and Compassion to Other Religions
6. Subaltern perspectives on Living Together
7. Christian Appreciation of the Other
8. Befriending the Other
9. Indian Genius for Religious Harmony
10. Alliance of Civilizations
11. An Indian Ending
12. Praxis as Testing Ground for Theory
13. Altruism: Christian and Beyond
14. Science-Religion Dialogue
15. The Value of Comparative Philosophy and Theology
16. The Flute of Krishna

17. "Religious and Cultural Resources for Peace"

18. Any other related topic of your choice

The General Outline of the Book

This book is about encountering other traditions, building friendly bridges with them, affirming others compassionately, enabling them and appreciating their diversity and difference, through dialogue, interaction and cooperation.

The first article by Rekha Chennattu, Assumption Sisters, delves into the need to build bridges, drawing from the New Testament.

Vadappuram M Jose, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, pleads for religious harmony and sees in Prof Noel Sheth that Indian genius, who is the need of the hour.

Rt Rev Thomas Menamparampil Emeritus Bishop of Guwahati affirms the need for The Dialogue of Civilizations, following the model of Matteo Ricci, the great Italian Jesuit of 16th century with his Chinese connection.

Kuruvilla Pandikattu studies the philosophical basis for dialogue, which is seen as essential for today's world. He talks of dialogue truly as a way of life. This is followed by the article by Kamladevi Kunkolienker, P.E.S.' College of Arts and Science, Farmagudi-Ponda-Goa, who sees science-religion dialogue as a necessary component in our pursuit for happiness.

The next article by Rudy Heredia, a close friend of Noel Sheth, sets the general tone when he reflects on triple dialogue as learning together with the other.

J. Charles Davis, Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg, Germany, explores human dignity in different religions, especially iin Islam as a bridging space for dialogue

May this volume contribute to a better harmony among our different religious traditions in India and in the world! May it help us to learn deeply from others' religious traditions and grow in wisdom. May this book be an inspiration to reach out to everyone and everything with compassion, wisdom and love!

This volume is a tribute to Prof Noel Sheth SJ, who has been one of the pioneers of Hindu-Christian dialoge, from his colleagues and friends. We affirm that Noel has tirelessly worked for inter-religious dialogue, has attempted dialogue between science and religion and has assiduously sought for wisdom deeply rooted in our Indian traditions and the Christian heritage! He has also contributed to the continuation of *Jnanadeep: Pune Journal of Religious Studies*, which we gratefully acknowledge.

The Editor

November 28, 2018

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# Building Bridges: Models from the New Testament

**Rekha M. Chennattu, RA**

Abstract: Matthew 15 presents a courageous mother who builds bridges between religions (Jews and Gentiles), cultures (Jewish and Canaanite) and genders (men and women). The woman's gender and non-Jewishness render her intervention with Jesus insignificant and marginal in the Jewish world of that time. She is, however, praised by Jesus for her "great faith" required of all true disciples of Jesus. This great faith consists in her ability to interpret her faith in response to the needs of the emerging situation or new context. She is reading the "signs of the times" and building bridges by making non-Jews recipients of God's blessings and bringing them into the family of God's chosen people.

At the beginning of the story in John 4, there existed no dealings between the Jews and the Samaritans, but by the end of the episode, they have become one covenant community. The confession of faith in Jesus as the Saviour of the world, and not just of the Samaritans, confirms the movement to a communion which transcends all sectarian boundaries. The Samaritan episode thus projects a world in the process of a dynamic movement from personal alienation, social discrimination and religious exclusion to human solidarity, liberative communion and transformative integration. The passage instructs us that the breaking down of all barriers will bring about a radical egalitarian understanding of the presence of the Church in the world today.

Keywords: Building bridges, Bridge-builders, Canaanite woman, Samaritan woman, liberation.

It is my privilege to contribute for the late Prof. Noel Sheth to commemorate his 75th birthday on the 31st October

2018. I have always been inspired by his simplicity of life, his passionate love for the priesthood and religious life, his absolute commitment to research and scholarship, his genuine interest in inter-religious dialogues and promotion of non-violence and peace, and the integrity of creation. He could reach out to millions of people from all walks of life in India and abroad: scholars and students; learned and illiterate; rich and poor; religious and lay people; women and men; Christians and non-Christians, Indians and non-Indians, and young and old – always building bridges and fostering communion.

In what follows, I present two examples from the New Testament – the Canaanite woman from the Gospel of Matthew and the Samaritan woman from the Gospel of John – who dared to transcend boundaries and build bridges between two religions and cultures. I have chosen two biblical women as models since Father Noel always respected the dignity and equality of women. He supported women's liberation from marginalization and encouraged women to take their rightful place in society. I hope he will accept this essay as a tribute to his enormous contribution to scholarship and inter-religious dialogue, his wise mentorship, and his empowering partnership in God's mission of reconciliation and harmony.

### *1. The Canaanite Woman: A Dynamic Bridge Builder*

The Canaanite woman in Matt 15:21-28 is a courageous dialogue partner of Jesus. The evangelist Matthew presents her as the mother of a daughter possessed by a demon who will be the beneficiary of Jesus' healing ministry. The story, however, gives no attention to the healing itself; instead it focuses on the dialogue between Jesus and the woman.

The same story is narrated in the Gospel of Mark (7:24-30), but Matthew seems to have altered the Markan story. Matthew gives special significance to the woman and her interventions. By the specific reference to the place as Tyre and Sidon (Gentile territories) and the designation of the woman as Canaanite (indigenous people of Canaan and ancient enemies of Israel), Matthew presents the woman as a political enemy of, and a religious outsider for, the Jews. She encounters Jesus in a public place – the domain of men. In Matthew's version, the woman is presented as a social critic who transcends the traditional norms and conventions concerning the role of women in public, which appreciated the surrender and submissiveness of this woman pleading for the "fallen crumbs." The true image that emerges from the text is that of a bold and courageous woman who takes the initiative to come out on her own and make her request to Jesus by shouting: "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David" (Matt 15:22). Her request reflects both the Christological titles of the early Christian communities ("Lord, Son of David") and the language of the Jewish prayer – the language of the lamentation psalms ("Have mercy on me"). A lament psalm is understood as an act of hope and trust in God's faithfulness to the covenant promises. Her persistent request (☒κραζεν) coupled with her liturgical posture of kneeling (προσκυν☒ω) underlines her desperate need as well as her confident faith in Jesus' divine power (as the expected Davidic Messiah) to heal her daughter (Matt 15:25). The woman thus seems to have transcended the boundaries of her own religious traditions, customs and beliefs.

Matthew portrays the woman as an active dialogue partner who dares to confront Jesus, the newly found Jewish prophet, with counter theological arguments. Jesus'

categorical statements: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15:24) and "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs" (Matt 15:26) are very rude and harsh. They contradict the usual charm, respect and compassion of Jesus. What is striking is the fact that in spite of Jesus' harsh words, she does not give up but challenges Jesus with equally powerful counter arguments: "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." The implication of her response – "the dogs eat from the fallen crumbs" – is that "Gentiles as well as Jews are fed by God." Although she accepts the priority of the Jews in Salvation History, she challenges Jesus to include Gentiles as an integral part of the salvific community brought about by Jesus. She wins in this theological dispute concerning the boundaries of Jesus' mission and gets her daughter healed. She seems "to have opened the way for Jesus' (and the Church's) mission beyond the Jewish community." The divine power of Jesus is for all – Jews and Gentiles, men and women – and that all should be the beneficiaries of justice, peace and equality – the blessings of God's reign. Like the prophets in the Old Testament, the woman seems to be filled with the Spirit and the power of God to speak on behalf of God, and to reveal the will of God for her daughter's destiny.

### *2. The Samaritan Woman: A Creative Dialogue Partner*

The Gospel of John presents women positively, and they play significant leadership roles in the narrative. There seem to be some women leaders and apostles in the Johannine community who are represented by the mother of Jesus (John 2 and 19), the Samaritan woman (John 4), Mary and Martha (John 11-12), and Mary Magdalene (John

20). This study focuses on the Samaritan story in John 4. In this missionary episode the evangelist makes a woman the protagonist; this is also one of the few texts in the Gospels, in which the issue of women is explicitly raised by the characters and responded to by Jesus (John 4:9.27). Like the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15, the Samaritan woman is also presented as a social critic, a contextualized theologian and a committed apostle.

The Johannine Jesus allows the Samaritan woman to question him at every significant moment of the narrative. The request of Jesus in 4:7b: "give me a drink" is questioned by the woman in 4:9: "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" Her response establishes a two-fold division: she challenges the religious association between the Jews and the Samaritans and the social association between men and women. She has the ability to give water to Jesus, but she raises an objection because of the social and religious prohibitions. The woman introduces the issues of the national antagonism between the Jews and the Samaritans, and of the interaction between men and women in public. The polemic posture of Jews and Samaritans is reinforced by the comment of the narrator in 4:9b – "Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans." The reader familiar with Jewish traditions is aware that the request of Jesus is improper and undesirable. The question still remains: how do we interpret the "surprise" of the woman in 4:9? Is she in agreement with the twofold prohibition? By responding to Jesus and so agreeing to enter into dialogue with Jesus, she shows that she does not care about this prohibition. By dealing with her and talking with her, Jesus presents himself as someone who does not follow the religious and social prohibitions regarding interaction between Jews and Samaritans, and

between men and women. It is very striking that instead of debating the issue of separation, Jesus changes the topic to the issue of living water. Like Jesus, she has also shown an openness which transcends social traditions by entering into a dialogue with him. Her courage and freedom are great as she is completely unaware of the identity of Jesus.

Although the Samaritan woman is traditionally interpreted as a prostitute who was evangelised by Jesus, the dialogue between Jesus and the woman in 4:19-20 reveals that her sins are not the point of the story. It is in verses 19-20 that the woman takes an initiative in bringing forward a new topic and Jesus' prophetic character by raising the issue of the right place of worship. If her personal life were the central theme of the story, then, like the disciples of John the Baptist, very probably she would have asked a personal question: "What then shall I do?" (cf. Luke 3:10-14). On the contrary, what she brings forward is a national and religious issue pertinent to her people, namely, the right place of worship. According to the Scripture of the Samaritans, the Pentateuch, there is only one place of worship (Deut 12:2-12): Mount Gerizim is the mount of grace and blessing, because Noah and Abraham offered sacrifice on this mountain. In Deut 27:4 the Samaritan Pentateuch reads 'Mount Gerizim' instead of the 'Mount Ebal' of the Masoretic Text, thus Gerizim is considered a sacred mountain, the place of worship and God's revelation. Hence, for the Samaritans Mount Gerizim is as holy for the worship of God as Jerusalem for the Jews. This disagreement about the right place of worship was the most important and pertinent religious dispute between the Samaritans and the Jews. The Samaritans believed that the Messiah would settle this dispute (John 4:25). In the words of Teresa Okure, "the woman thus proves to be remarkably

in touch with the current disputes between the two nations. As for finding a topic worthy of a Jewish prophet she could do no better than raise this longstanding issue of Gerizim versus Jerusalem." These verses thus reveal a woman well-versed in her religious tradition. She articulates the dispute from the perspective of the Samaritans: "Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship" (John 4:20). Notice that instead of saying "we worship" she says "Our ancestors worshipped". By appealing to her ancestors, she seeks to strengthen the Samaritan practice in contrast to the Jewish one. She juxtaposes the tradition of the ancestors with the current practice and dogma of Judaism. The Samaritan tradition rests on the authority of the patriarchs; the woman thus questions Jesus by holding on to the authority of the ancestors. The Samaritan woman is depicted as a *theologian* who dares to confront a prophet and to discuss theological issues with him; and she does both these in the context of her own religious traditions. She is rooted in her traditions yet open to receive the revelation from Jesus. She is portrayed as someone who initiates and encourages dialogue and contextualization in our mission.

The woman's change from unbelief to belief in Jesus reflects the faith-journey of a committed believer. At the beginning she encounters Jesus with puzzlement because of her ignorance. She is however open to participate more and more actively as the dialogue progresses. When we look at John 4 within the literary context of the section "from Cana to Cana" (John 2-4), the Samaritan woman is clearly contrasted with Nicodemus (John 3:1-15), who is confused by Jesus' self-revelation and disappears into the shadows. Unlike Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman accepts the revelation of Jesus and brings others to him by

her witness. She becomes a model of "mature discipleship." Her response when she recognizes Jesus as the Messiah is very significant. She abandons the water jar and goes into the city to spread the good news of her encounter with Jesus, the Messiah. She fulfils the "standard characteristics" of an apostle by giving testimony to the people in the city and inviting them to "come and see" Jesus (John 1:43-50). The statement of the Samaritans in 4:42 that "it is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world", does not denigrate the apostolic activity of the woman. The role of the woman, like John the Baptist or any other faithful witness, is relativized only in relation to Jesus (cf. John 3:25-30). Therefore, the acknowledgment of the Samaritans in 4:42 does not belittle the witness of the woman, but rather confirms it. The transforming effect of her apostleship is marked by the whole-hearted response of the people from Sychar.

## Conclusion

As we have seen above, in Matthew 15, the woman is presented as a courageous mother who builds bridges between religions (Jews and Gentiles), cultures (Jewish and Canaanite) and genders (men and women). The woman's gender and non-Jewishness render her intervention with Jesus insignificant and marginal in the Jewish world of that time. She is, however, praised by Jesus for her "great faith" required of all true disciples of Jesus. ("O woman, great is your faith" [15:28b]). This great faith consists in her ability to interpret her faith in response to the needs of the emerging situation or new context. She is reading the "signs of the times" and building bridges by making non-Jews recipients of God's blessings and bringing them into

the family of God's chosen people.

At the beginning of the story in John 4, there existed no dealings between the Jews and the Samaritans (4:9), but by the end of the episode, they have become one covenant community. The confession of faith in Jesus as the Saviour of the world (4:42), and not just of the Samaritans, confirms the movement to a communion which transcends all sectarian boundaries. The Samaritan episode thus projects a world in the process of a dynamic movement from personal alienation, social discrimination and religious exclusion to human solidarity, liberative communion and transformative integration. The passage instructs us that the breaking down of all barriers – gender, religious and racial – will bring about a radical egalitarian understanding of the presence of the Church in the world today.

The legacy of Father Sheth will be a blessing for all of us as we continue the mission of inter-religious dialogue in India, a ministry very dear to him. To the Indian Church, I will now let Father Noel Sheth speak in his own words from one of his interviews: "let us get out of our western shell and try to be more Indian ourselves." He highlighted inter-religious relationship more than inter-religious dialogue: a dialogue of spiritual sharing – sharing of spiritual experiences leading to deeper relationships and communion. Talking about those who persecute Christians, Father Noel once said: "to me the better way is not confrontation but embracing in love." May the memory of Father Noel Sheth – his legacy of building bridges, of reconciliation and love, of inner freedom, genuine scholarship, true ascetic life and his commitment as a religious – be a source of inspiration for all people of good will! May he continue to build bridges between heaven and earth!

1. This section on the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15 is developed in detail, see Rekha Chennattu, "The Dignity of Women: Christian Perspectives," Journal of Dharma 37:1 (2012): 70-72.
2. Normally a woman is depicted as a "daughter of a man" or "sister of a man" or "wife of a man" or "mother of a son."
3. The understanding is that Mark's Gospel is earlier than Matthew's.
4. For the importance of these cities during the OT and NT periods, see LaMoine F. De Vries, Cities of the Biblical World (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006) 73-82.
5. The first century culture of the Mediterranean society relegated the activities of women to the private or domestic sphere; see Karen Jo Torjesen, "Reconstruction of Women's Early Christian History," pages 290-310 in Searching the Scriptures, vol 1: A Feminist Introduction (ed., Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; New York: Crossroad, 1993), esp. 304-7. See also Mary Lefkowitz and Maureen Fant, Women's Life in Greece and Rome (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982).
6. See for example, "Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us" (LXX Ps 123:3a).
7. For a study of Matthew 15:21-28 and the Lament Psalm, see Gail O'Day, Surprised by Faith: Jesus and the Canaanite Woman, pages 114-25 in A Feminist Companion to Matthew (ed., Amy-Jill Levine; Sheffield: Academic Press, 2001) esp. 118-23.
8. Daniel Harrington, The Gospel of Matthew (Sacra Pagina 1; Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991) 235.
9. Sharon Ringe, "A Gentile Woman's Story," pages 65-72 in Feminist Interpretation of the Bible (ed., Letty M. Russell; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985) 65.
10. What follows is a summary of my article; see Rekha Chennattu, "Women in the Mission of the Church: An Interpretation of John 4," Vidyajyoti: Journal of Theological Reflection 65 (2001): 760-73; reprinted in French, "Les femmes dans la mission de l'Église: interpretation de Jean 4." Bulletin de Litterature Ecclesiastique CVIII/3 (2007): 381-96.
11. Birger Olsson claims that the symmetrical use of participial construction in the Greek text in reference to Jesus on the one hand

and the woman on the other hand emphasizes this separation; see Structure and Meaning in the Fourth Gospel: A Text-Linguistic Analysis of John 2, 1-11 and John 4, 1-42 (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1974) 177.

12. See John MacDonald, The Theology of the Samaritans (London: SCM, 1964) 406.

13. The belief in Mount Gerizim was one of the articles of the Samaritan creed; see John Bowman, Samaritische Probleme: Studien zum Verhältnis von Samaritanertum, Judentum und Urchristentum (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1967) 30.

14. Teresa Okure, The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4:1-42. WUNT 2/31. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988) 115.

15. From the perspective of history, the practices of the ancestors take precedence over the contemporary Jewish dogma of worship in Jerusalem which began only from the Davidic era (2 Sam 6); see Okure, The Johannine Approach to Mission, 114-115.

16. For a comparative study of Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, see M. Pazdan, "Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman: Contrasting Models of Discipleship," BTB 17 (1987) 145-48, who considers the Samaritan woman as a model of "mature discipleship" while Nicodemus represents "initial discipleship" (p. 148). See also D. A. Lee, The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1994) 65-66 and Francis Moloney, Belief in the Word: Reading John 1–4 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 144.

17. This resembles the standard way of responding to the call of discipleship in the synoptic Gospels: leaving the boats in Mark 1:16-20 and leaving the tax stall in Matt 9:9.

18. See Lee, The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel, 91.

19. For the covenant motif in John's Gospel, see Rekha M. Chennattu, Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006).

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# Religious Harmony in a Multi-Religious India

**VM Jose SJ**

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Abstract: The world today witnesses a growing trend of intolerance, Lotus Temple in New Delhi, India, stands majestically as a true symbol of peace and communal harmony. The Baha'i House of Worship, built in the shape of a lotus is a witness to the religious harmony of the people who visit the place. Our country is in fact more diversified than Europe. The geographical landscape in India is such that the diversification also is vast. On the one side we have deserts and plateaus and on the other snow mountains and rain forests at very close proximity to each other. A Kerala Muslim and a Bengali Muslim do not dress in the same way and as a result it brings about a different upbringing on their identity. The author concludes his reflections by saying that Jesus the Christ revealed in the gospels is a man of tolerance, compassion and one who lived his life for others. His tolerance and compassion may be understood from the dialogues he had with Mary of Magdala and the woman of Samaria and many other people of low esteem as seen by the others. This message of Jesus poses a challenge to the church to re-think the message it preaches to propagate the gospel of Jesus the Christ and to redeem the distorted picture of Jesus.

Keywords: Dialogue, compassion, Lotus Temple, communal harmony.

## *Introduction*

Today even as the country witnesses a growing trend of intolerance, Lotus Temple in New Delhi, India, stands majestically as a true symbol of peace and communal harmony. The Baha'i House of Worship, built in the shape of a lotus is a witness to the religious harmony of the people who visit the place. Our country is in fact more diversified than Europe. The geographical landscape in India is such that the diversification also is vast. On the one side we have deserts and plateaus and on the other snow mountains and rain forests at very close proximity to each other. A Kerala Muslim and a Bengali Muslim do not dress in the same way and as a result it brings about a different upbringing on their identity.

## *1. A Real Story*

I once read an incident in The Times of India newspaper, October 8, 2015, about the Hindus and Sikhs helping the Muslims to repair their mosque in Nathowal village near Ludhiana. They also took care of more than 65 percent of the repair expenses. The project cost was around Rs. 25 lakhs, of which Rs. 15 lakhs were contributed by Sikhs and Hindus. The beauty of this place is that the three communities live in peace in this village. Muslims and Hindus contribute to the gurudwara work as well. A resident of the village informed The Times of India that they celebrate all festivals like Diwali, Dusshera, Rakhi, Eid, and Gurupurab together.

Nathowal village has a population of around 7, 000 of which around 500 are Muslims. There are only around 50 members from the Hindu community. Mansa Khan, a contractor and president of Jamia Masjid at Nathowal says this,

"All three communities lived in peace here even before Partition. During Partition, 10 to 12 families migrated to Pakistan but 50 families stayed back as the Sikh brothers didn't allow them to leave." It does not mean they were forced to stay but requested them with love. Today, these people do not regret that they stayed back; in fact the relations are only stronger. The majority Sikh community takes pride in the village's communal peace. "Our village is more of a family. If a villager wants to donate money to a religious place he contributes equally to the gurdwara and the mosque. They are determined to uphold this spirit in the future too. When the work on the mosque began every villager pledged to help irrespective of his religion," says Pyara Singh, block committee member and president of Gurudwara Dharamshalla in the village.

### *2. The Indian Perspective*

The Indian constitution supports and encourages religious harmony. According to the constitution every citizen has a right to choose and practice any religion. There are examples of Muslims and Sikhs building temples as already mentioned above. In different parts of India we can witness different religious traditions living harmoniously. We also come across several seers of religions call for religious harmony in India. According to Dalai Lama, India is a model for religious harmony. He mentions that "In the last 2000-3000 years, different religious traditions, including Buddhism, Jainism, flourished here." The ancient Indian scripture Rigveda endeavours plurality of religious thought with its mention "ekam sadvipraa bahudhaa vadanti", meaning wise people explain the same truth in different manners.

Ashoka (304–232 BCE), in his 12th edict stated, "The beloved of the gods, king Piyadasi, honours both ascetics and the householders of all religions, and he honours them with gifts and honours of various kinds. Whoever praises his own religion, due to excessive devotion, and condemns others with the thought 'Let me glorify my own religion', only harms his own religion. Therefore contact between religions is good. One should listen to and respect the doctrines professed by others. The beloved of the gods, king Piyadasi, desires that all should be well-learned in the good doctrines of other religions."

Kharavela (193 BCE – after 170 BCE) was the third and greatest emperor of the Mahameghavahana dynasty of Kaḷinga (present-day Odisha). The main source of information about Khārabeḷa is his famous seventeen line rock-cut Hātigumphā inscription in a cave in the Udayagiri hills near Bhubaneswar, Odisha.The inscription states that the Emperor Kharavela had a liberal religious spirit. Kharavela describes himself as, "the worshiper of all religious orders, the restorer of shrines of all gods."

Even the simple word, Namaste, it means, "I bow to you." This gesture means, "you and I are very much alike and can be 'one'. We can find unity and accord." "Essentially the divine in you and me are alike." Unfortunately this is not always true to life. There is also a negative aspect of our Indian reality which is very painful to recall.

### *3. Intolerance Towards Other Religions*

#### *Religions in Conflict*

What leads to conflict is one religion inclining to be exclusivist or fundamentalist because that group believes

that its view of the world represents the world as it really is. Some religions try to proselytize and they become aggressively missionary. In the process others may tend to marginalize those who differ from them. Every religion has a share in this aggressive approach. Even Hinduism that prides itself of its tolerance had actively opposed Buddhism and Jainism in the past and opposes Islam and Christianity as 'foreign' in the present. In some parts of the country the situation has become very severe and the minorities begin to feel alienated and discriminated by the ruling class. This exclusivism of religious perspective gives rise to ignorance and prejudice concerning others and consider others as untrue and immoral, of course, from one's own point of view.

If we analyse the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India, sociologists point out how the Muslims recall the golden age when they were the rulers. It is not false to say that they looked down upon the Hindus as cowardly, promiscuous and weak. They may feel that their own fall from power is due to their infidelity to their religious observance. Today the situation has changed and they feel marginalized and seek to assert their identity around the shariat. On the other hand the Hindus seek to assert their majority status and their glorious historical past. The Hindus often consider the Muslims as militant and religiously intolerant and narrow.

We should understand that Hindu-Muslim relationship in the Indian history was bad. The 1202 storm campaign of Muhammad Ghori resulted in the destruction of hundreds of Hindu temples. There is no doubt (in spite of the efforts of secular historians) that Nalanda was destroyed by the Muslim invaders. The common Hindus were forced to pay Jizya tax (Jizya is a yearly per-capita tax imposed upon non-Muslim occupants of an Islamic country by the Islamic

state itself. In India it was first introduced by Qutub-ud-din Aibak, first ruler of slave dynasty upon non-Muslim subjects under his territory). There was also forced conversions of Hindus by Muslims. An infamous example of a forcible conversion attempt was Aurangzeb's attempt to convert Kashmiri Pundits to Islam in the 1670s. Kashmiri Pundits were saved by the Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur who was executed by Aurangzeb for defending the rights of non-Muslims to live in India. Another example would be 16th century Varanasi. The Muslim clergy made it impossible for Hindus to live peacefully in Varanasi.

