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**Tradition, Freedom &
Development**



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Editorial

Today we live in a world of unimaginable change and undeniable progress. No generation earlier has seen so much development in so short a time. How does the development that we see around us affect us? How is it related to our rootedness or freedom? How does it enhance our freedom? How can we foster a development that is rooted in the tradition and open to the new? Can we dream of a humane and all-inclusive development that does justice to humanity? These are some of the questions that we take up in this volume, which tries to relate human development to freedom.

The first article takes up Gandhi who have been dealing with the issues connected with freedom and development. Prof George Pattery, President (Acting), Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, enquires into the concept of development and its hermeneutical role with regard to tradition and freedom. This will take us to view the evolutionary contribution in an appreciative frame. In the light of these we review Gandhi's notion of development and its linkage with tradition and freedom. Wholeness/holon-movement/interdependence is the point of departure of the author. The choice of the model of development will define our understanding of tradition and freedom. Wholeness takes the evolutionary tradition forward. The author invites us to augment the fields of compassion so that sarvodaya and antyodaya, as visualized by Gandhi could be reinterpreted and appropriated.

The Gandhian vision of freedom may be contrasted to the materialistic approach of M.N. Roy. Dr James Ponniah, Dean of

Philosophy, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, explores the philosophy of one of the modern atheistic philosophers of India, M.N. Roy, to find out how he critiqued and re-interpreted the tradition that he came from, i.e. Marxism, to develop his own system, namely, Radical Humanism. It further dwells on its key concepts of freedom, rationality and morality to find their relevance for a secular development ethics. For this, according to the author, we need to look for philosophies and world-views that would put us on the right path of living for all. While so much has been written about the role of religion to orient ourselves for a holistic future, the author holds that M.N. Roy's radical humanism provides an alternative worldview from which all irrespective of religious creeds and ideological colours can draw inspiration and motivations for a holistic environmental ethics.

The next two articles give an overview of the challenges facing contemporary world. The first one by Dr. Nishant Irudayadason, Director, JDV Centre for Applied Ethics, examines the technological challenges that India faces and explores some of the moral responses, based on the German philosopher, Hans Jonas's imperative of responsibility.

The comprehensive and life-long task Hans Jonas sets himself is to find an ethics for our age, the technological one. He develops this approach mainly in his book *The Imperative of Responsibility*. Jonas is certainly not against technology especially since technological innovations play positive roles in the field of health and medicine, communication and transport. While the technological potential itself is not the problem, the lack of ethical restrictions, the unbridled and uncontrolled development and increase of technological power is indeed a problem. The destructive potential of technology cannot be contained on its own and Jonas metaphorically describes this ethical impasse as 'the finally unbound Prometheus.' The limitlessness and infiniteness of human dominion are expressions of our Promethean arrogance and immodesty. It is one thing that we have reached such degree

of technical mastery that we can cultivate, manipulate, shape and change life up to the point that we irreversibly damage or even destroy it. It is another that there are no ethical restrictions that can protect us from effectuating our own demise as well as the destruction of the environment. It is in this context that Jonas underscores the importance of human responsibility.

The author holds that everyone can participate in the critique of technological utopianism and construction of a new world, more human and more clean. Whether through an artistic practice, through participation in events, by creating a website, or through discussions and debates, everyone can add a stone to build our future world and to bring about change in the attitude of humanity. The Imperative of Responsibility is one of those stones which humanity needs today. It seems then that the ethics of Jonas by criticizing the enslavement of human person to our modern economy and comfort technology, addresses one of the biggest problems that humanity must address in the twenty-first century.

The next article reflects on some of the challenges that modern India faces, given its paradoxical model of development. Kuruvilla Pandikattu, Director, JDV Centre for Science-Religion Studies, holds that India, with a rich tradition and history of more than 5000 years is still a vibrant democracy, where freedom is very much cherished, if not always realised. The modern India that is progressing is truly a story of living contradictions and creative paradoxes. In this chapter, he shows that only debate and dialogue can make India a viable player in the globalized world of today, where democracy is cherished, development is furthered and freedom realized.

In the first part, the author highlights the contribution of Amartya Sen, who equates genuine freedom with enabling development and fostering capabilities. Later he reflects on the present state of political freedom and democratic polity in India following the analysis of Mukulika Banerjee. This takes him to the burn-

ing problem of corruption in India and the sad, ambivalent and uncending story of Anna Hazare movement. These issues point to the need to carry on dialoging with adversaries of different sorts, an imperative to foster development and freedom. In the concluding part, basing on the novel *The White Tiger*, the author takes up some of the contradictions inherent in our vibrant India, which makes it an incomplete story, a dynamic and complex movement forward. The author dreams that we can move towards “completing” the story of progress and development by emphasizing respectful and on-going dialogue with all players that constitute the larger or entangled stories that the emerging India is: something to be achieved by reinterpreting and appropriating the weakest individual man or woman in India!

The following article by Ginish Cheruparambil, Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune, explores Amartya Sen's capability approach to freedom. The center of Sen's vision is what he calls a ‘capability approach’, where the basic concern of human development is ‘our capability to lead the kind of lives we have reason to value,’ rather than the usual concentration on rising GDP, technical progress, or industrialization. His approach ‘inescapably focuses on the agency and judgment of individuals’ including their capability, responsibility, and opportunity. Raising human capability is good because it improves the choices, wellbeing, and freedom of people. Further, human capability plays a significant role in influencing social change and in influencing economic production. In this context, the author proposes a creative interpretation and criticism of Sen's approach to freedom.

The next article deals with Buddhist hermeneutics and its relevance for contemporary India. Prof. Dr. Mangala R. Chinchora, Department of Philosophy, University of Pune, dwells into the significance of Asaṅga's *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra*. According to her, knowledge is not merely for its own sake, but it is to be used, practised and lived actually. Such knowledge is a mark of unity of Indian Civilization. Naturally, various sages and seers have

spoken out their own revelations of truth/s. Since their comprehensions and visions not being the same, interpretative varieties have emerged. Further, due to differences in the modes of thinking and living truth, traditions of interpretation, reinterpretation and multiple understandings surfaced. Thus, cultural diversity which is lived/ experienced actually has been a living fact.

Within the fold of Indian Civilisation, Gautama the Buddha in the 5th century B.C. attempted to discover the truth and excel the then prevalent modes of thoughts and practices. He, after his enlightenment, initially kept silence, and was hesitant to respond to the questions posed by the people, but after repeated requests from humans and super-natural entities, he attempted to speak about his revelation/realisation of the truth. Then he delivered the first discourse known as the Dhammacakka-pabattana-sutta. After his Bodhi (enlightenment) till his Mahāparinirvāta (death), – i.e., for almost 50 years – he expressed his views and thoughts at different places and times, and in response to various issues of the numerous individuals. His understanding and comprehension about himself, others, and the world at large, consists of the four basic truths viz, the Ārya-satyas (Four Noble Truths). Although he was clear enough that realisation cannot be substituted by the description and discourse of truth, nonetheless it is out of compassion and love towards others that he preached and disseminated his knowledge of truth. After Buddha's passing away the need and necessity of interpreting and reunderstanding his thought and experiences arose and multiplied in course of time. And this is how within the fold of Buddhism, hermeneutics originated and flourished.

This legacy of interpretative tradition further was reinforced by the movement of Mahāyāna Buddhism in general and Yogācāra tradition of Buddhism in particular, and later on against which the Mādhyamika trend within Buddhism emerged. In the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra (approximately 100 B.C.) the seeds were sown and Sañdhinirmocana-sūtra further added some points, but it is

Asaṅga ((c.300 - 370 CE), an Indian Buddhist master and scholar and major exponent of Yogācāra, who systematically pioneered this trend of thought and hence is honoured by the status of one of the “Six Ornaments of Buddhism in the Jambu-dvipa”.

This paper is an attempt to inquire into Buddhist hermeneutics in particular, by using Asaṅga’s Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra as a starting point. It is a modest endeavour to re-interpret and re-understand Buddhist thought and bring out its relevance by way of its appropriation for the present. This two-fold task – of interpretation and making it relevant in the present contexts – is attempted in three sections: first, a question of what is the nature and status of hermeneutic within Buddhism in general and Asaṅga’s Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra in particular is considered. Then, we attempt to inquire as to why hermeneutics is required. Finally, we concentrate on the question as to how it is to be used significantly – the methods and procedures of its use for philosophy and practice. The entire exercise, we hope, is a methodological appropriation of historical facts, and focusing on linking our understanding of them to the present context.

The papers in this volume are mostly based on an international seminar on “Tradition, Freedom and Development: Hermeneutic Appropriations” held on August 10-12, 2012 at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV), Pune 411014, India. Its primary goal is to understand and appreciate one’s own culture and the values that shape its aspirations and motivate its actions. And its objective was to mobilize research teams to study the nature, interpretation and development of cultures and to apply them to the challenges of contemporary globalised world. In this venture Centre for Values, Research and Philosophy has teamed up with JDV and organised the three day seminar cum workshop.

The final article in this issue is the inaugural Lecture ‘*Schola Brevis*’ at Jnana-Deep Vidyapeeth, delivered on June 10, 2013, by Rudolf C. Heredia SJ, Independent researcher, Mumbai. He reflects on Pope Francis’s vision of a poor Church for the poor

is a call to be more authentic and focused in their mission. However, we need to constantly contextualise our understanding of what it means to be poor for our Church today and every day; as also who the poor are and how they are to be served. It is particularly pertinent for ecclesial studies in a poor country. For as institutions of higher learning Catholic faculties are concerned with not just the transmission but the transformation of the social heritage of the Church. Given the huge institutional investment of the Church, what is needed today is prophetic witnessing not just by charismatic individuals, but by Church institutions. Catholic faculties are called to give such prophetic institutional witness.

Pope Francis's vision and mission for the Church is a defining moment, a *kairos*, that challenges local churches to come out from our comfort zones to a prophetic witness that contextualises their option for the poor and the promotion of justice in solidarity with them. This demands a renewed priority for charismatic elements in the Church and its institutions, even as it must still be balanced by the institutional one.

This requires an option for a pedagogic praxis that is liberative and transformative in counter-cultural solidarity with the poor. Such pedagogies focus less on teaching course content than on transforming learners and reorienting teachers. Taken together these pedagogies have the potential for a community that is creative and humane, ethical and non-violent, participative and affirmative, inculturated and diverse. Catholic faculties are missioned to a critical and constructive role in facilitating such ecclesial communities in solidarity with and for the poor, for they encapsulate the learning and the teaching Church, *ecclesia docens, ecclesia discerns*, in the quest for the kingdom of God.

I do hope that these articles give us enough theological fodder for reflection and assimilation.

Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ
(Guest Editor)

Gandhi's Evolutionary Hermeneutics: Reinterpreting Tradition, Development and Freedom for Today

George Pattery SJ

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Abstract: In this article the author begins by explaining the concept of development and its hermeneutical role with regard to tradition and freedom. This will take us to view the evolutionary contribution in an appreciative frame. In the light of these we shall review Gandhi's notion of development and its linkage with tradition and freedom. Wholeness/holon-movement/inter-dependence is the point of departure of the author. The choice of the model of development will define our understanding of tradition and freedom. Wholeness takes the evolutionary tradition forward. The author invites us to augment the fields of compassion so that *survodaya* and *antyodaya*, as visualized by Gandhi could be reinterpreted and appropriated.

The article argues that in the triptych of 'tradition, development and freedom', development holds the hermeneutical key to understand the terms. This is further substantiated in the light of the evolutionary studies and in the light of the perspectives given by Gandhi. We conclude to say that the inter-relatedness and inter-dependence of all with everything calls for a compassionate approach to life.

Key words: Evolutionary world-view, Gandhi, Holon, Inter-relatedness, Development, Swaraj (Self-rule), Swadeshi (rootedness)

The approach in this paper is integral in nature. It touches upon philosophical, religious, humanitarian and cosmic points of view

of tradition, development and freedom. As will be argued in the course of this paper, such an integral approach is called for by the evolutionary perspective given by science and is evidenced in the philosophy and thinking of Gandhi. We shall begin by explaining the concept of development and its hermeneutical role with regard to tradition and freedom. This will take us to view the evolutionary contribution in an appreciative frame. In the light of these we shall review Gandhi's notion of development and its linkage with tradition and freedom.

1. Development

In the triptych of 'Tradition, Development and Freedom', the middle term development seems to hold the key. This is the point of departure of my paper. Development necessarily has material and economic connotation to it, especially in today's market-driven economy and way of life. It is often related to the economic and social uplift of a person or community. In contrast, most of the Indian languages use the word development in the sense of an upward movement that is more holistic. 'Unnati' in Bengali language or 'Purogati' in Malayalam language could mean economic uplift, but can also mean an integral movement forward. It is part of a journey and it is a long journey.

1.1. *Skewed Theory of Development*

The model of development that is dominant since the modern era, and especially during the colonial times is derived from the philosophy of European enlightenment. It assumed that rational and empirical sciences are the roads to development. It presupposed a notion of culture and development that are superior and inferior, performative and folk-oriented. Especially since the time of Francis Bacon the neopositivist approach dominated the western-worldview. As Joke Schrijvers argued, "faith in the objectivity and neutrality of scientific knowledge, based on the strict dichotomy between the observer (subject) and the observed (object) is central to this approach" (Schrijvers 1993: 35).

Accordingly Europe, where modern science developed, is considered to be the centre of development. This led to an epistemological error of assuming that geographically Europe became the centre of development and the closer one is to Europe the more one is considered developed; temporarily, those who are ancient and away from the modern time, were considered less developed. In this colonial model of growth and technological advance, the political control led to the material development and in this road-map, the poor were considered a liability and the poor countries were to be colonized. It was then mistakenly assumed that the material and human progress would bring happiness to people. This has been seriously called into doubt particularly since the tragic experience of the two world wars, the planned and partly achieved destruction of whole peoples, and the looming of atomic peril. A naive mechanistic optimism has been replaced by a well-founded anxiety for the fate of humanity. The above concept of development does not, therefore, express the true meaning of development.

In our own time, Pope John Paul II critiqued this perspective when he asserted that “a mere accumulation of goods and services, even for the benefit of the majority, is not enough for the realization of human happiness” (John Paul II 1987: 28). Already *Populorum Progressio* had adopted that ‘integral development’ is essential for lasting peace. This being the case, the Church has adopted the phrase integral development to convey its concept of human development. The Social Teaching of the Church acknowledges that although development has a necessary economic dimension, since it must supply the greatest possible number of the world’s inhabitants with an availability of goods essential for them “to be”, it is not limited to that dimension (John Paul IV 1967: 15-17). Increased possession is not the ultimate good of nations or of individuals. All growth is ambivalent. It is essential if man is to develop as man, but in a way it imprisons man if he considers it the supreme good. Thus it restricts his vision. The exclusive pursuit of possessions thus becomes an obstacle to in-

dividual fulfillment and to man's true greatness. Both for nations and for individual men, avarice is the most evident form of moral under-development. Integral human development is, therefore, a genuine move towards better human, economic, social, political, cultural, moral and spiritual conditions of existence. As Pope Paul VI expresses in *Populorum Progresso*, it is, "a development which is for each and all the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human" (John Paul IV 1967: 15-18). The less human conditions include the lack of material necessities for those who are without the minimum essentials for life, accentuated by the moral deficiencies of those who are mutilated by selfishness. Other less human conditions consist of oppressive social structures, whether due to the abuses of ownership or to abuses of power, which lead to the exploitation or abuses of workers or unjust transactions. Whereas more humane conditions enables the passage from misery towards the possession of necessities, victory over social scourges, the growth of knowledge, the acquisition of culture, increased esteem of the dignity of others, the turning towards the spirit of poverty, cooperation for the common good, the will and desire for peace. True humane conditions promote the acknowledgement of supreme values and of God as the source and finality of life.

2. Development from an Evolutionary Perspective

We are told that the universe is about 13.8 billion years old with a future of billions of years – about 100 trillion years – although the sun will die out long before then. Our own galaxy, one among the billions of galaxy, the Milky Way, consists of 100 billion stars and stretching about 100, 000 light years in diameter. This amazingly fine-tuned universe narrates its story through us the humans – in us the humans, the universe is coming to consciousness (Delio 2011: 17).

It is now established that in this magnificently evolving universe, humans like Mammals, have existed on earth for a relatively short time, only about 0.04 percent of the earth's 4.5 years

of existence. However through greater complexification and emergence of new forms, life increased and multiplied. Philip Clayton writes: “once there was no universe and then, after the Big Bang, there was an exploding world of stars and galaxies. Once the earth was unpopulated and later it was teeming with primitive life forms. Once there were apes living in trees and then there were Mozart, Einstein and Gandhi.”¹

In this long winding and exciting journey of evolution, everything in the universe is ‘genetically’ related; the universe is bound together in communion, each thing with all the rest. We are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent. In this world, we humans are neither superior nor the centre of the universe, but we are part of a web of life; by nature we are interconnected. To be is to be related. Three characteristics define the systemic evolution. First, being is intrinsically relational and exists as unbroken wholeness in a system. Secondly the system is in movement – holon-movement – and is a dynamic reality (a whole that is part of other wholes). Thirdly as reality is in movement and in relationship, it manifests endless depth. Reality is not exhaustive; reality is beyond us. Wholeness, relationality and depth characterizes the evolutionary system (Delio 2011: 27).

First time in the history of the universe today we learn about the big picture and the tiny picture – that everything is inter-related and interdependent. We have the star-dust in us. The least particle of the atom is both mass and energy – visible and invisible- and we are told the entire universe is composed of such particles. The same pattern is repeated in the whole universe and is in holon movement. Everything is in everything and each is part and whole at the same time. We are at the same time part and whole. In this on-going forward movement, everything depends on everything. Development needs to take this inter-relatedness into account. The timeless conversation about how we and everything else are connected is now confirmed by western science. It is searching for its own unified field. At the level of our everyday

experience and at the quantum dimension, we and the fundamental units of creation are joined in ways we are just beginning to discover, certainly don't yet fully understand and in many cases, can't even imagine. The Universe is a space alive with a cosmic dance of Nothing hiding as Something, of the waltz of appearance and disappearance, of masked dark energies holding everything together. Clearly, space is not empty!

Our relation to the invisible dimension of space and our understanding of how we are connected to it and influence it is new territory. We need open eyes and ears to for this exploration, for it will shape our evolutionary journey and every aspect of our human experience. Ultimately, it will determine how we as a species shall take our position as citizens of the Cosmos.”² Brian Swimme adds: “The Universe shivers with wonder in the depth of the human” (Swimme 1984: 32).

This inter-connectivity and inter-dependence holds the hermeneutical key to the future of development, more specifically to the understanding of development in the present. Concept of development should take into account the inter-connectivity of all from the beginning. It can't dichotomize between the material and the spiritual. It is one whole. This is the point of departure of my presentation. If development is the hermeneutical key in this triptych, the inter-relatedness is the point of departure in our understanding and evaluation of development. The energy crisis and the conundrum of nuclear energy (powerful and destructive) confirm that the present model of development is skewed and that it is unsustainable. The Occupy Wall Street demonstrations and the Farmers agitations across the globe demonstrate that urgent response is needed to adopt a sustainable model of development.

2.1. Freedom and Tradition within an Evolutionary Perspective

If I am part of the holon movement – part and whole – then my freedom belongs to me as ‘whole’ where I am complete and ca-

pable of deciding in relation to the whole; if I am part of the whole, then my freedom is relative; my freedom is true when I am in relation with the whole – the holon movement. If the goal of holon movement is evolutionary infinite fullness, then my freedom is related to this future. Freedom is not fully in the present; it is future oriented; yet my freedom consists in acting in the present in tune with the holon movement. Freedom is the present in so far as I decide for and with the future. Freedom is the future in so far as in every act I am creating the future. Freedom is ever in the making; it is our possibility. From an evolutionary point of view, freedom is in going forward, taking holon-movement forward. It is only in ‘moving ahead’ and ‘together’ there is freedom and growth. Everything in the universe is a holon or whole/part. Nothing is a whole entirely unto itself, while nothing is a part separate from everything else. Everything is a whole/part. Cannato mentions that each holon has four-fold capacities of self-preservation, self-adaptation, self-transcendence, and self-dissolution (Cf. Cannato 2010: 151.) Through these capabilities each part is enabling the whole and the whole enables the parts.

For Teilhard “God is the unbroken wholeness in movement, and creation is movement toward God-centered wholeness” (Teilhard de Chardin 1969: 33). To be related to God is to become whole within the whole. We stand within God as it were – Wholeness in the light of the holon movement defines God-world relationship: “Whole person in the whole creation in the whole God.” God-world relationship is wholeness. God is inter-related depth and movement; God is the unbroken wholeness in movement. (Cf. Delio 2011: 33-34). In God we move and have our being. God is the ‘within’ and ‘ahead’ of evolution, calling it forth to its fullness.

Tradition is the accumulated wisdom of the past transmitted to us in an – ongoing way, and moves forward, enriching and enlivening the past. It is parambara = living organism. From an evolutionary point of view, tradition is alive and active in the

present. On the other hand evolutionary pattern shows unpredictability and disruption at the emergence of the new. Today we know that it is not the fittest and the mightiest that evolved. There is unpredictability and surprise at every stage of evolution. Unpredictable in its process yet evolution is carried forward in holon movement. In spite of and because of and beyond ‘disruption’ evolution is advanced; thus tradition is carried forward. Development as the hermeneutical key in the triptych has to take tradition as the flow of continuity into the debate. On the other hand, tradition is not an unqualified continuity, but a connectivity that is embedded with unpredictability in the past and in the future.

Development holds the hermeneutical key. It can take the holon movement forward and can advance the cause of tradition. In the process it operationalizes freedom. However the dynamics of freedom has to account inter-relatedness and inter-dependence of all. Decisions on development can either carry forward or retard evolution; to that extent it influences tradition and the exercise of freedom. When development respects ‘Holon movement’, tradition grows in an organic way – related to the origin and yet ever-growing. The type of development defines my freedom as my possibility to evolve the future of evolution.