From the time Muslims started arriving, around 632 AD, the history of India becomes a long, monotonous series of murders, massacres, spoliations, and destructions. It is, as usual, in the name of 'a holy war' of their faith, of their sole God, that the barbarians have destroyed civilizations, wiped out entire races. Mahmoud Ghazni was an early example of Muslim ruthlessness, burning temples of Mathura, razing Kanauj to the ground and destroying the famous temple of Somnath, sacred to all Hindus. His successors were as ruthless as Ghazni; 103 temples in the holy city of Benaras were razed to the ground, its marvellous temples destroyed, its magnificent palaces wrecked. Will Durant, the famous historian summed up like this, "The Islamic conquest of India is probably the bloodiest story in history. It is a discouraging tale, for its evident moral is that civilization is a precious good, whose delicate complex of order and freedom, culture and peace, can at any moment be overthrown by barbarians invading from without or multiplying within."

### *4. Tolerant Religions*

India is the birthplace of four of the world's major religious traditions; namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. India is a land of various religions and their sub – castes. India has been home for centuries to all great religions of the world. The Constitution of India declares the nation to be a secular republic that must uphold the right of citizens to freely worship and propagate any religion or faith.

It is known to people all over that India is the homeland of numerous religions, and we also hear many educated and uneducated people saying that the holy scriptures of all these religions preach and teach peaceful and harmonious life with one another. One religion tells us "salam alaikum", may peace be with you, while the other religion says "love your neighbour" still another religion tells "bhavatu sabha mangalam or sarve bhavantu sukhinha" may all beings be happy. Therefore we can conclude by saying whether it is Islam, Christianity or Hinduism, every religion promotes peace and amity. The promotion of love, peace and compassion are the sole objective of all religions.

### 5. Multi-Religious India

In this 21st century we cannot feign ignorance of the diversity of our human race. The modern technology and social media have made the world a global village and open vistas which we could never dream of earlier. As a result of religion many conflicts have also emerged in many parts of our country and the world. We cannot pretend that religion has not been a source of major conflicts in centuries past, however religious intolerance has raised its ugly head in the early part of the 21st century. The human rights situation

in the world today is a picture of stark contrast; on the one hand there is undeniable progress in technology and on the other the tragic situation of widespread cruelty and violations. Martenson opines that over the last few years amazing changes have taken place in many parts of the world. Today the question is: How do we achieve religious harmony in the 21st century? Achieving religious harmony in the 21st century is the job of all; beginning with the state, institutions and individuals.

The history of India reveals that India's ethnic composition encompasses myriad streams of culture and religious faiths. As a multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultured society, India has served as an outstanding example of unity in diversity among the fast maturing democracies across the world. In a multi-religious country, religious harmony is a must. Religious harmony is possible where there is understanding between followers of various faiths. For a country like India, as well as for whole the World, religious harmony is important as religious harmony is the need of the hour to make this world a happy place to live. In today's multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural world we need to establish harmonious relationship in order to create the world a haven of peace and harmony instead of conflict and strife.

Cultural diversity as a major component of secularism has been widely recognized and acknowledged in the recent past throughout the world when many countries have suffered ethnic violence and constant conflicts of faiths and beliefs. Unfortunately these components of Indian society have been attacked frequently, especially in recent times by divisive fascist forces, which are bent upon upsetting the social fabric of a peace loving and growing democratic so-

ciety. The young minds therefore must know that the traditions of communal harmony and tolerance and respect for diversity have always been the redeeming features of our civilization. Communal harmony is the sine qua non of a pluralistic society such as ours. Guarding and strengthening this core ideal, upon which our policy is based, requires ceaseless vigilance.

Swami Vivekananda says, "We want to lead mankind in the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this is to be done by harmonizing the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of the Religion, which is Oneness, so that each may choose that path that suits him best."

Nearly six hundred years ago, the saint Kabir blended the mystic aspects of the various religious traditions of our country, and provided to later generations a sense of what we would today call Unity in Diversity. Among his many luminous 'dohas', Kabir had urged each of us to find within ourselves the spark of goodness or genius to inspire everyone.

### *6. Religion for Harmony*

Doubtlessly we can say that religion occupies a special place in the life of human beings, so also human rights has become as accepted way of living. Sad to say that our problem has been balancing religious freedom with human rights principles. We can confidently say that Religion and Human Rights can co-exist if people will believe, accept and practice human rights principles and ideas alongside the tenets of their religion.

The primary task of religion is to contribute to the building up of a human community of freedom and fellowship, equality and justice. This may be seen from the economic, political and religious perspectives. It is expressed in terms of love, justice and care for the poor in our day to day life. The church itself is a group of people sent into the world to be the salt, light and the servant of this Kingdom. Even in this task the church is only collaborating with the spirit who is already present and active in the world carrying on God's cosmic project. Thus the mission of the Church is universal reconciliation. The disciples of Jesus are called to struggle against these forces and the oppressive structures they have created.

From the religious point of view we are now faced with two different ideologies in the country. We must consciously build up a multi-religious society, in which every religious community is recognized, accepted and respected and has an opportunity to collaborate in the building up of the national community. We have to evolve a new kind of democratic order in which numbers are not important and a majority does not impose its will on the minorities. This new order will be respectful of diversity and participative, allowing each group to contribute its riches to the good of all.

## 7. Inter-Religious Dialogue

### *The Church with Other Religion*

In the earlier days the Church attitude was apologetic and missionary; she defended her uniqueness and invited other to join her, co-existence, collaboration and solidarity. The goal was to struggle against atheism and evil materialism in an effort to build a world where Christianity ruled.

The Church and other religions were pilgrims towards the future goal. Our approach to their religions has so far been negative. We took it for granted that we have the truth about God and the appropriate means to reach God and be saved. We have looked at other religions from the context of Christian Salvation.

The new starting point is the affirmation that in virtue of creation we believe that all of us are created in the image and likeness of God and God is in contact with the humans, as individuals and as groups. Our quest for the Kingdom of God therefore calls us to collaborate with the believers of other religions and all people of good will. Today the Church does affirm the need for such collaboration in the pursuit of a just society in the world. John Paul II, speaking to leaders of other religions in Chennai, in Feb.1986, said: As followers of different religions we should join together in promoting and defending common ideals in the spheres of religious liberty, human brotherhood, education, culture, social welfare and civic order. Since Kingdom is the goal of mission, then collaboration with the other religions and with all people of good will is the way of mission.

Inter- religious dialogue does not mean that it is opposed to welcoming people who wish to become disciples of Jesus Christ and collaborate with him in his mission, inspired or attracted either by the person and teachings of Jesus or by the witness of his disciples. If we join disciples in promoting social justice and equality for the downtrodden and marginalized then we may discover that people are not interested in getting converted anymore for socio-economic reasons. If our mission is genuine then automatically it is dialogical. Without witnessing there is no dialogue. It does not mean that our witnessing is aggressive; definitely not.

We have to take great care to keep it so in the pluralistic context of India. In a conflict situation dialogue is difficult and is seen as much broader than merely religious. We should keep in mind that religion is only one dimension of human life in society and it cannot be isolated.

### *Conclusion*

We understand the fact that India is a multi-religious and pluri-cultural country. This diversity has to be viewed as divinely bestowed blessing and grace. The Church's mission in this context is to be a truly dialogical community. The dialogical mission of the Church also implies that it becomes an agent of reconciliation and peace among the multi-religious context. This mission or vocation has to be understood as being the "light of the world" and "salt of the earth." Our task thus is to create a common forum of inter-religious dialogue through which mutual misunderstanding, hatred, discord and discrimination could be opposed, and we become co-creators to build up a nation of justice, peace and harmony.

The mission of the Church is none other than that of Jesus himself. His mission comprised going about doing good and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom and that God is powerfully present and is transforming this world. In the process he is caring for all and in particular the poor, oppressed, marginalized and the outcastes. We should make sure that the church takes every effort to remove every trace of triumphalism, exclusivist and any attitude of superiority in its teachings, structures, evangelizing activities and the style of the functioning of its institutions. However, it should be pointed out that the Church always defends the right of individuals to profess the religion of their choice. At

the same it denounces proselytisation using questionable means, such as, fraud, force and allurement.

I would like to conclude these reflections by saying that Jesus the Christ revealed in the gospels is a man of tolerance, compassion and one who lived his life for others. His tolerance and compassion may be understood from the dialogues he had with Mary of Magdala and the woman of Samaria and many other people of low esteem as seen by the others. This message of Jesus poses a challenge to the church to re-think the message it preaches to propagate the gospel of Jesus the Christ and to redeem the distorted picture of Jesus. In other words, we have the task to liberate Jesus the Christ who is created in our own images because of our captivity to power, corruption and misreading of scripture. Rienzie Perera writes in, Christian Identity in a Multi-Religious Context, Jesus the Christ has to be liberated from the false dogmas and teachings of the church in order for him to take his true identity and become the crucified and saving presence amidst crucified and broken peoples in Asia.

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# The Dialogue of Civilizations: The Ricci Model

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Abstract: Against the prevailing mode of despair and angst, the author hopes for a better world through dialogue and sharing of vision and ideas. "Paradoxically, their (religious believers') other-worldly gaze brought this-worldly success" (Smart 1999:17). Matteo Ricci invited his dialogue partners to look beyond immediate gift-giving and study of Euclid to the study of values of his civilization, and spiritual energies from which they were derived, and relating them to the Chinese worldviews and values. Thus, intelligently relating the immediate and the practical with the aesthetical, ethical and the spiritual of two Great Civilizations he explored the more complete identity of the human being opening doors to immense possibilities. The Ricci way of sharing the assets of Great Civilizations and even of Little Cultures is the only way forward for the human family today.

Keywords: dialogue, civilizations, cultural heritage, communion, Matteo Ricci.

## 1. From Wars of Civilizations to Dialogue of Civilizations

"Never in this world will hatred cease by hatred...hatred is ceased by love" (The Buddha).

It was only a few decades ago that the great Historian

Arnold Toynbee expressed his profound concern for the future of humanity. He said "Mankind is surely going to destroy itself unless it succeeds in growing together into something like a human family. For this, we must become familiar with each other (Toynbee 1995:10). "We shall have to do more" he said, "than understand each other's cultural heritages, and even more than appreciate them. We shall have to value them and love them" (Ibid 47). This challenge has assumed greater significance in our times. Aggressiveness has grown. Mutual understanding has diminished, despite the expansion of communications.

Soon after the terrorist attack on New York's World Trade Centre (11/9/01), many cried that the much-debated 'Wars of Civilizations' had just begun. The Gulf War, they said, was only an early warning. Human experience has shown down the centuries to what inhumanities human groups can descend when they look at each other as threats and not as friends and fellow-travellers towards a common destiny. Driven by hatred, people can find hidden resources and unlimited energies in themselves to be able to inflict mortal injuries on the supposed 'enemy'.

## 2. Inter-Civilizational Distances Seem to Grow

"There is a way to get the people: get their hearts and the people are won over" (Mencius 4:9).

History tells us that differences are bound to arise between communities, cultures, countries, and even more between civilizations. It is not that we dislike other cultures or civilizations, but we misread their meanings. Little issues assume mighty proportions. We may not go the whole way with Samuel Huntington's fully developed thesis on the inevitability of the "Clash of Civilizations."

But we do agree with his central argument that there is a renewed awakening of cultures and civilizations in modern times, and that the boundary lines are sharpening. There are possibilities of increased assertiveness and tensions, and it is good to search for paths that lead to easing of anxieties, dialogue, reconciliation and collaboration.

"In the post-Cold War world, ....culture counts, and cultural identity is what is most meaningful to people", says Huntington (Huntington 1997:20). And he adds, " People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and at the broadest level, civilizations" (Ibid 21). Inter-cultural and inter-ethnic conflicts have multiplied. Trying to prove his thesis, he refers to ethnic tensions in Uganda, Burundi, Zaire, Nigeria, the Caucus, Bosnia, Sudan, Sri Lanka and other places. "As of early 1993, for instance, an estimated 48 ethnic wars were occurring throughout the world, and 164 'territorial-ethnic claims and conflicts concerning borders'..." (Ibid 35).

### *3. Ricci Proposes Inter-Civilizational Dialogue*

"The Master said....But if even a simple peasant comes in all sincerity and asks me a question, I am ready to thrash the matter out, with all its pros and cons, to the very end" (Analects IX, 7).

It is in this context that the figure of Matteo Ricci stands out tall as a person who was able to lead two mighty civilizations into a happy encounter. Even at the first stage of his encounter with Chinese society he had only words of appreciation about the people he met and their culture; he recognized "nobility of talent, civility of manners, elegance

of language" among the Chinese people. He sought to make himself a Chinese of his own choice. His graciousness and suavity amazed the people. He was acknowledged as a perfect gentleman.

He presented himself as an intellectual from the West, and was happy to introduce the assets and values of his civilization, like technological products, ideas and ethos to the Chinese in a convincing style. He overcame existing prejudices with amazing skill. Joseph Needham F.R.S in his Science and Civilization in China says that the Ricci's efforts towards dialogue "stand for all time as an example of cultural relations at the highest level between civilizations heretofore sundered."

Art was another area of common interest. The western techniques of perspective amazed the Chinese society.

Ricci's writings on friendship, memory techniques, natural law, married life, and attributes of God were widely read and admired in spite of the fact that the concepts contained therein differed greatly from those prevalent in Chinese community. He wrote home contributing to building up a positive image of the Chinese civilization in the West. He felt it was his duty to build bridges. He worked hard engaging himself in discussions with a continuous stream of visitors even late into the night. His efforts did not fail to win recognition from people, intellectuals and by the Emperor himself. He was assigned imperial quarters for his residence. And when he died, is body was made to rest at an honoured place on imperial grounds. His memory continues to live.

The exchange of clocks, maps, poetry, mathematical knowledge and ethical thoughts were merely symbols of

a deeper desire Ricci had, that of bringing the minds of the Western and Chinese societies to meet and enter into a dialogue. The need of the hour in our own times is precisely to bring cultures and civilizations into a mutually beneficial conversation so that all societies concerned can profit from it instead of coming into collision. In this brief paper I would like to apply Matteo Ricci's message to the present day context of tensions between civilizational groups.

## 4. Definition of a Civilization

"To be one with the world is wisdom" (Tirukkural).

Toynbee defined civilization as "an endeavour to create a state of society in which the whole Mankind will be able to live together in harmony, as members of a single all-inclusive family" (Toynbee 1995:44). A civilization is meant to be a unifying space. "Behind every civilization there is a vision," says Christopher Dawson. The very concept of civilization implies, therefore, an eagerness to realize a unique vision in behalf of the whole of humanity as one united family, not merely in behalf of the particular society where it took shape.

Fernand Braudel defines civilization as a space, a cultural area, a collection of cultural characteristics and phenomena. Wallerstein calls it a particular concatenation of worldview, customs, structures, and culture. For Dawson it is a particular original process of cultural creativity, for Durkheim and Mauss it is a kind of moral milieu encompassing a certain number of nations. Huntington defines it as the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level cultural identity people have (Huntington 1997: 43).

## 5. Identity and Inner Sturdiness of Civilizations

He [the sage] is free from self-display, and therefore he shines (Tao Te Ching 22).

A civilization comes into existence, according to Toynbee, when a society tries to respond to an extraordinary challenge, which calls for an unprecedented effort to survive. Different societies respond differently to the same or similar challenges, evolve differently, and take on different identities. Some societies may not gather enough determination to respond at all, and get submerged or sidelined in the process. Those that emerge, preserve sustaining power as long as their inner spirit does not fail. Though empires rise and fall, civilizations live on. Governments come and go, "civilizations remain and 'survive political, social, economic, even ideological upheavals'" (Huntington 1997:43).

Usually we evaluate a civilization for the quality of its material products, e.g. buildings, structures, artefacts. But ultimately material achievements alone are not the true measure of the progress of a civilization. In this respect, the self-congratulation of the technologically more advanced nations and communities of our times is misplaced. In fact, the greatest material achievements may be made by a civilization even when it is well on the way to decline.

It is only when the energies, spared from physical labour through an advance in technology and organization, are used for spiritual search and profounder self-articulation that a civilization may be said to be in the process of growth. Such an undertaking is always led by charismatic individuals or creative minorities who inspire their society with a vision of life and of realities which they have developed through a

profound inner experience.

## 6. What Can Cause the Breakdown of Civilizations

"People in their conduct of affairs are constantly ruining them when they are on the eve of success" (Tao Te Ching 64).

For all the sturdiness that civilizations build up, they too are fragile entities. Spengler thought civilizations were organic entities, following an inevitable birth-growth-death pattern. Writing during the second decade of the last century, he believed that the Western civilization was already on the way to decline. About that perception of his we do not wish make any judgement. But the fact remains that civilizations are mortal. What happened to the Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian and Persian civilizations can happen to others as well, even to the most advanced.

In Toynbee's view, a civilization moves on to a path of decline and death, when the creative minority that brought it into existence and gave it inspiration and leadership during its process of growth, gradually degenerates into a 'dominant and oppressive minority'. And it finally breaks down when the same minority entrenches itself in an unassailable position of exploitative advantage over the rest of their society.

A civilization can recapture its dynamism by returning to the original values that led it to success. But this does not always happen. The danger is that during the period of decline an uncreative elite take over and begin to idolize their past in compensation for the values that they have already given up, idealizing the achievements of their ancestors, institutions, techniques, in short their 'dead selves'. They

continue to worship the 'ghost' of their ancient glory and propagate that devotion in the wider society. Many religious fundamentalists and radical nationalists in different parts of the world today make this mistake.

## 7. The Encounter of Civilizations

"You shall speak to men good words" (Quran 2,83).

Civilizations have interacted with each other down the centuries. But in our times, encounters between civilizations have increased a thousand fold. It is becoming abundantly clear that no one can hope to thrive in isolation. Closing in upon oneself, one becomes incapable of facing the social realities that are rapidly changing. New realities push the unprepared to the margins or inferior positions, and there they remain in a helpless condition.

As we have seen earlier, "behind every civilization there is a vision" (Christopher Dawson). During interactions between civilizations, troubles start when one vision seeks to impose itself on another, or when the perceived interests of a civilization clash with those of another, or when messages are misread. In these difficult situations, those would prove most helpful who point the way to dialogue. Many problems can be solved with respectful mutual attention and sympathetic understanding.

Demonizing communities or countries, or isolating them and branding them with negative titles are not helpful. In times of tension we need persons who seek to understand across cultures and build bridges to facilitate mutual relationships. In today's world we need persons who can initiate dialogue even with people whose cultures differ greatly from their own. In this respect Ricci shows us the

way. In fact, his first book in Chinese was precisely on 'Friendship'.

## 8. Spontaneous Resistance to an alien Civilization

"It is because he (the sage) is free from striving that no one in the world is able to strive with him" (Tao Te Ching 22).

Great civilizations naturally tended to overflow into the neighbourhood, e.g. the Chinese into Korea, Japan and Vietnam; the Indian into Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia; the Arab into West Asia, North Africa and beyond. Later, the high seas favoured frequent interactions, and today worldwide network of communications.

Not always are gifts of a dynamic alien civilization well received. Where the indigenous leadership feels threatened, there is powerful resistance to any form of alien civilizational influence. Resistance grows all the stronger if the intruding civilization seems to challenge native interests, institutions, concepts and value systems, even going to the point of violence. Violence often, we know, is the response of the weak. That is why even today, while studying the problem of terrorism, it would be more intelligent to approach it with patient curiosity and sympathetic understanding than in a spirit of retaliation.

## 9. Assimilation into an alien Civilization - Rejection

"When a ruler's personal conduct is correct, his government is effective without the issuing of orders" (Analects 12:5).

A society whose civilization is expanding assimilates into itself willing admirers who feel that their original identity is only enhanced by merging into the glorious civilizational stream that seems to point to the future. There was a period in history when not only enthusiastic individuals but also a vast variety of ethnic groups and consenting communities considered it a privilege to be admitted into the Roman society whose star seemed to be on the ascendant. The Scandinavians, Hungarians (Magyars who were of Asiatic origin) and a section of the Slavs like Poles, Slovaks, Slovenes, Croats and others cast in their lots with the emerging West when they thought that their future lay there. One may observe, similarly, the wide acceptance of the civilizations of the Han Chinese in East Asia, of the Indo-Aryans on the Indian subcontinent, of the Arabs in West Asia and North Africa.

However, at some stage there begins a resistance at the periphery, especially when the blessings of a once-triumphant civilization turn into burdens, e.g. in the form of taxes, or use of force for cultural or religious compliance, political or economic disadvantages. Such opposition may express itself politically in armed uprising, and culturally in heresies, schisms, and native versions of the original inspiration, and even outright apostasies. Very many communities of Syriac origin and other oriental subjects of the Byzantine Empire seceded en bloc to the expanding Arab empire preferring to offer allegiance to people who were civilizationally closer to them, than serve the oppressive Byzantines, even though these latter belonged to the same religion. Something similar happened in North Africa too.

When any individual society or a civilizational group becomes too powerful, difficulties for it arises

spontaneously: tensions within the group and resistance from neighbours or other threatened societies. Many inter-civilizational and inter-cultural tensions of our days can be explained from the this point of view. An intelligent and sympathetic approach can reduce tensions and strengthen relationships. Ricci can serve an inspiration.

## 10. Shedding of Negative Memories

"If you shed tears when you miss the sun at night, you also miss the stars" (Tagore).

There are many countries in modern times that are still trying to get over the memories of injuries they have received during their colonial past or the years of their humiliation. The reverses of history had humbled nations and civilizations that had once occupied leading positions in an earlier period; or they felt taken advantage of, for political power, natural resources, or economic advantages. Many of the Asian countries find it hard to forget the past, deal with the present and look to the future with an undisturbed mind.

Unfortunately those for whom the humiliating memories of their colonial past are still fresh are likely have a distorted vision of history and a lop-sided view of the civilization that seems to confront them as a single, monolithic bloc, as though always aggressive, arrogant and dominant. It is good to correct exaggerations and distortions and pay attention to saving features. An understanding of peoples in the context of their overall history will make us condone their mistakes and appreciate their greatness.

But objectively speaking, in human history, injuries have been in all directions. If we go by historic grievances

we shall never be done with it. From whom we will seek compensation? East from the West or vice versa? One religious group against the other, or in the opposite direction? One cultural family pitted against another or the other way round? One day East and West must embrace. North and South will have to learn to work together. And peace shall reign on earth.

## 11. Many Unintended Gifts Go with Injuries

"He who rules by means of virtue may be compared to the pole-star, which keeps its place while all the other stars pay homage to it" (Analects 2.1)

Unfortunately when two civilizations meet, what are exchanged faster are the less valuable elements, like skills of war and expertise in exploitative trade. Lethal weapons reach faster and further from one to another. Thus, most countries of the developing world have acquired weapons from the Western nations, partly in self-defense and not rarely with aggressive designs against neighbours. Meanwhile disoriented Western youth fall for Asian fake sages, soothsayers and drug peddlers. This is a case of the worst meeting the worst between civilizations, instead of the best meeting the best as it happened when Ricci met with Confucian scholars.

As interactions grow between civilizations, the frequency of borrowing one from the other increases, even if not intended. In all cultural encounters, one thing leads to another. While the West took advantage of many nations in their weaknesses, it passed on an interest in science and technology that strengthened the weaker nations. Some were very quick in profiting from this encounter. While the East felt humiliated and disregarded, its heritage of wisdom

and spiritual search drew the attention of many intellectuals in the West. This encounter made the thinking element in he West realize that there are vast areas of human interest beyond material achievements.

As Peter the Great in Russia and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in Turkey thought that the West has something offer so did Lee Kwan view did in our own days. In fact, several modern ideologies of the Right and Left came from different Western schools to explain diverse social realities. Each society in Asia accepted one or the other line of thought according to the need of their own situation and the relevance of an ideology.

But not all the West-admiring persons in the non-Western world have shown the ability to distinguish between the core values of the Western civilization and the transitory, superficial, and degrading dimensions of it. Absolutizing a mere 'secular extract' of the old integral Western civilization and proposing it as the new faith for the modern world is a folly of the highest kind. Likewise, there are Asians who do not succeed to identify the core values and central orientations of their own civilization. Here lies the difficulty for a useful encounter of civilizations at this stage. We need Ricci-like scholars, to show the path.

## 12. Mutual Penetration of Civilizations---A New Synthesis

"First establish yourself in the good; thereafter you should counsel others. The wise man who acts thus will be above reproach" (Dammapada 12,2)

Any synthesis that will be worked out between civilizations with a materialistic emphasis will remain imperfect. It would

not be true to the genius of either civilization. Fragility of the Frankenstein that the consumeristic, production-consumption-oriented civilization has produced is becoming more and more evident. It is laden with problems: over-consumption of natural resources, environmental pollution, and social disruption, to mention only a few. Further, the potentialities of the deeper dimensions of civilizations are underestimated, when all gaze is only on Technology and the Market. While we do admit that Economy is very important, there are other dimensions of depth to human society.

It is certain that Indian spiritual intuitions, Chinese genius for building up social cohesion, Japanese ardour for hard work and constant learning, African emphasis on human relationships, the Arab call for submission to God... all these and more, have something unbelievably great to offer to universal human heritage. It is equally certain that the final result of these interactions will not be just one homogeneous universal civilization. Civilizations will continue to give and take, integrate and differentiate, revive and re-incarnate, work out new syntheses and take on new identities. They will live on with new forms and faces, and release incredible energies in periods of transformation.

We only need briefly to look at what Western thinkers and writers like Hegel, Schelling Schopenhauer, Romain Rolland, Ruskin, Yeats, Emerson or Carl Jung have borrowed from Indian thought and traditions, what Indians like Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindra Nath Tagore and Radhakrishnan took from the West, what modern art and popular music in the West borrowed from Africa, and the welcome that Buddhist or Hindu spirituality find in Western society, to understand the extent of mutual borrowing that is going on.

An interesting case is the one of Thoreau in America being influenced by the Bhagavadgita and Upanishads, Gandhi in India being influenced by Thoreau, and Martin Luther King instead of seeking direct tuition from Thoreau coming all the way to India to study Gandhi, and finally many Indians going to America to examine King's experiences... the original Indian thought on non-violence crossing the ocean about four times.

Civilizations that are totally different and even hostile to each other can, step by step, mutually penetrate and amalgamate, compounding their tissues into a new fabric. Toynbee argues that the Hellenic and Syriac civilizations made a new synthesis (Greek philosophy from the former and Christian religion from the latter) to give birth to the present Western civilization, making it impossible for anyone to analyze and identify the component parts. The Indian civilization combined differently with local cultures in Cambodia and Bali (Indonesia); and still more differently at Gandhara integrating with the Hellenic culture. The original Indian inspiration of Buddha worked out several different syntheses in different countries of Asia whose cultures differed greatly from India's. Those countries were never 'Indianized'. They were affirmed in their own original identities, while they drew benefit from an alien civilization. Thus, Kipling's view that 'the East is East and the West is West, the Twain shall never meet' does not stand the test of history. Placing different civilizations in permanent contrast is wrong, they are complementary. Only open-minded searchers like Ricci can identify the areas of agreement.

However, no synthesis that has been arrived at becomes definitive and final. Once the era of glory has passed for

a civilization, tensions arise due to component parts challenging each other in the form of ideological, religious or political differences due to internal re-thinking values, or external threats from a more youthful and dynamic civilization.

## 13. We Need to Initiate a Dialogue of Civilizations

"You shall speak to men good words" (Quran 2,83).

The intelligent contribution in contexts of conflict is not one of withdrawal from the scene out of 'respect for the other', but extending one's hand in friendship. Together with it comes an offer to share the best of one's treasured beliefs and convictions for mutual enrichment. It would be a crime to trivialize one's own or others' civilizations or stereotype each other for their weaknesses, as is often done.

When the best is brought to the common encounter, the central and significant values of different civilizations meet each other, and the fertilization offers to humanity something new. It is true, every civilization today is at a stage of crisis and transformation. It is for the Intellectual to change every perceived threat into a 'stimulating challenge' and every transformation into an 'ennobling transfiguration'.

In the face of these challenges, we must not act as though we have no resources to count on. Our civilizational heritages provide enormously valuable assets we can build on, making use also of the dynamic new ideas of our times. We are not helpless. We make ourselves helpless only by isolating ourselves from each other or wasting energies in constant rivalry. As Thomas Berry said, "We live immersed in a sea of energy". This energy primarily belongs to the community, and a big portion destined for each person is to

be found in the other. It has to be discovered and tapped, not by violent snatching, but by drawing it forth gently from each other: sharing thoughts, evoking emotional support, eliciting collaboration.

## 14. Intellectuals Must Play a Bridge-Building Role to Bring about a Communion of Civilizations

One ignorant of the land asks of one who knows it; he travels forward instructed by the knowing guide. This, indeed, is the blessing of instruction; one finds the path that leads straight onward (Rig Veda 10.32.7).

We are legitimately proud of our rootedness in our own culture and civilization (each one of his/her own). But we are also happy to reach out to other heritages which too have a proud history deserving our respect. We know that we are mutually dependent. Our destinies are interlinked. Historians tell us that civilizations that grew side by side were always locked in relationships that were mutually acknowledging and mutually sustaining, even amidst tensions. It is hard for any civilization to maintain high standards in isolation (Fernandez-Armesto 19).

Nor can we limit ourselves to the wisdom of the past; we must remain open to the new insights of our own times. It was Confucius who said, "If by keeping the old warm one can provide understanding of the new, one is fit to be a teacher" (Analects 2.11). May be the uncertainties of the present era is inviting us to play a bridge-building role between the old and the new.

Time has come for the West to meet the East, the North the South. The old and the new must dialogue. Commerce must be attentive to ethical values, and scientific and

technological research must draw inspiration from spiritual search. The painful memories of the past need to be healed and restored, and a future of harmony constructed together. Such 'impossible' dreams can be realized, not through a 'clash of civilizations' in which the strongest will emerge on top to solve problems, but through a dialogue that will lead to a communion of civilizations. That is the only way all cultures and civilizations will be able to make a rightful contribution to human destiny. This great undertaking has to be initiated by true Scholars, real Intellectuals and Persons of faith.

## 15. Life is not a Desperate Struggle but a Cooperative Venture

All people are a single nation (Koran II).

Nature gives us models of several patterns of inter-relationships and integrated systems: atoms, molecules, organs, body; individuals, families, tribes, societies, and nations. As the material world is made up of an inseparable network of linkages, and as the human body and nature itself are self-regulating systems, in the same way we belong to each other in an intimate fashion within the human family. Therefore, what we need to make of life is not a competitive struggle, but a cooperative venture, each person and community playing a complementary role with the other, like musicians in a concert.

And when things do turn out that way, something new emerges because we are acting according to the norms of the natural order. We notice the creative forces in nature continuously causing the emergence of something new in the universe: a scientific discovery, a unique poetic intuition, a new vision of social processes, a new understanding of

the cosmic reality. We see that whatever happens in society speaks of connectedness, relationship, interdependence... giving expression to a common, shared spiritual experience.

When we develop a holistic outlook, we see clearly how one reality completes another, and how one vision of life enhances another: economy with ecology, physics with psychology, scientific research with spiritual search, technology with mysticism, social struggle with self-realization. Thus we see that one gleam of truth is not complete without the other.

## 16. Self-Cultivation with Absolute Determination

O Lord, grant me such qualities of head and heart as would endear me to the enlightened and learned among us, to the ruling class and to all that have eyes to see (Atharva Veda 19,62).

Confucius insisted on self-cultivation to respond to the challenges of his times. The gentleman practices moral cultivation, develops a moral personality, acquires tranquillity. Self-cultivation makes one strong, generous, humble, caring, conciliatory, gracious...and therefore successful. People's differences among themselves are often due to disparities in education (Analects 16.9). "The Master said, without goodness a man cannot for long endure adversity, cannot for long enjoy prosperity" (Analects IV,2). A prepared mind meets with opportunity, which some describe as mere 'good luck'. What is considered mere chance, good luck, a happy coincidence, an unexpected turn of events, is part of the cosmic plan, universal mind, mandate of Heaven.

In times of persistent troubles, there emerge spontaneously

persons with a strong sense of purpose in their lives. Such a person was Mattero Ricci who equipped himself for the challenges that were ahead for him. He studied the great values and traditions prevalent in Chinese society. The first thing, then, one needs to do is to equip oneself adequately for the work, gather knowledge. Confucius said, "At fifteen I set my heart on learning" (Analects 2.4). He continued, "I silently accumulate knowledge; I study and do not get bored; I teach others and do not grow weary—for these things come naturally to me" (Analects 7.2).

Next, they commit themselves to the cause they have chosen with unflagging zeal and absolute fearlessness. The Buddha said, "I neither stood still, nor sat nor lay down until, pacing to and fro, I had mastered that fear and terror". They do not give up because of difficulties, even repeated failures. "He's the one who knows it's no good but goes on trying" (Analects 14,41) said Confucius. A similar teaching we find in the Bhagavad Gita which insists on perseverance in duty, work, action...detachment from fruits, from results, from remunerations and rewards. A lack of appreciation from others does not disconcert persons who are mentally set. For them, their commitment is everything. The pleading of Archimedes while he was being attacked by invading soldiers was not to spare his life, but not ruin his diagrams! (Hobsbawm 557).

## 17. Placing the Cultural Heritages of the World in Relationship

"For this purpose I was born,...to go and spread righteousness everywhere" (Guru Govind Singh).

The most important thing for intellectuals with a sense of purpose in Asia today is to be acquainted with the

foundational literature of various Asian traditions. The concepts, images and symbols contained in them remain deeply imbedded in the collective unconscious of respective communities. They refer to the origins of the human race, its purpose and destiny.

With the passage of time, even the most cherished words of wisdom can grow stale, boring and uninspiring, and irrelevant to the current situation. History can associate them with un-genuineness and superficiality. Therefore, their inner potentiality need be re-awakened. Old teachings need to be re-interpreted and made relevant and capable of addressing the problems of our times: violence, corruption, nuclear arms, abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering, exploitation of minorities, economic imbalances, destruction of nature. "He who by reanimating the Old can gain knowledge of the New is fit to be a teacher...", said Confucius.

Intellectuals with a sense of direction help humanity to regain its balance by relating the present to the past, looking to the future, and by putting the diverse cultural heritages of the world in relationship. "The Master said....But if even a simple peasant comes in all sincerity and asks me a question, I am ready to thrash the matter out, with all its pros and cons, to the very end" (Analects IX, 7).

## 18. We Need Persons of Deeper Insights and Communities of Vision

"Oh men, direct your energies to promote the good of all mankind. Let your relations with all be characterized by love, peace and harmony. Let your hearts beat in unison with human hearts" (Rig Veda 8,49,4).

When we are satisfied with quick-fix solutions as a regular habit, permanent solutions keep evading us. A dosage of drugs will not serve as a permanent solution to psychological problems. A few personality-development tips will not take away guilt feelings for wrong done from human hearts. A double share of consumer goods will not satisfy the spiritual hunger of a society. Financial compensations will not make up for the injury inflicted on the culture and identity of a dying community (tribe, ethnic group). In the same way, a list of punishments will not be an adequate response to the needs of a society that is agonizing with pain for the absence of ethical and spiritual guidance.

We need today persons of deeper insight and 'communities of vision', who are able to anticipate the future and make it come about through committed action. Asians should not forget that "For nearly all of world history the richest and most developed societies have been in Asia" (Ponting 9). Asia has shown the way on many occasions, it can still do in the future if it will remain true to its identity and to its vocation.

If at some period of history Asia has lost its initiative we can seek to find out why. It can generally be said that the decline of a culture (civilization) takes place when its ideas, customs and social organization become lifeless and its internal harmony is lost; things stagnate, society is lost in superficial issues, in conflict with itself and with neighbours, and uncertainty and confusion prevail. It is at this juncture that creative minorities appear proposing new solutions to the new problems. Silabhadra the 7th century professor in Nalanda University told Hiuen Tsang, a disciple from China, "You have become a disciple in order to benefit

the world".

It is good to remind ourselves that the inspiring ideas that have roots in our ancient civilizations will prove ultimately more precious than the volume of accumulated capital or an abundance of natural resources that we boast of. Communities whose innovative ideas turn out to be relevant and inspiring, gradually begin to make an impact on others. They transform the world. Arms assail and crush, economies entice and enslave, ideas enlighten, unite and motivate. We do not deny the fact that every civilization holds some negative elements within them as well. However, given the needed good will, the worst can be averted and the best ensured.

## 19. Gathering Round Great Values and High Ideals

"Let my life be a life of dedication, let my vital breath, eyes, intellect and spirit be dedicated to service.; let my love and my understanding, my prosperity and my knowledge be dedicated to service. Let the service be made in a spirit of utter sacrifice." (Upanishads).

The unity based on the spiritual bonds provided by a 'communion of civilizations' will have the strength to bring together our diverse cultural and religious groups, economic and political interests, ideological and philosophical visions. When we begin to re-capture the spirit of our ancient civilizations, express it in today's vocabulary, and live them out in dynamic ways and relevant styles, we shall begin to regain our lost energies. When they are brought to actual life situations, they will manifest their strength and validity once again.

With growing instances of violence, corruption, erosion

of culture, damage to environment, and poor governance, there is no denying the fact that our inherited ideas and values are in danger. And the threat comes from those trends in our society that weaken our moral fibre, social bonds, sense of common belonging, commitment to shared values and ideals, and those that promote sectarian thinking. Many of communities that were rural, agricultural, living generally in isolated villages, eking out an existence from seasonal labour, have moved into investment economy and global economy in a matter of a few decades. Along with these changes, new political forces (even radical ones) have arisen at national levels in a manner that could not easily have been foreseen before.

The New Economy is pulling people from their homes, families, religious beliefs, cultural roots, community identities, familiar terrain, and throwing them into the high seas of uncertainties. They have little sense of security or belonging, and experience the weakening of family and community support; no sure concept of the future, no consistent vision or convictions. They miss the cultural continuity that the presence of parents and grandparents, uncles and cousins used to give, the sanctions that the elders of the community used to impose, the certainties that a common heritage used to hand down, and the solidarity that the village community used to offer in moments of crisis. The entire value-system itself is under threat.

We need to stand aside and develop a detached view of things, withdraw for a while and reflect, move apart and meditate. We know that another world is possible. Victor Hugo once said, "There is one thing stronger than all the armies of the world: and that is an idea whose time has come". May be such a time has come for bringing

human civilizations into a communion. However, this possibility can be made a reality only if we build up our inner sturdiness. Mahatma Gandhi said, "Such power as I possess for working in the political field has derived from my experiments in the spiritual field." No wonder he conveyed his message as much through religious silence, as by political interventions. In these respects Ricci had gone far ahead.

## 19. The Ricci Style

The journey of thousand miles begins with a single step (Tao Te Ching 64).

I refer to Toynbee again, "In order to save Mankind we have to learn to live together in concord in spite of traditional differences of religion, civilization, nationality, class, and race. In order to live together in concord successfully, we have to know each other, and knowing each other includes knowing each other's past... Historical forces can be more explosive than atom bombs...We must try to recognize and, as far as possible, to understand, the different cultural configurations in which our common human nature has expressed itself in the different religions, civilizations, and nationalities into which human culture has come to be articulated in the course of its history." (Toynbee 1995:47).

Our message is something similar. All we add is, "Be gentle as doves" (Matthew 10:16); that is the 'Asian way' of communicating a message. For we know and appreciate the wisdom contained in such teachings as this: "Those who lead others in harmony with the Tao (Way) do not use force to subdue others, or attempt to dominate the world through force of arms. For every force there is a counterforce. Violence, even when well intentioned, always rebounds

upon oneself" (Tao Te Ching 30). A non-adversarial approach to each other listening to other voices than our own...., readiness to accept the wisdom of the wider community...that is closer to the Asian way. Dhammapada says, "Do not speak harshly to anybody; those who are spoken to will answer thee in the same way. Angry speech is painful, blows for blows will touch thee" (X,133).

The Physicist David Peat speaks of 'gentle action' in this manner, "Gentle action is global... It addresses itself not just to practical issues, as the price of oil or the efficiency of a given factory, but also to values, ethics, and the quality of life.... Like the ripples around the point, it moves inward to converge on a particular issue. Gentle action works not through force and raw energy but by modifying the very processes that generate and sustain an undesired or harmful effect... Gentle action... gives a new dimension to the whole idea of social action" (Hathaway 387).

There is a Ricci style of doing this: Look beyond. Ninian Smart in his "Atlas of the World's religions" says, "Paradoxically, their (religious believers') other-worldly gaze brought this-worldly success" (Smart 1999:17). Ricci invited his dialogue partners to look beyond immediate gift-giving and study of Euclid to the study of values of his civilization, and spiritual energies from which they were derived, and relating them to the Chinese worldviews and values. Thus, intelligently relating the immediate and the practical with the aesthetical, ethical and the spiritual of two Great Civilizations he explored the more complete identity of the human being opening doors to immense possibilities. The Ricci way of sharing the assets of Great Civilizations and even of Little Cultures is the only way forward for the human family today.

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## Pope Francis on Dialogue

Speaking to the participants of the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Pope Francis underlined the importance of friendship and respect between men and women of different religious traditions. He noted that due to increasing movement of peoples because of phenomena such as migration, Christians are being challenged to be more open to different cultures, religions and traditions.

Quoting from his recently published Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii gaudium, the Pope said "an attitude of openness in truth and love must prevail in dialogue with believers of non-Christian religions, despite the various obstacles and difficulties, particularly fundamentalism on both sides "Recognizing the fact that there are situations in the world where coexistence is difficult due to fear, the Holy Father underlined that the one way to overcome this fear, was to foster dialogue.

Dialogue, he went on to say, does not mean giving up your identity as a Christian. On the contrary, the Pope stressed "true openness means remaining firm in ones deepest convictions, and therefore being open to understanding others.

Constructive dialogue between people of different religious traditions, Pope Francis continued, also serves to overcome another fear, which, unfortunately we find on the increase in a more heavily secularized society. It is, he said, the fear of different religious traditions and as such the religious dimension. In his concluding comments, the Holy Father said the future for interreligious dialogue lies in the coexistence of respectful diversity, and the fundamental right to religious freedom, in all its dimensions [http://wccm.org/content/pope-francis-interreligious-dialogue-foster-respect-and-friendship]

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# Identity, Memory and Healing: In Search of Dialogical Wisdom

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Abstract: After going through the philosophical basis of dialogue, leading to related truths and experiential wisdom, the author reaffirms that dialogue implies sincere and genuine communication among persons, among groups, among cultures and among peoples. It requires silence as well as words. We need silence to come to our perception of our truth and to welcome that of others with honesty and openness. This makes us all companions together searching for truth and leading to wisdom. This will make us both intelligent and wise

Keywords: Dialogue, wisdom, companions, way of life, Socrates, Kant, Heidegger, Panikkar.

Recently I read a message passed on through the internet where the difference between an intelligent person and a wise one is illustrated well.

1. Intelligence leads to arguments. Wisdom leads to settlements.

2. Intelligence is power of will. Wisdom is power OVER will.

3. Intelligence is heat, it burns. Wisdom is warmth, it comforts.

4. Intelligence is pursuit of knowledge, it tires the seeker. Wisdom is pursuit of truth, it inspires the seeker.

5. Intelligence is holding on. Wisdom is letting go:

6. Intelligence leads you. Wisdom guides you.

7. An intelligent person thinks he knows everything. A wise person knows that there is still something to learn.

8. An intelligent person always tries to prove his point. A wise person knows there really is no point.

9. An intelligent person freely gives unsolicited advice. A wise person keeps his counsel until all options are considered.

10. An intelligent person understands what is being said. A wise person understands what is left unsaid.

11. An intelligent person speaks when he has to say something. A wise person speaks when he has something to say.

12. An intelligent person sees everything as relative. A wise person sees everything as related.

13. An intelligent person tries to control the mass flow. A wise person navigates the mass flow.

14. An intelligent person preaches. A wise person reaches.

Intelligence is good but wisdom achieves better results.

I believe that the above description of a wise person is applicable to Prof Noel Sheth SJ, with some qualifications and nuances. He was on in search of wisdom. He tried to encounter different traditions and entered into dialogue with them in search of wisdom. He himself personified dialogue among religions, cultures, different groups and between science and religion. He was also a professor of philosophy. So in this essay, meant to remember and honour him, I want to focus on the philosophical basis for dialogue. We follow the basic insights of five philosophers on dialogue which enables individuals and communities to reconcile among themselves. In this way, we can collectively search for truth and experience wisdom.

## 1. Socrates: Commitment to Conversation

In Plato's "Apology," wise man Socrates exemplifies a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, who is dedicated to the search for deeper understanding. Possessing understanding takes considerable humility as many are willing to contradict the wisdom of a person who presumes to possess it. Only through a process of much discussion or deliberation will they come to find out with which wisdom resides. Socrates understands the definitive quality of meaningful dialogue to be this kind of examination. We see upon a closer reading of Socrates' apology that this examination is realized through extensive dialogue with others. In fact, in order to test the validity of what the Oracle says about him, Plato says of Socrates: "I thought of a way to try to find out, something like this: I approached one of those who had the reputation of being wise, for there, I thought, if anywhere, I should test the revelation and prove that the oracle was wrong: "Here is one wiser than I, but you said I was wiser" (Plato 1984: 507).

Socrates does not merely accept the words of the Oracle. Rather, he tests this revelation through dialogue with others that may prove to be wiser than he. What Socrates finds astonishes even him. Through questioning a politician, a poet, and an artisan, Socrates finds that he is truly wiser than his fellow man by virtue of one trait: Socrates, unlike the others, understands that he does not know all there is to know.

In the end, Socrates is put on trial for the very characteristic that sets him above the rest of his citizens – the desire to gain wisdom even if it means questioning his own assumptions or pride. Meletos, one of those who sought Socrates' death, accuses Socrates of aspiring to corrupt the youth of Athens.

In his integrity, Socrates denounces this through the very same process of dialogue. He questions the reasoning behind Meletos' accusation. Socrates points out that most men, if not all, aim to influence their associates toward the good precisely because those same associates whom one influences will be the persons with whom one shares his life. He asks Meletos, "Have I indeed come to such a depth of ignorance that I do not know even this—that if I make one of my associates bad I shall risk getting some evil from him—to such a depth as to do so great an evil intentionally, as you say" (Plato 1984: 512)? In these words, Socrates supports the idea that, if we do evil to those around us, it is at minimum unintentional. Conversely, we seek to do good by those around us and, for Socrates, doing good by those around him is engaging in meaningful dialogue or argumentation that sharpens and brings wisdom. A final instance in which Socrates defends his dialogic aim and foundation is seen when he is asked to lead a quiet life and not bother their political process with his questioning. He responds with the following:

> For if I say that this is to disobey the god, and therefore I cannot keep quiet, you will not believe me but think I am a humbug. If again I say it is the greatest good for a man every day to discuss virtue and the other things, about which you hear me talking and examining myself and everybody else, and that life without enquiry is not worth living for a man, you will believe me still less if I say that (Plato 1984: 526).

Throughout his life and death, Socrates embodied his undying commitment to the process of examining his life through conversation with others. As a result, he braved the

grave consequences of the death penalty in order to be an example to a society which did not value the same. Though he was executed, Socrates' manner of living persisted, guiding others in a method of self-examination through inviting intellectual debate and dialogue.

## 2. Immanuel Kant: Dialogue for Enlightenment

After Socrates, we take up the greatest philosopher of the modern times: Kant. Impassioned by the possibility that change in the way human-being was conceptualized would "bring about a failing off of personal despotism and of avaricious or tyrannical oppression," Kant (1798) was tried his best to describe the conditions by which he thought change might become a reality in his "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment" (Kant 1798: 2)? This transformation in the way persons relate to each other would not be through revolution because revolution was sure to replace one tyrant with yet another and another. Instead, Kant postulated that "for this enlightenment, however, nothing is required but freedom, and indeed the least harmful of anything that could even be called freedom: namely, freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters" (Kant 1798: 2). In order for humans to be enlightened, they need not be merely told what is right and what is wrong: their actions directed solely by an authority figure. Instead, persons need to have the opportunity to partake in the education, or sharpening, of their intellect. This sharpening would make a more sophisticated public dialogue about morality possible without the necessity of control. Wisdom would direct change in a society, not the will of a select, powerful few. In postulating this kind of free discourse, Kant (1798) anticipates feelings of trepidation on the part of those in power, disallowing them from understanding

the gravity and benefit of the change that enlightenment would bring. In the following passage, Kant addresses these potential fears:

> But I hear from all sides the cry: do not argue! The officer says: Do not argue but drill! The tax official: Do not argue but pay! The clergyman: Do not argue but believe! (Only one ruler in the world says: Argue as much as you will and about whatever you will, but obey!) Everywhere there are restrictions on freedom. But what sort of restriction hinders enlightenment, and what sort does not hinder but instead promotes it? I reply: The public use of one's reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among human beings (Kant 1798: 2).

This revolutionary claim says that the enlightenment and, in turn, the advancement or progress of society would only be realized if citizens were able to freely disseminate their ideas about any number of life's issues whether they be political, religious, etc. Dialogue and argumentation are, here, set apart as indispensable to what it means to be human. For Kant, it is not the case that enlightenment should bring an end to authority and duty. Instead, persons are given a particular forum – public sphere – in which to voice their individual understanding, rightly called the public use of one's reason. In the private use of one's reason, persons are called to uphold the duty of their position. Systemically, giving persons the freedom to exchange ideas about an array of subjects, including morality, cultivates an environment in which human dignity is upheld. As a result, humans "who are now more than machines" rise above their "selfincurred minority" and are able to construct a more complex, well-

rounded understanding of ourselves through collective encounter and dialogue (Kant 1798: 6).