3. Gandhian Hermeneutic

On hindsight, we could say that Gandhi saw ‘development’ from this evolutionary hermeneutical angle although he did not use the evolutionary language. However in the immediate context of British colonialism in India, his starting point was ‘swaraj’ or freedom for self-rule. His seminal booklet on *Hind Swaraj* (1908) repudiates not just the foreign rule, but modern civilization based on power and greed. Even after thirty years of stormy political life, Gandhi held in the revised edition of *Hind Swaraj* that he would not alter anything from it. For Gandhi any theory of freedom has to be rooted in the choice of the type of development. The ancient Indian wisdom articulated that for him. Accordingly

he said: “For ages the oppressed have cried for freedom and yet a thousand man-made statues have failed to give it to them. They can give it only to themselves; they shall find it only in obedience to the Divine Statues which are inscribed upon their hearts. Let them resort to the inward freedom, and the shadow of oppression shall no more darken he earth.” (Gandhi CW XXXVIII: 1). For Gandhi then, true freedom comes when one chooses the path of God-realization and when one orders one’s life accordingly. Ordering of life cannot be done without choosing the right type of development that promotes wholeness and purposefulness.

In this debate on genuine human freedom, Gandhi fundamentally challenged the man-machine paradigm of imperialism. He was not opposed to technology and modernity; he was confronting the technology-driven progress that was the yardstick of development in modernity. In fact spinning wheel represented for him the sum total of a healthy relationship with ‘technology’. “Indeed by redefining modernity and development, the Gandhian vision seeks to relocate the place of science and its practical uses in the overall terrain of human affairs where it can promote mankind’s holistic progress, and not be used for exploitation and violence” (Kulkarni 2012: 55). Human pursuits should be motivated by the divine law. ‘Charka’ (Spinning wheel) represented for him a non-violent machine that ‘helps every individual everywhere in the world’. However he saw the menace that is hidden in the western economic system totally dependent on technology, enabling colonial exploitation and seeking soul-less materialistic civilization. And the menace came true: “In World War II Auschwitz and Hiroshima showed that progress through technology has escalated man’s destructive impulses into more precise and incredibly more devastating form,” Bruno Bettelheim said. “The concentration camps with their gas chambers, the first atomic bomb … confronted us with the stark reality of overwhelming death, not so much one’s own – this each of us has to face sooner or later, and however uneasily, most of us manage not to be over-powered by our fear of it – but the unnecessary and untimely

death of millions. ... Progress not only failed to preserve life but it deprived millions of their lives more effectively than had ever been possible before. Whether we choose to recognize it or not, after the Second World War, Auschwitz and Hiroshima became monuments to the incredible devastation man and technology together bring about.”³

Hence it is the ultimate search for the end in life – self-realization – that should determine theories of development. Gandhi's critique of modern civilization should be located within the larger purpose of life – namely God realization. Modernist development ideology tends to curtail true freedom by disrupting the holon movement, and by denying the organic growth of tradition. Hence Gandhi talked about development that is based on *swadeshi* principle: rooted in the here and now, going beyond in an ever-widening oceanic circle, where centre and periphery are everywhere. “In this [*swadeshi*] structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle for which they are integral units” (Gandhi CW. LXXXV: 33).

The outer circumference in this design would not wield power to crush the inner circle but would give strength to all within and derive its strength from it. Machinery will not displace human labour nor their concentration of power in a few hands. Gandhi wanted India to strive for this ideal, and come to her own, rescuing the weaker section of the earth from the exploitation of the western civilization and from the narrow concept of independence. In this *swadeshi* model of many villages forming an ever-widening circle, Gandhi saw the ancient civilization coming alive through its traditions. It preserves its inter-connectivity

and inter-dependence in this ever-widening circle of relationship. To Gandhi, therefore, the kind of development that one chooses provides the hermeneutical key for understanding and advancing tradition. ‘Khadi’ and ‘charka’ represented this model of development. In such a model of glocalization, (instead of globalization), I am able to produce what I need. ‘Charka’ provided him with the tool of productivity at one’s leisure and in one’s surrounding. It shifted ‘production’ from the factory to home; it re-located the producer in his/her surrounding. In one stroke, ‘charka’ connected him with ancient traditions and it enabled individuals to be independent. It was a way of empowering the masses and introducing a new concept of cooperation.

Today many are rediscovering Gandhi as a prophet for the age of communication revolution. Interestingly modern means of communication finds a parallel in Gandhi. Kulkarni says:

Universal connectivity; emergence of new communities in the virtual space transcending the barriers of race, religion and nationality; social media on which new friendships blossom each day; participative democracy at international, national and local levels; steady progress towards inclusive development within nations giving rise to the real possibility of poverty becoming history throughout the world; trans-border collaborative scientific research; new tools to promote and preserve the heritage of arts, culture and indigenous knowledge traditions; the promise of new technologies to arrest and reverse the humongous damage wrought on the environment – all these changes prove how the Internet is promoting the ‘khadi spirit’. For they will mean transition from globalization to glocalization, from centralization to decentralization; from power and prosperity in the hands of a few to many; from prosperity defined purely in material terms to that which gives primacy to the richness of culture and ethical values; from unhealthy competition to healthy cooperation; from exploitative attitude towards nature and its resources to an attitude of harmonious co-living (Kulkarni 2012: 56).

It is assumed today that the disconnect between economics and ethics which is dominant in the world since the colonial onslaught to conquering the distant markets will eventually be reduced with the new technology. Like ‘khadi’ the new technology should enable individuals to determine a mode of work/production that is ‘locally rooted’ and enhancing one’s goal in life. New technology augments the exercise of freedom without distancing one from his/her immediate surroundings and yet it is capable of connecting with the rest of the world. New technology’s connectivity is the true meaning of tradition. To see oneself in the web of connectivity from the origins to this day and to see oneself in holistic movement towards greater evolution is to retrace the true meaning of tradition. ‘Charka’ was intended to be an empowering tool for everyone to be self-sufficient and at the same time to connect with one’s surroundings and traditions.

For Gandhi development is aimed at ‘*sarvodaya*’ (development of all) and *antyodaya*’ (development to the last/end). Development is development when it cares for all and to the last one. ‘*Antyodaya*’ could also mean development that takes into account the end or purpose of life – development to the end – a never ending process. Connecting *sarvodaya* with *antyodaya*, one could speak of a development that is inter-connected, respecting the wholeness and aimed at advancing the original intent of all creation. *Antyodaya* as the end or to the end could signify that end-purpose of all needs to be achieved in and through development.

Gandhian perspective could thus easily be accommodated in the evolutionary perspective. In an evolutionary context, development in its integral meaning has no limit; it is aimed at achieving the end/purpose of evolution itself which is growth and emergence of higher consciousness. That means we can always develop more, further, higher, and deeper. In Traditional Enlightenment, it’s possible to become “fully enlightened.” In Buddhism, they call it “cessation” or “the end of becoming.” In

Evolutionary Enlightenment there is no final resting point – it is about infinite becoming for eternity. Hence the right type of development can guarantee infinite freedom enabling genuine growth of tradition in its full meaning.

4. Roadmap of Compassion

The triptych of development, tradition and freedom, when viewed from an evolutionary perspective, highlights the fact that they need to be viewed in their inter-connectedness. They need to attend to one another; they need to talk to one another; they need to respect one another. From the perspective of holon movement, fields of ‘compassion’ (for want of another term, we choose compassion though it might sound too religious!) is the road map of this triptych of tradition, development and freedom. The morphogenic fields of energy that is in and around everything needs to be approached in compassion. As the Dalai Lama said, compassion is the radicalism of our time. As Vimala Thakar says: “the challenge now is to create an entirely new, vital revolution that takes the whole of life into its sphere. We have never dared embrace the whole of life in all its awesome beauty; we’ve been content to perpetuate fragments, invent corners where we feel conceptually secure and emotionally safe ... Today ... we can no longer go on with this game of fragmentation” (as quoted by Cannato 2010: 161).

The new sense that is emerging is inter-relatedness. Compassion is the result of a sense of the whole. This new compassionate sense is both prophetic and mystic. The prophetic dimension of compassion engages the material and the universe and sees with clarity the whole and the significance of the part and builds them together. “Relationships are based on mutuality and respect and genuine concern for the common good and are inclusive of everyone, including Earth itself” (Cannato 2010: 163.) The mystic calls us for the incomprehensible holy mystery that is being unfolded in and through the evolutionary process, and is unafraid of grace (unpredictable) that is operative in the evolutionary pro-

cess. The prophetic and the mystic should surge into a unitive flow that embraces all and remains all. This happens when we receive the giftedness joyfully – the full acceptance of the power and energy that we are within this evolutionary holon movement – the blessing, the grace that we are; creation that is gifted to us. This reception and becoming the grace is possible in the fields of compassion, that includes a constant dimension of self-dissolution (dying) and enables us to face our every fear, including the fear of death, in freedom. We cannot be whole if we are not free; we cannot be free without self-dissolution. The opposite is unlimited consumption, uncontrolled production and the untold damage to the earth.

5. To Conclude

Wholeness/holon-movement/inter-dependence is the point of departure of my reflection. The choice of the model of development will define our understanding of tradition and freedom. Holistic development, as Amartya Sen argues, is genuine freedom. Wholeness takes the evolutionary tradition forward. We are invited to augment the fields of compassion so that *sarvodaya* and *antyodaya* could happen.

Notes

1. This quote is from religion-online.org. accessed on June 2, 2012.
2. For details see Ron Friedman; Vistar Foundation Inc. www.vistar-foundation.org. accessed on June 4, 2012.
3. As quoted by Chris Hedge, “The Science of Genocide”, Monday, August 6, 2012 at Truthdig.com. accessed on August 9, 2012.

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M.N. Roy's Critique of Marxist Tradition: Revisiting and Appropriation of the Notion of Freedom in Radical Humanism for Development Ethics

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Abstract: In this paper the author aims to explore the philosophy of one of the modern atheistic philosopher's of India, M.N. Roy to find out how he critiqued and re-interpreted the tradition that he came from, i. e., Marxism, and to develop his own system, namely, Radical Humanism. It further dwells on its key concepts of freedom, rationality and morality to finds their relevance for a secular development ethics. For this, according to the author, we need to look for philosophies and world-views that would put us on the right path of living for all. While so much has been written about the role of religion to orient ourselves for a holistic future, the author holds that M.N. Roy's radical humanism provides an alternative world-view from which all irrespective of religious creeds and ideological colours can draw inspiration and motivations for a holistic environmental ethics.

Keywords: M.N. Roy, Marxism, Indian communism, humanism, Radical humanism.

This paper aims to explore the philosophy of one of the modern atheistic philosopher's of India, M.N. Roy to find out how he critiqued and re-interpreted the tradition that he came from,

i. e., Marxism and to develop his own system, namely, Radical Humanism. It further dwells on its key concepts of freedom, rationality and morality to finds their relevance for a secular development ethics.

1. A Brief Biographical Sketch of M.N. Roy

Manabendra Nath Roy (later popularly known as M.N. Roy) (1887-1954), one of the most original yet controversial thinkers of Modern India, was born in 1887 at a village called Arbelia near Calcutta and died in 1954 in Dehradun. His life is characterised by relentless pursuit of freedom which he sought at any cost all through his life. It was the search for freedom which made him a proponent of his own philosophy, not a slave of an ideology or a system. This explains why he decided to quit Marxist party for which he was one of the important ideologues. He went to Mexico and founded the communist party of Mexico. He served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and became the ‘political Commissar’ of the communist University of Toilers of the East which was seen those days as a nursery for the would-be leaders of communism in Asia. Independent-minded, Roy did not see eye to eye with Lenin and he also differed quite a great deal from the ultra-leftist policies of the communist party. Thus he severed his ties with Russian communists (Bhattacharrya 1961: 2).

Upon returning to India, he was actively involved in congress party but for a short span of time as he grew critical of Gandhian leadership and left the party later. In 1940 M.N. Roy founded his own outfit, i.e., Radical Democratic Party. Later, he dissolved that too and launched not a party but rather a new movement known as the Radical Humanist Movement in 1948. He also founded the Indian Renaissance Institute at Dehradun in 1946 with a view to evolving a renaissance movement in India on the basis of scientific humanism in order to train and mould special group of intellectuals and leaders for a new future. Being a rationalist, he subjected everything to critical reasoning and did not

even spare Marxism in this regard. He grew increasingly critical of Marxist ideology, saw through its pitfalls and soon evolved his own philosophy called ‘Radical Humanism.’ He renamed his journal '*Independent India*' as '*The Radical Humanist*' and ventilated his views on Marxism through this magazine. He appealed to his communist friends to give up the mechanical understanding of Marxism. Instead, he wanted them to base their thoughts upon experiences, and thus to be able to re-interpret the insights of Marx to the present context. He held that one’s existence and environment would necessarily determine one’s thought. He wrote “our political consciousness and behaviour will be determined by [these] peculiar features of our social being. Necessarily, our thinking process, our ideology also must be very largely influenced thereby. And we shall be able to contribute to an amplification and enrichment of Marxism which is not a closed system of philosophy, not a bunch of dogmas. It is based on human experience, and therefore must adjust itself to new lessons acquired from experience” (Roy 1942: 148). It is his openness to contexts and experiences that drove him to widen the horizons of his philosophy, transcend Marxism and found a new philosophy of Radical or Scientific Humanism as we see in the following pages.

2. Re-interpreting Marxism

Though M.N. Roy’s thought was much influenced and shaped by Marxism, he was always able to transcend the paradigmatic limits of Marxism. He went on to relate to certain notions and views that he found lacking in Marxian worldview. While Roy reinterpreted Marxism in his construction of Radical Humanism, he also differed from Marxist views in many ways.

Roy notes that Marxist theory of historical materialism is another form of belief in the theory of predestination. Taken to its logical conclusion, Marxism would imply that whatever happens in human history happens not because of the will of man but because of the historical inevitability of class-struggle.

In Marxism, history is a succession of events caused by the automatic developments produced by the contractions inherent in the means of production. The idea of class struggle brought about by automatic contradictions in economics is nothing but economic determinism. Economic determinism, Roy said “is a throwback to the doctrine of predestination....The march of events being determined either by a Divine Providence or by inexorable economic laws, man can have no control on them... Human life will then be the greatest tragedy on earth” (Bhattacharyya 1961: 2). But for Roy man is an architect of his own history. To quote Roy “The function of a revolutionary and liberating social philosophy is to lay emphasis on the basic fact of history that man is the maker of his own world” (Quoted in Bhattacharyya 1961: 62).

He rejects Marxism’s political theory as well. In Marxism individual is subordinated to society. This position is unacceptable to Roy, because society is nothing but the coming together of individuals whose existence is prior to that of the society. Hence individuals come first and society next. As an entity created by and consisting of individuals, society is the means to attain the end, which is freedom and progress of the individual.

Marxism which privileges society over individuals is a totalitarian cult and totalitarianism is the negation of the very concept of freedom. Marxism negates the significance of the individual who has no existence apart from the class. For Marx, individual freedom may have a meaningful place in classless society. “Real freedom [and democracy] can come only when we have reached the classless society but classless society is an utopia” Therefore in the final analysis what will come to stay would be the totalitarian state. Nor does M.N. Roy view positively the notion of classless society, which is too much of a utopia to be materialized in a historical time and place.

3. His Idea of Radical Humanism

Roy's idea of radical humanism is based on the idea of materialism in the sense that at the end of a long process of evolution of the material universe man—the highest product of evolution – emerged as an autonomous, free, rational and a moral being. “Before the appearance of the man or any life the universe existed as a vast mass of matter and energy and its evolution was purely mechanical in character. Life, which is a chemical process, emerged out of non-living matter spontaneously in consequence of the operation of physic-chemical laws and man is the outcome of the long process of biological evolution” (Bhattacharjee 1971: 14).

In fact he preferred the term ‘physical realism’ to materialism but he did not develop the idea subsequently . Though the concept of matter is constantly changing with the advancement of science and its discoveries, what cannot but be presupposed in all of this is the ‘physical reality’ of the cosmos. As Roy puts it, “physics has discarded the old conception of matter, but it has not dissolved the physical universe into nothingness or the fantasy of disembodied minds” (Roy 1955: 302). Thus something of the physical will always remain to be true.

No doubt evolution necessarily implies a complex process of diversification, and underlying this diversification there is a fundamental unity—a common foundation—which cannot but be matter for Roy. “The search for a unity underlying diversity is the oldest urge in man. It is the foundation of philosophy....” (Bhattacharjee 1971: 302) and in search for ‘what is reality at its core?’, science has come to conclude that it is fundamentally material in nature and it is one.

Just as the universe is a physical system, the human being, who is grown out of it, is also a physical whole. But there is a great difference between the two. “The physical universe is law-governed, the laws being inherent in itself, whereas man possesses will and can choose. Between the world of man and the

world of inanimate matter, there lies the vast world of biological evolution" (Bhattacharjee 1971: 302).

He considered physical realism (materialism) as the most plausible hypothesis about reality because "it provides the soundest philosophical foundation of the humanist view of life because, by abolishing the supernatural, it sets man spiritually free, capable of creating a world of goodness and harmony" (Bhattacharjee 1971: 302).

Roy upheld the physical foundations of man's life and not the divine essence of man. "All the manifestations of life-consciousness, intelligence, will—can be traced down to a common origin, which is a physical substance. There is a red thread of continuity running through the entire process of cosmic evolution including biological evolution" (Bhattacharjee 1971: 305).

The philosophical quest in woman drives her on to explore her true nature. It asks such questions about oneself as "Who am I basically? What is my true me? Such questions in philosophy led many thinkers to speak about the notion of 'soul' as the most basic dimension of a human being.

Thus in his philosophical inquiries, Roy also gives his understanding of soul "The soul is a sum total of the intellectual and emotional attributes of the human being. Scientific knowledge of the biological phenomenon man, thus rounds up the monistic philosophy of physical realism" (Bhattacharjee 1971: 305). Man did not come to the earth from nowhere; with all that is specific to him—mind, intelligence and will—he is an integral part of the physical universe.

Though man is intrinsically related to the physical universe, yet he stands out by virtue of reason. But reason plays the specific role of adaptability and survival. Just as sub-human species adapt themselves to the surrounding environment through their instincts, human beings adapt themselves to the world outside through the use of reason. It is by virtue of reason that man can

learn how to survive and to be part of nature. Without reason, he would have become helpless and powerless. Hence that which is meant not to make him powerless should not make him dominate over the nature.

M. N. Roy explicitly appeals to the humans not to forget their origins and to use reason not to destroy nature but in favour of total well-being of the universe: “In as much as the entire process of biological evolution takes place in the context of the world of dead matter, human will cannot be an antithesis to the law-governedness of the physical Universe. Reason harmonises the two; and reason results from the consciousness of man’s (the whole man’s) being an integral part of the law-governed physical Universe” (Bhattacharjee 1971: 306)

Though man has become a rational being and the end product of evolution of the physical universe, his rationality does not make him in any way superior to the physical nature. In fact the rationality of man is derived from the rationality of the physical universe. So he could very well hold: “The reason in man is an echo of the harmony of the Universe” (Roy 1947 : 48).

The harmony of nature is neither accidental nor arbitrary. It is brought about by natural laws. For Roy, everything in the physical universe has a cause and is governed by natural laws. “This law-governedness and orderliness of the physical universe may be called reason in nature. Man, as a result of his highly developed brain, is conscious of this reason in nature. Man is rational and thinks in terms of cause and effect, because he finds the world as rational where everything happens as a consequence of something else. Subjective rationality thus is intimately related with objective rationality” (Bhattacharjee 1971: 16).

The cause-effect relationship in the law-governed world finds its reflection in reasoning processes of man, the final product of nature in evolution. Therefore, the law-governed world and the harmony of physical universe should govern and guide his be-

haviours, inform him of what is good and what is bad, what is morally permissible and ethically imperative. Thus the objective rationality that is inherent but implicit in nature finds its manifestation in the a-priori ethical sense innate in (wo)man.

M. N. Roy, for instance, observes, “Morality must be referred back to man’s innate rationality. Only then can man be moral, spontaneously and voluntarily. Reason is the only sanction of morality, which is an appeal to conscience; and conscience, in the last analysis, is nothing mystic or mysterious. It is a biological function, on the level of consciousness” (Bhattacharjee 1971: 306). This rationalistic ethics is also closely associated with aesthetics. That is why Roy writes “Morality will be a soul-killing virtue, if it cannot co-habit with the pleasant, the enjoyable and the beautiful” (as cited in Bhattacharjee 1971: 124).

Roy (1955:255) writes “A secular rationalist system of ethics can be logically deduced from the mechanistic cosmology of the materialistic philosophy” and further goes on to state in another place: “As the repository of residues antedating *Homo sapiens*, the psyche is not a link between the mortal man and the immortal spirit (God); it is the umbilical cord which binds man, with all his spiritual attributes, to Mother Nature—the physical world. Spiritual values are physically determined, the psyche is a daughter of the Mother Earth” (as cited in Bhattacharjee 1971: 129). Since spiritual and ethical values are derived from the biological heritage of man, they require no sanction from outside.

For Roy, “To be moral one only needs to be human” (Roy 1955: 307). But to be a human is to be free. And it is that which distinguishes humans from other beings. On the hand, he is different from others because he is free “There is a great difference: The physical universe is law-governed, the laws being inherent in itself, whereas Man possesses will and can choose” (Roy 1955: 307). But on the other hand, his difference cannot be absolutized as it is conditioned, controlled and enabled by the world to which he is an integral part. “Man can be free because he is a part of

a world which is self-contained and self-operating" (Roy 1955: 306)

Accordingly, in his philosophy of new humanism, M.N. Roy lays special emphasis on human freedom. The radical humanism of M.N. Roy derives all its values from the supreme value of freedom. "Freedom is the supreme value of life, because the urge for freedom is the essence of human existence. Indeed it can be traced all the way down the entire process of biological evolution. Since all ethical values are derived from the biological heritage of man, they require no sanction which transcends human existence. To be moral , one needs only be human. It is not necessary to go in search of divine or mystic metaphysical sanction" (Roy 1955: 307).

4. Implications of Radical Humanism for Development Ethics

According to M.N. Roy, freedom becomes both prerogative and prescriptive for the humans. Freedom can be celebrated as the prerogative of the humans, for it is reserved exclusively for the humans. Humans alone possess freedom and no other beings seem to have volition and exercise freedom. Nevertheless, freedom is also equally prescriptive in the sense it makes it imperative for the humans to act responsibly not only towards one another but also towards the physical universe, the metaphysical foundation of their existence. Humans have to care for the physical world which might seem to be external to and outside of them. But without the physical universe the human beings could not have come to be what they are now. While actualizing their potentiality for freedom which they alone possess, human beings cannot digress from their innate nature of being part of the physical universe. Thus the rightful use of freedom entails rightful ethical behaviour towards the nature.

By rendering the human rationality as a reflection of 'rationality of the physical universe,' M.N. Roy has made the human

reason as a derivative of the physical universe and thus has re-invented the symbiotic relationship between the humans and the cosmos. It is to be recalled that while the indigenous peoples for time immemorial have always believed in the inalienable relationship between the humans and the nature and manifested it through their religious and symbolic schemes, the modern human beings, with the advancement of science and technology, have come to ‘use’ nature for their selfish ends. They have forgotten that the future of humanity and the future of the environment are intrinsically, inseparably and indefinitely related to each other. But M.N. Roy’s understanding of human rationality as a reflection of cosmic rationality is a timely caveat for our modern period. He gently reminds us that the human rationality cannot go against and disrupt the harmony and order found in the universe. To do so would prove to be suicidal as it would mean going against the law of evolution and destroying ones’ own roots. Radical humanism, taken seriously, would then imply that human reason in no way can go against the overall well-balanced equilibrium of harmonious laws found in the universe. As indicated already Roy puts it this way: “The reason in man is an echo of the harmony of the Universe” (Roy 1952: 16). May be we can term it as cosmic-rationality. Human rationality and its various artefacts, science, technology, etc., have to take outmost care to be at the service of ‘law-governed’ universe and take cognizance of the sacredness of cosmic rationality or the cosmic order, *rita* of Hindu world-view. In tune with this awareness, we can easily formulate a secular ethical principle that would protect nature. Whatever perceives, respects , supports and sustains the unity and the harmony of the cosmos is morally right. Whatever disrupts the cosmic unity is morally wrong.

Is not this interpretation reading too much into Roy’s radical humanism? While trying to find answer to this question by reading various works of Roy, I found one expression “conquering nature /environment ” that seems to go against the basic concern against the environmental ethics. But when Roy uses such an

expression, he uses it from an evolutionary perspective in which he takes into account the early man's struggle for survival against the forces of nature. "As soon as it appeared on the earth, the human species had to undertake the struggle with environment for survival. That was the beginning of endless struggle for freedom" (Roy 1955: 307). The struggle that started then is still on. Human beings still continue to conquer it by acquiring knowledge of the nature/environment. Though Roy states that 'man will never conquer the universe', because it is unbound, he does not seem to be uncomfortable with using such triumphalistic expression to describe man's interaction with the nature. In fact, he did not live at a time in which the kind of ecological awareness that we have now was talked about. Environmental concerns did not enter into human consciousness of the people especially the intellectual group, the academic philosophers and social thinkers of his time. Nevertheless, with his scheme of humanism which "bases its ethics on rationalism, and traces the roots of reason in the orderliness of nature and harmony of the physical universe" (Roy 1955: 309) the human beings' self-claimed license to destroy nature for 'profit motives' is out of place in his scheme of things as it would prove to be suicidal.

While Roy time and again emphasises man's part-whole relationship with the universe, he also speaks of the need to make use of reason and morality to establish harmonious and intimate union with the universe and the beings in it. "Man's rationality and moral sense, which are casually connected, are the expression of cosmic harmony. Therefore, it is in the nature of man, as biological organism, to be rational and moral, and as such he is capable of living with others in peace and harmony" (Roy 1955: 301).

He reminds that human beings as end-products have to be responsible agents in human history. He writes, "History being the record of human endeavour, and man being an integral part of the law-governed universe, history is not a chaotic conglomerate

tion of fortuitous events” (Roy 1955: 309). This being the role of humans in the development of history wherein humans promote not chaos but order and harmony. Roy, if he were to write today, would have corrected himself and avoided such expression as ‘conquering nature.’

He also described his humanism as cosmopolitan. His humanism called for restructuring the world through the fraternity and the cooperative endeavour of spiritually emancipated moral men. “A cosmopolitan commonwealth of spiritually freemen will not be limited by the boundaries of nation states—capitalist, fascist, socialist, communist, or of any other kind—which will gradually disappear under the impact of the twentieth century Renaissance of Man” (Roy 1955: 310). It was M.N. Roy’s hope that such a cosmopolitan commonwealth, free of nationalistic, ideological, ethnic and economic interests, is the right basic human structure ideal for the cultivation of harmonious relationship with nature and one another.

To sum up, Roy’s radical humanism “bases ethics on rationalism, and traces the roots of reason in the orderliness of nature and harmony of the physical Universe” (Roy 1955: 311). Thus M.N. Roy’s philosophy lays strong foundation for a secular development ethics. M.N. Roy’s view of human person as rational, free and ethical in his philosophy of radical humanism carries sufficient philosophical import for secular development ethics in the sense it places the human being as an integral part of the physical whole. By characterising the nature of this part as a conscious, rational and ethical entity, he calls for the responsible use of freedom that would guide human being’s interaction with the whole and inform his/her developmental practices.

5. Conclusion

We live in techno-modern world where only two things matter most: ‘know more’ and ‘have more’. As a result, we forget about ‘being more’. With the process of all encompassing globalisa-

tion, we find ourselves caught up in a consumeristic mode of life-style which drives us to ‘grab’ from all around us for our happiness. But we hardly get time to ‘give’ to others and the world from which we have taken to be happy. The net result of this life style is destruction of forests, interruption of rainfall patterns, global warming and significant loss of species. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, between one hundred and 300 species are being lost each day. Hence our present mode of living and enjoying cannot go on for too long. “The ecological crisis is the greatest challenge facing the human community and indeed threatens the very survival of life on earth.....The rescue of the Earth must be the key organising principle of civilization from here on” (Chapple 1994: xx).

Hence we need to look for philosophies and world-views that would put us on the right path of living for all. While so much has been written about the role of religion to orient ourselves for a holistic future, M.N. Roy’s radical humanism provides an alternative worldview from which all, irrespective of religious creeds and ideological colours, can draw inspiration and motivations for a holistic environmental and developmental ethics.

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Response to the Unbound Prometheus: Hans Jonas' Affirmation of Responsibility in Technological Age of Unbridled and Uncontrolled Development

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Abstract: The comprehensive and life-long task Hans Jonas sets himself is to find an ethics for the our age, the technological one; an approach he develops mainly in his book *The Imperative of Responsibility*. Jonas is certainly not against technology especially since technological innovations play positive roles in the field of health and medicine, communication and transport. While the technological potential itself is not the problem, the lack of ethical restrictions, the unbridled and uncontrolled development and increase of technological power is indeed a problem. The destructive potential of technology cannot be contained and Jonas metaphorically describes this ethical impasse as 'the finally unbound Prometheus.' The limitlessness and infiniteness of human dominion are expressions of our Promethean arrogance and immodesty. It is one thing that we have reached such degree of technical mastery that we can cultivate, manipulate, shape and change life up to the point that we irreversibly damage or even destroy it. It is another that there are no ethical restrictions that can protect us from effectuating our own demise as well as the destruction of the environment. It is in this context that Jonas underscores the importance of human responsibility.

The author holds that everyone can participate in the critique of technological utopianism and construction of a new world, more human, more clean. Whether through an artistic practice, through participation in events, by creating a website, or through discussions

and debates, everyone can add a stone to build our future world and to bring about change in the attitude of humanity. *The Imperative of Responsibility* is one of those stones which humanity needs today. It seems then that the ethics of Jonas by criticizing the enslavement of human person to our modern economy and comfort technology, addresses one of the biggest problems that humanity must address in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Imperative of Responsibility, Ethics, Hans Jonas, Technology,

Introduction

The elaboration of the ethics of responsibility by the German-born philosopher, Hans Jonas (1903-93), is based on the theory of evolution and the unitary conception of life; there is continuity between the phenomenon of consciousness and that of biological life, the former evolving from the latter as was suggested by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, thus opposing the Cartesian dualism between body and mind. This blurs the distinction between human life and other forms of life. This means that either the human person does not have a sense of direction and end goal in life or other forms of life share along with the human person the kingdom of ends. Obviously Jonas opts for the second alternative. Jonas' unitary and teleological approach to life may well suggest that we are responsible for all life. However Jonas lays emphasis on our responsibility to the future of humanity. This raises three important questions: (1) How does Jonas maintain a balance between his claim of indistinctiveness of all forms of human life and his call for responsibility towards the future of humanity? (2) If our responsibility is towards the future of humanity, how does Jonas' ethics of responsibility be still directed towards the present generation who suffer inequality of technological utopianism? (3) As Jonas speaks of alleviating global inequality, should our ethical discourse on responsibility rise above political frontiers and aim at global community, which however is not possible without a certain measure of technological utopia?

1. Ethics for the Technological Age

The comprehensive and life-long task Hans Jonas sets himself is to find an ethics for the technological age; an approach he develops mainly in his book *The Imperative of Responsibility*. Jonas is certainly not against technology especially since technological innovations play positive roles in the field of health and medicine, communication and transport.¹ While the technological potential itself is not the problem, the lack of ethical restrictions, the unbridled and uncontrolled development and increase of technological power is indeed a problem. The destructive potential of technology cannot be contained and Jonas metaphorically describes this ethical impasse as ‘the finally unbound Prometheus.’² The limitlessness and infiniteness of human dominion are expressions of our Promethean arrogance and immodesty.³ It is one thing that we have reached such degree of technical mastery that we can cultivate, manipulate, shape and change life up to the point that we irreversibly damage or even destroy it.⁴ It is another that there are no ethical restrictions that can protect us from effectuating our own demise as well as the destruction of the environment. It is in this context that Jonas underscores the importance of human responsibility.

For Jonas, acting responsibly entails that one guarantees the future existence of life on earth. Jonas criticizes the idea of the total sufficiency of scientific discourses to exhaust the meaning of the world, especially that of life. In the first pages of *The Imperative of Responsibility*, Jonas advises us to remain open to the idea that natural science does not reveal the whole truth about nature, metaphysics can then supplement the inadequacy of pure sciences unless rationality is determined solely by the criteria of positive science.

2. Jonas' Critique of Cartesian Dualism

But to defend his position, the German philosopher must first question the merits of Cartesian dualism, which opposes the possibility of final causes outside the sphere of mind. We shall try to see to what extent it is possible to challenge the famous dualism historically operated by Descartes, and what drives Jonas to rely on a scientific theory which nevertheless is situated in one of the two poles of this divide between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*.

This distinction between two distinct orders of reality (extended substance/thinking substance) has an advantage in science: it serves to distinguish one realm of reality completely determinable in terms of size, shape and movement, from another corresponding to the human mind. While the former can be treated in mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology, the latter is the domain par excellence of investigation available to the humanities including philosophy. This is a practical model that allows science to decipher the mathematical language of nature and of being interested only in the elucidation of the mechanisms at work behind the phenomena. By definition, modern science opposes teleological explanations: “The cornerstone of the scientific method is the postulate that nature is objective. In other words, the *systematic* denial that ‘true’ knowledge can be got at by interpreting phenomena in terms of final causes – that is to say, of ‘purpose’.”⁵

Jonas thinks that this dualism may be helpful to make a distinction between subjective and objective properties. This clear distinction allows natural sciences to study physical objects and explain them objectively. “The scientific advantage of dualism was, at its briefest, that the new mathematical ideal of natural knowledge was best served by, and indeed required, the clear-cut division between two realms which left science to deal with a pure *res extensa*, untainted with the nonmathematical characters of being.”⁶

But this dualism has resulted in a radical separation of the human person from other beings. Human person alone has a soul; animals just like robots operating only according to the laws of matter. “The animal automata, though entirely determined by the rules of matter, are yet so constructed that their functioning suggests to the human onlooker an inwardness analogous to his own *without their possessing any such inwardness.*”⁷ In other words, animals are merely bodies, totally deprived of any consciousness even in a very limited sense. And yet if we give them a soul, it is because we analyze their behavior with misleading expressions such as joy and sorrow, according to the causal relationships that exist only in the human person, between his thoughts and physical manifestations. Cartesian dualism thus leads to a separation of consciousness that only the human person possesses from body that both animals and humans. Human person then occupies a special place in the living world: he is the only conscious being, he is the only one who can set his end goals and act accordingly.

This ontological position leads to a curious division of nature: the conscious human person on the one side and the rest of the biosphere subjected to mechanical laws of nature. “We would have to say that with the evolutionary appearance of subjectivity an entirely new, heterogeneous principle has entered nature or come forth in it; and there would be a radical (not just a gradual) difference between the creatures that partake of ‘consciousness’ (then, in degrees) and those who do not; and even within the partakers themselves, between those of their activities which are subject to consciousness (or partially so) and the much broader range of activities that are not.”⁸ This leads to a double opposition: between the human person and other living beings and within the human person himself, between what is subject to the laws of nature and what is part of his end goal.

3. Consciousness and Continuous Evolution

If Jonas chooses Darwin as his starting point, it is precisely because he considers the theory of evolution not only opposes

but also surpasses Cartesian dualism: “evolutionism undid Descartes’ work more effectively than any metaphysical critique had managed to do.”⁹ From the dualistic perspective, the human person has a special place in the world: he differs from the rest of life. With Darwin’s theory of evolution, the human person one species among many other in the same process of evolution; all living beings descend from the same origin and are subject to the same natural selection. Continuity characterizes the evolution of life. “The *continuity* of descent now established between man and the animal world made it impossible any longer to regard his mind, and mental phenomena as such, as the abrupt ingestion of an ontologically foreign principle at just this point of the total flow.”¹⁰ Jonas concludes that it is no longer possible to deny the presence of consciousness in the rest of the living beings. Consciousness does not introduce discontinuity in evolution. It is present in animals in varied degrees. The highest degree of consciousness is certainly in humans. Thus based on Darwin’s theory of evolution Jonas defends a continuity between humans and other living being and this continuity is reflected in degrees of consciousness as suggested by Leibniz.

If consciousness appeared in the process of evolution it is to ensure human survival. It is obvious that consciousness is an essential condition of our existence. In the words of Pascal in his *Pensées*, “Man is only a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed.” If consciousness is one of the ways to avoid death, it is not limited to that alone. As argued by Jonas, though it is a means to an end (survival) it has become an end in itself. “Beyond all instrumentality, it [consciousness] is for its own sake an end in itself... It is the subtle logic of life that it employs means which modify the end and themselves become part of it.”¹¹ Human life is necessarily a conscious life; even a sinking man, if he wishes to live, would wish to lead a conscious life and not merely on vegetative state. It is this possibility of consciousness compared to interiority found in some animals that gives full value to human life. The human person is the only one who

knows that he must die. And if we define life as coming to be, consciousness is what allows the being to self-reflect. We come to be and can interrogate this being. This is surely one of the most amazing features of life. Human person can observe life, ask questions about it and get to know it. And this capability has become an end in itself for man. Human person, therefore, is the only living being to be aware of his mortality. He knows that he may die at any moment that it is possible for him to die. There is another dimension to mortality, namely it is necessary for him to die. If the possibility of death refers primarily to the possibility of violent death, the necessity of death refers to the inevitable end of all life, the end point. Again, only the human person has the ability to be conscious of the finitude of all life, starting with his own. Only a human being knows that his/her life is not eternal.

4. Existential Finitude and Meaning

Moreover, it is perhaps through this consciousness of our inevitable existential finitude that we can give meaning to our lives. Jonas surely inherits this thought from the author of *Being and Time* and his own professor. “As to each one of us, the knowledge that we are here but briefly and a non-negotiable limit is set to our expected time may even be necessary as the incentive to number our days and make them count.”¹² For Jonas, to know that our days are numbered is what enables us to count our days and to give them value. This thesis is reminiscent of Heidegger’s Dasein and being-towards-death. If Husserl insists above all in his lessons for a phenomenology of internal time-consciousness, the temporality of past, the past horizon of all existence, Heidegger, focuses on the future horizon of Dasein. The latter is metaphysically defined as one that raises the question of Being. This forgotten question is nevertheless one of the essential modes of Dasein. This is what differentiates him from other beings. Because Dasein is related to Being in the ontological sense, he is ontically different from other beings; his mode of being is not the same. But by defining himself by this question, Dasein is then

defined by a anxiety because by questioning his own being, he realizes that it is temporally finite. And it is in this anxiety that Dasein opens himself up to possibilities and it is by becoming conscious of his existential finitude (that is to say, as a structure of his existence) that Dasein is able to lead an authentic life. His awareness of his finitude therefore allows him to get closer to himself and to lead an authentic way, that is to say, his consciousness of the temporality of being and the horizon of finitude that characterizes all existence. However Jonas thinks that the idea of anxiety in Heidegger is very much centred on the subjectivity of Dasein. If Dasein is anxious about his death, it is just an “abstract mortality.” One of the imperatives of thought, for Jonas, is to consider the statement “I am hungry.” But the anxiety of which Heidegger speaks does not concern food and physical needs. “Somehow German philosophy with its idealistic tradition was too high-minded to take this into account.”¹³

What Jonas criticizes here is the legacy of metaphysical dualism that grows into a mutual alienation between two parts of one whole. According to him, philosophy, since Cartesian dualism (extension/thought), has never dealt with the whole and has instead concentrated on subjectivity. Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein is no exception to this. Dasein’s care is never the real concern for his survival, but for the ultimate finitude of his existence. To use Jonas’ terminology, Dasein cares only about the necessity of his death, but not about the possibility of his death: Heidegger has not integrated human organism in his conception of the human person; his understanding of the human person does not care about the needs of the body. However, the bodily needs precede the ultimate concern of finitude. Millions of human beings care about their survival through proper nourishment. But from the standpoint of consciousness, survival becomes a true concern when the threat of non-being is strongly felt. In this sense he is in agreement with Heidegger’s interpretation of the importance of taking into account the ultimate finitude of existence.

5. Feeling and Being Responsible

All manifestations of consciousness – whether artistic, technical, ethical or political – form part of the purpose of human life. It is his conscious aspect that makes human life important and in this sense the human person occupies a special place among other living beings. Human life is distinguished from all other forms of life as it can be conscious of itself. Thus Jonas does not undermine the dignity of human consciousness, but he believes that human consciousness is twofold. If it can elevate the human person to a unique status, it can also weaken him in the spirit, nobility and fate meet. The human person is not only a sentient being: he can think, form concepts and raise questions. This is the intrinsic nobility of the mind. This is what makes the human person unique. But in the process of evolution, the human consciousness was originally meant to be a means of survival, which later became an end in itself. Jonas sees this instrumental use of mind at the service of body as weakening the human person because of some of its consequences. It is precisely for the pleasure of the body that the human person becomes ruthlessly consumerist. And if the mind at the service of the body leads to adverse consequences both for environment and humanity, the mind of man become most voracious. This voracity can be fatal to humanity in the longer run. But human life is too valuable to let voracity devour it. Besides his voracious mind, human person has also the ability to be responsible. We must therefore ensure the presence of humanity on earth in the indefinite future. This requires an affirmation of a universal principle as that of Jonas' injunction that "never must the existence or the essence of man as a whole be made a stake in the hazards of action."¹⁴ Jonas underscores this principle repeatedly: "act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life"¹⁵

For Jonas, feeling responsible precedes being responsible: it is only from the moment we feel responsible for something that we act responsibly. With regard to our responsibility to future

generations, the problem is precisely that they do not live in the present. We are not directly affected by the long-term problems caused by massive and excessive use of techno-scientific products that would a-priori affect the successive generations. How then can we feel responsible for our actions that affect only the future generations? It is important for Jonas that the ethics of responsibility must be adopted by the political sphere. It is indeed for the political class to preserve the possibility of a future humanity. And Jonas believes that the responsibility should not remain at the feeling level but must instead be founded: Rationally founded responsibility to future generations is necessary so that political leaders are convinced of such an obligation and act accordingly. This is because the ethics of responsibility must permeate the practice that must first be justified.

However, the feeling of responsibility comes before the theoretical legitimization. This is undoubtedly because Jonas has felt responsible for the future generations that he strives to found his thinking on a theoretical framework. But Jonas is obviously not the first philosopher to emphasize the importance of feeling. As he himself states, “moral philosophers, have always recognized that feeling must supplement reason so that the objectively good can exert a force on our will; in other words, that morality, which is meant to have command over the emotions, requires an emotion of its own to do so.”¹⁶ This feeling is determined differently by different philosophers. For example, it is *eros* in Plato, *eudaimonia* in Aristotle, fear of the Lord in Judaism, charity in Christianity, *amor dei intellectualis* in Spinoza, reverence in Kant, interest in Kierkegaard, and lust of the will in Nietzsche. But Jonas’ understanding of feeling is clearly distinguishable from all these.