### 3. Martin Heidegger: Dialogue Based on Disclosure of Being

Following Kant, we take up another great German philosopher, Martin Heidegger. Desiring to give a phenomenological account of being (i.e. how being shows itself in its everyday dealings with and in the world), Heidegger (1966) explicates the nature of thinking and the conditions for the possibility of living together in the world. Accordingly, Heidegger spoke, and, we can say, still speaks to a public that is far too thoughtless. Heidegger conceptualizes the issue in the following way: "Thoughtlessness is an uncanny visitor who comes and goes everywhere in today's world. For nowadays we take in everything in the quickest and cheapest way, only to forget it just as quickly, instantly" (Heidegger 1966: 45). Although persons may be engaged in many activities, all of which include the presence and participation of others, it is important to understand the quality or essence of such participation in more detail. In this regard, Heidegger points out that "man today is in a flight from thinking...but part of this flight is that man will neither see nor admit it" (Heidegger 1966: 45). The reason that man neither sees nor admits his flight from thinking is because his understanding of thinking has evolved altogether; failing to recognize that thinking is inextricably connected to, even rooted in, communicating and always already being understandingly or meaningfully in the world.

Accordingly, Heidegger situates thinking as the "place" where the world can show itself as meaningful through

communication (i.e. humans interacting with other humans and entities in the world). In order to garner a deeper understanding of how humans relate in and through communication, Heidegger affirms that "we speak because speaking is natural to us... language belongs to the closest neighborhood of man's being" (Heidegger 1971: 187). Dialogue is a central part of our humanity because we are always-already interpreting our experience, using language and reason to do so. This is not to say that we do not have automatic, emotional, or intuitive responses to sensuous experience. However, we make such experience meaningful by communicating our understanding of our experience through language. In this concept of being, Dasein (i.e. human-being) is differentiated from entities that are present-at-hand. Entities that are present-at-hand are beings for which their being is not an issue (e.g. a car, a hammer, a computer). He explains this distinction by arguing:

> That Being which is an issue for this entity in its very Being, is in each case mine. Thus Dasein is never to be taken ontologically as an instance or special case of some genus of entities as things that are present-at-hand. To entities such as these, their Being is 'a matter of indifference', or more 19 precisely, they 'are' such that their Being can be neither a matter of indifference to them, nor the opposite (Heidegger 1962: 68).

In other words, human-being cannot be conceptualized as the adding together of entities in the world. We are not merely defined by the number of bones in our bodies, the kinds of cells in our blood, or even the unique pattern of our particular DNA strand. What makes Dasein, Dasein is that it is the "site" in, or towards, which the world discloses itself. This means that the activities about which Dasein

is concerned are communicative activities that interpret, create, or respond to the world. Entities present-at-hand in the world do not have this concern and they show this by way of an absence of understanding or an indifference of sorts.

Entities in the world, present-at-hand, always-already show themselves as ready-to-hand. To put it differently, the disclosure of entities' meaningfulness to Dasein is ineluctably defined in terms of their "toward which" or "for that which" character: entities are interpreted as being for our human endeavors that are always-already "underway." Consequently, Dasein is always-already understandingly responding to entities in the world by way of responding to or interpreting their "involvement" in the world. For example, the computer on which one writes one's thesis is not just an aluminum and plastic piece of technology. It is the tool by which one continues in his or her studies and continue going on his or her path. The computer is ready-to-hand, meaningful, in a totality of significance (i.e. the conditions for the possibility of its showing itself in a particular manner). When Heidegger explicates this concept of "totality of significance" he writes: "Dasein, in its familiarity with significance, is the ontical condition for the possibility of discovering entities which are encountered in a world with involvement (readiness-to-hand) as their kind of Being, and which can thus make themselves known as they are in themselves" (Heidegger 1962: 120).

In other words, Dasein needs to be understood as distinct from entities in the world because it is to Dasein that the things in the world show themselves; Dasein makes the showing possible. This showing, disclosure or revelation is an import foundation from which to start because dialogue

can be conceptualized as participation in the activities of Dasein (i.e. responding to the world as disclosed through language). With this in mind, dialogue can be seen as something "ready-to-hand" though, not quite. Entities are ready-to-hand and dialogue is not an entity as such. Therefore, dialogue can be "caught up" in the totality of a project and when one is circumspect one can see the significance of dialogue's function in a sense. However, this can only be analogous to Heidegger's conception of the ready-to-hand because language is discovered, "used", in the way a pen (object-present-at-hand) could never be.

At the same time, persons' moral understandings can "break down" almost as things that are ready-to-hand can. In this way, Heidegger's discussion of the (un)readiness-to-hand becomes especially helpful in starting to theorize the nature of moral turning points. He describes that "when an assignment has been disturbed—when something is unusable for some purpose— then the assignment becomes explicit" (Heidegger 1962: 105 ). If moral frameworks are our habitual responses, or understandings, of the world and these systems fail to continue giving an adequate picture of what our experiences "uncover," then we can be motivated to comport ourselves toward entities or toward other humans differently. Heidegger's intellectual work on the nature of human-being (Dasein) informs the current project by way of the importance of interpretation and the communication of interpretation through dialogue as necessary conditions for attaining wisdom.

## 4. Ricoeur: Dialogue Leading to Collective Transformation

After Heidegger, we can take up Paul Ricoeur's

path to dialogue leading to healing among persons and communities. We can better understand briefly Ricoeur's contribution to dialogue in terms of creating a community (through identity) and healing of collective memories of the communities in conflict, leading to forgiveness and transformation.

### *4.1 Narrative Identity*

We know that in the everyday the sense of a self, and of a self identity is tied to mundane practices in which people locate themselves by reference to a routine of action or performances, and expectations about themselves and others that remain relatively stable in particular social settings. The term "iterability" is often used to point to what is significant about subjectivity in relation to acts, the re-iteration of a particular subjectivity in instances of action that position a self by reference to a previous pattern of behaviour recognized by significant others. For instance, the frequent reliance on stereotypes of the 'other' in the accounts of behavioural expectations as described by participants in the encounters suggests that such pre-established vocabularies and patterns exist in a discursive form, interiorised in the form of imaginaries, that are enacted and embodied in face to face situations. The stability of social relations is premised on such patterns of repetition and mutual recognition so that a self exists as a knot in a network of intersubjective action and understanding; they enact the fact that every particular 'who' or self is coupled to a world, both material and social. It follows that change implies transformation in that whole world. The line of argument I am developing is that because identity is constituted in relation to narratives of belonging and of the collective – nation, ethnicity, religious community, tribe – that inscribe

the deep structural aspects of the socio-material lifeworld, our understanding of change must interrogate the process of constitution. Here, it is important to recognise the fact that social interactions are ever open to the indeterminate. The possibility of change and further growth is premised on this openness (Venn 2018).

Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity points to the idea of a self as a storied self, as an entity made up of stories told, indeed, entangled in the stories that a person tells or that are told about her. Yet, this very mundane aspect of human beings is also a profoundly enigmatic element. This is because, in Ricoeur, the notion of narrative identity is grounded in an ontology deriving from Heidegger's (1962) emphasis on temporality as the defining characteristic of human beings. The primacy of time in relation to being has to do with the understanding of being as the entity that questions itself as to its way of being.

That questioning takes the form of a search for a sense of self measured or judged in terms of ways of being inscribed in models and scripts for the emplotment of life that exist in the form of a culture's archive of existence. One could say that a self comes to be folded in a kind of temporal envelope that circumscribes a memory referring to one's past action as well as to the reflexive account of collective existence. Time, then, determines the horizon for any understanding of being; as soon as we think of ourselves as conscious beings, we think time, and we cannot think time without bringing up the question of consciousness, specifically, the consciousness that we exist in time, as beings in time, dispersed between a remembered past, an evanescent present and the anticipation of a future. For each subject, the having-been, the making-present and the

coming-towards constitute the three moments, indeed, the co-articulated moments, of the temporality of one's being-in-the-world. They mark the space in which we question ourselves as to our way of being. In thinking about the problem of subjectivity and of the possibility of transforming identities, we need to recognise that the spacing and trace of time, in the form of memory and narrative, allows us access both to the intersubjective dimension of existence and to the historical framing of culture (Venn 2018).

One basic aporia of time is its inscrutability. This may well be because we are encompassed by time, as I have just indicated, so that it is impossible to stand outside it. The avenue that Ricoeur follows is to explore the possibility that narrative is the form in which we can overcome the unrepresentability of time (when we think of it in the singular), and the device by which we express the lived, or phenomenal, aspect of the temporality of being. The underlying idea is that the act of telling a story "can transmute natural time into a specifically human time" (1984: 17). In Ricoeur's approach, the term narrative identity seems to join up two problematics of subjectivity: concerning identity, and concerning the relation of history to fiction in the process of the figuration of temporality. The two problematics are correlated by way of the idea that time, and the way it is lived, provides the common ground for their co-articulation (Venn 2018).

Furthermore, the sense of narrative identity that Ricoeur develops stresses the view that every identity is "mingled with that of others in such a way as to engender second order stories which are themselves intersections between numerous stories... We are literally 'entangled in stories'" (Ricoeur,1996: 6). These stories are structured according to

rules of emplotment of experience that exist in a culture, including models of the good life – e.g. how we should live, what rules must guide us, and so on.

Narrative identity appears in his discourse of being as the concept that enables us to think of the mediation between the phenomenological and the cosmological apprehension of time, that is to say, the mediation between time as lived, inscribed in activities in the world, and "inscrypted" (that is, at once inscribed and encrypted) in life narratives, and time in the singular, the intuition of a dimension that cannot be derived from the experiential but encompasses and transcends it. As Ricoeur (1992) has put it, narrative is the way of joining up the 'time of the soul' with the time of the world. In a sense the 'self' as a meaningful and meaning-making entity appears at the point of intersection of two kinds of reflection on our beingness or existence. On the one hand, we find the stories and memories that express the time of being-in-the-world and of being-with, the duration of events and experiences in the everyday that is, "the scansion of the temporal flow in each life that we reckon and keep and memorialise because they involve our care" (in the Heideggerian sense).

In fact, every culture inscribes collective and shared memories of the group that have effects for how the biographical and the historical dimensions of being-in-the world and being-with are lived in the everyday. A self happens at the point of intersection of these two kinds of narratives, weaving the personal into the collective. For instance, for the students at the schools in the study, 'real time' involves memories of the daily fighting going on all round them, and in which they participate or get caught up, as in the case of the Jewish girl who cannot talk about the

Arabs without recalling the stone-throwing incident that she suffered whilst travelling in a car (Venn 2018). This kind of incident calls up a history of conflict between the two communities, and relays another history of the oppression of the Jews, with effects for the analysis of change that I will develop later on. Thus, the phenomenal apprehension of time already inscribes a dimension that opens towards an unrepresentable trace, the absent presence of memorialised and immemorial real and imagined events.

The mediation between the phenomenal and cosmological modalities in our experience of time brings into play the effects of another kind of discourse, that which addresses the questions which surface about time in the singular. This is about finitude and the experience of loss and thrownness, or, about existential suffering. They are the questions that animate the discourses about what gives meaning to life at the general, cosmological level. Ricoeur would relate this to the apprehension of a sublime or ungrounded dimension to human existence, an experience, besides, that links up with the ecstasy and epiphany of being. Typically, this dimension of the temporality of being is expressed in religious discourse (and, in a different register, in the sublime in art), invoking a transcendent being – God or gods – and an imaginary space – the afterlife, the promised land, paradise – that allocates their place to the mundane, grounded activities of daily living.

So, at one level, temporality encompasses the historical and cultural space of the emergence of the who of action and meaning, and at another level, it opens onto a critical hermeneutics and to a reflection which points to the apprehension that a self "does not belong to the category of events and facts" (Ricoeur1991: 193). So Ricoeur argues

that grand narratives, whether expressed in the secular language of the Enlightenment and the project of modernity, or in a religious, or onto-theological discourse, function to relay the two levels.

In the case of doctrinal systems of beliefs or fundamentalist sects, the rules and principles, as interpreted by the believers, determine absolutely what is rightful conduct and draw very strict lines of demarcation between what is and is not acceptable. The line separating purity from danger is both unambiguous and rigidly established, correlated and repeated in terms of the cleavage between identity (conceptualised in terms of unicity) and the other (conceptualised as absolutely other, or reducible to the same). One can see this at work in the attitude and action of fundamentalist sects on both sides of the conflict in Israel/ Palestine. In such circumstances, the problem is how to envisage the possibility of a translation between the two experiences, that is, the possibility of meaningful dialogue.

### *4.2 Healing of Memories and Forgiving.*

Clearly there is a primary political issue to be resolved, to do with establishing the conditions for any dialogue at all. That is but a first step, since in the case we are examining, and similar ones elsewhere, the return to violent conflict is a constant danger until some notion of community has been (re)constructed. Community, after all, depends on sharing stories of belonging and narratives of becoming.

So, we can understand some of the conditions for the emergence of new communities of solidarity, beyond the political level. In addressing a similar problem regarding the ethical issues involved in the integration of Europe, Ricoeur proposes three models for analyzing the relation of

identity and alterity. The first is that of translation premised on 'the principle of universal translatibility' (Ricoeur, 1996 :4) itself conditioned by a 'translation ethos' grounded in the gesture of 'linguistic hospitality'; the latter is inscribed in the principle of "living with the other in order to take that other to one's home as a guest" (Ricoeur, 1996: 5). The spirit of translation expressed in this idea of hospitality is to be extended to the relationship between cultures.

The second model that Ricoeur discusses is that of the exchange of memories or 'narrative hospitality'. It connects with the first model in that the latter recognizes a "difference of memory ... at the level of the customs, rules, norms, beliefs and convictions which constitute the identity of a culture" (Ricoeur, 1996: 5-6). These features of memory are preserved and communicated in narratives of identity and of the community. For this reason, Ricoeur argues that the exchange of memory calls for each party to take responsibility for the story of the other. Clearly, the implication is that this exchange requires a labour, involving the recognition of the other as a fellow human being worthy of respect and dignity. An obstacle to this process is the effect on the collective memory of a people of 'founding events' that fix the history of the cultural group into an immutable identity, untranslatable to the 'other' as outsider. Experiences of oppression and persecution, inflicted because of ethnic or religious or racial difference, and the collective memory of the suffering caused, as with the Shoah, amplify the hold of founding narratives on the enframing of the meaning of the nation, or the ethne, or the religious community. Breaking with such a tradition requires an ethical gesture indicated in the notion of hospitality, that is, the welcoming of the other as someone entrusted in one's care. Ricoeur proposes the possibility of

overcoming the hold of founding narratives and collective suffering through his third model, that of forgiveness, grounding the latter in an economy of debt and of the gift. The elaboration of the model passes through the process of the refiguration of identity that involves the revision of the past by reference to the mimetic functions of narrative. Ricoeur specifies two instances of suffering that needs to be worked upon, namely the wounds that one associates with the 'terror of history' (Ricoeur, 1988: 9) and the suffering one inflicts on others. The memory of such suffering needs to be exchanged in the third model, not according to the contractual rules of reciprocal obligations, but according to an economy of the gift that exceeds reciprocity so that one would "proceed from the suffering of others ... before imagining one's own" (Ricoeur, 1996: 9). It is clear that a spiritual economy is invoked in Ricoeur's discussion, involving a non-forgetful forgiveness that does not confuse forgiveness with forgetting, for one must keep the memory of the debt owed to those who have suffered. This means that "... the work of forgiveness must be grafted on to the work of memory in the language of narration" (Ricoeur, 1996: 10). It follows that the effort of telling differently involved in refiguring identities requires the work of anamnesis, thus of mourning (in relation to loss and suffering) and of the revision of the past as narrated in 'traditionality' (for instance, in relation to the recovery of the traces that onto-theology and monotheism erase, and in relation to a justice called for by a suffering caused).

Dialogue would take place in the shelter of such an ethic of responsibility for the other. However, telling differently is in solidarity with a difficult, because non-unitary and indeterminate, justice. The appearance of the notion of justice along the line of analysis suggests that

other principles must be brought into visibility to charge the models with the capacity to guide transformative action.

This is the essence of dialogue, leading also to healing of memories, forgiveness and transformative communitarian action.

## 5. Panikkar: Dialogue as Collective Search for Truth and Wisdom

The last philosopher we study is Raimund Panikkar, who has written prolifically on religious dialogue. For this article, I limit myself to one interview which he gave to Religion Online (Panikkar 2000).

Panikkar is categorical: "Someone who is afraid of losing his or her identity has already lost it." He adds: "In the West identity is established through difference. Catholics find their identity in not being Protestant or Hindu or Buddhist. However, other cultures have other ways of thinking about one's identity. Identity is not based on the degree to which one is different from others."

In the Abrahamic traditions people seek God "in difference," i.e., in superiority or transcendence. Being divine means not being human. For Hindus, however, the divine mystery is in man, in what is so profound and real in him that he cannot be separated from it, and it cannot be discharged into transcendence. This is the domain of immanence, of that spiritual archetype that is called Brahman. In Hinduism, people are not afraid of losing their identity. "They can be afraid of losing what they have, but not of losing what they are."

Then he elaborates on the conditions for religious dia-

logue to succeed. "The days are over when religions could take refuge in splendid isolation. In Europe, for example, religious people can no longer ignore the existence of the millions of foreigners with different cultures who are now living there. They can no longer ignore the fact that, across three quarters of our planet, the dominant religion is not Christianity. Hence there must be dialogue."

"As long as I do not open my heart and do not see that the other is not an other but a part of myself who enlarges and completes me, I will not arrive at dialogue. If I embrace you, then I understand you. All this is a way of saying that real intrareligious dialogue begins in myself, and that it is more an exchange of religious experiences than of doctrines. If one does not start out from this foundation, no religious dialogue is possible; it is just idle chatter."

Engaging in dialogue is connected to searching for truth and wisdom. Jesus did not answer the question, "What is truth?". He silences the answer. "In fact, truth does not allow itself to be conceptualized. It is never purely objective, absolute. To talk about absolute truth is really a contradiction in terms. Truth is always relational, and the Absolute (absolutus, untied) is that which has no relation.' So Panikkar cautions that "pretension of the great religions to possess all truth can only be understood in a limited and contingent context." We also need to be aware of the myths we live with. In order to be aware of our myths, we need our neighbor, and therefore dialogue and love. The truth is first of all a reality that permits us to live, an existential truth that makes us free.

Panikkar adds: "I am convinced that each of us participates in the truth. Inevitably, my truth is the truth that I perceive from my window. And the value of dialogue be-

tween the various religions is precisely to help me perceive that there are other windows, other perspectives." He adds: "Therefore, I need the other in order to know and verify my own perspective of the truth. Truth is a genuine and authentic participation in the dynamism of reality. When Jesus says 'I am the truth,' he is not asking me to absolutize my doctrinal system but to enter upon the way that leads to life." Dialogue is imperative in this process of discovery of truth leading to wisdom.

## 6. Dialogue as Way of Life

In this final section we collect the fruits of our previous discussion on the philosophers, which has helped us to look at the philosophical bases for dialogue.

In his integrity, Socrates denounces the accusations of Meletos through the process of dialogue. Throughout his life and death, Socrates embodied his undying commitment to the process of examining his life through conversation with others. As a result, he braved the grave consequences of the death penalty in order to be an example to a society which did not value the same.

Kant in "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment" makes the revolutionary claim that the enlightenment and, in turn, the advancement or progress of society would only be realized if citizens were able to freely disseminate their ideas about any number of life's issues whether they be political, religious, etc. Dialogue and argumentation are, here, set apart as indispensable to what it means to be human.

Heidegger points out that "man today is in a flight from thinking...but part of this flight is that man will neither see

nor admit it". The reason that man neither sees nor admits his flight from thinking is because his understanding of thinking has evolved altogether. It fails to recognize that thinking is inextricably connected to, even rooted in, communicating and always already being understandingly or meaningfully in the world. So for Heidegger What makes Dasein, Dasein is that it is the "site" in, or towards, which the world discloses itself. This means that the activities about which Dasein is concerned are communicative activities that interpret, create, or respond to the world. Entities present-at-hand in the world do not have this concern and they show this by way of an absence of understanding or an indifference of sorts.

Further, Heidegger points out that Dasein needs to be understood as distinct from entities in the world because it is to Dasein that the things in the world show themselves; Dasein makes the showing possible. This showing, disclosure or revelation is an import foundation from which to start because dialogue can be conceptualized as participation in the activities of Dasein (i.e. responding to the world as disclosed through language).

Ricoeur understands our self as a storied self, as an entity made up of stories told, indeed, entangled in the stories that a person tells or that are told about her. This leads to emplotment. Ricoeur has no hesitation to asserr that we are literally "entangled in stories". These stories are structured according to rules of emplotment of experience that exist in a culture, including models of the good life – e.g. how we should live, what rules must guide us, and so on. This calls for on-going dialogue between the different partners.

Further, human community depends on sharing stories of belonging and narratives of becoming. While we hope

for the emergence of new communities of solidarity, we cannot forget the wounded memories in need of healing and forgiveness at the community level. Here Ricour calls for a spiritual economy involving a non-forgetful forgiveness that does not confuse forgiveness with forgetting, for one must keep the memory of the debt owed to those who have suffered. This means that the work of forgiveness must be grafted on to the work of memory in the language of narration.

Finally we have Panikkar who holds: "The days are over when religions could take refuge in splendid isolation. In Europe, for example, religious people can no longer ignore the existence of the millions of foreigners with different cultures who are now living there. They can no longer ignore the fact that, across three quarters of our planet, the dominant religion is not Christianity. Hence there must be dialogue." For him, genuine dialogue is imperative in this process of discovery of truth leading to wisdom.

## Conclusion

After having gone through the philosophical basis of dialogue, leading to related truths and experiential wisdom, we need to reaffirm that dialogue implies sincere and genuine communication among persons, among groups, among cultures and among peoples. It requires silence as well as words. We need silence to come to our perception of our truth and to welcome that of others with honesty and openness. This makes us all companions together searching for truth and leading to wisdom. This will make us both intelligent and wise.

## Notes

1. For this section I am indebted to the well-researched article by Joshua Danaher where he treats the philosophical basis for dialogue from a moral perspective. I have borrowed heavily from him for Socrates, Kant and Heidegger.
2. For this section on Ricouer, I am grateful to (Venn 2018), who has applied Ricoeur's method especially to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. I have drawn from him Ricoeur's understanding of dialogue in terms of identity, history, memory and healing.
3. An aporia is an irresolvable internal contradiction or logical disjunction in a text, argument, or theory.

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# Science-Religion Dialouge and Personal Fulfilment

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***Abstract:*** *This paper tries to understand the need for befriending of so called the opposites, science and religion. In the beginning an effort is made to show how man had put together scientific spirit and spirituality to live a comfortable and happy life. Next, we see how development in science and technology prompted change s in our well-established values. That gave rise to certain values which estranged the relationship between the two. But it is the west which most feels the estrangement between the two. The East has been generally, inclusive and holistic in its approach, at least, Indian tradition is concerned. The purpose of befriending is explained, from human progress point of view and leading to happiness, which is our ultimate goal.*

Keywords: science, religion, man, befriending, spirituality, culture, happiness, value.

"Science investigates, religion interprets. Science gives man knowledge, which is power; religion gives man wisdom, which is control. Science deals mainly with facts; religion deals mainly with values. The two are not rivals." -Martin Luther King Jr.

Man, indeed is different from all other creatures, that is, his fellow - species on earth, as we observe ourselves

from different aspects... As Sri Aurobindo writes in the *Life Divine*,

"The animal is satisfied with a modicum of necessity; the gods are content with their splendours'. But man cannot rest permanently until he reaches some highest good. He is the greatest of living beings because he is the most discontented, because he feels most the pressure of limitations"[1]. It is also true that, the other species on earth live in the present moment, whereas man alone lives in three modes of time simultaneously, irrespective of the fact that he is conscious of it or not. Why is man what he is? Why is he created with this urge to know? Mankind is further marked by differences within itself, depending on factors such as culture, religion, nationality, wealth, education, temperament, refinement and much more. To link the past with the present and the present with the future is propelled by the basic quest to know and realize oneself. There was a time when this basic quest in man, which may be termed his inner quest, because response to this only could come through an exploration of his consciousness, went hand in hand with his external explorations of his environment, Nature, in search of better living conditions. In the Indian tradition we find the example of rishis or sages, who were an explorer of inner mysteries of life and an architect of life in its social context, capable of leading a seeker along the spiritual path and guiding a king through his pragmatic political crisis. Also he could author an esoteric hymn and be a poet of splendours of life. For these sages life was a field of experience embracing both the physical world and the spirit.

As we look at the West, we observe that, in the beginning the story was not very different from the East. However,

with the advent of philosophy, the knowledge at a certain phase of human development resulted in the formation of two different paths: the path of the spirit and the path of the mundane world. The first meant a total preoccupation with the spirit ignoring the worldly affairs and the second meant a total absorption with the matter, the worldly affairs at the cost of the spirit. It was post-renaissance period during which science developed to such an extent that, it claimed to explain the origin of the universe and man without any recourse to god. Religion, of course, has existed for much longer. However, there is the thesis, according to which science and technology, on the one hand, and religion, on the other, are inversely related. Recent resurgences of religion and religious belief in many parts of the world, however, cast considerable doubt on this thesis.

## 1. Understanding Progress

Advancements in science and technology prompted or brought about tremendous changes in values. The relation between these two great cultural forces has been multi faceted. As mentioned earlier that humanity has many angles and therefore it is mandatory to know all possible aspects of it. There is possibility of science befriending religion, because the two are not exclusive. When both of them are taken as independent of each other, equally powerful, and when they are looked at from extremes, they have always harmed humanity and played havoc with society. Be it consumerism as a by- product of materialism or technology that is misused for selfish gains. Sri Aurobindo foresaw the negative impact of materialism, science and technology on our value system, and rather at the global level, as early as 1916 which he terms as 'mindless consumerism' which is the dominant characteristic of our Age. He observes that,

human aspiration for happiness, which is a part and parcel of spirituality, was turned into "success" as a value. In the following quote he brings out the 'economic' and 'physical' barbarism endorsed by modern science:

> "[Modern science] has encouraged more or less indirectly by its attitude to life and its discoveries another kind of barbarism, – for it can be called by no other name – that of the industrial, the commercial, the economic age which is now progressing to its culmination and its close. This economic barbarism is essentially that of the vital man who mistakes the vital being for the self and accepts its satisfaction as the first aim of life .... Just as the physical barbarian makes the excellence of the body and the development of the physical force, health and prowess his standard and aim, so the vitalistic or economic barbarian makes the satisfaction of wants and desires and the accumulation of possessions his standard and aim. His ideal man is not the cultured or noble or thoughtful or moral or religious, but the successful man. To arrive, to succeed, to produce, to accumulate, to possess is his existence. ... life devoid of beauty and nobility, religion vulgarized or coldly formalized, politics and government turned into a trade and profession, enjoyment itself made a business, this is commercialism"[2].

The ripple effect of this barbarism which he predicted on education, religion, politics, is something which we are witnessing today. Aurobindo comments with reference to the concept of civilization and religion from the viewpoint of a common man, "His idea of civilization is comfort, his idea of morals social respectability, his idea of politics the encouragement of industry, the opening of markets, exploitation and trade following the flag, his idea of religion at best a pletistic formalism or the satisfaction of certain vitalistic emotions."[3]. The advancement in science made

people value education for its utility, to make a man fit for success in competitive world and socialized industrial existence; value science for the useful inventions and knowledge so that he can live a comfortable life. In other words, the great capitalists and the organizers of industry are the supermen of this commercial age.

Like Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore also was not willing to accept the western concept of progress. He remarks: "With what is called material progress, property has become intensely individualistic, the method of gaining it has become a matter of science and not of social ethics. It breaks social bonds; it drains the life sap of the community. Its unscrupulous plays havoc all over the world, generating forces that can coax or coerce peoples to deeds of injustice and wholesome horror"[4]. It is not that Tagore did not have respect for science, rather he advocated limited use of science confined to man's welfare and not for plundering nature. According to him, science is truth and it gives us freedom in the realm of matter. Although he welcomed western science, yet he wanted science projects to be guided by moral ideas. For Tagore, a world of science minus moral norms is a world of violence and aggression, 'fit for the world of tigers'"[5].

The fast development and ascent to modern civilization during last two centuries was possible because of the exponential growth of knowledge. As far as technology is concerned, there are fascinating prospects for the future. However, the development of a highly technological society does not free us from ethical and moral demands. Science cannot divorce itself from issues which take humanity beyond science itself. The mere technological advancements of which we boast and are proud of, should also take pain to

have some insights about functioning of life in general and of nature in particular. Relativity may sometimes be used as the right way to understand reality. Relativity theory seems to be a theory of nature which has explained not only contemporary empirical data but is also suggestive of what ought to be in future. Some of the issues which affect humanity at present and to which science has not provided any satisfactory solution because alone it cannot, include the political, economic, religious and psychological problems of our age. Science cannot overcome racial divisions and religious extremism, it cannot create a world which is at peace. Issues like this are very much connected with culture itself. The loss of decency of humanity is at the heart of the crisis that calls for a discussion of value. What is it that is to be accepted as a value is inseparable from culture, that is created by man.

Culture is a very complex phenomenon. We find that, in the beginning, at the visible level what matters us are the artefacts, constructed social environment, overt behaviour. At the next level, culture is manifested as values, where actions and events are assigned meaning according to what ought to be. Next, these values which are consistently useful are transformed into assumptions, rather unspoken and they constitute deepest level of culture. Our intrinsic nature influences culture. The abovementioned issues are not necessarily the problems that modem science can address, since they are the problems of the heart, of the mind, of attitude and a way of life; as such they fall outside the scope of science as per the view of the scientists.

Religion too, has failed to understand man in totality. In the garb of religious rituals, the poor, the powerless are harassed. When religion that is practiced and preached is

not realistic, it becomes an escape from reality. Humanity suffers from evil and it becomes 'ugly'. The culture and values are 'corrupted' by social evils. Hence, science along with other complementary factors can play a very constructive role in correcting religion, transforming it and making it anew. Rather, culture and religion are entangled with values, which deal with all possible aspects of human life. There may be hierarchy of values in particular cultures of the world, as we find one in our own culture. The western world valued the material approach more than the spiritual or looking within, while Indians and the other eastern cultures valued the spiritual aspect more than the material. This is one of the most prominent factor for the technological advance in the Western world. However, it is undeniable that the impact such technology has made on our culture and values, has been negative, showing a kind of dissonance with already established values. The traditional values, which supported Indian civilization for thousands of years, need to be strengthened and perpetuated, as they can build a bridge between the past and the future of our country and between India and rest of the world.

## 2. Need for Befriending Science and Spirituality

There is increasing proximity of both, science and religion, towards explaining and understanding certain basic or foundational issues like the nature of reality, origin of the Universe, human behaviour, evolution, moral behaviour and so on. This proximity either may lead to contempt or friendship. The path of contempt or conflict leads to self-limitation, whereas the path of friendship may open up new ways with positive attitude to understand these issues with a new paradigm.

The pressure felt due to the present challenges faced by the society, whether urban, rural, semi-urban or cosmopolitan on the one hand and the aspirations and the prospects of our future society on the other, calls for a friendship or a supportive attitude between science and spirituality. For instance, the challenge that we face of population explosion, creating healthy societies free from pain and suffering, threats from natural calamities where thousands of people lose their lives, and most important of all is living by the principles of ethics and morality, demand urgent solutions, which the lopsided development of science or spirituality cannot provide. Humanity is forced to look forward for such solutions in the coming together of these two great powers.

According to these great minds like M. Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, R. Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, the most important thing is religiosity than religion. Religiosity being universal, will free man from institutions, churches, temples, sections and personal Gods. The static religion with, at least some of its age-old rituals and values are a hurdle in path of new paradigm. We do recognize beyond doubt the findings of science as attractive and useful, but the world does not belong to impersonal science, as it tries to capture the world as it is without the intervention of imagination. We are wrong in adopting scientific findings when we give science an Omniscient and Omnipotent status. As R. Tagore points out that, the world belongs to 'personality ', and human personality is such that it creates new relationships with the world. He accepts dynamism in every sphere of the universe, which constantly rearranges the meaning of things and which is displayed in his creations. The 'truth' lies not in the mass of materials, but in their universal relatedness, which only the human mind is able to understand. He observes further

that it is possible for human personality to comprehend and transcend the details of the facts, knowledge, feeling, wish and will, as well as the individual's memory, hope, love, activities and all his belongings. This transcendence takes place through a unity, and this sublimation is a product of love. The realization of the existence of the 'other' makes the "I" realize his extension. Tagore says, I become more in my union with others..."[6].

Philosophers, cognitive scientist and social scientists agree that friendship is an essential ingredient of human happiness. Aristotle classified friendship into three distinct categories: of pleasure, of utility and of virtue. The first one brings direct pleasure while the second, is one where a tangible benefit either economic or political, is possible. According to Aristotle, the highest kind of friendship is that of virtue, which brings happiness. He believed that friends hold a mirror up to each other and through that mirror they can see each other in ways that would not otherwise be accessible to them. It is this reciprocal mirroring that helps them improve themselves. In the similar fashion, in the new paradigm also of religion and science befriending each other, we expect that it will work together for global happiness. The solution to the global issues facing mankind requires an ethical transformation, which lies in the area of human relationships. In the light of interconnectedness and interdependence, that is observed in nature, and proved by quantum science, we should aim at the oneness of religion. The oneness of religion asserts that, individuals must seek education and knowledge that is greater than themselves. We find that the posture of social and behavioural sciences to study the interactions between individuals is a right one. Our greatest joys as well as problems involve human

relationships, and successful human relationships involve love and happiness.

Science and spirituality, both the parties involved in this relationship will contribute to the relationship in order to enrich it, since they share a complementary relationship. Care should be taken to see that this relationship does not fall into customary practice or dead habit. It should be dynamic and flexible enough to assimilate the innovative ideas with a positive attitude. This should bring about not only the material and social construction, but also new values catering to our inner life.

The need for befriending of science and spirituality is felt more by the Western world, which believes in sophisticated technology more than the Eastern culture. Sri Aurobindo in his book on 'Foundations of Indian Culture' writes about how a culture or civilization can be evaluated: "A true happiness in this world is the right terrestrial aim of man, and true happiness lies in the finding and the maintenance of a natural harmony of spirit, mind and body. A culture is to be valued to the extent to which it has discovered the right key of this harmony and organized its expressive motives and movements" [7].

The eastern religion -- what may be considered the deeper and more significant elements -- are not only compatible with science but enrich its findings. The best evidence of this is science's response to the religions of the East over the course of the last 200 years. As the French Nobel laureate Romain Rolland said early in the 20th century, "Religious faith in the case of the Hindus has never been allowed to run counter to scientific laws." The same can be said for Buddhism, which derives from the same Vedic roots.

Also, most of the Hindu gurus, Yoga masters, Buddhist monks and other Asian teachers who came to the West framed their traditions in a science-friendly way. Emphasizing the experiential dimension of spirituality, with its demonstrable influence on individual lives, they presented their teachings as a science of consciousness with a theoretical component and a set of practical applications for applying and testing those theories. Most of the teachers were educated in both their own traditions and the Western canon; they respected science, had actively studied it, and dialogued with Western scientists, many of whom were inspired to study Eastern concepts for both personal and professional reasons.

The cooperation between science and spirituality is most noted today in the field of medicine. There is a growing body of research which suggests that, spirituality does play a role in health matters. The researchers observe that, the religious faith not only promotes overall good health, but also helps in recovery of serious illness. Certainly, science and religion have contributed towards our understanding of this universe in multiple ways, and whatever they have accomplished is truly impressive. In order that there should be an overall integral development of humanity, perhaps the time has come for science and religion to acknowledge each other's power and influence, join forces and work together in mutual respect to help solve the world's problems. This process should bring about the change in the attitude towards values, as there should be consistency and harmony in the values themselves that we take as foundational in this journey. The goal of all this is the pursuit of happiness of mankind, which is included in spirituality itself.

## Conclusion

Science and religion are not negations of each other, rather they are two great forces which have shaped humanity and its culture for thousands of years. It depends upon how our scientists and theologians interpret the working of these forces for common man, that will bring about change in our attitude towards values. The ultimate goal of humanity is happiness and well-being of all, which includes both, our material progress as well as moral development, which is a part and parcel of our quest for spirituality itself.

## Notes


1. Sethna K.D. and Nirod Baran (ed), Quoted in "Riddle that is Man" ,'Sri Aurobindo and the New Age-Essays in memory of Kishore Gandhi', pub by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of education, Pondicherry, 1997, pp 31.
2. Sethna K.D. and Nirod Baran (ed), 'Sri Aurobindo and the New Age—Essays in memory of Kishore Gandhi', pub. By Sri Aurobindo International Centre of education, Pondicherry, 1997, pp 53-54.
3. Ibid, pp. 54.
4. Sanyal Indrani and Shashinungla (ed), 'Ethics and Culture – Some Indian Reflections', pub by Jadavpur University, Kolkata and Descent Books, New Delhi, 1975, pp 58.
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# Triple Dialogue as a Pedagogy for Asia: Learning Together with the Other

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Noel Sheth was a Sanskritist and a much sought after Indologist of high repute. Through his teaching and research, the seminars and conferences he participated in, the papers he presented and published, his most significant contribution was in dialogue. It would seem that dialogue was for him really a way of life, both at the personal and the professional level. This paper is meant as an acknowledgement and affirmation of Noel the dialogist. Taking a cue from The Federation of Asian Bishop's (FABC) call for a tripe dialogue, with the poor, with cultures and with religions, the paper indicates the outlines of such a multi-focual, pluri-dimensional dialogue so crucial for our world and particularly in Asia today.

## 1. Terms of Discourse

Dialogue is readily described as communicative exchange. However, it is more comprehensive than the "communicative rationality" of Habermas, which he defines as: "oriented to achieving, sustaining and reviewing

consensus – and indeed a consensus that rests on the intersubjective recognition of criticisable validity claims". (Habermas 1984: 17).

The nature of dialogic communication focuses less on rational meaning than on hermeneutical meaningfulness. Moreover, to be credible, dialogue must be sensitive to the differences of local situations, and to be effective it must consider their commonalities as well differences and thus develop an overall architecture for a more universally sustainable dialogue.

### *The Hermeneutics of Dialogue*

For Panikkar 'dialogue' is a most fundamental condition of our existence. It is our way of being.

"Dialogue is, fundamentally, opening myself to another so that he might speak and reveal my myth.... Dialogue is a way of knowing myself and of disentangling my own point of view from other viewpoints and from me." (Panikkar, 1983: 242)

'Myth', Panikkar understands as a pre-rational, not an irrational but rather a trans-rational, comprehension, "the horizon of intelligibility" (ibid: 101) that can only be expressed in symbol and metaphor. Once it is rationally articulated, myth is demythicised and then develops into an 'ideology', which in this context Panikkar describes as: "the more or less coherent ensemble of ideas that make up critical awareness." (ibid. 21)

Gadamer explains how "to be in conversation, however, means to be beyond oneself as if to another." For, as he insisted in 1960 all genuine dialogue must be premised on an

authentic hermeneutic: "to recognise oneself (or one's own) in the other and find a home abroad-- this is the basic movement of spirit whose being consists in this return to itself from otherness." (Gadamer 1975: 15) But we would emphasise a further implication of such dialogical hermeneutics: "the challenge to recognise otherness or the alien in oneself (or one's own)" (Dallmayr 1989: 92).

'Difference', then, as Gadamer insists "stands at the beginning of a conversation, not it its end," (Gadamer 1989: 113) awaiting the moment of coherence, of fulfilment, of a 'fusion of horizon' that will complete the hermeneutic circle and set it off again for us – "we who are a conversation". (ibid.: 110) For we are constructed and deconstructed in dialogue with ourselves and others. Indeed, "the conversation that we are is one that never ends." (Gadamer 1989: 95) For dialogue and conversation are intrinsic to the human condition, the very language of our existence, the essential hermeneutic of all our experience. For "dialectics is the optimism of reason. Dialogue is the optimism of the heart." (Panikkar 1983: 243) Thus we can speak of a 'dialectical dialogue' which would pertain to the encounter of ideologies, while a 'dialogical dialogue' would be more pertinent to the meeting of myths.

We must dare beyond the constraints of dialectical reason, which no doubt has its uses – and limitations. In dialogue the 'self' and the 'other' are both discovered and enriched, the cultural 'other' and especially the 'counter-cultural other', within my own culture and across other cultures too. For as we unveil our 'self' in the 'other', and the 'other' in our 'self', we will find that our deepest identity and bonding transcends all differences in an immanent I-thou communion. It this that makes a dialogue pedagogic: learning together with and from each other.

However, a dialogue within is an imperative for a dialogue without. An intrapersonal dialogue is the pre-condition for an interpersonal one: openness within the self so that one is open to other and not locked in a 'walled-in consciousness'. So too is an intracommunity dialogue an imperative for an intercommunity one. It is precisely such openness that overcomes our prejudgments, our prejudices, the unconscious ideologies and mind-sets, which eventually can only bring a 'clash of civilisations'. If dialogue is to be pedagogic then there must be a "fusion of horizons", each side learning from the other, meeting on common ground to journey together to higher ground.

Human beings are meant to be interrelated and interactive, not isolated and alone. Yet, there is always the danger of celebrating our own 'difference' in isolation and seclusion from others, and not in dialogue with them. We find examples of such 'withdrawal', both personal and group, among fundamentlists/radicals of various persuasions: religious communes, utopian communities, even political parties and academic guilds...This 'shades over into the celebration of indifference, non-engagement and indecision' (Gadamer 1989: 90). Such an inwardly turned dialogue eventually becomes a monologue, whether of individuals or groups. This inbreeding can only lead to a genetic decline of the group's cultural and intellectual DNA. It further negates creative pluralism, undermines respectful tolerance and destroys any real possibility of a dialogue across differences with the other.

## The Asian Senario

The socio-political trajectories of Asian societies though their various stages of development from agro-

rural to urban industrial societies are spread across a wide spectrum of developmental models and political ideologies. Consequently, there are wide variations in the levels of poverty and deprivation, of civil liberties and democratic rights, of religious and cultural toleration, both in intensity and scope, across societies and within each as well. Consequently, there are multiple modernities unevenly spread: whereas some regions are highly advanced other locales are left behind in an earlier historical age; some strive for a just and decent society, other have settled into authoritarianism and suppression. Most Asians live in several different centuries and different senarios simultaneously, even within their national boundaries.

Yet there are commonalities in the 'family resemblance' (Wittgenstein 1958: 14) of those Asian cultures and religions which are premised on an understanding of a cosmos beyond or rather outside historical time. These developed locally and spread geographically to other distant Asian civilisations. But they were largely within the continent, at least till 20th century. Abrahamic cultures and religions also have a common 'family resemblance' which is premised on divine revelations within human history. These are at times perceived as 'foreign' to Asia. But this is really a perception coloured by the colonial experience and domination of the West. They are very much Asian, or rather West Asian where they originated and from where they spread over to other parts of the continent and beyond.

All this makes for an intriguing Asian mosaic with positive possibilities for complementarities and exchange, but also real dangers of misunderstanding and conflict. Hence when the Federation of Asian Bishops (FABC) calls for a threefold dialogue, with the poor, with cultures,

with religions, the purpose must be defined in terms of it a liberating, enriching, transformational promise. Such a dialogue must be both inclusively Asian and open to the world, universally global, and concretely local.

The Church in Asia must outgrow its colonial past to evolve into an authentic Asian Church, contributing to and learning from the Church universal in a pedagogic dialogue. In developing a contextual theology for this evolution Peter Hai lists: "five of its major characteristics, which complement and enrich each other: (1) a synthetic contextual character, (2) a similarity between the FABC's theological methodology and that of Latin American liberation theologies, (3) a faith seeking dialogue, (4) an approach that encourages theological pluralism and aims to achieve harmony, and (5) a development that constitutes a paradigm shift in theology" (Hai 2006).

In its Sixth Plenary in 1995 in Manila, the FABC recognised the specificities of the Asian churches and called for "a movement toward the triple dialogue with other faiths, with the poor and with cultures." The context for this triple dialogue must necessarily address the Asian situation characterised by three inescapable conditions: economic poverty, cultural diversity and popular religiosity. (Pieris 1988) For in Asia voluntary poverty still has a religious value represented as detachment from earthy goods and desires; popular religiosity runs too deep among our peoples to be easily dismissed and expresses religious values that must not be discounted, rather carefully and empathetically discerned for the genuine faith in which it is embedded; our cultural and religious is an inescapable reality not just to be accepted but to be celebrated in authentic Asian religious traditions.

Most recently two developments have opened new horizons of possibilities for renewal and reform for both the Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus: the election of Pope Francis on 13th March 2013, who has brought a tsunami of change in the Church; and increasing inequality and intolerance across the spectrum. Both events have significant and critical relevance for the Church and the society in Asia. This is the ecclesial context for our pedagogic dialogue in Asia.

The Church in Asia is a very small minority in a very large and enormously complex, and increasingly problematic social situation. It has still not shaken off its colonial past and though Christians are a tiny percent in the population they are still a significant presence there. We must learn in dialogue with the other: the poor, the anawim of the Bible, those culturally and religiously different, the neighb-our, the stranger. As Pope Francis said in his address to the conclave before his election: the Church cannot be a 'self-referential', 'worldly Church" it must be a "Church which evangelizes and comes out of herself, the *Dei Verbum religiose audiens et fidente proclamans*", hears and proclaims the word of God. (Dei Verbum No.1) In his speech to the pre-conclave general congregation of cardinals, he left us a compelling image of Jesus of this Church-for-the-world, "in which Jesus knocks from within so that we will let him come out" (Vatican Radio 2013).

This makes the call and challenge of a triple dialogue in the Asian Church both distinctive and critical for the Church Universal too and so is pedagogic for both. But it needs to be energised by the Spirit continuously: *eccelesia semper renovanda, ecclesia semper reformanda*, or in Luther's expression *eccelesia semper purificanda.*

## 2. Dialogue as Liberation: Learning from the Poor

### *The Contemporary Crisis*

In Asia the transition from tradition to modernity, rural to urban, agriculture to industrialisation has been uneven and inequitable. It has failed to deliver on its promise of a better world for all. The development model pursued has left an unconscionably large and increasing desperate poor population trapped in their deprivation in South Asia. Even those countries that have achieved rapid levels of growth have mounting social and political tensions that could put the gains at serious risk, as in China. And where economic affluence has arrived there was a crippling, lingering stagnation, like Japan. Others are stymied by multiple conflicts and gross inequalities, e.g., India. Rather than tinkering with the present system, we need another more sustainable model of development that is just and egalitarian, participative and solidary, not a top-down neo-liberal globalisation.

The capital intensive model, whether led by the state or private enterprise has resulted in endemic inequalities and polarisation across multiple dimensions. Authoritarian leaders come to power by fair means or foul and precipitate a majoritarianism that marginalises minorities. Not surprisingly those in the lowest strata of society, the most vulnerable and disfranchised people become scapegoats as collective discontents simmers and boils over, and the discontents of modernity are visited on refugees, migrants, minorities, the weak and vulnerable. Consumerist individualism breaks down social solidarity into an atomised mass society where mass leaders find a gullible

following. Defensive communitarianism divides society into impervious and hostile compartments.

The economic inequalities of class in an earlier century precipitated working classes that in places called for a class war. After two devastating world wars this was largely defused by the welfare state. But half a century later, in spite of a remarkable decrease in absolute levels of poverty the world over and in Asia and the in developing countries, relative poverty, that is the differences between the rich and the poor, has jumped to unsustainable levels worldwide, even in poor countries. The evidence for this can be seen in the recent populist, majoritarian mass politics, in rich and poor countries alike that is compounded by nationalism and migration, and internal displacement. And as always it is the poor and minorities that are the worst off.

In a capitalist society where gross inequalities are ingrained over generations, class antagonisms can build up beyond class struggle into class war. The welfare state has helped to mitigate this, but a neoliberal capitalism is dismantling it and once again institutionalising a global free market with disastrous consequences for the vulnerable poor. Asia is seeing the worst of this. Thomas Piketty's monumental work on *Capitalism in the Twenty-first Century* (2014) challenges the conventional wisdom of neoliberal economists. He demonstrates how over centuries the system reproduces itself and grows as it embeds inequality. This is "the fundamental force for divergence $r > g$" (Piketty 2014: 25): meaning that return on capital is generally higher than economic growth. In such a system class becomes caste, as status is inherited with capital rather than achieved through merit. But he is positive about remedial interventions in the system:

"There are nevertheless ways in which democracy can gain control over capitalism and ensure that the general interest takes precedence over private interest while preserving economic openness and avoiding protectionist and nationalist reactions." (Piketty 2014: 1)

Pope Francis has been severely indicting the profit driven, free-market system as inhuman and contrary to the Gospel values. His first encyclical Evangellii Gaudium, on the Joy of the Gospel articulated a critique of the present economic systems. It is premised on the basics Catholic social teaching, and his second, Laudato Si (Praise be) an even more emphatic rejection of it in the context of the ecological crisis consequent on climate change and consequent environmental degradation.

Thus the inequities of class and caste, precipitate hostilities of ethnicity and religion, negate the life-chances of the weaker sections of our peoples; the violence of religious fundamentalism that traumatises dissenting individuals and minority groups; political extremism hijacks human rights; the individualist consumerism of a market driven economy and money power displaces human concerns; invidious competition has been institutionalised to discount collective cooperation; overt success and public recognition for individuals are valued far more than the silent sacrifice and the unacknowledged contribution of persons;... these are just some of the characteristics of our social situation against which we must build counter-communities of solidarity for justice.