For Plato, *eros* is a desire for timeless good: the idea of Good. For this orientation towards the eternal the human person as a finite being tries to become eternal, to partake in immortality. “The imperishable invites participation by the perishable and elicits in

it the desire thereto.”¹⁷ The object of *eros* transcends the human person and allows him to rise towards eternity. Thus the human desire is motivated by eternity. Similarly, in Christian morality, it is the promise of the eternal life that ultimately motivates goodness. Jonas thus concludes that it is an object that motivates moral action, not our mind prompting us to act morally. He thus challenges Kant for whom “*duty is the necessity of an action from respect for the law.*”¹⁸ What drives respect in Kant is the moral law itself, that is act in such a way that your action can be willed to be a universal law. That is a subjective point of view, from respect for the moral law that the human person must act reasonably.

For Jonas, what gives rise to moral behaviour is outside of human consciousness. However he opposes platonic and Christian understanding of morality in the sense that what affects our feelings driving us to act morally and responsibly is not so much the eternal life as the perishable. “The object of responsibility is emphatically perishable qua perishable.”¹⁹ In this sense we can speak of the horizontal orientation of Jonas’ ethics as opposed to the vertical orientation of ethics in Plato and Christianity. This is precarious, for it is subject to the possibility of non-being, which should motivate both feeling of responsibility and responsible moral action.

Faced with a poor person who asks us some money to ensure his/her survival, we have the ability to feel for his/her precarious position and give him/her money or at least a little warmth or a caring look. Such a feeling is the responsibility. The poor people are the most vulnerable as they are shrouded with uncertainty: hundreds of homeless people die every year of natural calamity alone. They are therefore subject more than others to the possibility of non-being, of death. We, as individuals with certain material comforts and financial power can help these and thus enable them to continue to exist. We can be overwhelmed by a sense of responsibility towards them. But another possibility lies

in indifference; we rather remain unaffected by the poverty and the fragility of others.

The question of responsibility lies in feeling responsible. There is a greater possibility of indifference to the future generations since they do not evoke any feeling in us. But Jonas defends the idea of responsibility for others to come. The first requirement of the ethics of future is to get an idea of long-term effects of our technoscience, including possible negative effects. Faced with a grim scenario about the future existence of human persons, we have to fear for humanity: we must fear the idea that humanity can disappear because of it. We have to fear the loss of the idea of human person. But how to be moved by an imagination of something that does not exist yet like the disappearance of humanity or that which does not concern us, at least immediately like the question of future humanity? Jonas responds by saying that “the creatively imagined *malum* has to take over the role of the experienced *malum*, and this imagination does not arise on its own but must be intentionally induced. Therefore the anticipatory conjuring up of this imagination becomes itself the first, as it were introductory, duty of ethics we are speaking about.”²⁰

This fear however is not pathological, rather a kind of spiritual attitude to adopt. This implies a realization that humanity is worthy of existence. But fear does not seem to be the key drive of ethics of Jonas. Although the heuristics of fear is essential, especially to discover the ethical principles that underlie the ethics of responsibility, it seems that the feeling which guides the responsibility is primarily a positive feeling. It is the feeling of love for what is, whether humans or other species of evolution. It seems that it is by assigning value to what is we are then more likely to feel concerned about the loss of this being. It is recognizing the value of human person that we can then try to justify the existence of human life as long as possible.

The feeling of responsibility is a natural inclination of man who responds to the affirmation of being, the “yes” to being. The sense of responsibility then is the conscious expression of “yes,” an affirmation of being. Being responsible is the intentionality of the human person, but that intention is a response to a call. Humans namely not only say ‘yes’ to existence because they are blindly concerned with keeping on living, but can themselves set their own continued existence as their end.²¹ In human beings, intentionality is not mere actuality, but transformed into potentiality.

6. Fostering Human Freedom

This theme of the call and response to it is reminiscent of Emmanuel Levinas’ ethics. For Levinas, the entry into ethics is mediated by the other (*autrui*). He imagines a relation to the other in which “neither possession nor the unity of number nor the unity of concepts link me to the Stranger [*l’Etranger*], the stranger who disturbs the being at home with oneself [*le chez soi*].”²² In this encounter, the face of the other challenges me and gives me a command: “This infinity, stronger than murder, already resists us in his face, is his face, is the *primordial* expression, is the first word: ‘you shall not commit murder’.”²³

It is important to see the commonality between the two thinkers: the ethical attitude is an attitude that answers a call. Jonas however differs from Levinas because he analyzes the sense of responsibility itself as coming from an affirmation of being. Responsibility for the future of humanity is rooted in the metaphysical intuition of “yes” to all life. Feel responsible for humanity, is to feel what is expressed in the phenomenon of life, “a deep desire to be”²⁴ and the uniqueness of human person as capable of responsibility.

The reason why Jonas focuses on humanity is because he claims that humans are the only beings capable of ethical thinking. Only they can then follow an ethical imperative of any kind.

This is due to their freedom and ability to choose amongst different alternatives; they participate in “the human sphere of chosen ends where willing is not simply a creature of the given end, but rather the end – as my own – is a creature of willing.”²⁵ Because the human will is free, it can pursue both good and bad, and as part of the moral order humans are able to act moral as well as immoral. The free will cannot be forced to take what is good as its end, but it does recognize the existence of the good as a moral command, a duty. The freedom humans enjoy because of their developed intentionality creates duties on their side; while they are the only beings susceptible for the feeling of responsibility they are at the same time bound to it.

Even though human existence is worthy of our protection, it is not the ultimate object of our responsibility, but ‘only’ a necessary precondition for it. What should be guaranteed in the first place is the existence of responsibility itself. The possibility of there being responsibility in the world is bound to the existence of human beings; and therefore they ought to exist so that responsibility exists.²⁶ Acting responsible is thus ensuring that responsibility can exist in the future. This self-reflexive definition is clearly reflected in the second paradigmatic example of responsibility; the politician. The responsibility of the politician resembles that of the parent in its characteristics of totality, continuity and being directed at the future. A politician acts responsible according to Jonas, if he ensures that his successors can act responsible as well. Next to his personal duties and commands he is under the total responsibility to leave open the conditions for responsibility. Responsibility being the ultimate object of our responsibility, our primary obligation is then not to let humans exist in the future. We are not responsible for future life *per se*, but only for future life in as far as it is a prerequisite for responsibility.²⁷

Future generations of humankind must then not be conceived as right-bearers. Even though one could argue that future human beings might have a right to exist, or even to a certain kind of ex-

istence, Jonas explicitly states that this is not enough for a future-oriented ethics. His ethics namely wants to ensure that responsibility, and the human species as a prerequisite for its existence, will continue in the future. It therefore imposes on us the primary duty to continue humankind. The duty of the current generation is then is essentially one-sided; it is not opposed by the rights of future generations. We should act as to ensure the continuation of mankind not because of their perceived rights, but of our obligation to let responsibility exist.

Preservation of future humanity can only be achieved by lowering our energy consumption, that is to say, by a lesser use of technology and therefore a lowering of our living conditions. We may think that this reduction in energy consumption appears gradually as evidence for the collective consciousness and that human persons with comfortable lifestyle would change. However, it is unlikely that every person feels responsible. Hence there is a need for a political solution to the technological utopia which would respect human person and environment. This means among other things the need for respecting the environment as part of economic decisions. Natural resources are not unlimited and hence we need to adopt a critical attitude towards our economic system dictating terms to the policy making in politics. Jonas invites us to reverse this through education.

Various organizations and associations already play, at present, an important role in sensitizing public opinion whether by denouncing grave injustices or by criticizing the disastrous consequences of our economic system to ecology. It seems then that the real catalyst of denouncing technological utopia is proper education. Faced with problems of poverty and pollution in the peak of growing economic globalization, it is necessary to provide an education that prepares people to live in harmony with one another and with environment. This calls for a reform in our current education system.

Besides participation in the formation of responsible global citizens, media people, also play a very important role in resisting environmental disaster caused by the ultra-liberal economic policies of our times.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, we hold that everyone can participate in the critique of technological utopianism and construction of a new world, more human, more clean. Whether through an artistic practice, through participation in events, by creating a website, or through discussions and debates, everyone can add a stone to build our future world and to bring about change in the attitude of humanity. *The Imperative of Responsibility* is one of those stones which humanity needs today. It seems then that the ethics of Jonas by criticizing the enslavement of human person to our modern economy and comfort technology, addresses one of the biggest problems that humanity must address in the twenty-first century.

Notes

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11. Hans Jonas, “The Burden and Blessing of Mortality” (87-98), in Hans Jonas and Lawrence Vogel, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 93.
12. Ibid., 98.
13. Hans Jonas, “Philosophy at the End of the Century: Retrospect and Prospect” (41-56), in Hans Jonas and Lawrence Vogel, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 47.
14. Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 37.
15. Ibid., 11. Jonas reformulates this same injunction in many different ways as follows: “Act so that the effects of your action are not destructive of the future possibility of such life”; or simply: “Do not compromise the conditions for an indefinite continuation of humanity on earth”; or, again turned positive: “In your present choices, include the future wholeness of Man among the objects of your will.”
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23. Ibid, 199.
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Indian Democracy and Development: Hermeneutic Challenges to the Incomplete Portraits

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Abstract: India, with a rich tradition and history of more than 5000 years is still a vibrant democracy, where freedom is very much cherished, if not always realised. The modern India that is progressing is truly a story of living contradictions and creative paradoxes. In this article, I want to show that only debate and dialogue can make India a viable player in the globalized world of today, where democracy is cherished, development is furthered and freedom is realized.

In the first part, the author highlights the contribution of Amartya Sen, who equates genuine freedom with enabling development and fostering capabilities. Later he reflects on the present state of political freedom and democratic polity in India following the analysis of *Mukulika Banerjee*. This takes him to the burning problem of corruption in India and the sad, ambivalent and unending story of Anna Hazare movement. These issues point to the need to carry on dialoging with adversaries of different sorts, an imperative to foster development and freedom. In the concluding part, basing on the novel *The White Tiger*, the author takes up some of the contradictions inherent in our vibrant India, which makes it an incomplete story, a dynamic and complex movement. The author hopes that we can move towards “completing” the story of progress and development only by emphasizing respectful and on-going dialogue with all players that constitute the larger or entangled stories that the emerging India is: something to be achieved by reinterpreting and appropriating the weakest individual man or woman in India!

Keywords: vibrant democracy, discourse, Indian story, Incomplete portrait, Anna movement, Indian elections.

Introduction

One of the worst tragedies of modern India is the Gujarat violence in 2002. It was a series of incidents including the Godhra train burning and the subsequent communal riots between Hindus and Muslims in the Indian state of Gujarat. On 27 February 2002, the Sabarmati Express train was allegedly attacked at Godhra by a Muslim mob. 58 Hindu pilgrims, including 25 women and 15 children, returning from Ayodhya, were killed. This in turn prompted retaliatory attacks against Muslims and general communal riots on a large scale across the state, in which 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus were ultimately killed and 223 more people were reported missing. 523 places of worship were damaged: 298 dargahs,¹ 205 mosques, 17 temples, and 3 churches. Muslim-owned businesses suffered the bulk of the damage. 61,000 Muslims and 10,000 Hindus fled their homes. Preventive arrests of at least 17,947 Hindus and 3,616 Muslims were made.²

The nature of these events remains politically controversial in India. Some commentators have characterized the deaths of thousands of human beings as a genocide with alleged state complicity.³ It was only after ten years that Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, who is alleged to be involved in these riots was interviewed by former MP Shahid Siddiqui, a Muslim and the editor of Urdu weekly *NaiDuniya*. Commenting on this interview, Sudheendra Kulkarni, columnist and former strategist for the right-wing political leader L.K. Advani holds: “India’s democracy is a demanding teacher and, as all good teachers are, very fair and unfailingly helpful. Its lessons are meant for both people and politicians. Those who learn are rewarded. Those who don’t, suffer” (Kulkarni 2012). He adds: “One of the lessons that democracy teaches, with the persistence of a devoted teacher, is the virtue of dialogue. Especially, dialogue between adversaries for the sake of the larger good of the nation” (Kulkarni 2012). It is this dialogical dimension of Indian existence with its necessary freedom and development that I want to focus in this article.

India, with a rich tradition and history of more than 5000 years is still vibrant democracy, where freedom is very much cherished, if not always realised.⁴ The modern India that is progressing is truly a story of living contradictions and creative paradoxes. In this article, I want to show that only debate and dialogue can make India a viable player in the globalized world of today, where democracy is cherished, development is furthered and freedom is realized.

In the first part, I want to highlight the contribution of Amartya Sen, who equates genuine freedom with development and capabilities. Later I want to reflect on the present state of political freedom and democratic polity in India following the analysis of Mukulika Banerjee. This takes us to the burning problem of corruption in India and the sad, ambivalent and unending story of Anna Hazare movement. These issues point to the need to carry on dialoging with adversaries of different sorts, an imperative to foster development and freedom. In the concluding part, basing on the novel *The White Tiger*, I take up the contradictions inherent in our vibrant India, which makes it an incomplete story, a dynamic and complex movement. I believe that we can move towards “completing” the story of progress and development only by emphasizing respectful and on-going dialogue with all players that constitute the larger or entangled stories that the emerging India is: something to be achieved by reinterpreting and appropriating the weakest individual woman in India!

1. Development as Freedom:

Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach

The seminal work, “Development as freedom,” by Amartya Sen (1999), a Nobel Laureate in Economics, constitutes a comprehensive challenge to the classical theories of development that have dominated economics and economic theory during the last 20 years. For this section I am indebted to the good review article by Firoze Manji (Manji 2010), a Kenyan-born author and activist.

According to what has become the ‘conventional wisdom’ of economics, the most important function of economic policy is to safeguard the ‘right’ of a minority to accumulate profits at the highest rate possible (euphemistically referred to as ‘growth’). Development, it is assumed, is possible only if there is such growth. Only when this freedom is unrestricted will others in society benefit from any associated spin-offs (the trickle-down effect). All other freedoms are only achievable if such growth occurs. The purpose of ‘development’ is, therefore, to guarantee ‘growth’ so that ultimately other freedoms can, at some indeterminate time in the future, be enjoyed (Manji 2010). State expenditure, according to this dogma, should be directed towards creating an enabling environment for ‘growth’, and not be ‘wasted’ on the provision of public services that, in any case, can ultimately be provided ‘more efficiently’ by private enterprise.

These are the assumptions that we will find in the various writings on economic development over the last 20 years – whether from the World Bank, IMF, WTO, or from bilateral development agencies in the North. This is the madness that, as Amartya Sen points out, “makes socially useful members of society such as school-teachers and health workers feel more threatened by conservative economic policies than do army generals.” It is the madness that led to social calamities such as the genocide in Rwanda. In his important book, Amartya Sen tries to bring sense (and sanity) to bear on economics and development theory. For him, the well-being of humans is placed at centre stage. So the well-being of humans is placed as “both the goal and the means for development, not simply a spurious side effect” (Manji 2010).

“Freedoms,” he argues, “are not only the primary ends of development, they are also among its principal means.” Therefore, he opines that development should be seen as a process of expanding freedoms. “If freedom is what development advances, then there is a major argument for concentrating on that overarching objective, rather than on some particular means, or some

chosen list of instruments.” To achieve development, he argues, requires the removal of poverty, tyranny, lack of economic opportunities, social deprivation, neglect of public services, and the various means of repression. He challenges the conventional economists with gentleness and reason. There is both breadth in the scope of subjects considered and depth in the treatment of empirical data that he amasses as evidence for his conclusions.

He shows, for example, how high per capita income does not necessarily correlate with greater life expectancy – poor Afro-Americans have a lower life expectancy than the poor in the Indian state of Kerala where public services have long been accessible to them. And further, he argues that the “solution of the problem of population growth (like the solution of so many other social and economic problems) can lie in expanding the freedom of the people whose interest are most directly affected by over frequent child-bearing and child-rearing. The solution of the population problem calls for more freedom, not less.” Thus he is of the opinion that famines are not a product of absolute shortages of food; rather, “inequality has an important role in the development of famines and other severe crises … [the latter] thrive on the basis of severe and sometimes suddenly increased inequality” (Manji 2010).

In this context he believes that nothing is “as important today in the political economy of development as an adequate recognition of political, economic and social participation and leadership of women. This is indeed a crucial aspect of ‘development as freedom’” (Manji 2010). His concern is about human potential and capabilities and how they can be liberated both as means for improved economic performance and as the very purpose of economic and social activities.

Sen integrates ethics, values and development in his economic theory. “The formation of values and the emergence and evolution of social ethics are also part of the process of development.” He argues that a variety of social institutions including those in

volved in the operation of markets, administrations, legislatures, political parties, NGOs, the judiciary, the media and the ‘community’, all contribute to the process of development, and therefore an integrated analysis is needed of their respective roles.

Sen’s *Development as Freedom* has contributed significantly to the larger debate on human development, freedom and respect for human dignity. It has the potential for influencing social and economic policy in the North and in the South— a potential that will be realised so long as we have the freedom to challenge prevailing dogmas, and so long as those in power have the capacity to listen. Not everyone will necessarily agree with his ideas. In fact, complete agreement is not what he is seeking for. The strength of this book lies in the reflections it provokes and the debates it will stimulate about issues that should concern us all. That debate is vital for, since “It is the customary fate of new truths to begin as heresies and to end as superstitions” (Manji 2010).

Thus for Sen development and freedom are intimately related. Developing or enhancing capabilities empowers citizens enabling them to live into one’s own hands. This makes them responsible for their own life. Technology and common living, to the extent they foster such capabilities and freedom are genuine development. Keeping in mind these insights, in the next section we attempt a bird’s eye-view of freedom and democracy in the political scenario in the complex Indian situation.

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2. Vibrant Democracy and Festival of Freedom: Mukulika Banerjee’s Portrait

As India is being hailed as the next superpower, we need to ask some uncomfortable questions in the political field. Is its record on governance and development up to the challenge of its new-found reputation? India has been a democracy for over six decades. Mukulika Banerjee of the London School of Economics, points out that India has achieved some remarkable successes but also failed in significant ways (Banerjee 2009). While economic

growth has been rapid over recent decades, this has not translated into greater welfare for the majority of the Indian population. Pulapre Balakrishnan, a noted economist, writes: “Despite overtaking Japan as the third largest economy, India has lost its leadership role in the continent because, unlike its eastern neighbours, it has ignored its poor” (Balakrishnan 2013)

Despite being severely critical of its politicians, the electorate however remains enthusiastic in its political participation, especially at elections. In 1947, when India gained her independence from colonial rule, the choice of parliamentary democracy and a universal franchise for such a poor, vast and largely illiterate nation was considered foolhardy by many observers. Nevertheless the first general election was held with great rigour, enthusiasm and success in 1952. In the meantime, a Constitution reflecting the political and ideological goals of the new nation had been adopted. It was authored by the Constituent Assembly made up of 299 members who represented the enormous class, religious and linguistic diversity of India’s population and who after much debate and deliberation set out the framework for India’s future as a republic and parliamentary democracy. “Enshrined within it were the principles of the separation of powers, a universal Indian citizen with constitutional rights, equality before the law, the separation of civil and military powers, and the necessity for political competition. The press remains as free as any in the world and contributes to a lively and highly contested public sphere. So according to the democratic checklist of institutional arrangements, India’s democratic system is in a reasonable, if not excellent, shape,” asserts Mukulika Banerjee (Banerjee 2009).

a. Civil Society: Vigorous and Vibrant

Banerjee asks about India’s record on democratic ideas: the participation of citizens, rule of law, and the responsibility of the state in ensuring basic freedoms, material security and education. It is evident that India’s heterodox policy of a mixed economy of planned economic development and liberalization has put it at

the high table of emergent powers in the world. She concedes that the positive effects of this are yet to reach the majority of Indians, in particular the poorest citizens. Many of those in power have severely abused their position, transgressing trust and probity, as scandals of corruption, bribes and kickbacks are revealed daily. While some of this corruption is widely regarded as inevitable transactional costs, the more serious consequences have been felt by what has been called an ‘economy of influence,’ namely the nexus of corporations, politicians and the press who have colluded to strengthen entrenched interests and weaken institutions (Banerjee 2009). This has been acutely felt, for instance, in the state’s policy on India’s natural resources, which has consistently ignored the rights of indigenous populations (tribals) whose lands contain these resources in deference to corporate interests who seek to exploit them commercially. This neglect, on the back of an abysmal human development record among the same populations, has led to violent insurgency movements in some districts, whose ideologues disavow the democratic state and its institutions

The state in turn has not held back in its violent suppression of these movements. Elsewhere too, India’s civil society remains vigorous as ecological, feminist, religious and justice-based social movements continually challenge the status quo. The national body politic has developed a vast repertoire of protest and persuasion, drawn on the techniques developed during the anti-colonial struggles and those from the twenty-first century, to bring pressure on governments to be responsive to popular demands. These movements at once utilize and challenge the freedoms and liberties within the purview of democratic institutions and sometimes outside of it.

b. The Elections: With Flair and Festivity

At the heart of India’s democratic system have been the regular elections that now see the participation of over a hundred political parties and the largest electorate in the world (now c.715

million – larger than all the potential voters in North America, Europe and Australia combined). Recent voter turnout rates in India have been comparable to other major democracies (about 60 percent) but are still trending upwards, unlike in the older democracies where rates are generally falling amid growing voter apathy. Even more surprisingly, the most enthusiastic voters in Indian elections are not the well-educated urban middle classes but those who are the poorest, most discriminated against, and least educated, mainly living in villages and small towns. Turnout rates at elections in these areas can be well over 80 percent. Further, the more local the election, the higher the turnout, which goes against global trends. Contrary to what many predicted in 1947, notes Banerjee, poverty and illiteracy have not hampered the functioning of Indian democracy.

She asks: “Why do large parts of the country’s electorate cast their votes enthusiastically (and support a democratic mode of government over any other), despite the sustained failure of the Indian state to improve the living standards of its poorest citizens?” (Banerjee 2009). Is it because the poor are ignorant and don’t know what they are doing? Are they gullible and vulnerable to vote buying and empty campaign promises?

According to her, one important factor in the faith that people have in elections is the performance of the Election Commission of India (ECI). Set up in 1950 to manage and conduct elections, unlike many of its counterparts in other democracies, the ECI is an autonomous and constitutional body, which through its sixty-year old life has evolved into a responsive and efficient public body. Only the Supreme Court of India shares this level of popular respect. The voting process, the successful adoption of electronic voting machines, the maintenance of electoral registers, the security provided to voters and political actors, and the standards of probity among the two million election officials who conduct the elections have all emerged as enviably efficient features in a country where much else goes wrong. During elections,

the Election Commission is given wide-ranging powers to create greater transparency and accountability, and politicians and governments are governed by the strict rules of a Model Code of Conduct imposed by the Election Commissioner of India (Banerjee 2009). So, in general the Indian electorate trusts the Election Commission of India much more than the politicians

These redefined political styles play out in the Indian Parliament, which has emerged as an arena for loud, gestural statements alongside debate and deliberation. In recent years, it has become routine for Parliamentary proceedings to be frequently disrupted by members aiming to capture the attention of a hungry media that relishes the transgression of parliamentary norms (Banerjee 2009). In turn, the airtime gained by politicians has proved to be an invaluable tool to reach out to their mass followings.

Elections in India are a big festival. As pointed out by Mukulika Banerjee, it is at this time that “the two political domains of the demonic/demotic that remain largely separate for the most part are forced to collide and confront each other” (Banerjee 2009). It is during election campaigns that the politicians have to account for their neglect of their constituencies and beg a second chance. During long and exhausting election campaigns in large and diverse constituencies the “laundered clothes of rich politicians are sullied by dusty road journeys, their arrogant heads have to be bent entering modest huts of the poor, and their hands have to be folded in a plea for votes. It is no wonder that elections in India have a carnival air as people delight in this leveling effect of campaigns, as the ordinary voter suddenly becomes the object of attention of the powerful” (Banerjee 2009).

But the voters also feel some pressure to play their own role in making the correct choice, which is always open to the influence of a caste group, kin or community. At the most fundamental level, there is tremendous pressure to not waste a vote. One of the ways in which this pressure is created is by a simple procedure carried out by the Election Commissioner of India. In any Indian

election, each voter has their left index finger marked by a short vertical line in indelible black ink just before they approach the electronic voting machine. While this procedure is carried out to ward off repeat voting, it has also had the unintended consequence of making it impossible to lie about *whether* one had voted. It therefore generates tremendous peer pressure among people to go and take the trouble to vote, for not to do so causes the discomfort of constant questions and suspicions about one's motivations for abstaining. The importance of not losing face in front of others, whether they are kin or party workers, is thus an important motivation for voting and results in high turnout rates (Banerjee 2009).

A further motivation for voting is “the actual visceral experience” people get from it (Banerjee 2009). The culture of a polling station fosters an order, disciplined queues, respect for the ordinary person of whatever social background, efficiency of process and trust in the system – rare qualities in Indian public life. In addition, at a polling station, the only relevant identity of a person is his Electoral Photo Identity Card that records nothing apart from the most basic information. As people arrive to vote, they have to queue in the order in which they arrive and no preferences are made on the basis of wealth, status or any other social marker. For those who are routinely discriminated against on the basis of caste, colour, class and religion in everyday life, this extraordinary glimpse of egalitarianism is valued. Further, people often pointed out that the knowledge that each vote is of equal to any other heightens its importance even more. “By turning up to vote, by queuing patiently at polling stations, by punishing arrogance and complacency in their choice of leader, they thereby consider themselves as participating in the most basic act of democracy that enshrines political equality and popular sovereignty” (Banerjee 2009).

After her elaborate analysis Mukulika Banerjee sums up India's record on democracy as “reasonably consistent”(Banerjee

2009). She adds: “Her institutions have been mostly robust though they have also increasingly come under threat by personal greed and the collusion of powerful actors who seek to undermine the principles and robustness of these institutions. Yet, at the same time, in the wider society, ideas about democratic participation, the role of the electorate and the importance of a shared duty of citizenship are also vigorously articulated. In the end, it will be the challenges posed by this latter demotic politics of hope, mobilization, participation and justice that will need to overcome the demonic world of greed and power” (Banerjee 2009).

India’s experiments of democracy have taught the world a number of lessons: the successful workings of coalition governments, the unpredictability of voter behavior, the importance of an autonomous and responsive electoral commission, and above all the possibility of political sophistication among the poorest people. It remains to be seen whether India can redistribute the fruits of its economic growth to the wider society and thereby serve as a unique model among the rising powers of combining economic democracy with a robust political one (Banerjee 2009).

It is precisely in this connection that we study the sad or disappointing story of Anna Movement for a “corruption-free India” in the next section.

3. The Unending Discourse: Lessons from Anna Hazare’s Movement

a. The Ambiguous Story of Anna Movement

Kisan Baburao Hazare (born 15 June 1937), popularly known as Anna Hazare is social activist who led movements to promote rural development, increase government transparency, and investigate official corruption. In addition to organizing and encouraging grassroots movements, Hazare frequently conducted hunger strikes to further his causes—a tactic reminiscent, to many, of the work of Mohandas K. Gandhi.⁵

Anna Hazare started an indefinite hunger strike on 5 April 2011 to exert pressure on the Indian government to enact a stringent anti-corruption law, The Lokpal Bill, 2011 as envisaged in the Jan Lokpal Bill, for the institution of an ombudsman with the power to deal with corruption in public places.⁶ The fast led to nation-wide protests in his support. The fast ended on 9 April 2011, a day after the government accepted Hazare's demands. The government issued a gazette notification on the formation of a joint committee, consisting of government and civil society representatives, to draft the legislation.

For the year 2011 Foreign Policy magazine named him among top 100 global thinkers. Also in 2011 Anna was ranked as the most influential person in Mumbai by a national daily newspaper. He has faced criticism for his authoritarian views on justice, including plea for death as punishment for corrupt public officials.

Gradually Anna Hazare's fight against corruption movement began to fizzle out, partly due to his own doings. If one studies the whole event, one may conclude that right from the beginning Anna started committing blunders after blunders. In fact he claimed to have monopoly over civil society in his fight against corruption and began shifting his goal at random. So the three-day fast by Anna Hazare against the government's version of Lokpal Bill in Mumbai starting on December 27, 2011 drew lukewarm response, unlike his earlier fast (Totanawala 2011).⁷

Again Anna Hazare proceeded on 28 July 2012 his fast-unto-death on the Lokpal issue in Delhi. He stated that country's future is not safe in the hands of the two major political umbrellas: Congress and BJP. He hoped to campaign in the coming elections for those with clean background. On the third day of his indefinite fast, Anna stated that he will not talk even to the Prime Minister till his demands are met. But this time the response of the masses and the mass-media were very discouraging. The government refused to negotiate with Team Anna. On 2 August 2012 Anna said

that there was nothing wrong in forming a new political party but, he would neither join the party nor contest elections.

In this context Team Anna decided to end their indefinite fast on 3 August 2012 after which the team announced their decision to enter party politics, a move opposed by many of the followers of Anna. To make matter still complex, August 7, 2012, Anna Hazare disbanded Team Anna that formed the core committee of the “India Against Corruption” movement and assumed the role of a patron to a proposed formation that would provide the nation with a political alternative (Parsai 2012).

On his blog, Mr. Hazare said that the core committee (or Team Anna) was formed to facilitate talks with the government on the Jan Lokpal Bill.⁸ But the government was not listening to it, so it decided not to talk to the government any more. “We observed fast [for four times] to make ourselves heard, but the government is not interested in bringing in a strong law against corruption. The movement launched to ask the government to set up an effective Lokpal has been withdrawn, but the movement for coming up with an alternative and finding the right people will go on,” he added. The activist insisted that the movement would continue as long as it was dedicated to the cause of the people. “The day I find that members of the alternative party have allowed power or money to go to their head, I will withdraw the movement,” he warned (Parsai 2012).⁹

b. The Debate Goes on: Tavleen Singh’s Critique

Tavleen Singh, a popular Indian columnist and political reporter, who is herself critical of Team Anna, wishes well for Anna Hazare. Writing in her regular column, she hopes that the team who has decided to join politics, “realizes the fundamental principle of democracy is debate.” She confesses that among the things that “put me off Anna, and his movement, from the start was its totalitarian nature. Its apparent inability to accept that neither Anna nor his team have all the answers.” She was apprehensive

of “their inability to comprehend the power of debate and the meaning of dissent” (Singh 2012).

She holds that the strength of democracy lies in its institutions and in the rule of law (Singh 2012). So even as someone who has no respect for Anna Hazare and “his very unsavory team mates,” she welcomes their entry into electoral politics. “If they can find a new way, tread a new path and bring people into the Lok Sabha [Parliament] who have a genuine interest in public service, then they would have done this country a real service” (Singh 2012).

Amartya Sen, the author of *The Argumentative Indian*, (Sen 2005) also holds similar, though not identical views. “I believe that their reading of corruption or what causes corruption or how it can removed is wrong,” Sen said while rejecting the notion of using indefinite fast as a tool to eradicate corruption (Sen 2012). “The system needs changing but that’s not a question of changing a minister or doing dharna or having someone tied up at a tree. It’s a question of changing a system and looking at the incentives the system gives on corruption,” he added (Sen 2012).¹⁰

“You have to mobilise the political system because you know democracy is meant to be governed by discussion instead of that what we’ve ended up in India is the government by pressure groups and the pressure groups are very sour,” he asserted (Sen 2012).

The story of Anna is not ended. The narrative goes on either through Anna, or Ramdev or others. It has not ended or reached its closure.

4. Development and Freedom: Two Contemporary Stories

Thus what will happen to the Anna movement is uncertain at the moment. But we can very well be confident that freedom and democracy in India, which this movement hoped to purify and strengthen is in safe hands, in spite of its many weaknesses. Such

freedom and democracy is closely tied up to a humane understanding of development, as Amartya Sen holds.

In the same news item referred earlier, touching upon issue of economic growth, Sen said there is need to use benefits from growth for healthcare, education and physical infrastructure. "Chasing fast growth alone is stupid," he said. "That doesn't make me anti-growth because growth helps, certainly. But a kind of single-minded worship of growth is no way of getting to the things which we really care about namely what is good for the Indian people," he added (Sen 2012). Can India debate and dialogue with itself? That is the greatest challenge that the Indian democracy faces: a challenge from within!

In this concluding section we take up the emergent and entrepreneurship India in the globalized scenario. I want to reflect through the prism of two dynamic and enterprising writers of the contemporary Indian scenario: Aravind Adiga and Akash Kapur.

a. Aravind Adiga: *The White Tiger*

Aravind Adiga (2008) is the well-known author of *The White Tiger*.¹¹ It was first published in 2008 and won the 40th Man Booker Prize in the same year. The novel provides a darkly humorous perspective of India's class struggle in a globalized world as told through a retrospective narration from Balram Halwai, a village boy. In detailing Balram's journey first to Delhi, where he works as a chauffeur to a rich landlord, and then to Bangalore, the place to which he flees after killing his master and stealing his money, the novel examines issues of religion, caste, loyalty, corruption and poverty in India. Ultimately, Balram transcends his sweet-maker caste and becomes a successful entrepreneur, establishing his own taxi service. In a nation proudly shedding a history of poverty and underdevelopment, he represents, as he himself says, "tomorrow."

The novel has been well-received, making the *New York Times* best-seller list in addition to winning the Man Booker

Prize. Aravind Adiga, 33 at the time, was the second youngest writer as well as the fourth debut writer to win the prize in 2008. Adiga says his novel “attempt[s] to catch the voice of the men you meet as you travel through India — the voice of the colossal underclass.” According to Adiga, the exigency for *The White Tiger* was to capture the unspoken voice of people from “the Darkness” – the impoverished areas of rural India, and he “wanted to do so without sentimentality or portraying them as mirthless humorless weaklings as they are usually” (*The White Tiger* 2013).

The locale of *The White Tiger* is the dynamic and modern day India. The novel’s protagonist, Balram Halwai is born in Laxmangarh, Bihar, a rural village in “the Darkness.” Balram narrates the novel as a letter, which he wrote in seven consecutive nights and addressed to the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao who is visiting India. In his letter, Balram explains how he, the son of rickshaw puller, escaped a life of servitude to become a successful businessman, describing himself as a successful entrepreneur. Balram begins the novel by describing his life in Laxamangarh. There he lived with his grandmother, parents and brother and extended family. He is a smart child. But he is forced to quit school in order to help pay for his cousin’s dowry. He begins to work in a teashop with his brother in Dhanbad. While working in the teashop he begins to learn about India’s government and economy from the customers’ conversations. Balram describes himself as a bad servant and decides that he wants to become a driver.

Balram learns how to drive and gets a job driving Ashok, the son of the local landlord. During a trip back to his village Balram disrespects his grandmother and tells the reader and the Chinese Premier that in the next eight months he intends to kill his boss. Balram moves to New Delhi with his boss Ashok and his wife Miss Pinky Madam. Throughout their time in New Delhi, Balram is exposed to the extensive corruption of India’s government.

In New Delhi the separation between India's poor and wealthy becomes even more evident by the juxtaposition of the wealthy with poor city dwellers.

One night Pinky decides to drive the car by herself and hits something. She is worried that it was a child and the family eventually decides to frame Balram for the hit and run. The police tell them that no one reported a child missing. Gradually Ashok becomes increasingly involved with the corrupt government. Balram then decides that the only way that he will be able to escape India's "Rooster Coop" will be by killing and robbing Ashok (*The White Tiger* 2013). One raining day he murders Ashok by bludgeoning him with a broken liquor bottle. Balram then managed to flee to Bangalore with his younger brother. There he bribes the police in order to help start his own driving service. When one of his drivers kills a bike messenger Balram pays off the family and police. Balram explains that his family was almost certainly killed as retribution for Ashok's murder. At the end of the novel Balram rationalizes his actions by saying that his freedom is worth the lives of Ashok and his family and the monetary success of his new taxi company.

The White Tiger takes place in the modern day world where increased technology has led to globalization. In the past decade, India has had one of the fastest booming economies. Specifically Americanization in India has played its role in the plot, since it provides an outlet for Balram to alter his caste. To satisfy Pinky's want for American culture, Ashok, Pinky, and Balram simply move to Gurgaon instead of back to America. Globalization has assisted in the creation of an American atmosphere in India. Ashok justifies this move by explaining, "Today it's the modernist suburb of Delhi. American Express, Microsoft, all the big American companies have offices there. The main road is full of shopping malls - each mall has a cinema inside! So if Pinky Madam missed America, this was the best place to bring her." By blackmailing Ram Bahadur, the other driver, Balram is promoted

and drives Ashok and Pinky to their new home (The White Tiger 2013).

India is now compared to the rest of the world's superpowers, including countries like the United States of America and China. "There are so many more things I could do here than in New York now...The way things are changing in India now, this place is going to be like America in ten years." Balram notices the rapid growth as well. From the beginning of his story he knows that in order to rise above his caste he should become an entrepreneur. Although his taxi service is not an international business, Balram plans to keep up with the pace of globalization and change his trade when need be. "I'm always a man who sees 'tomorrow' when others see 'today'" (The White Tiger 2013). Balram's recognition of the increasing competition resulting from globalization contributes to his corruption.

In an interview Aravind Adiga asserts that "The White Tiger" was a book about a person's quest for freedom. Balram, the protagonist in the novel, worked his way out of his low social caste (often referred to as "the Darkness") and overcame the social obstacles that limited his family in the past. Climbing up the social ladder, Balram sheds the weights and limits of his past and overcomes the social obstacles that keep him from living life to the fullest that he can. In the book, Balram talks about how he was in a rooster coop and how he broke free from his coop. The novel is somewhat of a memoir of his journey to finding his freedom in India's modern day capitalist society. Towards the beginning of the novel, Balram cites a poem from the Muslim poet Iqbal where he talks about slaves and says, "They remain slaves because they can't see what is beautiful in this world." Balram sees himself embodying the poem and being the one who sees the world and takes it as he rises through the ranks of society, and in doing so finds his freedom (Adiga 2008).

But its unflattering portrait of India as a society racked by corruption and servitude, exposing the country's dark side has expectedly caused a storm in India.

b. Akash Kapur: An Incomplete Portrait

In "The New York Times," Akash Kapur, another young and creative author, called Adiga's book "simplistic" and "an incomplete portrait of a nation and a people grappling with the ambiguities of modernity" (Powers 2012).

What are some of the ambiguities of modernity in India today? In the "Sunday Money" section from the "New York Times" published May 6, 2012, Tyler Cowen writes "Never Mind Europe. Worry about India." Cowen thinks though India is "likely to end up as the world's largest economy by the next century" that the decline in the economic growth rate in contemporary India is unevenly distributed, "with the greatest burden falling on the poor." He is afraid that if this trend doesn't reverse itself that "millions of Indians, for another generation, will fail to rise above extreme penury and want." So he complains that "the economic slowdown in India is one of the world's biggest economic stories, but it is commanding only a modicum of attention in the United States" (Powers 2012).

Ironically, that same Indian writer, Akash Kapur who criticized Adiga's portrait of India in "The White Tiger," has later published *India Becoming: A Portrait of Life in Modern India* in which he states that upon his return to South India in 2003, after receiving an education at an American boarding school and at Harvard, that every other person he met seemed to be an "entrepreneur," reminding one of Balram.

Kapur adds that in today's India "for the first time in my life, but arguably in India's history too, people dared to imagine an existence for themselves that was unburdened by the past and tradition." He confirms, "India, I felt, had started to dream" (Powers 2012).

Kapur married and settled down to live in his “new” India, was appalled by what he at first admired about his re-found country. Kapur points out that over 300 million of India’s people—roughly the population of the United States he was educated in—live in abject poverty, on merely a dollar a day or less. More than half India’s surface water is polluted, and almost 50% of its land has eroded. And India’s air is considered by some to be the most polluted on the planet.

In the book Kapur describes the millions of young people in India today who have left their small country towns behind to move closer to jobs in India’s large urban centers such as Delhi, Calcutta and Mumbai, all of them contributing in part to the immense ecological problems that face the country as the Indian middle class grows (Powers 2012).

So two books dealing with the ambiguities of modern India! How then does Aravind Adiga’s novel, this “incomplete portrait of a nation,” compare with Kapur’s new non-fiction book, *India Becoming: A Portrait of Modern India?* (Powers 2012 & Kapur 2012). Kapur sets out to tell two parallel stories: “One is a story of progress,” he writes, the other, “of the destruction and disruptions caused by the same process of development.” Kapur’s own feelings about his native country tend to get overwhelmed by bland nostalgia, but fortunately, to make his point, Kapur focuses on recounting the stories of a wide range of characters he encountered during his research. As his influence and status wanes, Sathy, a rural landowner, wants simply to hold on to comforting rhythms of the old India (much to the annoyance of his progressive wife, who runs her own consulting business in Bangalore). Hari, a high-flying young IT worker, flourishes in the city but struggles with his homosexuality; Selvi, a small-town girl who moved to the city to take a call center job finds her views of Americans changing as she interacts with brusque customers; and Veena, an ambitious divorcee, must balance her aspirations for a career and independence with her desire for a family. Their

entangled stories are what give the book its texture and insight, and make it a valuable investigation of the effects of India's fast-paced change on the land and its people (Powers 2012).

3. Conclusion: Sandhya Devi's Challenge

Finally, we may hold that Akash Kapur was right in his criticism when he said that "The White Tiger" by Aravind Adiga is an incomplete portrait of modern Indian. That is the novel's strength, because a complete portrait would be a series of graphs and charts and statistics, not a novel that is filled with living ambiguities and paradoxes. Kapur's *India Becoming* also point to these ambiguous realities. Such is the India of today: prosperous and poor, beautiful and ugly. Truly a paradox!

By definition, a paradox is never complete. It just is what it is. And in this case, it is a great work of modern art or a mosaic (Powers 2012). The Indian scenario is ambiguous, ambivalent, progressive, regressive and so creative and/or destructive. It is not linear, not deterministic. Much more chaotic and synergetic! It is through such scenarios that we, individually and collectively, realize our freedom and enable progress that is humane. Such a scenario calls for genuine dialogue.

Dialogue between politicians of differing or opposing ideologies, between hope and greed, between the poor and the rich. Still, can we foster a creative and respectful debate and dialogue between adversaries, "especially, dialogue between adversaries for the sake of the larger good of the nation" and of every human being. Thus the story continues to be narrated, the story of belongingness, freedom, development and progress. Such a story, complex, involved and multifaceted, goes on in contemporary India. Can we gently twist it and give it a humane face?

Yes, our country needs to listen (again?) to that old man's wisdom:¹²

"I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man [woman] whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [her]. Will he [she] gain anything by it? Will it restore him [her] to a control over his [her] own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melt away" (Cited in Brown & Parel 2011: 150).

Once again: "Recall the face of the poorest and weakest woman you have seen, and ask yourself if this step you contemplate is going to be any use to her."

It is here that we need to recognize the challenge posed by Sandhya Devi and her husband, Ashok Kumar. It was reported recently that Rajasthan state have arrested and bailed a couple suspected of selling their new-born baby boy for Rs 40,000 (\$722) to pay for the treatment of their sick three-year-old son. The parents, Sandhya Devi and Ashok Kumar, allegedly sold the baby to a neighbouring couple, Vinod Agarwal and his wife Shakuntla, who have also been arrested and bailed. The baby was born on 31 July and handed sold to the couple on 3 August, 2012 (Bareth 2012). They were forced to sell the baby to take care of their other child!

The role of money, middle man and corruption is evident in the story of Sandhya Devi. The hermeneutic appropriation of the larger story of Indian democracy and development has to take account of such concrete and tragic cases.