**Solidarity for Justice**

In this problematic context the individual pursuit of happiness and success displaces the common good and

threatens to sunder our societies. To address this we need another developmental model for liberating the poor: solidarity must stand against alienation. But this will require a counter-culture communitarianism, not a self-centred individualism of the 'me generation', but on an 'other' centred social ethic of persons-for-others; a culture that does not place person and community in contradiction, but is premised on a complementarity of a person-in-community and a community-of-persons. It cannot be a community in which we pursue an illusory 'progress' for the privileged few, while we leave the disinherited masses left behind. All this is even further exacerbated by the contemporary neo-liberal globalization.

We cannot be content to be ruled by the manipulative and elitist politics so current in societies today and the inegalitarian economic models they pursue. Rather we must strive for a more sustainable and equitable economy, a more transparent and participative polity. Together we need to get beyond the individualist consumerism that is corroding our cultures across the continent and exorcise the aggressive religious fundmentalisms and the violent conflicts it generates and then exploits. We need a participative down-up developmental process coordinated by a top-down facilitation.

In other words, we must build a counter-cultural community that will seek 'another development' and an 'alternative politics' for a multicultural, a pluri-religious society, both on the national as well as the international scene. We must believe, as the World Social Forum keeps affirming: "Another World is Possible!": where economic status is not skewed, cultural identities are inclusive and religions traditions are harmonious. But to take such a counter-culture seriously, we need to articulate a value frame of reference in

which we function and evaluate ourselves critically against the vision and inspiration of a counter-cultural community of solidarity, where the personal good of each is the common good of all. This is the only way to decolonise ourselves from the neoliberal capitalism encircling global village.

An authentic contrast faith-community of Christians has much to offer here not just in terms of the vision of the kingdom: a reign of peace and justice, reconciliation and harmony, of beauty and truth. It can also point to a road map to get there: through renunciation and self-denial, with faith and hope, love and joy. This is what the Christian vision must be animated by: the experiences of its mystics and prophets; an articulation of a contextualised theology of liberation for all, yet preferentially for the poor, the last and the least.

Such a vision must has been so evocatively articulated in Dec 4 of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1974-75), "Our Mission Today" as the "the service of faith and the promotion of Justice": "If we have the humility and the courage to walk with the poor, we will learn from what they have to teach us what we can do to help them. ...to help themselves: to take charge of their personal and collective destiny." (G. C. 32 Dec. 4. No. 50)

In practical terms this will demand a pedagogic dialogue with the poor in an action-reflection praxis, a bottom-up process that reaches out to and embraces the whole of society in this movement.

What sets the context for his preferential option for the poor and the promotion of justice, is not clerical bureaucratic administration but the Christian charism of love. Pope Francis is foregrounding once again a vision and mission

for our world that was earlier articulated emphatically at the Latin American Bishops conferences at Medellin in 1968, Puebla in 1979, Santo Domingo in 1992. It was affirmed for the universal Church in World Synod of Bishops in 1971 on "Justice in the World":

"Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation." (No. 6)

And again in the *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) reaffirms this in Nos. 25- 39, and rhetorically asks: "how in fact can one proclaim the new commandment without promoting in justice and in peace the true, authentic advancement of man?" (No. 31)

This is a vision that still awaits a more comprehensive and convincing expression in the mission of the Church today, to be a truly prophetic Church in a world of "conspicuous consumption" (Veblen 1899: 64) and desperate poverty; of power as the instrument of the privileged few and not at the service of the powerless multitudes; of the pursuit of self-referential individual goals not the common good of all. On 16th March, speaking to the media soon after his election, referring again to his choice of patron, Pope Francis left us a compelling vision for our mission: "Oh, how I wish for a Church that is poor and for the poor" (Reuters 2013).

A pedagogic dialogue with the poor must be premised on an option for the poor that embrace both, faith and justice; a faith that does justice, and a justice premised on Biblical

faith. Our faith in God includes our love of God, but this is authenticated by our love of neighbour, especially the least and the last among them. Our promotion of justice is for all, but it is authenticated by our option for the poor. Biblical faith is not just intellectual consent, fides qui, but a total surrender to God, fides qua. This is the faith of the anawim of God. Moreover, Biblical justice necessarily includes forgiveness and reconciliation, which lead to peace and harmony. This is the justice of the prophets of God.

The poor have much to teach us about faith because in their life-situation, so vulnerable and always precarious, they have only their God as their one faithful protector. They experience endemic injustices at the bottom of society so their longing for a liberating justice is existential and genuine. Their very presence in our society challenges our lives with the question: Am I my brother's keeper? It confronts us with the affirmation of Jesus: as long as you did this to the least of my brothers you did it to me. It challenges all to learn from the poor even as we try "to help them help themselves". And dialogue is surely the best pedagogy for this. The poor are both, the most prepared to hear the word of God and the best able to witness to it. Surely we have so much to learn from them.

## 3. Dialogue as Enrichment: Learning from the Cultural Other

### *Clash of Civilisations or Dialogue of Cultures*

There is no denying the historical violence precipitated by collective differences of varying degrees and multiple kinds: political-economic, religio-cutural. Today such collective violence is escalating everywhere. But there has

also been exemplary creative synergy between different peoples, both across and within national borders. For social traditions do change even to the point of evolving into very new and rather different ones. Human identities based on them follow suit, or else there will inevitably be different degrees of dissonance and disorientation, as happens in times of rapid and radical social change when cultural traditions do not follow suit, or even resist the changes. Once we realise that cultures are socially constructed and so can be deconstructed, and we accept that religious affiliation to be a matter of freedom of conscience when this is informed and responsible, then the common concerns that bind the human community together can be brought back to centre stage in our shared lives to reverse the spiralling violence, to heal old wounds, to create a new future.

However, we cannot avoid the grim reality of divisions that mark our societies. For if common human concerns bring us together, different social interests set us apart. We cannot of course wish this away, nor can we impose a uniformity or enforce a consensus on them and remain democratic and free. Too often the way of settling such differences was by confrontation and controversy, wherein each party tries not only to prove its own position, but at the same time to demolish the one or the other of the two in a binary opposition. This age of controversy settled nothing and neither did the religious wars it precipitated. For particularly with matters of personal and collective identity and dignity, human beings cannot be forced, or imposed indefinitely on beyond a point.

Yet there remains the temptation to fall back on inhuman and 'final solutions'! Ethnic cleansing and genocide await us at the end of this road. To escape such a scenario, a dialogue of cultures and religions is imperative, and for this we must

overcome our prejudgments as the necessary precondition to find common ground from which to move to higher ground together. This further demands an acceptance and tolerance of 'the other' without which no dialogue is possible, only debate at best and violence at worst. Globalisation has brought us closer, but it has not helped to make us more accepting of each other. Rather the opposite seems to have happened in the global village.

### *Celebrating Diversity*

Yet diverse social groups coming together in some kind of a more inclusive social order, like a common polity, a common market, shared language and history, can construct an overarching civilisational order over time. Under such an umbrella diverse cultures and sub-cultures can survive and thrive as different "designs for living" (Kluckhohn and Kelly 1945: 97) and "total ways of life". (Linton 1945: 30) In our world today plurality is an inescapable given, whether political-economic or socio-religious or ethnic-linguistic or otherwise. For the complexity an imploding globalisation in our modern world cannot be contained in any single worldview (Rahner 1969: 26), nor can a dominant one be imposed without destroying its freedom and openness.

In Asia, plurality is so deeply and intricately woven into the very fabric, the whoop and waft of our society that any attempt to homogenise it can only be suicidal. Ways of coping with diversity range from indifference and non-engagement, all the way to affirmation and celebration. Given the intricacies of our social interdependence, the first approach can only end with a nihilistic relativism if it does not collapse in annihilating chaos. The second must open into ever deeper levels of tolerance and broader dimensions of engagement.

As an ideological response "pluralism' addresses this plurality with democratic equality and freedom. However, some common basis is necessary for social integration, involving some basic, even if minimal, orientation towards cooperation rather than conflict, lest the common meeting ground becomes the occasion for misunderstanding and hostility. This common basis can be shared histories and values, overlapping identities and interests.

We are now coming to value diversity as something potentially enriching and even uniting at a higher level of union. Such an enriching 'communion' or common union must inspire us not just to a 'unity in diversity', that accepts and respects differences, but rather to a 'diversity in unity', that appreciates and celebrates difference. (Kothari 1988: 20)

The danger is that a majoritarian uniformity marginalises minorities and creates an alienating hostility and even violent conflict between groups and communities. If these identities are exclusive, singular and solidary, rather than inclusive, multiple and fluid, then a resocialisation process will be needed lest fault lines get harden and mutual hostilities embedded. Such a situation must be anticipated and defused with a dialogue of cultures to create a climate of social tolerance and reciprocal acceptance. This is a precondition for a safe and stable, multicultural society.

Sadly, our social traditions of tolerance seems to be increasingly displaced from public life. If the present crisis of intolerance is to be reversed, these need to be revived and extended. We must distinguish levels and dimensions in our understanding of tolerance, lest the ideal of tolerance we aspire to and the limits to intolerance that we set become both impractical and naive.

### *Ideal of Tolerance*

However, tolerance is more than a matter of conflict resolution and emancipation. A constructive and creative response to pluralism cannot mean mere endurance of, and resignation to differences. It must include something more positive: the active acceptance of, and even the celebration of plurality. It must be as multifaceted as the broad spectrum of social pluralities it addresses: from political ideologies to economic systems, intellectual worldviews to ethical values, religious beliefs to cultural patterns, ethnic divisions to geographic regions.

As a response to pluralism we can distinguish progressive levels in our understanding, all deriving from a deepening realisation of the reality, truth, satya, underlying our human situation; a reality that is radically pluralist and ultimately uniting, a truth that is essentially non-violent. These are not exclusive but rather overlapping dimensions and interpenetrating levels that form a continuous progression. This is the common ground we must seek for dialogue.

With Panikkar, we can distinguish several levels of tolerance (Panikkar 1983: 20-36): first, tolerance as a practical necessity: bearing with a lesser evil for the sake of a greater good. But such political pragmatism does not cut deep enough to sustain itself under the stress and strain of rapid social change. A second, further understanding of tolerance is based on the realisation of the essential limitations in any human grasp of truth or expression of reality: it must always be partial, it can never be complete. Such tolerance is but "the homage the finite mind pays to the inexhaustability of the Infinite" (Radhakrishnan 1927: 317). Such an intellectual awareness makes us accepting of what we do not understand and respectful of what we disagree with.

Beyond such acceptance and respect, however, we can still think of tolerance as a more positive and active moral imperative based on the ethics of doing good to others, of loving even our enemies. This is the third level of ethical or religious tolerance based on moral responsibility for the other and is often religiously inspired. But even in such an understanding of tolerance the 'different other' as the object of one's responsibility even love remains 'other'. Such 'objectivisation' of the other can only be transcended in a forth level of tolerance of what can only be called a spiritual or "mystical experience of tolerance," (Panikkar 1983 :23) where "one being exists in another and expresses the radical interdependence of all that exists," (ibid.) where the other is the completion, the enrichment, the extension of oneself; where the other is no longer in definitional opposition to one's self, but where old selves become one new 'self', at one with the Self, tattvamasi; where 'I' and 'thou' merge into the 'One I-Thou'!

There is a continuous spectrum across these various levels of tolerance. However, the level of we live is set by the way the 'self' perceives by the 'other': From perceiving the other as practical obstacle, to positive complement, to moral obligation, to mystical-spiritual fulfilment, our perception of the other is always complex and so the levels of tolerance will overlap.

Moreover, using the terms 'myth' and 'ideology' as explained earlier, there are two dimensions of tolerance; consensual ideologies underpin the pragmatic and intellectual tolerance; while

religious and spiritual tolerance is premised on shared myths

### *Limits of Tolerance*

Any understanding that does not consider how limits must be set to tolerance, would be unviable and naïve. If we are to cope with intolerance, we must set the social context within which tolerance functions at any of the levels or in either of the dimensions mentioned earlier. If tolerance is to be a viable social option in a plural society, it must not be high-jacked by a chauvinistic intolerance. For a cynical intolerance can easily and unfairly outmanoeuvre a trusting tolerance. Hence the limits of tolerance must be set within a regime of ethical values and norms, human rights and sensitivities.

However, to be sustainable our tolerance must go beyond legal norms and human rights. It must be founded on positive values and driven in terms of: justice, truth, humanity, compassion, love ... It must be spelt out in behavioural norms that reflect these values: non-violence and respect for life, social solidarity and economic equality, political freedom and ethical truthfulness; and in gender relations in terms of equality and fairness. Our tolerance must express sensitivity to the 'other' in multiple ways in the diverse arenas of inter-personal and social encounter.

But if tolerance must include tolerating the intolerable, how do we set responsible limits to intolerance without abandoning our own tolerance and becoming intolerant ourselves? This brings us to the necessity of dialogue as the sine qua non of tolerance and vice versa. For no dialogue is possible without a common and mutually agreed-upon level of tolerance, which must be reached in dialogue. Often dialogue collapses precisely because levels of tolerance are so different that people talk past, rather than to each other.

A regressive reaction seeking a haven in this heartless world by privileging and romantising earlier traditional societies and isolating ourselves in that cocoon is an inadequate and defensive response to the multicultural challenges we face today. Yet cultural nationalists do promote such surreal and unviable social and religious traditions so out of sync with our contemporary world. A cultural dialogue requires that we be open and rooted as well. Gandhi's aspiration can provide us with our best starting point here: "I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them" (*Young India*, June 1921: 170).

We are beginning to realise that uniformity is not the only or the most creative response to difference. Nor is mere co-existence a viable answer in an ever shrinking world. We need a dialogue of culture as a prelude to a dialogue of religions. Only then can we experience a *metanoia* in ourselves that will free us from the *paranoia* we have of each other. This is precisely what we can and must learn in inter-cultural dialogue.

## 4. Dialogue as Transformation: Learning from the Religious Other

### *Culture and Religion*

Pascal wisely counselled: the heart has reasons that reason knows not off. (Pascal 1958: 222) Indeed, a genuine dialogue pertains less to the dialectical mind than to the compassionate heart. We are still coming to terms with the implications of religious freedom and cultural rights for different groups within a single society. Much of the

contemporary collective violence must be read in this context. Both culture and religion are symbol systems that bring meaning and motivation to individual and social life. But of the two, religion is the more fraught with a huge potential for explosive conflict because it is far more charged with emotion and passion than cultural ones.

Clifford Geertz's *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) distinguishes the two. For him religion is a distinct domain within culture. Thus a culture "denotes an historically transmitted pattern or meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (Geertz 1973: 89).

Whereas a religion is: "(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seems uniquely realistic." (Geertz 1973: 90).

This explains why politics premised on the one or the other will then be qualitatively different and why religious identities are the more intractable of the two, especially in traditional religious societies. Moreover, when the two identities overlap and even merge, communities constructed on such identities are the more impervious and solidary.

### *Reason and Passion*

Cultural and religious symbol systems are shared in society and across groups and communities in it. As such

they necessarily exist in the public domain. They cannot be isolated in a private one, for the public and private domains are in constant and interpenetrative interaction. As collective identities they find their most appropriate, though not exclusive space in civil society. When collective interest are polarised along the fault lines of sectarian identities, they precipitate an ' 'identity politics', more subject to passion which displace by an 'interests politics' more amenable to reason. For interest politics is premised on ideological and/ or economic differences among peoples and mobilise people along class divides. A rational politics of compromise will help to defuse this. Identity politics polarises cultural and religious differences and easily fall into a zero-sum game.

Precisely because religious identities are so emotionally charged they are so readily co-opted to this politics of passion. And the more passionate, the more unreasonable and uncompromising this becomes. Far more than addressing the real interests and genuine concerns of people, this advantages group leaders, especially the extremists who claim to be better representatives of their peoples. Whether there is any substance to their exaggerated claims or not, they use them to consolidate their group behind their own leadership. Such negative identity politics readily spills over into violent conflict. Communal riots and civil wars are so often based on such retrograde politics.

### *Science and Religion*

A dichotomy between science and religion results in a dialectic rather than a dialogue between the two. Thinking in such binary opposites is more typical of Western than Eastern thought, where faith and reason are complementary, not opposed ways of seeking the truth. Both must be

included in a more comprehensive understanding that opens to a genuine dialogue, not just between science premised on reason and religion premised on faith, but between religions as well. After all, more than just truth as knowledge, it is truth as reality, satya, that cannot be contradictory.

After a corrosive rationalism of modernity rubbished religion, in a post modernity critical reason has turned in on itself and now undermines our confidence in the older rationalist optimism. Religious revivalisms and fundamentalisms are spreading like inkblots across countries and continents. To address such issues we need to understand the limits of positivist science based on the experimental method, and the horizons of religious faith based on an experiential quest. Each must be able to interrogate the other's truth in a constructive dialogue rather than in an antagonistic debate. However, faith must respect the legitimate domain and methods of reason, which it turn must be sensitive to the belief convictions and value commitments of faith. We must steer ourselves off both a fideism that rejects reason in the domain of faith, and a rationalism which displaces faith with reason.

Beyond the incremental progress with experimentation, science proceeds with a 'paradigm shift' (Kuhn 1970) that is an intuitive leap of imagination to a new model of interpreting data to resolve old contradictions and open new perspectives. This is not based on experimental logic, though it is post factum authenticated by it. The popular use of scientific technology is without much understanding of the theories and techniques that underpin it. It is pragmatically accepted because it works. This is an uncritical use of science quite alien to the scientific mind. Such uncritical pragmatism eventually instrumentalises and dehumanises

science and leads to its misuse, as most obviously in modern warfare.

Religions are founded on the experience of charismatic persons whose teachings are institutionalised and experiences are ritualised into a tradition. This is meant to give later followers access to the original experiences and teachings. But these must be critiqued, interpreted and discerned to contextualise them in changing life-situations. A religious tradition must be renewed thus. This makes for a reasonable faith, not a blind one. Unfortunately, much of popular religiosity gets distanced from such faith and mixed with superstition and magic. People seek assurance and certainty in their insecure and fluid world. Faith experiences no *Cost of Discipleship*. (Bonhoeffer 1970) It easily blinds itself in dogmatism and fundamentalism which eventually consolidate into religious extremism, even fanaticism. When politicised into a religious ideology, this can precipitate horrific violence, especially when religion is put on the defensive, as with a belligerent secularism or rationalism.

Ashis Nandy (Nandy 1992: 80) distinguishes between 'religion as ideology' and 'religion as faith'. All ideologies can help to interpret a social situation, and they can be as dysfunctionally obscurantist: whether as religious fundamentalism or cultural nationalism, liberal capitalism or socialist Marxism. We need liberating and open ideologies, not closed and exploitative ones. Religious faiths too and can be oppressive or liberating, extremist or moderate. We need to recover "religious tolerance from everyday Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and/or Sikhism, rather than wish that ordinary Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Sikhs will learn tolerance from the various fashionable secular theories of

statecraft." (Nandy 1992: 86) Tolerance in both domains of faith and ideology is necessary to make dialogue viable.

### *Faith and Reason*

The dichotomies between scientific reason and religious faith are but an extension of the dialectic between faith and reason. An interreligious dialogue cannot be premised on the one or the other because it must be underpinned by both. To facilitate such a dialogue the relationship between faith and reason must be clarified. Panikkar rightly insists on "Faith as a Constitutive Human Dimension" (Panikkar 1983: 187-229) and the content of faith must fulfil not negate the human, i.e., belief must humanise believers, not dehumanise them or demonise others. Tolerance then becomes the sign of 'good faith'.

Here in a few sutras is an epigrammatic summary of our query: what does being 'reasonable' mean to faith, and again what does being 'faithful' to reason require? (cf. Heredia 2002: 41-51).

- Faith and reason are complementary not contradictory ways of seeking the truth;
- What we believe depends on whom we trust;
- A rational methodology transgressing its inherent limitations can never yield 'rightly reasoned' knowledge;
- Where we position ourselves influences how we reason;
- Whether or not we believe depends on our self-understanding;
- If to believe is human, then what we believe must make us more human, not less;

- Faith that is 'blind' is never truly humanising; faith that is not humanising, is to that extent 'bad faith';
- Only a self-reflexive, experiential methodology is meaningful to the discourse of faith; a rationalist-empirical one is alien to it;
- Act of faith is constitutively human it necessarily has a common religious basis across varying cultures and traditions;
- An inclusive humanism must embrace both 'meaningful faith', as well as 'sensitised reason';
- The dialectic between faith and reason must be pursued in the context of tolerance and dialogue or it will degenerate into a hostile debate across an unbridgeable divide.

Indeed, both faith and reason are imperative to bring a healing wholeness to our bruised, broken world.

### *Domains in Dialogue*

Dialogue is surely more than a verbal exchange. It implies a reciprocity between the 'self' and the 'other' that can take place in various types of encounter and exchange between persons and groups. Hence a complex and more nuanced understanding of dialogue requires a specification of various kinds of involvement of the 'self' with the 'other'. As with tolerance, so too with dialogue, we must distinguish various domains and dimensions of this involvement with one another, for dialogue is surely more than a verbal exchange.

Recently Christians have been urged by the Church to engage in a fourfold dialogue ("Dialogue and Proclamation",

Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, Vatican City, 1991, no.42.):

1. "*The dialogue of life*, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations."

2. "*The dialogue of action*", in which we which we "collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people".

3. "*The dialogue of religious experience*, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for god or the absolute".

4. "*The dialogue of theological exchange*, where specialists seeks to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values."

In our perspective, the dialogue of life is at the level of sharing and encounter of the myths we live by and, which then are deepened in the dialogue of religious experiences. This can be an even deeper level of not just mythic communication but mystical experience. The dialogue of action requires some level of ideological and political consensus, which can then be intensified and sharpened in a theological exchange. Thus life and experience are at the level of 'myth' and mysticism, action and theology at that of 'ideology' and politics, respectively.

In each of these areas of exchange, corresponding to the levels of tolerance delineated above, one can distinguish degrees of dialogue premised on differing understandings of the self and the other and the encounter between the two. Thus

at the pragmatic level of tolerance the other is perceived as the limitation of the self. Here dialogue becomes a practical way of overcoming differences, rather than by confrontation that could result either in the assimilation or in elimination of the other. At the intellectual level, where the other is seen as complementary to the self, dialogue seeks to overcome the limitations of the self with help of the other, rather than instrumentalise the other in the pursuit of self. At the ethical level the self accepts moral responsibility for the other. In this dialogue the self will reach out to the other to establish relationships of equity and equality. At the spiritual level, the other is perceived beyond a limitation or a complement or an obligation, as the fulfilment of the self. Here dialogue would call for a celebration of one another.

Raimundo Panikkar rightly insists that "dialogue is not a bare methodology but an essential part of the religious act par excellence" (Panikkar 1978: 10) In 1995 the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus in Decree 5 gave a particularly relevant mandate for dialogue to the Jesuits: 'to be religious today is to be inter-religious in the sense that a positive relationship with believers of other faiths is a requirement in a world of religious pluralism. (Dec. 5, No. 130) As Joshua Heschel insists, "No Religion is an Island" (Heschel 1991: pp. 3-22)

The imperative for dialogue can now be summed up in a few pertinent sutras:

***To be a person is to be inter-personal;***
***To be cultured is to be inter-cultural;***
***To develop is to participate and exchange;***
***To be religious is to be inter-religious;***

Psychologists have convinced us of the first; sociologists are trying to teach us the second; political economists are promoting the third; theologians are coming to realize the fourth.

## 4. Dialogue as Disarmament for Peace

### Metanoia for Peace

For all the progress we might congratulate ourselves on, the last century has been perhaps the most violent century in human history. It still continues into the present. Asia has not been exempted from this. Violence is still the final arbitrator to conflicts and divisions that increasing riddles our societies and our world. War and terror is the last recourse when other arguments and appeals fail. A catalogue of the violence of these last years, genocides, atrocities, riots, terrorism, murders, lynchings, rapes, ... are merely the external evidence of the constant social tension between countries, regions, communities, groups, individuals, ... that never to go away but too easily escalate out of control.

Non-violence seems to be an idea whose time has passed. We must reverse the spiral of violence that engulfs us like a cyclonic tidal wave, and reflect together on what peace and harmony today might mean for us. For, while the quest for power remains one of our most insidious human temptations, the longing for peace is part of our deepest human yearnings too.

A sound and stable peace must be founded on such complementarity, not on domination. It must be "the fruit of justice". A just social order necessarily implies freedom if it is to be compatible with human dignity. Moreover, if the dialectical tension between justice and order is effectively

and constructively resolved, then we would have a third element in our understanding of peace that is harmony. This is a treasured Asian value. Each of these three elements, justice, freedom and harmony, can be described, but we still need to put them together in a collective "myth of peace", (Heredia 1999) pursued both individually and collectively.