If such incidents take place in some parts of India, what does it say of India's freedom and development? We need to interpret and appropriate the talisman proposed by Gandhi creatively.¹³ We need collective and creative dialogue to move away from a culture of violence, exploitation and poverty. Then we pay heed to the wise counsels of Sudheendra Kulkarni, Amartya Sen, Aravind Adiga, Anna Hazare, Mukulika Banerjee, Akash Kapur

and Mahatma Gandhi. Can we dialogue with friends and foes to reach out aim of sustainable development and free India? True, it is a herculean challenge! But the “argumentative Indian” is capable of it.

Notes

1. A Dargah is a tomb of a Muslim saint or a Muslim shrine, which is very special for them.
2. All the details, including the number of causalities, cause and motives of violence, etc., given here are debatable, though the carnage as such is not. I have used the Wikipedia information for this section. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2002_Gujarat_violence
3. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2002_Gujarat_violence
4. In this article that long tradition and therefore, the rootedness, that is part of Indian heritage is ignored, for lack of space. But we do realize the need to trace our rootedness and to have creative fidelity to it.
5. Hazare also contributed to the development and structuring of Ralegan Siddhi, a village in Parmataluka of Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra, India. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan—the third-highest civilian award—by the Government of India in 1992 for his efforts in establishing this village as a model for others.
6. Hazare initiated a Satyagraha movement for passing a stronger anti-corruption *Lokpal* (ombudsman) bill.
7. See <http://firoztotanawala.blogspot.in/2011/05/rise-and-fall-of-movement-anna-hazares.html>.
8. Jan *Lokpal* Bill is Peoples' ombudsman bill to check corruption. This bill was proposed by Anna Hazare and team, to distinguish from *Lokpal* (ombudsman)vBill, proposed by the government.
9. History.... Am Aadmi Party (AAP) ArvindKejriwal-led *Aam Aadmi Party* (AAP) has got its registration from the Election Commission. It was launched by anti-corruption activist ArvindKejriwal on 26 November 2012 at JantarMantar in Delhi.
10. Recently Sen has landed into controversy for asserting that “I don’t want Narendra Modi as my PM” (Sen 2013).
11. For this section, I am indebted to good review of *The White Tiger* in Wikipedia (*The White Tiger* 2013).
12. This is a powerful quote from Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation

tion, who is both respected and reviled in modern India.

13. What are the ambiguities of modernity in India today? In the “Sunday Money” section from the “New York Times” published May 6, 2012, Tyler Cowen writes in “Never Mind Europe. Worry About India” that even though India is “likely to end up as the world’s largest economy by the next century” that the decline in the economic growth rate in contemporary India is unevenly distributed, “with the greatest burden falling on the poor.” He also states that if this trend doesn’t reverse itself that “millions of Indians, for another generation, will fail to rise above extreme penury and want” (Powers 2012).

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The Capability Approach to Development: Amartya Sen's Understanding of Freedom

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Abstract: As regards freedom, Amartya Sen's thesis is simple. Freedom is both the primary end and the principal means of development. Insofar as many have been critical of approaches to development that emphasize growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), rising personal incomes, industrialization, technological advance, or social modernization, we should be glad that such a distinguished economist is apparently tooting our own horn. Yet there are some issues in Sen's basic assumptions about the nature of people and his lack of a feasible prescription for reaching his stated goals that make Development as Freedom in need of some modifications and nuances.

The center of Sen's vision is what he calls a 'capability approach', where the basic concern of human development is 'our capability to lead the kind of lives we have reason to value,' rather than the usual concentration on rising GDP, technical progress, or industrialization. His approach 'inescapably focuses on the agency and judgment of individuals' including their capability, responsibility, and opportunity. Raising human capability is good because it improves the choices, wellbeing, and freedom of people. Further, human capability plays a significant role in influencing social change and in influencing economic production. In this context, the author proposes a creative interpretation and criticism of Sen's approach to freedom.

Keywords: Amartya Sen, freedom, development, freedom as means and end of development, capability approach, democracy.

1. Introduction

Amartya Sen argues that the overarching goal of development is expanding people's choices. Yet, freedom as a goal is ambiguous as the notion is clouded by idioms of freedom dating as far back as Ancient Greece. Thus Amartya Sen claims to have Universalist presumptions, this dissertation discusses and analyzes Amartya Sen's notion of freedom. For this purpose the conceptual meaning of freedom is treated as both autonomous and mutable as it allows for a historically and philosophically sounded approach to its study. The method applied to trace the different notions of freedom is the one of conceptual history. "The findings indicate that Amartya Sen's notion of freedom is formulated under Mac Callum's widely accepted meta-theory of one concept of freedom, for Amartya Sen seeks universal validation of his democratic values based on individual agency." Since freedom is the principle of democracy, Amartya Sen's thought is rooted in a democratic tradition that advocates universal standards drawn from the classics.

2. Relevance of the Study

During his inaugural speech in 1949, President Truman made explicit the dream of creating a world of prosperity brought about by technology and economic growth. At the beginning the task seemed simple enough, but over the decades, the level of complexities encountered by the developers has made them rethink their strategies over and over again. It has been more than sixty years since different projects were put in motion. Yet the gap between the wealthy and the poor has gradually widened. Consequentially over the past three decades, there has been a critical awakening regarding the idea of development in all its shapes and forms. Criticism has often been directed to mainstream development – the one in line with modernization theory, which usually measures development through levels of industrialization and GNP.

In response to the criticism, the UNDP redirected its approach under the advice of the Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq and the Indian economist Amartya Sen. In 1990 the UNDP published the first Human Development Report and introduced the Human Development Index. For the first time, development was described as providing choices and freedoms expected to have widespread outcomes. This new approach to development practices was based on Amartya Sen's academic work on capabilities and functionings. In recognition of his enormous input, Amartya Sen was awarded the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences for reintroducing an ethical dimension to the field of development. A year later, Amartya Sen's interest in the problems of society's most deprived members led him to publish *Development as Freedom*, a book in which he summarizes – in a language accessible to all – his studies on welfare economics and social choice theory. There, Amartya Sen explains why freedom ought to be the overarching goal of development.

The concept of freedom is a much disputed subject. What freedom really is, is in actual fact an ancient debate dating as far back as the Ancient Greeks. Hence, although Amartya Sen elaborates on his definition of freedom – and hence development –, it seems to me that a historical and philosophical explanation is deemed necessary to make intelligible Amartya Sen's notion of freedom. A historical analysis is mainly due because the notion of freedom had evolved along other concepts and there is more than one notion of freedom. Therefore, in order to elucidate Amartya Sen's conceptualization, it is necessary to trace the different concepts of freedom and place Amartya Sen in this debate. Furthermore, it may be noted that Amartya Sen is seeking a philosophical explanation and so it is my assumption and belief that Amartya Sen is, besides being an economist, a philosopher also. Through all his studies, Amartya Sen makes normative claims by alluding to the value thoughts of classical, medieval, modern, and contemporary philosophers. Thus, in the many ways one could analyze his academic works and if one really desires to grasp his ethical

stand and basis, Amartya Sen ought to be read foremost as a philosopher. As a matter of fact, his concerns are rooted in the intrinsic value of notions such as democracy, freedom, equality, and justice with “a strong universalist presumption”¹. In other words, the primary question with which Amartya Sen approaches his academic studies is “what is politically, socially, and economically right?” His endeavor is then the concern of the philosopher. For these reasons, it seems to me that both historical and philosophical explanations are rendered indispensable to make intelligible not only Amartya Sen’s conceptualization, but the concept of freedom itself.

3. Theoretical Framework

How to study concepts is still a current controversial debate. Different approaches to the study of conceptual meaning will differ according to the views of the relationship between language and the world. Nonetheless, I tried to approach the issue from a historically sound philosophical stand. However, from this point on, I was not only dealing with a linguistic debate about the nature of concepts, but I also had to confront a heated debate that took place a few decades ago between historians of political thought and political philosophers regarding methodology in the study of the history of ideas. Since the mid twentieth century, many scholars studying the history of political thought took a “linguistic turn,” which was primarily a response against the semantic interpretation of texts. The traditional semantic approach, roughly described, regards words and concepts as signifiers referring to an object of thought. Hence, concepts do not exist independently of that object. The objectivity of concepts is placed in the fact that concepts “put us in touch with things, and this referential capacity is in turn a condition of their possible meaning”².

Due to these properties, conceptual meaning is universal and timeless. This further implies that the study of the history of ideas of Amartya Sen is essentially the study of “superficial variations in semantic content of no fundamental importance to the study of

political thought".³ This approach gave thinkers and philosophers strong foundations to theorize and philosophize while undermining the historical change in contextual meaning. This approach also made possible definitive ideas about Amartya Sen's "nature," "truth," "reason" and other such concepts that have served to promote ideological thinking and dogmatic beliefs.

The traditional semantic approach did not only have implications in the interpretation of texts, but it went much further concerning more generally epistemological and methodological approaches. Thus, academics from a variety of different disciplines stood up against this approach and came up with methodological alternatives to the study of history and the history of ideas. Among the most prominent historians and philosophers are Michel Foucault, Reinhart Koselleck, Gilles Deleuze, Richard Rorty, Heyden White, and Dominick La Capra. Concerning specifically the interpretation of texts, we can distinguish Isaiah Berlin, Geral Cohen, John Pocock, Quentin Skinner, Leo Strauss, and Charles Taylor. These scholars developed different methods of interpretation based on assumptions of conceptual meaning and language. Some scholars like Skinner regard conceptual meaning as deriving from their actual usage in a given context. Other academics such as Taylor regard conceptual meaning as deriving from an expression of human experience. Scholars such as Koselleck and Foucault argues "against the view that conceptual meaning derives from the consciousness of the subjects,"⁴ which basically challenges the possibility to trace conceptual meanings altogether.

In the light of all this and following my preliminary assumptions, I will follow Bartelson's steps and attempt to overcome the debate of conceptual meaning and language in the study of the history of political thought for the sake of political philosophy. Currently, political philosophy is in decadence mainly because of a successful revolution against the tendency of classical semantics and hermeneutics to locate meaning in objects and subjects respectively, a revolution which was propelled by the notion that

meaning resides inside language and nowhere else. Yet this was a revolution in favour of history which left us with few resources with which to philosophize, lest we wanted to backslide. For this reason, my aim is to recover a view of political philosophy that will elucidate Amartya Sen's philosophical stand as well as call attention to the importance this disciple deserves.

4. The Notion of Freedom in Modernity

We are often told that the Modern age represents Amartya Sen's thought as an abrupt change in political thought. To a great extent, this is true. This is not to say that these notions were not there before, but the belief of bringing about ideal societies is strictly modern. Before modernity, most thinkers understood the human condition as limited. One could have only limited control and was only able to manipulate nature, society, and people to a certain degree. In other words, any notion of freedom in absolute terms was a condition that could only be achieved by a god. What took place at the eve of modernity in the West was the "demythologization" of the world. "The planning and rationalization of nature and society became the norm. Gradually, most political philosophers started to believe that the world was conceivable through reason alone. Reason, science, and technology would enable man to achieve what before seemed impossible. This is what was on the air at time political philosophers wrote about freedom. Of course, some of them did not see reason at odds with God, but one should rely on science and empirical observation rather than the Bible or the Ancient thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle."⁵ Among the earliest empiricists, we find, most notably, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and David Hume. Their most distinguished successors are, William Godwin, Jeremy Bentham, James Mill and his son, John Stuart Mill. They are also known as thinkers of the utilitarian tradition.

5. The Notion of Freedom in Amartya Sen

In order to discuss freedom, Amartya Sen argues that “it is very important to see freedom in a sufficiently broad way”.⁶ This is because freedom is an innately diverse notion. Without hesitation, we can state that Amartya Sen regards freedom as a multi-layered notion or notions that has or have acquired meaning over time. However, Amartya Sen does not perceive this as an impediment to philosophize about the concept of freedom. In actual fact, Amartya Sen has Universalist presumptions, in which he calls for a coherent framework for reasoned social assessment regardless of high degrees of diversity. This way of reasoning is parallel to MacCallum’s call for one concept of freedom as it is necessary to have set conditions for intelligibly establishing a dialogue about the concept of freedom. Moreover, Amartya Sen’s thought is particularly aligned with Ancient thought – something highlighted by Strauss – as he sees how parts relate to a larger whole, which illustrates the principle of unity underlying diversity.

Development as Freedom is not a philosophical work as such. The audience Amartya Sen sought to reach was not a philosophical one. Rather, Amartya Sen sought to reach the common person, and hence the language and ideas are made accessible to all. For that reason, we can only speculate about Amartya Sen’s hermeneutics when drawing from this book. I would argue that Amartya Sen believes in a unifying principle as a given, but it can also be that he sees it as a necessary condition to elucidate social affairs, especially considering value-laden notions. It would seem that values are predominantly vulnerable when not advocating in a Universalist framework as seen from our context. This assumption would explain why, for Amartya Sen, enhancing individual freedom as a social commitment, is rooted in the unity of the individual as a whole.

5.1 Individual Freedom

For Amartya Sen, freedom comes to rest on the individual. Thus, our author states that “[t]he analysis of development as put for-

ward by Amartya Sen treats the freedoms of individuals as the basic building blocks".⁷ In Amartya Sen's eyes, freedom is an ambiguous term that can only be fully grasped in terms of individual freedom, specifically looking at the real person, the material reality of it. According to Amartya Sen, freedom can be reflected in the person's capability, which is provided by both processes and opportunities.

5.2 Capabilities

Capabilities are a central idea of Amartya Sen's notion of freedom. Amartya Sen views capabilities as types of freedoms. In this Amartya Sense, Amartya Sen's language – the way in which he introduces his ideas – is the language of freedom. Amartya Sen argues that capabilities refer to what a person can do, that is "the ability to do this or that" such as being able to nourish yourself or finding a job. Likewise, capabilities also refer to the ability to be, namely "the various 'functionings' he or she can achieve". Therefore, functionings embody elements of a state of a person, especially what she or he can manage to be or do.

When we speak of capabilities, we refer to "the alternative combinations of functionings the person can achieve" and the choice the person desires to make. Then quality of life is evaluated according to the capability to accomplish a valuable function. "[O]r, less formally put, [capability is] the freedom to achieve various lifestyles".⁸

5.3 Individual Agency

Amartya Sen understands individual freedom as a capability in which the person decides and takes responsibility of his or her own life. He calls this view of individual freedom, individual agency. An agent is "someone that acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well".⁹ Then, taking in account agency is regarding individuals as reasonable beings capable of evaluating

choices. However, this valuation process, according to Amartya Sen, goes beyond rational choice since individuals make decisions based not solely on preferences, but based on intrinsic values. From this perspective, agents are seen as responsible adults with the right to decision making and action to impact their own lives. For Amartya Sen, fostering responsibility encourages individuals not only to watch their own behavior, but it also makes people relate to “the miseries that we see around us and that lie within our power to help remedy” that is to bring out one’s own responsibility.

5.4 Development as Freedom

From what is described above, we now can be sure that “development as freedom” is not mainly concerned with economic growth, but with individual agency. As Amartya Sen quotes from the very beginning of the Nicomachean Ethics, “wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else”. What we seek with the use of wealth is, according to Amartya Sen, to live the lives we have reason to value and this is where the importance of wealth rests. Therefore, when measuring development, we do not do it in terms of GNP or levels of industrialization; we do it in terms of individual agency. Poverty is accordingly a deprivation of basic capabilities, rather than merely low income. From this perspective, measuring development becomes an extremely complex task since not all individuals enjoy the same freedom within a society.

Furthermore, this understanding of freedom has two major implications. First, the difference between developed and developing countries based on levels of industrialization or GNP – as useful as it may be for other purposes or levels of analysis – does not reflect the degree of individual agency in any society. It can of course reflect economic circumstances such as a strong middle class in terms of purchasing power, but it tells us nothing about the absolute purchasing power of the poorest in a given society, let alone individual agency. Poverty then cannot be intelligibly

identified in terms of GNP. As such, Amartya Sen argues that poverty can be sensibly identified in terms of capability deprivation and highlights that this approach concentrates on deprivations that are intrinsically important.

Following this reasoning then, it would be a mistake to take economic growth as the end of development. For wealth is only a means to an end – the end being the things we have reason to value, which Amartya Sen calls them substantive freedoms. Consequently, as Amartya Sen speaks the language of freedom, wealth is regarded as an instrumental freedom. From this follows that the ends of development are substantive freedoms by the means of instrumental freedoms. “In this approach, expansion of freedom is viewed as both (1) the primary end and (2) the principal means of development”. Thus individual freedom becomes the means and the ends of development. Accordingly, “[t]he success of a society is to be evaluated, in this view, primarily by the substantive freedoms that members of a society enjoy”. From Amartya Sen’s perspective, instrumental freedoms contribute to the general capability of an individual. Thus, emphasis is made on the capability of individuals, and hence capabilities are substantive freedoms. Amartya Sen does not mention concretely what substantive freedoms are because that is for each individual in a specific society to decide. Substantive freedom can be enjoyed individually or collectively. In this way, Amartya Sen leaves open for each society the desirable combination of functionings they wish to pursue. Furthermore, there is not a clear cut destination between some instrumental freedoms and substantive freedoms. I would argue that substantive freedoms from Amartya Sen’s perspective are what the instrumental freedoms are supposed to bring about, in particularly justice and equality. I elaborate below on Amartya Sen’s idea of a just and equal society.

5.5 Identity

Amartya Sen warns that a world divided between haves and have-nots has every possibility to experience retaliatory violence. Am-

artya Sen feels that West - Anti West solitarist contrast feeds bellicose identity. To prevent such conflicts global inequality needs to be addressed from different angle and the process of globalization must be made equitable through increased human contacts and institutional measures. The author recalls his first exposure to identity violence in 1944 when as a child he witnessed the death of a poor Muslim labourer Kader Mian killed in the Hindu Muslim riots. As a child he was perplexed and admits that he is still bewildered by the violence of identity. He realised that the poor were the worst victim of such violence as economic poverty meant comprehensive unfreedom.

Amartya Sen argues that the isolation of one identity at the cost of all others into stringent categories has impact on politics, society and thought. The intellectual theories of exclusiveness are often used to provide conceptual basis for conflict. Both the proponents of violence and their opponents suffer from the same conceptual myopia. Such a sense of solitarist illusion has implications for global identities as the difference between global and local becomes irreconcilable. To prevent such flawed understanding to distort our vision we need to question order and ethos, politics and thought. There must be intellectual fairness in dealing with global history. Only freedom of choice and reason can enable us to break this vicious circle of violence. Sen emphatically proclaims Democracy as Public Reasoning. The book is a splendid reading and opens up alternative paradigm to view the world. Sen emphasises on the plurality of identity but he does not address the issue of how identities are really created and their crucial inter relation with other real life processes. A person must have the right to choose his identity yet the choice of a person is limited by other socioeconomic factors which Sen deals rather cursorily. For example the caste system in India which is a hierarchy of identities is not merely a construction but also based on tangible assets, wealth, weapons and control over political power. Identity in this case is the culmination of a long social

process, even before it becomes an entity in itself and promotes violence.

6. Conclusion

By treating the conceptual meaning of the notion of freedom as both autonomous and mutual, I was able to apply conceptual history. This method was used by drawing from Strauss' hermeneutics since Amartya Sen claims to have universalist presumptions. Amartya Sen can be considered as a political philosopher as he sees to reveal the best political order. As earlier philosophers search for "fundamental principles", he also did a search for the underlying diversity of the world, namely they look at the "permanence and changes it undergoes". The pursuit of this knowledge is not only about understanding or fulfilling a curiosity, but it is also, of course, for practical reasons – in Amartya Sen's acquiring power. Whether the goal is to have power over nature, ourselves, or others, the aim is to influence – negatively or positively – the status quo. Amartya Sen's reasons are without a doubt unselfish. As a philosopher, he seeks to positively impact society towards a better life based on classical standards of justice, equality, and freedom. For Amartya Sen, the enhancement of freedoms is in the pursuit for the best social, political, and economic order. Thus, in this respect, "development as freedom" is not just the eradication of poverty, but the pursuit of the best order.

As the fundamental principle of a democracy is freedom, Amartya Sen's thought is "strictly" democratic or, put differently, Amartya Sen belongs to a democratic tradition. Democracy – as advocated by him – presupposes the cultivation of certain specific values, especially social values. The classics perceived the cultivation of values – individual and social – to be the aim of human life. Hence, for the Ancients, virtue was the goal of the individual and social life. Even so, the classics berate democracy. In effect, Plato's Republic is the indictment of democracy par excellence.

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Asaṅga's *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra*: A Move Towards a Buddhist Hermeneutics

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Abstract: Knowledge is not merely for the sake of knowledge, but it is to be used, practised and lived actually, is a mark of unity of Indian Civilisation. Naturally, various sages and seers have spoken out their own revelations of truth/s, but their comprehensions and visions not being the same, interpretative varieties have emerged. Further, due to differences in the modes of thinking and living truth, traditions of interpretation, reinterpretation and understanding surfaced. Thus, cultural diversity which is lived/ experienced actually has been a fact.

Within the fold of Indian Civilisation, Gautama the Buddha in the 5th cen B.C. attempted to discover the truth and excelled the then prevalent modes of thoughts and practices. He, after his enlightenment, initially kept silence, and was hesitant to respond to the questions posed by the then people, but after repeated requests from humans and supernatural entities and beings, he attempted to speak about his revelation/realisation of the truth; and delivered the first discourse known as the *Dhamma-cakka-pabattana-sutta*. After his *Bodhi* till his *Mahāparinirvāṇa* — i.e. almost for 50 years — he expressed his views and thoughts at different places and times, and in response to various issues of the numerous individuals. It is his understanding and comprehension about himself, others, and the world at large consisting of the four basic truths viz. the *ārya-satyas* (Four Noble Truths). Although he was clear enough that realisation cannot be substituted by the description and discourse of truth, nonetheless it is out of compassion and love towards others that he preached and disseminated his knowledge of truth. After Buddha's passing

away the need and necessity of interpreting and reunderstanding his thought and experiences arose and multiplied in course of time. And this is how within the fold of Buddhism, hermeneutics originated and flourished.