### *Vision and Mission*

But for this dream to even begin to become a reality, we must divest ourselves of a great deal of, the presumptions and pre-options we have been, and still are being socialised into. We must not allow our history to control our destiny, we must come to terms with our collective memories and allow our wounded psyche to heal. More importantly for the dialogue among ourselves, and even within our 'self', this myth of peace must first be rooted in our hearts and minds, our cultures and religions. This was a most appropriate agenda in Pope Francis's year of mercy, but it is a continuing enterprise, an always unfinished business.

Tragically modern man with his loss of innocence in a disenchanted world, has no longer any abiding myths. Today more than ever we need such bonding myths to sustain our cosmic vision, our world mission. Now myths are collective, never individual projects, and the 'myth of peace' is one in which we can all share. Certainly it is one whose time has now come in our tired and torn, broken and, bruised world. But as yet we have no such common myths. Even the symbols and images we use for peace are quite inadequate or needlessly divisive. The tragedy of modern humanity seems to be that it has too few creative and inspiring myths to live by and too many competing ideologies to die for. And so in

desperation we revive and cling to images and symbols that draw on the darkest recesses of our destructive potential.

If the myth of peace is to redeem us from such a future, it must become the common ground for our dialogues. This is the peace that is reflected in popular greetings, pax, shalom, salaam, shanti, ... that needs to found for us a brave new world. At this profound level of myth, peace can be an end in itself, as in fact so universally expressed by various salvation myths in religious traditions and utopian ideologies.

## A Triple Dialogue

Against the background of the historical trajectory of violence in religious traditions, and the alarming escalation of religious and other kinds of terror today, a comprehensive tolerance becomes the sine qua non condition for a multi-dimensional dialogue across political-economic and socio-cultural and religious divides. As our globalising world implodes further, even continents cannot isolate themselves, nor can countries and communities immunise themselves from the escalating violence.

In the bewilderingly plurality of societies in our contemporary world, and some Asian societies, especially those in the middle East and South Asia, are more so than most, violent conflict often reaches an impasse. With the rapid social change and the insecurities it brings, with technologies of mass communication and mass mobilisation, of social media and individual connectivity, in which competing groups and conflicting interests implode, this impasse becomes a point of no return and no advance. National and local communities dig themselves into a kind of trench warfare. In such a war of attrition the one

alternative seems to be to withdraw into isolation, if that were possible at all; in a globalising world this would be dangerous and even unviable. The other is to mobilise for total war and mass destruction; this would be an inhuman price to pay even for the unlucky survivors.

To anticipate such a painful dilemma the viability of radical alternatives needs to be explored. We can surely find alternatives to make another world possible, where sustainable and regenerative technologies, participative and inclusive social systems, for free and equal citizens and communities are not beyond our reach even though not yet within our grasp. If we can disarm ourselves from the prejudgments and prejudices, the fears and hostilities wherein we seek security, we could make a just society a more viable reality, where the personal good of each is subsumed into the common good for all.

However, for this we need to distance ourselves from, and critically examine our vested interests and unconscious ideologies, our exclusive identities and intolerant fundamentalisms, hidden fears and inarticulate apprehensions, to put the old negativities on hold and be open to the new possibilities to set a creative agenda for peace and harmony. This implies a kind of disarmament from all negativities that vitiates this. It will demand a daring, courageous leap of faith, but if not us then who, if not now, then when!

### *A Pedagogic Dialogue*

For a pedagogic dialogue with the poor we must first detach ourselves from our embedded vested interests and political ideologies, when these provide the strong armour against change for a better, more humane world, a more

just and fraternal society. Only when we put off this armour will we find the humility and the courage, the faith and commitment to walk with and learn from the poor to find our personal and collective destinies together. This is the liberation a pedagogic dialogue with the poor teaches us.

In a multicultural society, and Asian societies are more so than most, cultural conflict often becomes endemic. When cultural identities cease to be flexible and fluid but become solidary and exclusive, each cultural community digs itself into a kind of cultural trench warfare and once again a continuing war of attrition undermines our cultures. To defuse this we must cease absolutising our cultures as an ultimate good. Rather we need a "cultural disarmament" (Panikkar 1995), stepping back from our cultural entrenchments, bracketing away negative cultural identities and stereotypes, holding them in abeyance to facilitate a dialogue of cultures and come back to them less exclusive and more understanding, more open to, and appreciative of the cultural other with whom we can celebrate our diversity as a mutual enrichment. This involves seeking common ground in our shared cultural values and loyalties from which to move together to higher ground of a more enriched and creative culture. A pedagogic dialogue with cultures teaches us to find a deeper understanding and appreciation of the cultural other in myself and my cultural self in the other.

Similarly, in a society when a religious tradition is politicised it can explode into violence. Precisely because of its emotional charge of religious identities, such politicised religious violence becomes embedded and exorcising this demon may require a sustained effort over generations. We need to incisively critique our fundamentalist extremes

and inflexible dogmatisms of all hues in our religious traditions, and bracket our differences to open ourselves to finding common ground in our religious beliefs and commitments to move together to the higher ground of a transformed religious tradition, with a renewed spirituality and mysticism. A pedagogic dialogue with religions can teach us to deepen our understanding of other religious traditions and our own as well.

A disarmament of our political-economic ideologies, as well as our religio-cultural prejudgments will demand a radical change of heart, a social metanoia from a history of violence to a commitment to non-violence, from the pursuit of power to the quest for peace, from a pragmatic to a deeper level of tolerance, from a self-righteous monologue with ourselves to a truly open and equal dialogue.

The threefold dialogue, with the poor, with cultures, with religions that the FABC calls for must be premised on the Gospel myth of the kingdom of peace and justice, of equality and fellowship, of freedom and love is not a blue print but a vision, a prophetic critique of our present and a call to build a future with faith and hope together, already now but not fully yet.

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# Human Dignity as the Basis for Dialogue Between Religion

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Abstract: Religious, philosophical and legal traditions search for common grounds for dialogues. International conventions use universal terms for breaking barriers, settling issues and building bridges. In such attempts, the concept of human dignity seems to play a vital role. Human dignity is the foundation and the constituent of human rights of equality, justice and peace. So the author explores human dignity in Islam. The understanding of the noble concept of dignity can be a powerful tool to educate one's own followers for promotion of equality and justice as well as to create bridges between followers of different religions for world peace and harmonious living together. Upholding intrinsic dignity and fundamental equality can change the world. Human dignity is a word that has the tremendous power to unite the world. Dialogues between religions must go on and human dignity is a good theme for dialogues and initiatives to uphold human rights and promote a better world to live in peace and harmony.

Keywords: Islam, human dignity, dialogue, shari'a.

Noel Sheth hails from a family whose members belong to many religions. Noel was an ardent promotor of dialogue with peoples and religions for peace in the world. He spent his life for interreligious academia. His death in Bogota/ Colombia during a conference was sudden, sad and shocking that prevented our meeting in Frankfurt. We never know that we would never meet. Death puts definitely an end to our physical existence but memories remain. Convictions in life after life and resurrection console us and keep our bond of relationships and friendships eternal. Significant persons continue to inspire us through their word and deed even beyond death. In honour of such a noteworthy human, my professor, mentor, colleague and friend Prof. Dr. Noel Sheth SJ, I dedicate my article on human dignity in Islam. Human dignity is a theme dear to him in his efforts to building bridges between peoples, cultures and religions.

Religious, philosophical and legal traditions search for common grounds for dialogues. International conventions use universal terms for breaking barriers, settling issues and building bridges. In such attempts, the concept of human dignity seems to play a vital role. Human dignity is the foundation and the constituent of human rights of equality, justice and peace. The Greco-Roman philosophies exalted human rationality that accounted for human dignity and equality. Judeo-Christian traditions saw humans as the images of God and plead for inviolability of human life and for equal respect. Immanuel Kant grounded human dignity deriving from freedom, rationality and capacity for moral reasoning and thus promoted autonomy and equality. It appears almost self-evident that the intrinsic human dignity underlines a basic equality. Yet, there have been wars between peoples and nations. In the age of biotechnology, humans have been also at times used as biomaterials. The

dehumanizing, tragic Nazi incident has driven international bodies to return to human nature and human dignity to safeguard human species. Since the World War II, there has been a growing awareness of fundamental human dignity and equality of all people despite differences of gender, race or religion. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), despite differences of distinctive anthropologies and debated philosophies, has succeeded to establish a common understanding with a universal appeal of human dignity in protection of humanity.

In the present time, there are clashes within Islam due to many extremist attitudes of some groups. In the context of the horrible killings by the Islamic State of Iran Syrian (ISIS), it appears that human rights paradigms are out of picture in Islam. War and violence threaten people and destroy world peace. In the wake of increasing violence by such Jihadi groups in the name of religion, it is more than a mere academic quest to understand the concept of human dignity in Islam in order to prevent tragedies and promote understandings. Does Islam advocate and promote human rights at all? Let us first fathom the concept of dignity in Islam and see whether there are universal human rights on the basis of this God-given dignity.

Everything in Islam depends on the allegiance to the will of Allah. God's majesty, and faith and submission to God are the pivotal pillars of Islam. Islam did not have a systematic system of human right paradigms like Judeo-Christian traditions which had a historical process of judging human actions in the light of the ten commandments and two great commandments of love that ground for human rights. The concept of human dignity does not seem to be familiar to Islam as in Judeo-Christian tradition, as the idea of image of

God is not explicitly found the Qur'an. The transcendence of God in sharp contrast to human beings is constantly emphasized in the Qur'an, Islamic traditions and theology. These things might invite us rather to think that the idea of human dignity is foreign to Islam. That is not the case.

Islam stresses the moral element in human nature, which has the dignity as a creature of God first and as a believer second. To submit to the one God is essential to complete human nature (*fitrat al-insan*) itself, that is why faith (*iman*) and servitude (*ibada*) are what dignify humans. Human condition (*fitra*) is enhanced by the faith in one God (Allah) through the natural religion (*ajlah*) which is Islam, thus dignity of human consists in the natural submission to God, whom the creation of humans stands in the first place in his entire creation. Obligation is primary in Islam and it is in the fulfilment of obligations that individuals acquire rights. The dignity of humans is only in relation to God. Humans are primarily God's creature.

## 1. Two Kinds of Human Dignity

In order to understand the right to human dignity in Islam, we need to first know the meaning and kinds of dignity in Islam itself. Dignity may mean many things: honour, great, respect, purity from corruption and an art of perfection. There are two kinds of dignity attributed to humans in Islam according to Allama Mohammad Taqi Dschafari:

> (1) An innate and natural dignity that all humans possess. Unless humans deliberately deceive or commit a crime against themselves or others and thereby reject their own dignity, they are in possession of this valuable quality; (2) There is a higher dignity

acquired through the attainment of values, and the use of talents and positive abilities in human nature, and through means of development, perfection and goodness: this dignity is acquirable and desired willfully. The ultimate and outstanding human value pertains precisely to this dignity and greatness.

### *1.1. The Natural Dignity*

The natural innate dignity which is not acquired is the one that God awards to every human being. Many verses of the Qur'an and legal traditions speak of this dignity. Islamic scholars and experts primarily refer to the Qur'an to provide a proof for human dignity: "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference" (al-Isra: Q 17:70). This Qur'anic verse substantiates quite distinctively that God elevated the sons of Adam (humans) in their nature and placed them above other creatures. On account of this indisputable and decisive reason, humans must recognise the greatness of honour for each other as a right and be committed to this right.

Kamali says that the text [al-Isra Q 17:70] is self-evident and comprehensive in its recognition of dignity for all human beings without limitations or qualifications of any kind. According to al-Alusi (d. 1270/1854), "everyone and all members of human race, including the pious and the sinner, are endowed with dignity, nobility and honour, which cannot be exclusively expounded and identified. Ibn 'Abbas, the Companion of the Prophet Muhammad famed for his Qur'anic exegesis, has commented, however, that

God Most High has honoured mankind by endowing him with the faculty of reason." Dignity is the right of every human being regardless of colour, race or religion. It is established for every human being as of the moment of birth and it is the natural and absolute right of every one. Mustafa al-Siba'I, Abd al-Hakim Hasan al-Ili, Ahmad Yusri and Sayyid Qutb attempt to inform the world that human dignity is not a privilege of a few, but belongs to pious or of ill-repute, Muslim or non-Muslim. The children of Adam are honoured not because of any specific status but for the very fact that they are human beings. Thus, dignity is not earned by any human effort or meritorious conduct; it is purely an endowment of God's favour and grace upon every human being.

The origin of this natural dignity exists in the relationship between God and humans: "And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration" (al-Hijr: Q 15:29) and "so the angels prostrated – all of them entirely" (al-Hijr: Q 15:30). God created humans valuable with a precious grace that even angels fall down before them in adoration. The source of this human greatness consists of characteristics, powers and talents. Through proper use of these gifts in an honest search for a reasonable life, humans appropriate this specification of a valuable and elevated dignity and greatness. On account of human greatness, two important rights emerge: the right to life and the right to the natural dignity that humans are obliged to uphold mutually. Hence, everyone is obliged to respect the right to dignity of the other, who has not forfeited the dignity in oneself or other through fraud or crime. The right to life and the right to dignity are given equal credence. In the Islamic view, human greatness remains intact even after death and no one has the

right to violate the natural dignity. The natural dignity is not earned by or exchanged for money either, as Masada ibn Sadaqa explains it through an incident:

> The head of the faithful, Imam Ali (a.) sent 5 Wasaq (ca. 50 Kilo) dates to a man who was generous and magnanimous and never expected anything from the head of the faithful or others. Someone told the head of the faithful: "I swear before God, that he has not requested nothing from you. It would be perhaps 1 Wasaq enough." But the Lord spoke: "God would not like to increase people like you in the society of the faithful. I donate but you show greed. I swear before God, if I do not give him what he hopes from me (personally or from the treasury), unless he asks me for, and I have given him nothing unless for a price that I have received from him, then I have purchased him to sell his dignity. It means that I have forced him to exchange his dignity for 5 Wasaq dates and his face that casts unto the Earth in honour of his and my God.

There is no better evidence than this record for the human dignity and honour. Such traditional evidences make it clear that we will not be in a position to defend the right to life and the obligation to respect the human dignity, when we consider the human life as mere natural phenomenon without any proof of the supernatural level. It is the supernatural, divine power that make human life intrinsically worthy and valuable. This natural dignity is present in every human being and continues to remain intact even after death.

There are many more affirmations of the dignity of humans in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* that clearly state that humans are elevated to the dignified status of God's beloved

children and hence, there is a basic unity and equality of humanity. In the eyes of the Creator, everyone is precious and dignified, thus man as God's vicegerent (*khilafah*) on earth has to treat each other with mutual respect. The Qur'anic declaration on human dignity prompted Weeramantry to express that the Qur'an gives the foundation that dignity is intrinsic to the personality of every individual so that "no regime, however powerful, could take it away from him" and "provides the basis of modern doctrines of human rights." Mutual recognition of human rights springs forth from the equal right to human dignity.

## 1.2. The Higher Dignity

The higher dignity is above the natural dignity that is also common and available to all humans. The higher dignity is based on the values of fear of God and piety: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you people and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted" (al-Hujurat: Q 49:13). A literal translation of the last sentence sounds better: The most esteemed of you is the one who is the most God-fearing.

Although the children of Adam are endowed with so many powers, talents and virtues, when they refuse to respect human rights, they go astray and become ignorant, ungrateful and hardhearted. It reveals that the most blessed God has only made the prerequisites for securing values, greatness and honour in humans. This means that all positive powers and talents that God has conferred on humans are necessary for dignity and honour and are essential in order to acquire the right to dignity. It does not mean that humans

will be in possession of noble nature and higher dignity in all occasions and under all conditions. When a human being has lust, deceit, corruption and self-centeredness, and uses the powers and talents for unclean purposes, certainly such a human being does not have the right to dignity and noble nature. When one acts against life, greatness and freedom of others, s/he becomes guilty to be reprimanded and punished in defense of the rights of others to life, greatness and freedom.

Muhammad ibn Dschafar Aqba tells about the head of the communities, Imam Ali (a.) and speaks in a preaching in praise of them: "O People, the Prophet Adam (a.) had neither male nor female slaves. All humans are born free, though God has entrusted the responsibility of some people on some others." It follows from this fact that the tradition proves the absence of slavery in Islam and the common greatness and digntiy of humanity is brought forward as the basis for freedom, nobility and sincerity. Allah loves every righteous person. The Qur'an says, "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight with you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly" (al-Mumtahanah: Q 60:8). Muhaddis Qummi wrote down a tradition on human greatness in Safinat-ul-Bahar:

> Hussein ibn Khalid says that he told Imam Reza (a.): Oh, son of the Prophets, the Prophet of God be blessed, man says that God has created Adam in his image. Is this correct? Imam Reza replied that God would destroy those who omit the beginning of the tradition. The tradition is this: The great Prophet passed by, while two men were fighting with each

other. One said to the other: 'God has formed your face and the face of those who are similar to you, uglily.' The great Prophet spoke: 'Slave of God, do not speak so wickedly. God, the blessed and the majesty, has created Adam similar to his face.'

Using the gifts of God, if one does to act rightfully and righteously, there is a chance for losing this higher dignity. The right to higher dignity as well the respect for this right to the higher dignity from others can be removed when one acts against the nobility, the worth and the greatness of humans. Apart from God, both natural as well as higher dignity do not exist. They are purely gifts of God, in a sense, natural dignity is endowed upon humans eternally and higher dignity is to be earned by individuals using powers, talents and virtues given by God.

## 2. The Right to Dignity

No individual or a society can claim the right to life for themselves, if they do not respect the right of others to dignity. The right to dignity is not merely a question of demanding respect from others, but it is equally against violation and humiliation. It has both positive and negative elements. Although ignorance does not forfeit the right to dignity of the ignorant person, it should not become the cause for violation and humiliation of the right to dignity of others. Ignorance can be a cause for not acknowledging the right to dignity of oneself and others, but ignorance of rights should never be a justification for violation of rights.

Discussing philosophies of various political theories and schools, for example, of Hobbes and Machiavelli that dichotomise the human society on the one hand, and the values, dignity and respect of human nature for the

proclamation of human rights on the other, Dschafari poses the question: when a thinker or a school asserts that all humans are equal in the use of right to human digntiy and honour, and that there exists no difference between humans, is it justifiable of a spiritual order that keep Moses, Jesus and Mohammad on par with Pharaohs, satans and gold worshippers without any difference? He tends to believe that every legal, cultural, political and ethical consideration on equalization of criminals, executioners, enemies of rights and truth with rest of the society is a harm to the human digntiy. Making a comparison between two verses of the Qur'an, Dschafari claims that there is a difference in the nobility (al-Isra: Q 17:70) of the persons with different ranks in the order of the higher dignity while all humans without exception are equally conferred with the natural dignity (al-Hujurat: Q 49:13).

### 3. The Ranks of Dignity

In the view of Islam, it is clear that all humans are inherently in possession of the natural digntiy. However, in the practical world they are supposed to use the powers, talents and virtues in order to lead a righteous, dignified life. In the development of human life, there are different ranks corresponding to the reach of individual humans. This rank depends upon the ability and nobility of the person. This higher dignity is an achievement in human developmental stages. In the moral-legal normative realm, this dignity is highly influential. A human being, although inherent with the natural dignity, can go astray and consequently may lose the acquired ranks of higher dignity.

Dschafari lists the ranks of this dignity: (1) The people in the first rank are in their primary developing states who

are not yet reached the level of understanding principles and laws as foundations for life. They possess the external shell of human life with unused spiritual capacities and personality in the status of a seeds that are sown in the field of their being. They live with factors of natural and social environment and natural requirements of material dimension. The proof for dignitiy for the natural creation of humans is found not only in the Qur'an (al-Isra: Q 17:70) but also in the traditions. This dignity is natural and intrinsic to all humans as members of the family of God. (2) A human being, who during the stages of development of his personality recognizes his fellow humans as equal, bases his life on principles and laws, is harmony with life of others and considers pleasures, pains, usefulness and dignity of others as in oneself, feels obliged to respect the status of others on account of principles and laws, has the higher dignity in addition to the natural dignity. (3) When a person develops himself in the path of perfection and acts not only with reason and conscience but also out of love and serves the humanity, he is said to have obtained a greater dignity and deserves the paradise of God. At this stage, one has overcome pleasures and egoism, and is able to strive for higher goals of life. (4) In addition to the firm faith and consciousness of obligations, when a human being reaches the stage of being representatives of God on earth or becomes prophets who receive the revelation of God, he moves to the higher stage of dignity. (5) The next rank of dignity belongs to those who accepted Islam and applies his nature and reason for the search of the right faith and the best commandments using the spirit, thoughts, conscience, feelings and nature, and finally (6) the followers of Islam who have obtained a perfection and fear of God are said to be most noble ones (al-Hujurat: Q 49:13).

The right to higher dignity is a preference or characteristic of an individual that is neither transferrable nor dispensable. Attached to the right to dignity are the rights to education, freedom and equality. In the light of Islam, the protection of these rights is important. Likewise, the correction of an individual who in his own freedom gives up these rights is a duty. In this world, a human life without dignity is equal to or lower than the life of an animal. An individual without dignity despite having powers and talents can cause so much of harm to the society. Dschafari believes that it is not so much bad intention or enmity, but animalistic attitude of disrespecting human dignity can damage the humanity. In other words, it is not possible for an individual who has comprehended the greatness, honour and dignity of humans to inflict humiliation upon others and thereby violate dignity of others. Persons in families, societies or groups who disregard the rights and commands do not own value and dignity themselves.

## 4. Human Dignity in Islamic Theology and Jurisprudence

In Islamic theology, human creatures are radically different from their creator who provides them with sufficient spiritual and material sustenance in this world and in the afterlife. Humans are legally categorized as male-female, free-slave, Muslim-nonMuslim, etc. Without trespassing the legal limits (*hudud*), they are supposed to behave as per the category. Both theologically and legally, humans are considered to be free: "human freedom is a gift from God, so it is possible for any individual to follow and submit to God or to reject His message. In the same way, it is possible to follow and obey or reject his law (shari'a). In any case, the conception of the human being in Islam 'is not merely

religious' (cf. Shaltut 1980: 8) but comprehensive and multiple, and it is always line to freedom and liberation." Though the Islamic theology does not speak on ethical and legal aspects of human dignity, it is rooted in Islamic sources and their later interpretation (*tafsir*), which is an important element for consideration of human dignity. Some of the most important Islamic scholars and Qur'anic interpreters such as Mahmud Shaltut tried to interpret key concepts of revelation along with its legal development in the light of theology and jurisprudence.

The Qur'an, as we have seen, gives high consideration to human beings with ample support for an Islamic understanding of human dignity. The German Jesuit and a renowned scholar on Islam, Christian Troll, similar to other Islamic scholars such as Ali al-Qasimi and Ahmad S. Moussalli, identifies four Qur'anic references to the assertion of a special human dignity bestowed upon them by God.

1. And We have certainly honoured [*wa-laqad karram-na*] the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them [*wa-faddalna-hum*] over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference. (al-Isra: Q 17:70)

2. And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority [*khalifa*]." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not

know." (al-Baqara: Q 2:30)

3. Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant. (al-Ahzab: Q 33:72)

4. And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam – from their lions – their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." [This] – lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this universe." (al-A'raf: Q 7:171)

Interpretation of the verse al-Isra 17:70 would mean that "the idea of having honored [*karamat al-Insan*] by God allows us to speak of an intrinsic value bestowed by God on human beings that requires special treatment. This honor may come from the fact of being preferred over other creatures from the capacity God gives humans to rule the world, or from the commandments given in the Qur'an that protect people." The term successor (*khalifa*), open to many interpretation, in the verse al-Baqara 2:30 would also imply that a special kind of deputy of God on earth. Being God's representative would parallel the idea of God's image on earth. The verse al-Ahzab 33: 72 refers to the trust that only humans are able to assume it. Troll interprets that the term 'trust' is a reference to human freedom and moral responsibility. Troll and many Islamic scholars interpret the aspect of "testifying" in the verse al-A'raf 7:171 as the idea of human dignity.

Miklos Maroth says that the Islamic tradition of human dignity is promoted only by shari'a and the Qur'anic treatment of slaves and women confirm the idea of different levels of human dignity. However, "Islamic jurisprudence interpreted these levels by stating human equality: all human beings ('children of Adam') are Muslims in their intimate natural condition by birth (*fitrat al-insan*), so Islam is the natural way of worshipping God. In this sense, equality is established as a natural paradigm."

There are however conflicting views in contemporary Islam, "on the one hand, for conservatives and fundamentalist theologians, religious obligations are prior to human freedom. We are free, as an expression of our human dignity, only after having performed those obligations. Therefore, society should compel people to fulfill their religious obligations. On the other hand, contemporary Muslim theologians in dialogue with modernity think that human freedom should precede religious obligations and that it only makes sense to fulfill them when we do so freely. This position allows thinking of a human dignity common to all men and women." One of the Islamic thinkers, the Shite Abdulaziz Sachedina asserted that a common human nature (*fitra*) in the Qur'an implies shared ethical obligations and equality of every human being and presupposes a set of human rights.