This legacy of interpretative tradition further was reinforced by the movement of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism in general and *Yogācāra* tradition of Buddhism in particular, and later on against which the *Mādhyamika* trend within Buddhism emerged. In the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (ca 100 B.C.) the seeds were sown and *Saṅdhinirmocana-sūtra* further added some points, but it is Asaṅga who systematically pioneered this trend of thought and hence is honoured by the status of one of the “Six Ornaments of Buddhism in the *Jambu-dvipa*”.

This paper is an attempt to inquire into Buddhist hermeneutics in particular, by using Asaṅga’s *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* as a peephole. It is a humble endeavour to reinterpret and re-understand Buddhist thought and bring out its relevance by way of its appropriation for the present. This two-fold task — of interpretation and making it relevant in the present contexts — is attempted to be performed in three sections: In the first, a question of what is the nature and status of hermeneutic within Buddhism in general and Asaṅga’s *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* in particular is attempted to be considered. In the second, we shall attempt to inquire as to why hermeneutics is required. And in the third, we shall concentrate on the question as to how it is to be used significantly — the methods and procedures of its use for philosophisation and practice. The entire exercise hopes to be a methodological appropriation of historical facts, and focusing on linking our understanding of them to the present context.

Keywords: Asaṅga, *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra*, Buddhist hermeneutics, *Yogācāra*, *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, *Tripiṭakas*, *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, Buddhist tradition, interpretation.

Right from ancient times, within the fold of Indian Civilisation, attempts are made to emphasise the goal/s of life, viz. realisation of the ultimate truth.¹ Nonetheless to those who have not yet realised the truth, there should be at least some avenue to know about the truth, and hence another mode – a stepping-stone and/or a direction-giving indicator – is available, viz. knowing truth indirectly through interpretation. It is obvious that although

interpretation is needed, it cannot be a substitute to direct/intuitive experience of the truth.²

Further, in India it is generally held that by distribution of knowledge, we grow. It means, by knowledge we get more and more clarity and precision in our understanding³ and perhaps that is the reason why in India, knowledge of language and grammar⁴ was held essential in any discipline to communicate and develop our knowledge. Though discovery of truth may be out of reach to all, its understanding through explanation should be open to all. This, it seems, provided a ground and scope to develop various skills of interpretation and the arts of expression to communicate our comprehensions of truth (*Paṭisambhidā /Pratisamvid*).⁵

All the traditions in India – philosophical or otherwise – unanimously believe that the ultimate goal of life is to realise truth, but the question is: Is such a truth is one or many? Whether it exists objectively on its own, or is dependent upon and determined by human comprehensions? Whether it is eternal, absolute, permanent, certain; or non-eternal, relative, impermanent, uncertain in nature? Whether it has substantive-content, or it is non-substantive in character? Whether it is uniformly the same or its form differs? Just because primacy is given to intuitive-experience must it be mystical and sacred? Even if it is not completely objective, can it be at least inter-subjective? Is it that transcendental experience is necessarily non-rational, sacred and speculative; or can it be rational, objective and empirical? These are some of the issues where differences of opinion are experienced. There is diversity in comprehending, understanding and analysing the nature, status and role of truth on the one hand, and its communication and interpretation/s on the other. Historically, there may be continuities in discontinuities in preservation of our traditions, but such variety of thoughts and practices are imbibed, adopted and absorbed by generations to respond to the then prevalent problems confronted by all unanimously. And, Buddhism is not an exception to it.

As is well-known, Buddha had *Bodhi* (enlightenment),⁶ and such a realisation of the truth, for sometime at least, so overwhelmed him that it made him speechless or forced him to keep silence.⁷ However, many people around him were interested in knowing what he had realised. Similarly Gods, angles, supernatural beings and demons too earnestly requested him to speak,⁸ and it is on demand he attempted to describe and narrate. Initially he gave advices and afterwards had a dialogue with those who showed interest, which later on came to be known as sayings/sermons delivered to his pupils and many followers. Here it is important to note one thing about Buddha's *Bodhi* – he himself never claimed that 'I have known the "truth"', nor did he start on his own spontaneously to describe it. Rather it is on the request he narrated his experience/s, gave advices to various people at different times and places – taking into consideration their problems.⁹ And yet he often made it clear that I am trying to give direction,¹⁰ taking into account their (i.e. listeners') conditions, situations and capabilities. It means, he is concentrating on understanding and comprehension of "truth" and "its interpretation", by using various ways and means.¹¹ He never proclaimed to be an authority,¹² nor held that what he had comprehended is the only truth; but he is humble in stating the facts about human beings and the world at large (viz. *Sarvam Duḥkham*).¹³ He is aware that truth is not "one – complete and uniform". He has clearly stated that my understanding of truth may not be useful to you, and hence you have to become your own guide and better realise it yourself being your own path-finder (*Attāno Pradīpo Bhava*).¹⁴ In other words, what was Buddha's experience/comprehension of truth and how shall we relate ourselves with the Buddha through interpretation and understanding of it? Or alternatively, what is Buddha's thought/message and how shall we relate our lives with it through interpretation and reinterpretation of it as may be required? It is this understanding of truth, which is embedded in the very possibility of alternative frameworks of interpreting Buddhism, and provides historical background for us to understand its contributions especially in the field of hermeneutics.

Right from initial stages, during the life of the Buddha while circulating his thoughts various interpretations came to the foreground. Rather going one step ahead, one can see from the *Tripitakas* that his followers used different modes and Buddha himself had openly promoted and/or permitted them. Later on after the demise of the Buddha, attempts were made by his followers to collect his speeches and teachings, classify according to their content and/or form, and present them in an organized/systematic way. While circulating his thoughts in the form of systematic presentations, such differentiality paved a way for schism giving rise to the eighteen sects within Buddhism depicted in the *Tripitakas*. Again, after some centuries, there was, perhaps, a kind of paradigm-shift – from oral-tradition to written-tradition, which was perhaps concurrent with the emergence of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. In this movement of shifting from oral-tradition to written-tradition flexibility was perhaps lost and due to the passage of time distancing of followers from the Buddha, a question of authenticity and reliability of the thoughts being preserved and circulated emerged. Thus, in the *Mahāyāna*-tradition an inquiry was undertaken to examine the facts. Since Buddha himself had used various dialects and various forms of communication, flexibility of understanding “his thoughts” was involved in the very framework of Buddhist thinking; and correspondingly that was reflected into the practices¹⁵. Hence, within the philosophical framework of Buddhism, there are differences and yet there is unity due to the Buddha – his thoughts and life. On the one hand, it provides commonality to all the sects, yet, on the other hand, interpretative differences of thoughts and practices, perhaps, bring in diversity and richness. It is this inclusive framework, which provided scope to accommodate alternativity and novelty to integrate and modify progressively, and tolerate differences too. Such interpretative-flexibility and tolerance towards differences and yet preservation of unity was, it seems, a reason to adopt, absorb and sustain Buddhism universally. This interpretative alternativity/plurality further provided scope to hold that truth is not necessarily “one”¹⁶ or unilateral; rather the Buddha himself has expressed and

permitted others to express his comprehensions of the truth in variety of ways. Thus, Buddha's experience/comprehension of truth and his communication/expression his thoughts through his preaching are the facts. But our understanding of them through interpretation and reinterpretation at any stage is never final and irrevocable. Nor are our modes of relating to them invariable and permanent. Rather, they are also subject to the law of *Anityatā* and *Anātmatā* (impermanence and non-substantiality). Such an inquiry into the understanding of truth was, it seems, focusing on the following considerations:

- 1] Already interpretation is involved in Buddha's sayings and their preservation in the form of *Tripitakas*, as they are not the texts actually being written by the Buddha, nor verified by him after their being written. As is well-known, it is after *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha followers have collected, classified and systematically presented his thoughts. But in doing so, what the Buddha had said at different times and places could not be presented in exactly the same letters /words, because in between the two events – Buddha's demise and emergence of the *Tripitakas* – we are told that there is a gap of at least fifty years. Hence what is heard by the then disciples and codified later on cannot be exactly in the same word/s. Moreover, just as all the other Indian Philosophical traditions initially were preserved in the oral-forms, so too was Buddhism; and the written-form of preservation came to the foreground some time before or after 1st Century C.E. Thus, there may be similarity of thoughts and ideas, but not the sameness of letters in the sayings of the Buddha.
- 2] Further, Buddha himself had preferred to present his thoughts not in the same form monotonously, but according to the contexts, he also had made variations and modifications in his modes of sayings. They are of three kinds:
 - (i) Dialect/Language (*Bhāṣā*) – He knew many dialects and had not only used *Pāli* language in which the present *Tripitakas* are available, but had also used various regional dialects¹⁷

like – *Māgadhi*, *Kośalī*, *Paiśācī*, *Saṅskṛta*, *Prākṛta*, *Vrajasenī*, *Saurasenī*, etc.

(ii) Forms of Explanation – Taking into consideration the content and style of his expressions, later on classification was made into *Nava-Dharmas*¹⁸ viz. *Sutta* (verse), *Geyya* (poetry/ songs), *Veyyākarana* (explanation of words/ grammar), *Gāthā* (prose/stanza), *Udāna* (exalted/ spontaneous utterances), *Itivuttaka* (descriptive-reports/ narratives), *Jātaka* (stories of births), *Abbhuta-dhamma* (teachings regarding miracles) and *Vedalla* (analysis by questions and answers) in the early period. And in the *Mahāyāna* tradition three more forms were added later on and came to be known as *Dvādaśa-Dharmas*,¹⁹ viz. *Avadāna* (legends), *Nidāna* (investigation), and *Upadeśa* (philosophical advices).

(iii) Variety of Methods—By using parables, similes, analogies, metaphors and illustrations the Buddha used to teach²⁰. He used to insist that one should transcend the limitations of words, and better concentrate on the content and live life accordingly. For some primarily it is essential to have faith and convictions behind practices, for others rational and critical reflection is significant response, and further still for some others creative expressions of various potentialities and use of magnificent skills to motivate / illuminate one-self and others, etc., may be emancipatory. Taking into account complexities of their prevalent preconditions — internal or external — inclinations, abilities and situations in which they are placed, one is required to teach; and hence modes of persuasion and disciplining vary. And yet at a certain point of time all these techniques and methods turn out to be redundant and futile, and that is to be realised by oneself. Even the so-called philosophical doctrines and practices laid down by the traditions, become meaningless and vacuous. That's why *Hīnayāna* Buddhism advocated the importance of *Prajñā* (wisdom), *Śīla* (moral-character) and *Samādhi* (meditativeneutrality)²¹ to be practised through *Aṣṭāngika-mārga*. Later on, *Mahāyāna* Buddhism transformed this emphasis onto the understanding

and practice of Madhyamā-Pratipada (non-extremism or middle-way)²², perhaps, leaving flexibility and responsibility to understand rationally.

Everyone is endorsed to avoid what is of the nature of excess/extreme in order to avoid various kinds of attachments / bewitchments even by ignorance. Minimally by practising and elevating human abilities, viz. *Prajñā* (insightful understanding) and *Karuṇā* (compassion), excellence and perfection can be attained; and one can transcend²³ one's own limitations — inner or outer.

3] In the changing circumstances and situations neither the direct accessibility to the Buddha was possible, nor was there unwavering universal authenticity of his words which were circulated, yet Buddha's experience and narration of the truth prevailed. It was this background of understanding of his thoughts with the help of available scattered and sporadic texts or corrupt practices with which even *Mahāyāna* tradition was trying to adjust. Under such conditions how to comprehend truth in teachings of the Buddha, and what is meaning of the ultimate truth in our communicative-world of expressions — the tradition and our life-comprehensions — were the problems confronted by the then Buddhist followers. It is in this context Asaṅga is responding in a novel way. To study his thoughts and especially the nature, status and role of words used for interpretation, to take the insightful clues from him for the present, is an important and interesting task to which we wish to focus in this paper.

Asaṅga, a well-known *Yogācārin* in his *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra*, it seems, has attempted to draw the boundaries — scope and limits — of interpretation on the one hand, and the possibilities of knowing the ultimate truth on the other. It is, perhaps, an inquiry into Buddhist hermeneutics in general by using Asaṅga's *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* in particular as a peep-hole. It is an endeavour to reinterpret and re-understand Buddhist thought and bring out its relevance, by way of its interpretation and appropriation for the present. This two-fold task — of

interpretation and making it relevant for the present – is an attempt desired to be performed in three sections: In the first section, a question of what is the nature and status of hermeneutics within Buddhism in general and Asanga's *Mahāyāna-sūtrālankāra*²⁴ in particular is attempted to be inquired into. In the second, we shall try to consider why hermeneutics is required. And in the third section, we shall concentrate on the question of how it is used significantly – the methods and procedures of its use for philosophising and practice. The entire exercise aims at methodological preservation – absorption and assimilation – of historical facts, and focusing on integrating our understanding by them – a kind of our contribution to the preservation and growth – in the present context.

Section-I: Nature and Status of Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is a science of interpretation (of text, thought, message or comprehension of truth). Restricting ourselves for the present to truth whether it is interpretation of the actual truth, or our understanding and/or comprehension of truth, is a crucial question. It has, perhaps, something to do with our conception of truth primarily. According to Buddhism, ontologically truth is unique, particular, un-instantial. It is beyond the possibility of expression, as our modes of communication bring in shareability and generality. Hence, the very possibility of such a unique truth being satisfactorily expressed in words is out of question. It transcends the limitations of our normal modes of expression – verbal as well as non-verbal. Truth exists on its own and does not depend on us nor is it determined by our comprehension/s of it. It is not what we create and/or believe to be true, but exists independently of us; and occasionally/incidentally we may have a chance to comprehend it. As the ultimate truth is unique and cannot be captured by words, naturally the entire possibility of normal modes of communication and expression is fraught with serious difficulties even *prima-facie*. Although actual existence of truth and our intuitive-experience /comprehension of it is impossible to be interpreted by way of expressions, it

is nonetheless not a mystical experience culminating into either agnostic and/or sacred exercise, or solipsism. Rather, Buddha's comprehension of the truth is not something above the world, but it is a truth about the entire world and all kinds of beings including human beings universally, viz. *Sarvam Duḥkham* (that all living beings are susceptible to *Duḥkha*)²⁵. It is in this context that Asaṅga's conception of truth and reality is worth to be analysed. According to him, there are three realms of understanding the reality – *Parikalpita* (illusive-imaginary, imputed), *Paratañtra* (given-conceptualised relative, contingent) and *Parinispitta* (truth-original, unqualified)²⁶. Out of them the former two are conventionally-real (*Samvṛtti / Vyavahāra-sat*), whereas the last one alone is real and/or true ultimately (*Paramārtha-sat*). Let us discuss them in the sequence in which they are given in the text:

A] (*Abhūta*) *Parikalpita-sat*: It is a world of expression and communication to start with. It is the realm of imaginatively constructed-reality, where communication and expression has unlimited scope. It is the world full of imagination and fabrication of ideas, and hence is real but only fictitiously.²⁷ It is not only mind-involving, but completely mind-dependent and determined.²⁸ It, *prima-facie*, helps us to peep into our imaginative and/or creative world. But, it is completely unreal, coherently untenable, and hence conventionally as well as ultimately it is not true. It provides a scope to create imagery-world, but exists only on the level of ideas.²⁹ Mind and mental artefacts may not be true objectively, but enable us to integrate our personality and help us to boost our passions to create originating from our potentialities.³⁰ It is through the exuberance of our instinctive passions and feelings that we out-burst, and produce spontaneously something excellent, at times giving us experience of the sublime. The depth of our comprehensions, perhaps, is depicted in the realm of integrated thoughts and sensitivity of feelings, sometimes not necessarily expressed verbally but by using non-verbal modes of expression and communication too; but it is far away from realisation of the ultimate truth.

B| Paratantra-sat: Whatever is not given to us but we create/express, is the world of our imagination and conception. It is our creation of ideas, images and articulation of artefacts based on the given sensations, thoughts and emotions.³¹ Expressions are imbedded in certain presuppositions and assumptions of our past experiences, sentiments and beliefs prevalent through generations. It is a complex-whole of articulation of our images, and hence may be held as a product of causal-determination and/or intentional-motivation. With the help of memories, reflections and responses to facts, thoughts and emotions we attempt to express and share inter-subjectively our realisations and revelations. It is this conventional truth (*Kyavahāra-sat*) that provides the ground contextually and contingently for hermeneutics.

Human beings exist physically having mind and intellect. Through sense-organs we have sensations, but our physical body is endowed with instincts and passions too. One is capable to know/sense what is given to know naturally and spontaneously without adulteration of interpretation – in pure and simple ways. But human beings are also endowed with – sensitivity and sensibility – to sense thoughts and emotions is important even. It is a natural capacity to feel and think, which it is not a product of human creation. Human existence is not to be understood as a machine, which is able to acquire rationally what is given to know externally through physical body. But in the inner-world also – sensitivity and sensibility – prevails. We sense and feel the existence of thoughts and emotions, which are given to us and are real as well. These two aspects of our existence and/or personality are generally neglected, but Buddhism, it seems, high-lights their importance. Truth is not merely about the empirical /external objective world, but it is about the inner-world too, which *prima-facie* may appear to be subjective but is real nonetheless.

Our comprehensions of truth are normally derived through our commonsensical experiences based on sensations of physical body³². Yet, there are two more important avenues of cognition viz. thoughts and ideas, (i.e. conation); and the functional aspects of our existence (i.e. affection), existing in the form of instincts.

feelings and emotions. These two aspects of our existence play a vital role in our life. These two aspects are equally real, though not independently of us but with-in us. Just as our sense-organs are capable to acquire sensations physically, similarly we have spontaneous thoughts without words, and so too we have instincts, feelings and emotions, which though momentarily are often passive and un-communicated. Just as direct experience of truth existing in the empirical world is beyond the possibility of expression at times, so too expressing thoughts – rational or irrational – appropriately in the form of various modes of communication is impossible. Similarly is the case of our feelings and emotions expressed – verbally or non-verbally.³³ Thus, human beings intend to realise truth directly in all forms of its existence, which exists without various modes of expressions and communication. The scope of our knowledge of the truth should not be delimited apriorily to physical experience and objective empirical world only. It is this factual world of existence which is beyond the capacity of our creation. However, whatever is given to us when we try to know through inter-subjective modes of communication is *Paratantra-sat* (conceptualisation of the given-truth), according to Asaṅga, is regulated by patterns of communication and discursive thinking.

Our inter-subjective modes of communication apparently seem to be true, but ultimately it is neither real in the ontological world of facts nor objective in the inner-world of thoughts rationally. They are pragmatically useful in certain contexts. Verbal expressions are conceptual creations of mind, apparently real and coherently conceivable, but are not true ultimately and hence real conventionally. On the contrary, thoughts and ideas, emotions and feelings are real – though not existing ontologically (*Paramārtha-sat*) in the external world, yet are real in the realm of inner-world and hence exist conventionally (*Vyavahāra / Lok-saṃvṛtti-sat*). Nonetheless, they remain restricted to our conceptions and imaginations i.e., in the domain of *Vyavahāra / Lok-saṃvṛtti-sat*, and cannot transcend the limits and boundaries

of our normal modes of communication and expressions on the one hand and our understanding on the other, and hence they cannot claim to be basically real. Yet they open the grounds of possibilities of interpretation and expression, i.e., our understanding of facts and thoughts.

C] *Pariniṣpanna/Paramārtha-sat*: Ultimate truth is beyond the limits of duality (*Advaya*),³⁴ viz. (1) It is neither existent, nor non-existent, (2) It is neither identical nor different, (3) It has neither beginning, nor end, (4) It neither increases nor decreases, and (5) It is pure and unpolluted but does not purify anything. It is impossible to communicate and express the ultimate-truth, and is to be realized by one-self. It is indefinable and indescribable by its very nature (*abhilāpa-samsarga-ayogya/ Nirvikalpa*)³⁵. It is beyond our normal modes of categorisation, and hence is neither one nor many. It is unique, discrete, particular, and yet unitary. Our comprehension of it is not eternal and stable. Such a truth does not have fixed core or nucleus, as it is non-substantial. It transcends the limits of our imagination and normal mode of understanding, and yet is realisable by all – anybody and everybody. It exists on its own and is real ultimately. It is beyond any kind of pre-determinations or presuppositions. It is insightful, perfect and excels all kinds of bounds and limitations. Basic, absolute but uncontaminated or unadulterated truth/s regarding human beings, human life or world at large together with interrelationship among them are neither regarding these relating to external or internal world on the one hand nor about fictitious or imaginary world on the other. Fictions, fabrications of imaginations, are baseless and the only truth concerning them is that they are unreliable and untenable. Any worthy hermeneutical exercise concerning them is not likely to cut any philosophically significant ice. Other things remaining the same, facts and objects of the external-world , mental processes and states-of-affair of the inner-world like feelings, emotions, sentiments etc. are impermanent, susceptible to change and substanceless. Truths concerning them are only conventional and communication concerning them as

well as its interpretation does not transcend commonsensical limits. Thoughts and emotions too occur spontaneously and contingently, and at times it is impossible to interpret or express them beyond certain limits.³⁶ That's why existence of the ultimate truth is objectively real, but not necessarily physical/ substantial/ material in nature.³⁷ This sort of truth is real and needs to be comprehended/ realised directly. Comprehension of such basic/ absolute truth/s is often an outcome of prolonged exercise of de-construction, de-conditioning, purging and purification of various kinds of pollutions and deformities (*Pariniṣpanna /Paramārtha-sat*). And yet such a truth is realisable only by humans in so far as they are truly human.