## 5. Islamic Philosophy and Human Dignity

Muslim philosophers were from the early period of the Islamic history (9th-12th century) devoted to the study of the human condition. Al-Farabi (872-950 CE) and Ibn Sina (980-1037 CE) were the first to study human nature and its role in cosmogony (metaphysics) and in society (ethics and politics) different from the perspectives of the Muslim

theologians (*mutakallimun*) and jurists (*fuqaha*). While philosophers studied the essence of God and His attributes, theologians and jurists focused on the development of a strong canonical legal corpus. The field of ethics was primarily a matter of philosophy.

The Iraqi Islamic scholar 'Ali al-Qasimi defines Islam as a "liberating revolution for the human being," and connects the essence of humanity to four liberating values: life (*al-haya*), freedom (*al-hurriyya*), equality (*al-musawa*) and justice (*al-'adl*). The moral and legal foundations for other human rights can be inferred from these four values. Ben Achour affirms that there is no single conception of humanity in Islam and thus there is a need to go beyond the exclusive religious framework for foundations of universal human rights. Ben Achour establishes that justice which is a Qur'anic duty which appeals to the whole humankind. Similarly, Ahmad S. Moussalli says that religion (*al-din*), the self or soul (*al-nafs*), reason (*al-'aql*), family (*al-nasl*) and money (*al-mal*) are the five human fundamental necessities which at the same function as their duties, which are preserved by the shari'a. Moussalli believes these interrelated necessities and duties affirm the central role of human dignity. To defend freedom and pluralism based on justice in general interest of society is to uphold human dignity.

## 6. Human Dignity in the Shari'a

The Arabic expression '*karamat al-insan*' is equivalent to human dignity. The root '*krm*' appears in many Qur'anic verses meaning 'to bestow honour upon' or 'to venerate' or 'to treat with deference.' The Qur'ani dictionary has another equivalent term '*faddala*' which means 'to like better' or

'to give preference to'. The verse Q17:62 mentions that the angels prostrated to Adam following the commandment of Allah, but Iblis (Satan) protested saying: 'Shall I prostrate myself along with one whom Thou hast created of clay? Tell me, Lord, can I submit to this one whom Thou hast honoured above me (*karramta 'aleyya*)?' The meaning of the word here is simply 'venerate'. Similarly, the oft-quoted verse Q17:70 says: 'we have indeed honoured the children of Adam (*karramna bani Adam*), and provided for them means of transportation in land and sea, and given them wholesome food and exalted them high above the greater part of Our creation.' The term 'to honour' implies that Allah provides for human beings with everything they need for a comfortable life. Interpreting the same verse, al-Qurtubi says that humans have a privileged position (*karamat*) in creation with tall stature, beautiful form and great abilities. God is the only source of *karam* and it is God Himself who bestows *karam* on humans. Thus, Karamat is not an inherent quality of human achievement, but a special gift of Allah.

Belhaj interprets that this privilege is given only to Adam's children. It is disputed whether God gives *karam* to all human beings. The verse Q14:49 says: 'Verily, the most honoured among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous (*atqa*) among you.' The term '*atqa*' is often translated as 'most righteous,' but the etymological meaning is 'most pious' or 'most God-fearing.' Maroth draws a conclusion that God does give *karam* to all human beings, but the degree varies in proportion to one's devotedness. For modern philosophers, it would not be difficult to make the distinction between the *karam* as ontological category bestowed upon all humans, while the religious or social dignity might vary in degrees corresponding to one's

faithfulness to Allah.

The term *karam* normally refers to an elevated position and special treatment for a comfortable life. The expression *maqam karim* is translated as 'pleasant abodes,' (Q26: 58-9) and as 'comfortable dwelling' (Q44:26-8). It means that a pious and God-fearing creature deserves a life in security, free of harm, in well-being and comfort. Humans are even superior to angels who are commanded to prostrate to Adam (Q7:12). While angels have no freedom but to follow the commandments of God, humans have free will.

> Man is a rational being, however, always has a choice, on which his dignity depends. If he obeys Allah he will be dignified, but if he rejects Allah's commandments he will be punished. Allah's commandments revealed to his chosen creature can be found in the Qur'an, and, consequently, Qur'an gives everybody a guideline on how to attain human dignity.

The elevated creature is free from any kind of subjection expect the worship of God. It is in submission to the will of Allah, humans preserve their privilege of dignified position and those who obey Allah's commandments are further elevated to the rank of His representatives (*khulafa'*) on earth. Pious ones will be dignified and impious will be humiliated. Belhaj and Bielefeldt infer that the Qur'an speaks of human dignity primarily in terms of morals and not in terms of law. Despite the understanding of graded social dignity of humans by various scholars, Izzeddeen al-Khateeb al-Tameemi, the chief qadi in Jordan, speaks of the equal dignity which is inseparable from humanity itself.

So, human dignity originates from Divine Will

and the immortal law of God. Hence, human dignity is inseparable from a human being whether a male or female, irrespective of colour, time, place, social position, prestige among people, age, even if still a foetus, or dead lying in his grave... In other words, dignity and human beings form a syndrome that never part with each other. Dignity is an admirable value in human being's life. Human esteem does not emanate from universal declarations, international resolutions, regional agreements or inter-state conferences. Commitment to it from an Islamic standpoint is based on doctrine, not on accidental interest or temporal benefits.

The foundation of human dignity, which is a doctrine of Islamic religion, is founded on the Qur'an that gives the highest value to human life. The duty of shari'a is to preserve human life and dignity and protect them from violation and chaos. Encroachment on human life is prohibited and humiliation on human dignity with reputation is forbidden. Defamation is a major sin whether against Muslim or dhimmi (non-Muslims). The shari'a bans everything that disturbs the security of society and threatens the high values derived from human dignity. The shari'a prohibits anything that endanger the lives, honour, minds and property of individuals and the necessary condition of human dignity is the safe and secure life individually and in family and society. Toleration of the deviant lifestyle of any person is an offence against human dignity. Deviant behaviours such as rape and adultery are not mere ethical violations but require legal prohibition. Human dignity excludes all kinds of behaviour that go against the general rules of nature. Human dignity is not limited to the lifetime of individuals, all humans before birth as well as after death have equally

dignity, though the degree of dignity might vary according to their loyalty to God.

According to the shari'a understanding, human dignity is a reality in humans but in earthly life it may vary in degrees in different humans. We may infer that the dignity of humans in its existential human nature is guaranteed equally, but the social honour may differ among them. The purpose of human life is thus to attain the degree of a perfect being and to restore the dignity of proximity (*qurba*) to God in freedom through self-preservation and natural duty of reproduction. The main task of the religious law is to ensure the welfare and well-being of humans, which constitute human dignity. Thus, the fundamental duty of shari'a is to protect and defend human dignity.

## 7. Human Dignity in Qanun

Qanun (canon) is the generally accepted document of the Islamic countries deliberated by leading politicians of the Muslim countries in Cairo. According to qanun, man is the deputy [*khalifat*]of God on Earth, and this fact defines his position. The aim of this document is to "affirm his [mankind's] freedom and right to a dignified life in accordance with the Islamic *Shari'a*." Article 1§1 of the Cairo qanun states:

> All human beings form one family whose members are united by their subordination to Allah and descend from Adam. All men are equal in terms of basic human dignity and basic obligations and responsibilities, without any discrimination on the basis of race, colour, language, belief, sex, religion, political affiliation, social status or other considerations. The true religion is the guarantee for enhancing such dignity along the

path to human integrity.

The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights speaks of equality of human dignity for all humans, however the last reference to 'true religion' is open to interpretations. Subjecting Cairo Declaration to the Islamic shari'a quoting the Islamic Ummah as the best community while making many exceptions for shari'a has raised objections. Ann Elizabeth Mayer critiques that "the Cairo Declaration treats dignity as being congruent with the inequalities mandated by versions of Islamic law that are favoured by conservative Muslim opinion that subordinates women and non-Muslims," and concludes that "once scrutinized, dignity as used in the Cairo Declaration is revealed to be a concept that embraces inequalities. It presupposes the superiority of Islam over other faiths and the retention of traditional understandings of Islamic law, viewed as mandating a hierarchy granting male Muslims superior rights and subjecting women and non-Muslims to discriminatory treatment." This problem is to some extent clarified by a great Islamic scholar Mohammad Hashim Kamali who says that "the Qur'anic vision of mankind is basically that of a single, unified entity, regardless of any differences of origin and status. Unity and equality are the necessary postulates of human dignity." To authenticate his claim of the unity of mankind, he refers to the essence and origin of humanity inherent in the Qur'an (al-Nisa: Q 4:1):

> O mankind! Keep your duty to your Lord, who created you from a single soul and created its mate of the same [kind] and created from them countless men and women. And keep your duty to your Lord, by Whom you demand your rights from one another, and [observe] the ties of kinship.

The key phrase '*khalaqakum min nafsin wahidatin*' – He created you from a single soul – refers to both male and female, the first parents and indicates that "Islam is addressed to humanity at large, and all its basic teachings on justice, promotion of good and prevention of evil (*amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al-munkar*), the doing of good (*ihsan*), cooperation in good works (*ta'awun*) and building and beautifying the earth (*'imar al-ard*) are addressed to all people. Similarly, the Qur'anic designation of *khilafah*, that is, God's appointment of man as His vicegerent on earth, and the numerous references in the Qur'an to the subjugation (*taskhir*) of the universe to the benefit of man, are addressed to the whole mankind. The essence of worship (*'ibadah*) is also a common theme of all religions."

The typical address in the Qur'an 'O people' (*ya ayyuha al-nas*) is for humanity at large without any specification of a section or group. All humans are included. No one is excluded. Therefore, "there could be no affront to the human dignity of any single person without there being an affront to the dignity of all – including the dignity of the perpetrator of the indignity." Thus, Islam seeks unity in origin, unity in creation and unity in basic values for the benefit and improvement of all people who must enjoy equality and equal treatment without any discrimination. Islam has placed an infinite value on humans, because God has made them sacred (al-Isra: Q 17:33). Al-Ghazali says: "in respect of the sanctity of life and the prohibition of aggression against it, Muslims and non-Muslims are equal. An attack on the personal safety of non-Muslims involves the same punishment in this world and the Hereafter."

## Concluding Remarks

In Islam, life is seen as a God-given gift and human life as a privileged one in the creation. The dignity of humans is sacrosanct and inherent in relation to the Creator. Though there are various ranks in the social honour, the natural human dignity is one, equal and common to the whole humanity. Dignity respects freedom and overrules compulsion including in religion (al-Baqarah: Q 2:256). Dignity can be violated by deviant behaviours and defamation. It is human obligation to respect human dignity and thus to show obedience to God.

There are other Islamic views that justify inequality of humans and various grades of higher dignity. Extremist Islamic groups that perpetrate violence seem to take few verses literally out of context in the name religion and not to have understood the underlying Qur'anic teachings on the fundamental, natural dignity that stands as foundation for universal human rights. Elements that cause violence and divisive attitudes need internal corrections with the application of human mind in the interpretation of the Scriptures and traditions.

There is a great need for openness from the part of Islamic scholars to re-read the sources and principles of the shari a in the light of God-given gift of human reason keeping the universal principle in mind that a just, loving and merciful God would neither allow inequalities and discriminations among humans nor will he wish bloodshed.

The understanding of the noble concept of dignity in religious traditions can be a powerful tool to educate one's own followers for promotion of equality and justice as well as to create bridges between followers of different religions

for world peace and harmonious living together. Upholding intrinsic dignity and fundamental equality can change the world. Human dignity is a word that has the tremendous power to unite the world. Dialogues between religions must go on and human dignity is a good theme for dialogues and initiatives to uphold human rights and promote a better world to live in peace and harmony.

## Notes

1. Mona Siddiqui, "Between God's Mercy and God's Law: Human Dignity in Islam," in: Paul Middleton (ed.), The God of Love and Human Dignity: Essays in Honour of George N. Newlands (London: T & T Clark, 2007) 51-64, 51.
2. See Juan Antonio Macias and Gonzalo Villagran Medina SJ, "Human Dignity as a Space for Islamic-Catholic Dialogue on Human Rights," Studies in Interreligious Dialogue 26/1 (2016) 75-91, 83.
3. See Mohammad Hashim Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, reprint2011) xv.
4. Allama Mohammad Taqi Dschafari, "Das Recht auf menschliche Würde," Al-Fadscher: Die Morgendämmerung, Issue 149, Vol. 31 (April-Juni 2014) 21-27, 22. All the translations in this article from German to English are mine.
5. The Qur'anic quotations are taken from the Sahih International. Available at www.quran.com (accessed in November 2017).
6. See Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, 1.
7. Mahmud al-Alusi, Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, vol. XV (Beirut: Dar al-Turath al-'Arabi, undated) 117. Quoted in: Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, 1.
8. Quoted in: Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, 1; Mustafa al-Siba'i, Ishtirakiyyat al-Islam, 2nd ed. (Damascus, al-Dar al-Qawmiyyah li'l-Tiba'ah wa'l-Nashir, 1379/1960) 66; 'Abd al-Hakim Hasan al-Ili, al-Hurriyyat al-'Ammah (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, 1403/1983) 361. Kamali narrates an incident mentioned in the hadith in order to show that religious bearing did not restrict human dignity of all humans that Prophet saw a funeral procession

passing by: upon seeing it, he rose in respect and remained standing. One of his Companions informed him that the deceased person was a Jew. The Prophet disapproved the intervention and posed the question, "Was he not a human being?" Thus, he affirmed the fact that the inherent human dignity conferred by God is universal and calls for unqualified respect. Similarly, the Prophet's Companions took part in the funeral of a Christian woman as recorded by Ibn Hazm (in his al-Muhalla (K. al-Jana'iz)). Quoted from Muhammad al-Ghazali, Huquq al-Insan bayn Ta'alim al-Islam wa I'lan al-Umam al-Muttahidah (Alexandria, Egypt: Dar al-Da'wah li'l-Nashr wa'l-Tawzi', 1413/1993) 37. See Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, 1

9. See Ahmad Yusri, Huquq al-Insan wa Asbab al-'Unf fi'i-Mujtama' al-Islami fi Daw' Ahkam al-Shari'a (Alexandria, Egypt: Mansha'at al-Ma'arif, 1993) 30; quoted in: Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, 1f.

10. See Sayyid Qutb, at-'Adalah al-Ijtima'iyyah fi'l-Islam, 4th ed. (Cairo: 'Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1373/1954) 59; quoted in: Quoted in: Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, 2.

11. See Kamali The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, 2, from Wahbah al-Zuhayli, al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatuh, 3rd ed. 8 vols. (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1409/1989) VI: 720: "Even a criminal is entitled to dignified treatment. For punishment is meant to be for retribution and reform, not indignity and humiliation."

12. See Dschafari, "Das Recht auf menschliche Würde," 22.

13. See Dschafari, "Das Recht auf menschliche Würde," 23.

14. Quoted in: Dschafari, "Das Recht auf menschliche Würde," 23, original from Masada ibn Sadaqa, Wasail al-Schia, vol. 2, p.118.

15. The Qur'anic verse, al-Isra 4:1, says: "O mankind! Keep your duty to your Lord, who created you from a single soul and created its mate of the same [kind] and created from them countless men and women. And keep your duty to your Lord, by Whom you demand your rights from one another, and [observe] the ties of kinship."

16. J. Weeramantry, Islamic Jurisprudence: An International Perspective (Basingstoke (UK): Macmillan, 1988) 64; Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, 2.

17. See Dschafari, "Das Recht auf menschliche Würde," 23.

18. Quoted in Dschafari, "Das Recht auf menschliche Würde," 23, originally from Shaykh Faiz Muhsin Kashani, Al-Wafi, vol. 14 (1978) 20.

19. Quoted in: Dschafari, "Das Recht auf menschliche Würde," 23, original from Muhaddis Qummi, Safinat-ul-Bahar, vol. 2, pp. 54-55.

20. See Dschafari, "Das Recht auf menschliche Würde," 23-24: Dschafari raises a question: „Kann eine, Person, die das Recht der anderen auf Würde nicht achtet, seblst ein Recht auf Würde besitzen?... [er antwortet]: Das Nicht-Beachten des Rechtes auf eine natürliche Würde und Ehre hat nicht nur eine Ursache. Die Antwort hängt von dem Grund der Missachtung und Beleidigung ab."

21. See Dschafari, "Das Recht auf menschliche Würde," 24-25. He quotes from the Qur'an to oppose the equality in this sense: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted" (al-Hujurat: Q 49:13).

22. Dschafari, "Das Recht auf menschliche Würde," 25-26.

23. While categorizing the natural dignity (1) and the higher dignity into five ranks (2-6), Dschafari has strongly confirmed about the natural dignity in humans and through the higher dignity tried to list different levels of honour in religion and society. He does not contract the idea of natural dignity, which is inborn and inherent in humans, as the Qur'an as well as other hadiths and Islamic scholars explain. We cannot undermine his idea of higher dignity, since it plays a normative-legal role in governing the society.

24. See Dschafari, "Das Recht auf menschliche Würde," 26-27.

25. Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space for Islamic-Catholic Dialogue on Human Rights," 83; Mahmud Shaltut, Al-Islam 'aqida wa-shari'a (Cairo: Al-Shuruq, 1980).

26. See Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space for Islamic-Catholic Dialogue on Human Rights," 84. Abdullah Saeed, Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach (London: Routledge, 2006).

27. Christian Troll, Dialogar Desde La Diferencia: Como Oriestarse En Las Replaciones Entre Cristianos Y Musulmanes (Santander: Sal

Tarrae, 2010) 97-100; Cited in Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space for Islamic-Catholic Dialogue on Human Rights," 83-84.

28. Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space for Islamic-Catholic Dialogue on Human Rights," 84.

29. See Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space...," 84; Mona Siddiqui, "Between God's Mercy and God's Law: Human Dignity in Islam," in: Paul Middleton (ed.), The God of Love and Human Dignity: Essays in Honour of George N. Newlands (London: T&T Clark, 2007) 51-64.

30. Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space...," 85; Christian Troll, Dialogar Desde La Diferencia: Como Oriestarse En Las Replaciones Entre Cristianos Y Musulmanes (Santander: Sal Tarrae, 2010) 97-100.

31. See Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," in: Marcus Müwell et al. (eds.) The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 155-162; Christian Troll, Dialogar Desda La Diferencia, 99. Cited in Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space...," 85.

32. Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space...," 85.

33. Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space...," 85-86.; Troll, "Dialogar Desda La Diferencia," 104-015.

34. See Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space...," 86; Abdullah Sachedina, Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 71-72.

35. See Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space...," 83.

36. Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space...," 86; 'Ali al-Qasimi, Huduq al-insan bayna al-shari'a al-islamiyya wa-l-i'lan al-alami (Rabat: Ramsis, 2001) 27.

37. See Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space...," 87; Yadh Ben Achour, La deuxieme Fatiha: L'Islam et la pensee des droits de l'homme (Pariss: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011) 30.

38. Cited in: Macias and Medina, "Human Dignity as a Space...," 87; Ahmad Moussalli, The Islamic Quest for Democracy: Pluralism and Human Rights (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001) 126.

39. Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," 155f.

40. Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," 156; Majma'at al-lughat al-'arabiyya (ed.), Mu'jam alfaz al-Qur'an (al-Qahirat, 1990).

41. Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," 156.

42. See Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," 156; Abu Abdallah al-Qurtubi, al-Jami' li-alikam al-Quran, ed. Abdallah al-Turki (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risala, Undated).

43. Cited in: Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," 156; A. Belhaj, "Karamat al-insan – emberi meltosag," in: M. Miklos Maroth (ed.), Az iszlam politikaelmelete: Terminologiai vizsgalat (Piliscsaba: Avicenna Kaido, 2009) 196; A. Belhaj, Muslim Political Theory: A Comparative Terminological Investigation, ed. Miklos Maroth (Piliscsaba: Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2010).

44. See Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," 156; The contemporary Islamic scholars (Belhaj 2009: 196; al-Qurtubi (undated): 125-6) refer to this kind of graded dignity from the expression al-takrim al-ilahi li-'l-insan.

45. See Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," 157.

46. Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," 157.

47. See Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," 157; Belhaj (2009) 196; M. F. Othman, Iuquq al-insan baina 'l-shari'at al-islamiyya wa 'l-fikr al-qanun al-gharbi (Dar al-Shuruq, 1983) 62.

48. Belhaj (2009) 196: cited from H. Bielefeldt, "Western versus Islamic Human Right Conceptions? A Critique of Cultural Essentialism in the Discussions on Human Rights," Political Theory 28/1 (2000) 109.

49. Izzeddeen al-Khateeb al-Tameemi, Islam and Contemporary Issues (Amman: 2003) 462. Qutoed in: Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," 158.

50. See: al-Tameemi, Islam and Contemporary Issues, 474f.

51. L. Milliot and F. P. Blanc, Introduction a l'etude de droit musulman (Paris: Dalloz, 2001) 173; Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," 160: "There is, however, one open question: does everybody have the same dignity, or is the dignity of mankind in

general limited to some elements only, while some other elements are given to those only who are pious Muslims? From what has been said, various conclusions may be drawn. It seems that all human beings have the same gifts as far as man's place in the creation is concerned. This must be a matter of general agreement. It is not clear whether the other elements of human dignity (secure life and what is connected with it) are part of the dignity of all human beings. Some Muslims authors are ready to acknowledge that human dignity as such is given to everybody, while some others exclude from human dignity everybody who is not a devoted Muslim." Abdessamad Belhaj asserts: "The sacred nature of human beings does not only apply to Muslims: it is extended to all those with whom Muslims have made peace treaties... or defence treaties... Nevertheless, certain interpretations inside the Muslim world tend to dehumanize non-believers. Unlike the mainstream interpretation that understands the concept of karama as being concerned with all human beings as children of Adam, these radical interpretations restrict its sense to believers who actively practise their faith."

52. The Nineteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (Session of Peace, Interdependence and Development), held in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, from 9-14 Muharram 1411H (31 July to 5 August 1990). The 1990 Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, which was put forward by the Organization of the Islamic Conference – renamed in 2011 the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the organization to which all Muslim majority countries belong – has outstripped other Islamic declarations in terms of international prestige. Online at www.oic-oci.org/english/article/human.htm; Human Rights: A Compilation of International Instruments, vol. II, Regional Instruments (New York, Geneva: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1997) 475-6.

53. The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam, as quoted in: Miklos Maroth, "Human Dignity in the Islamic World," 161. The adjective 'dignified' refers to human rights directly and human dignity indirectly.

54. Further, Article 10 of the Cairo Declaration says: "Islam is the religion of true unspoiled nature. It is prohibited to exercise any form of pressure on man or to exploit his poverty or ignorance in order to force him to change his religion to another religion or to atheism."

55. Ann Elizabeth Mayer, "The Islamic World and the Alternative Declarations of Human Rights," in: Marcus Müwell et al. (eds.) The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 407-413.

56. Mayer, "The Islamic World and the Alternative Declarations of Human Rights," 412; see also David Johnston, "Maqasid al-Shari'a: Epistemology and Hermeneutics of Muslim Theologies of Human Rights," Die Welt des Islams 47 (2007) 149-187; Ann Elizabeth Mayer, Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics, 5th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2012).

57. Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, 5.

58. Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, 6.

59. Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, 8.

60. Al-Ghazali, Huquq al-Insan, 54; Quoted in: Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, 22.

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# On Dialogue

"If there is one word that we should never tire of repeating, it is this: dialogue. We are called to promote a culture of dialogue by every possible means and thus to rebuild the fabric of society. The culture of dialogue entails a true apprenticeship and a discipline that enables us to view others as valid dialogue partners, to respect the foreigner, the immigrant and people from different cultures as worthy of being listened to. Today we urgently need to engage all the members of society in building 'a culture which privileges dialogue as a form of encounter' and in creating 'a means for building consensus and agreement while seeking the goal of a just, responsive and inclusive society'. Peace will be lasting in the measure that we arm our children with the weapons of dialogue, that we teach them to fight the good fight of encounter and negotiation. In this way, we will bequeath to them a culture capable of devising strategies of life, not death, and of inclusion, not exclusion." — Pope Francis

"I strongly feel that it is only when there is a deep understanding of one's own religious beliefs and commitments that progress can be made in achieving true understanding and respect for the religious values and beliefs of others. Engaging in interfaith dialogue does not in any way mean undermining one's own faith or religious tradition. Indeed, interfaith dialogue is constructive only when people become firmly grounded in their own religious traditions and through that process gain a willingness to listen and respect the beliefs of other religions. " — David R. Smock,

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"I cannot engage in dialogue if I am closed to others. Openness? Evenmore: acceptance! Come to my house, enter my heart. My heart welcomes you. It wants to hear you. This capacity for empathy enables a true human dialogue in which words, ideas and questions arise from an experience of fraternity and shared humanity."
**Pope Francis (1936-)**

"The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor is a Hindu or a Buddhist to be come a Christion. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth."
**Swami Vivekananda (1863 - 1902)**

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