These three realms of understanding enable us to interpret truth in various ways and make our life rich in scope and profundity. It is language through which generally we express and interpret our understanding of truth – ontological as well as conventional, subjectively given to us by cognition and inter-subjectively verifiable, occasioned by facts, thoughts or emotions. Thoughts/ideas are generally shared by modes of expression and communication – through signs and symbols, verbally through words or non-verbally through various non-linguistic forms. Since, interpretation of truth is not merely possible linguistically / verbally through language, but through non-verbal modes as well, as they also enable us to express and interpret our experiences and thoughts about truth. Nonetheless, beyond expression and communication truth exists, and we try to analyse and explain our understanding of truth in various modes of expression and attempt to interpret them in different ways, using numerous means. A continuous search for discovery of basic truth by way of interpretation enriches our existence and provides scope for us to progress. It means hermeneutics is an integrative exercise, opening the vistas and depth of imagination, and creating imagery/ conceptual forms of expression; using our inner-world – subtle and sensitive – primarily. It is an excrcise of exhibiting depth of understanding and profundity of comprehensions, and marking our developmental integrative-richness. Hermeneutics does not

remain merely as a science of interpretation of a text – sacred or profane, but by transcending the limitations of expression it opens the possibility of knowing the proper conceptions of truth. Now with this background, let us turn to another consideration connected to interpretation, viz. need of hermeneutics, in the next section.

Section II: Reasons behind Interpretation

Interpretation need not necessarily be limited to text; rather it attempts to reveal the truth as comprehended/experienced/conceived by the author/s, and then described/explained and/or intended to be experienced by the reader/s – known or unknown. In the case of oral-tradition, spoken words directly perform a role of sharing the inner-world of comprehensions or thoughts of the speaker to be understood clearly and transparently by the listeners' primary. In the written-mode of expression also our knowledge of truth is at stake communicated to the unknown readers. However, in both the modes, oral or written, it is indirect cognition of truth through linguistic communication. Intentions differ according to changing circumstances and situations, medium to express our understanding of the truth varies; nonetheless, there is an inner urge to communicate.³⁸ It is because human beings are social by nature, and desire to progress by sharing,³⁹ and attempt to liberate by dissolving egoity/conceit. There are some reasons for prescribing /promoting hermeneutics, to which we intend to focus in what follows:

- 1] If what exists ontologically is momentary, incommunicable, and definable only in terms of itself and not by anything else, then correspondingly our knowledge should also become extremely difficult to fathom into. But, it is a fact that our comprehensions/knowledge of existence is not evanescent. Mere sensation/thinking/feeling – pure and simple – is not knowledge. It is only after sensation/thinking /feeling being understood and analysed, and articulated in the form of a knowledge-claim, it can be expressed properly. Thus, sensation is required to be interpreted to understand and communicate it appropriately, and for which

certain categories of understanding, conceptual schemes of formulation and articulation, and rules governing expression etc. are to be adopted. Although it is true that language is a product of human-creation, none of us articulate it individually. However, we generally follow and adopt language to communicate, which is given to us by traditions and cultures in which we live and yet there is scope to change and innovate something new. But, usually the prevalent terminology is used, and yet there is a freedom to select/choose words already available in circulation, in socio-cultural, intellectual and religious climate we live; or else to coin new ones. We generally use commonly available words, but when we are unable to express, our creative mind gives rise to either new meaning to already prevalent words or else tries to coin new ones.

According to Buddhism actual existence is impermanent¹⁰, yet we try to describe, communicate, name and express through our thoughts, ideas and conceptions in different ways, which are relatively stable/constant, though not eternal and permanent. We know that such a conceptual construction of reality cannot be mapped onto actual /existential reality, yet it is essential epistemically. There is no one-to-one correspondence between words and world. We need our knowledge to be shared, remain stable and continuous at least relatively, and certain minimally in the given context. Otherwise, human fund of knowledge cannot grow, and moreover we are likely to embrace something contrary to experience. Our comprehension of truth may be momentary, but our knowledge of truth should be relatively continuous. It may not be eternal and permanent; nonetheless, should have some kind of stability and certainty. This is possible only through interpretative understanding of the comprehended / communicated truth.

2] If one denies the very possibility of indirect modes of understanding truth – by way of explanations and analysis, descriptions and elaboration, cognition and certification – then the very teaching of the Buddha and his realisation of the truth shared will become redundant and futile. But many people

indeed use him as a role-model –an exemplar, and attempt to comprehend and follow his thoughts. Hence, to preserve the significance of the Buddha and his thoughts, it is required to have hermeneutics. Interpretations of thoughts of the Buddha change according to the contexts and situations in which we live, but they are essential and relevant heuristically.

3] Buddhism was, perhaps, attempting to deny eternality (*Śaśvatavāda*) on the one hand and total uncertainty and chaos (*Ucchedavāda*), on the other⁴¹. Although Buddhists deny the authority of text/person, they are not advocating solipsistic or sacred modes of thinking, and isolated form of living. There is a possibility to have organisation and systematisation through interpretative understanding of truth and that can be complementary to experiential realisations of truth. Hence, interpretation is required to be made for our understanding in an inter-connected and holistic manner.

Before we proceed further, in the context of Buddhist Hermeneutics in general, one point of seminal importance needs to be noted here. After passing away of the Buddha his thoughts/message formulated and gathered in the form of *Tripitakas* was the only source of reaching to the Buddha, however indirect it may be. In this context, the form and language in which his thought/message was expressed was required to be interpreted, especially because such a language was the language familiar to the people with whom the Buddha conversed directly, but did not commit to anything in the written fixed-form. Regarding interpretation of the texts of the *Tripitakas* and the message / thought of the Buddha contained in them, two positions seem to have emerged in the course of time. The advocates of *Hīnayāna* seem to have held that Buddha's thoughts and message to people/followers is contained in the letter and form of the language in which it is communicated. And the spirit of the thought/message of the Buddha does not transgress the language in which it is expressed. In other words, according to them, we would be able to understand the thought of the Buddha by strictly following the letter and form of the language, especially since the spirit of the

thought is nothing beyond the letter and form of the language expressing it. We need to literally follow the language and its form. If we do this, we would be able to understand his thought. Thus, external mode of expression and communication is the crux of the matter. Against this, the *Mahāyānists* seem to have held that the language in which Buddha's message is expressed is after all only a tool, and that the spirit of his message goes beyond the form and letter of the language. Buddha's message certainly needs to be interpreted, so that we can co-relate ourselves with him through following his thoughts. But what is important is not the letter and form of the language expressive of Buddha's thought, but rather spirit, focus, thrust, perspective and message that he intended to place before us through it. In order to reach to it, we need to go beyond the letter and form of the language concerned. Its interpretation furnishes an occasion for our being able to peep into Buddha's thought. For this, according to *Yogācāra* Buddhists, we need to develop a particular mind-set, through prolonged practice of various *Yogic* exercises and techniques together with various kinds of *Pāramitas*. Emergence of this sort of mental set-up/mind-set paves a way for our being able to understand Buddha's thought and its seminal implications and shape our life in the light of them. Advocates of *Mādhyamika* trend, on the contrary, held that we would be able to understand Buddha's thoughts properly through penetrating insightful wisdom. But as a preparatory step towards it, we need to free ourselves from outward bewitchments of language and expressions, constructions, egos, conceits, and traps of various kinds – linguistic, conceptual, mental, cultural, religious, conventional etc. For them, hermeneutics is basically such a de-constructive, de-conditioning, fog-clearing exercise. It is important, but such an exercise in itself does not constitute the insightful wisdom mentioned above. At this stage of the present study, we need not dive deeper into this issue here.

4] As is well-known Asaṅga was follower of the *Yogācāra*-tradition of Buddhism, which believes that there is no-self metaphysically, but our actions, their results and consequences do exist; and they are preserved in a seed-form of consciousness

known as *Ālaya-vijñāna*.⁴² Only when conditions are conducive, they (our thoughts and emotions) provoke us to respond and manifest contextually in the actual world. Similarly our knowledge is not completely lost at every moment, rather it can remain to continue in the form of innate pure-seeds of impressions (*Ālaya-vijñāna*). Thus, both the aspects of our existence continue in a series-form of consciousness (*Citta-santati*), and enable us to talk about gradual-development of a human being towards *Nirvāṇa*. And to make the spiritual-progress properly, it is helpful to make use of *Yoga*⁴³ – *Daśa-Pāramitās* (ten modes of perfection).⁴⁴ Asaṅga held that practising *Yoga* / *Pāramitās* in daily-life is essential for all to realise *Nirvāṇa*. It is not merely by denying the reality of the empirical world that one can comprehend *Nirvāṇa*, like *Sūnyavādins*, but it is necessary to live positively and constructively as a true Buddhist, through living with facts/truths. It is by practising the Buddhist way of life and performing *Yoga* in the light of *Pāramitās*, one can accumulate knowledge and morality, which is the crux of the true existence of humans. Otherwise, alternatively one can surrender completely and have faith in the *Bodhisattva*, who will take care of the devotees. It is emotional appeal and using feelings to liberate/realise – the supreme world of emptiness within. They reject sudden/spontaneous realisation of the ultimate truth, and stress on the gradual method of acquisition of truth.

5] According to Buddhism in general, there is no eternal permanent substance – self-existing in-side (*Pudgala-Nairātmya*) or out-side (*Dharma-Nairātmya*). To realise this fact is itself a kind of blow to our misplaced sense of ego or identity.⁴⁵ We are part and parcel of the cosmos, but not the controller and governor of it. Our existence is real, but not eternal and permanent. We do not have fixed identity, but there is a possibility to discriminate and identify things and beings. To realise this ultimate truth and vacuousness of our commonsensical modes of understanding is possible, by making ourselves empty of misplaced cognitions and creations, which give rise to a sense of pride and attachments. But unless we create, we cannot dissolve or realise the scope

and limits of creations. And for creation, we have to express, communicate, think, image, explain and conceive. That is possible only when we interpret messages in terms of our experiential-cognitions, thoughts and emotions. Asaṅga emphasises on using creative potentiality for the joy of all beings to be shared, and hence various arts and crafts are the avenues to express.⁴⁶ That is how we find, on the one hand, he has written texts like *Śrāvaka-bhūmi*⁴⁷ and *Yogācāra-bhūmi*,⁴⁸ to stress on *Yoga* and/or *Pāramitās* to become perfect like the *Bodhisattva*, and, on the other hand, philosophical texts like *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* to support his arguments to realise *Bodhi* as *Lokottara/ Viśuddha-jñāna*.⁴⁹ According to him, creation is an integrative exercise, where depth of imagination is required. It is by using one's own inner potentialities one can develop personality in the field of arts and crafts. In the field of aesthetic, morality and religion, there is a possibility to transcend the limits of knowledge and enter into the domain of the unknown. Human creativity depicts imagery, forms that are not redundant and futile, but they are relevant to enrich our personality – the inner-world of consciousness. It enables us to understand the unknown and subtle world of reality, which depicts richness of our understanding in terms of variety and profundity of thoughts, and ultimately gives us peace and contentment. We can avoid extremities and follow the middle-path by active-participation and live-demonstration.

6] As according to Buddhism everything is impermanent and hence changing, naturally the contexts in which we live do not remain the same. So too, our pre-conditions and predicaments historical/socio-cultural/religious/political/economic/linguistic/psychological/intellectual etc. change, and to adjust/imbibe and absorb/assimilate those changes, we need proper understanding. It is this interpretative-integration – knowing oneself and the others – the world of thoughts/persons/cultures etc., paves a way towards hermeneutic.

With this philosophical reasoning behind advocating the need to interpret, it becomes interesting and essential to know about the methods adopted, to which we turn in the last section.

Section III: Methodology of Hermeneutics

Although we discussed in the last section the need and necessity to interpret, our exercise cannot be complete unless we spell out the methods and techniques to be used; and precisely that is the task we hope to undertake in this last section. To interpret is to understand the truth – in and of/about human beings, and the entire universe. If this widest sense of the meaning of interpretation is accepted, then the truth-realising techniques and methods turn out to be self and/or world conceiving-exercise also. It is by using linguistic-expressions already prevalent that we try to interpret our thoughts and experiences, and articulate our conceptions – starting from ourselves, others and the world at large. There is a continuous and consistent attempt to make our expressions and understanding clear, transparent and perfect, in order to have proper conceptions. It is a passage from imperfection to perfection, through conceptual comprehension of the world – inner or outer.

In such an exercise of understanding /comprehending the truth and reality, we share freedom to use and create new words to obtain exactitude and precision, and everybody gets equal opportunity to understand the truth, create new conceptions, and use various modes of expression. Such a meaning-giving exercise can be individualistic in its inception, but it can be collective and collaborative in its reception. It is in a sense urge to share and distribute, in order to open the gate-ways of acquiring truth to be known by all. On the one hand, it is preservation of particularity and yet, on the other, accommodating all the individuals in general – both being the aspects of human personality. In our conceptions both the aspects – subjective and objective – are involved.

While undertaking such an exercise, one has to be flexible and accommodative to the changing demands of situations to which we respond. Thus, culture-specific relativities of the individuals/groups are bound to be there, but any interpretation aspires for universalisability. It originates in spatio-temporal context, but intends to be context-free. This is possible only when it observes

certain functional constraints regulating in a certain way. To consider some such constraints – internal and /or external – is worth-while, towards which we now proceed:

External Constraints: Since the interpretative exercise is expected to be undertaken in the Buddhist philosophical framework, to begin with such an exercise obviously should be consistent with its basic doctrinal commitments, which operate as external constraints. They are three:

i] *Anityatā* – Whatever is real is by its very nature impermanent, and hence subject to change. To this, any interpretation and understanding cannot be an exception. Having roughly grasped the importance of the Buddha's thought/message and the need of our living in the light of it to emancipate ourselves individually and/or collectively, people from various walks of life – with different cultural, intellectual, social background – try to understand his thought through interpretation/re-interpretation of the language in which it is expressed. To be able to get better insight, his thought too is interpreted to derive implications from it. But such interpretations are often relative to the period of time, place, level of understanding; and are subject to change to such an extent that they could be contested/challenged and forced to be given-up, being untenable. The sphere of *Anityatā* does not cover only the field of objects and events. It also extends to interpretations, conceptions of truth, modes of analysis/ explanation/ justification, etc. however *prima-facie* satisfactory they may seem.

ii] *Anātmatā* – Anything real is non-substantial, and esselessness – internal or external – according to Buddhism. The doctrine of no-self and selflessness entails in the context of Buddhist hermeneutics that no interpretation or re- interpretation of the Buddha's thought/message at any stage put forth by anybody can revolve around any substance/nucleus of whatever kind. But it also entails that although it might have been put forth by a particular advocate in a certain context, it should not aspire to monopolise the hermeneutic-space in Buddhist tradition. As is evident from Buddhist history, various interpretations and

hermeneutical trends were in vogue at the same time without trying to eliminate others. And although they were at variance with each other they nevertheless brought forth richness, depth, variety contained in Buddha's thought. Any Buddhist hermeneutical exercise compromising with this aspect was not well-received.

iii] *Duhkha* – Susceptibility to annoying states of affair, agony, angst and restlessness, according to the Buddha, is a natural state of affair of existence of any living organism and to this even a human being is not an exception. The Buddha and his followers did emphasise universal phenomenon of pain and suffering coming to the lot of living beings. But they never entertained the possibility of human beings engulfed by pain. Nor did they preach pessimism of any sort in face of pain and suffering. Any interpretation of Buddha's thought should never lose sight of this. Due to ignorance and attachments, pain and suffering emerges. In the process of expression/interpretation, pain and suffering can provide foundation to any work of art, and give scope to discover our inner-world of thoughts and ideas rationally, emotions and feelings aesthetically, faiths and beliefs religiously, and passions and instincts morally. They are apparently normative and non-rational, but a systematic inquiry into our subtle forms of realisation of truth is important. Any expression/interpretation can be good or bad, depending upon its authenticity and originality. Any interpretation cannot apriorily avoid bewitchment, deception and mis-interpretation, as there can be a gap between understanding the intentions and motives on the hand and actual expression and interpretation on the other. Under such circumstances, there is a need of tolerance and compassion or sympathetic mode of understanding of the other – creator or appreciator. Interpretation – verbal or non-verbal – should be flexible and accommodative to provide scope for readers / listeners/observers to understand their comprehensions of truths, and hence could be incomplete. Interpretation and understanding of phenomenon of pain and suffering or of the manner and mode of overcoming of it as taught by the Buddha should be free from

one-sidedness, dogma, regimentation and misconception as far as possible to keep the possibility of its universalisability open.

iv] *Nirvāṇa* – Any line of interpretation, reinterpretation and reunderstanding Buddha's thought should not compromise in any way with the basic tenet of *Nirvāṇa* so that on the one hand it is transcendence of de-humanising and de-moralising forces – internal and external – operative on humans individually and collectively, and attainment of peace on the other. By attempting to express and interpret one can progress, but such a development is not eternal; there is a permanent possibility to understand newly and alternatively. Any interpretation can transcend the boundaries and limitations of common-sensical world, provided it expresses hither-to-unknown and enables to realise the truth involving both sublimity (*Audārya*) and depth (*Gambhira*).⁵⁰ Rather, if it pacifies the need to share emotions and comprehensions originated in inquisitiveness, then only it gives peace and contentment through novel-creativity taking different forms of expressions – depending upon availability of medium, materials, inclinations and conditions. Though potentiality to create is by nature given to us, it depends upon our moods and modes to express the truth we experience, think and feel.

Internal Constraints: As said earlier Asaṅga was a *Yogācārin* and hence the marks of the *Yogācāra* Buddhist tradition are traceable in his writings. Some of them we wish to bring out which is also essential:

i) **Physical-Body:** *Prajñā and Karuṇā – Mahāyāna* is a paradigm-shift from individual-good upheld by *Hīnayāna*, to social-interests and/or well-being of all, especially preserving the interests of the majority of laity, which were neglected and marginalised. Physical body is neither pure nor impure. It is not impure by its very existence naturally, but it can be used as a tool to do social-work by performing morally good acts (*Sīla*) for the betterment of society at large. In the external world, *Bodhisattva* works for the people, who are ignorant and suffering, and up-lifts them all by using his *Prajñā* – (insightful wisdom/

discriminative understanding) and *Karuṇā* – (overflowing love and compassion). But for doing such acts, one needs to understand and realise (*Bodha*) facts actually, and interpret the life-problems/ worlds appropriately. Thus, it is interpretation of and for others, selflessly by the ideal interpreter, viz. the *Bodhisattva*. Here the interpretation is not of the objects/things, but of beings in the living-world. Hence, *Bodhisattva* has to develop *Prajñā*⁵¹, which is the highest one amongst the *Daśa-Pāramitās* prescribed by *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

ii) Mental Conditions: Although in the *Hīnayāna* tradition while explaining *Daśa-sīla*, one rule is that people should not entertain themselves by indulging into *Nṛtya* (dance), *Nātya* (drama), *Saṅgīta* (music) etc. but better concentrate on individual moral codes of conduct. In contrast to this, later on, Nāgārjuna, who is the founder of *Mahāyāna* tradition, himself has written *Nātya* (drama), viz. *Saudarānanda*. It may apparently sound to be contradictory, but in-depth-analysis reveals that such a rule in the *Hīnayāna* tradition is not meant for all the members of the society; it is only for *Bhikkhus* and *Bhikkhunis*. By suppressing one's own instincts and passions one cannot grow naturally, rather they can be used creatively by training and cultivating – culturing and nurturing –appropriately. Such a realisation compelled the later followers of Buddhism to think about interpretation of the rules to be practised. Perhaps, that's why within the fold of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, in the list of essential-trainings of the *Bodhisattva*, out of the five sciences to be learnt important place is given to sciences like *Śilpa-sthāna-vidyā* and *Śabda-vidyā*. Both are the modes of expression and originate in our instincts and passions, which spring from our emotions and feelings; but if trained properly can create aesthetic joy, which is witnessed through Buddhistic creation of master-pieces, viz. *Śilpa*, *Citra*, *Nṛtya*, *Nātya*, *Kāvya*, *Saṅgīta-kalā*, etc., that are considered as marks of Buddhist culture.

iii) Spirituality/Religiosity: Just as for living life we require body and mind, and hence passions and instincts are bound to

be there; so too we have emotions and feelings. Emotions and feelings by their very existence are not hurdles, rather if trained properly they can enable us to understand the inner-world. One can create a spiritual-world through contemplation and integrate the inner depth of understanding by using various practices of *Yoga*. There is a chance to interpret the religious-world of faith and devotion, which is apparently mystical and occult; but such practices too can enable us to develop and integrate our worldly-existence. And that is exactly done by Asaṅga's *Yogācāra* Buddhism.

As analysed and explained above, it should be amply clear that there are on the one hand constraints, but on the other hand giving scope and providing grounds to develop and integrate our personality in various ways. It is this method of transcendence – of what is given/ prevalent to be transformed into an artefact, conversion of limitations and constraints into assets, and adjusting with the present to live truly – taught by *Mahāyāna* Buddhism in general and Asaṅga in particular. It has unlimited scope and enormous possibility to become perfect truly as a human being. To live as a human being with all limitations and assets, and practising humanity in its all aspects to create peace and harmony is a new mode of culturing man and his world. It is a sense of true hermeneutics – a mode of interpretation and understanding ourselves, others and the world at large in the widest sense of the term, a vision given to us by Buddhism.

Buddhism attempted to create a new world of expression, by using the complementarity between understanding and interpretation, and *vice-versa*. By using what is not given as a medium, to create artefacts uniquely. It is a novel and originality-preserving mode to produce hermeneutic-world. One is creator of his own world by expressions of his culture, which depicts the value he preserves and makes his progress by giving meaning to his own life and the world through his contributions. It means: What you create, How you create and Why you create, truly be-speaks for your own culture.

Everything is evanescent and fragile,⁵² but to convert it into ever-lasting joy is a technique worth to be learnt from Buddhism. A good interpreter is one, who converts and succeeds in absorbing the reader/listener /observer and unites with the object of expression and creation. This method of critical-reflection on the complexities of world, transforming into excellence and perfection is a unique contribution of Buddhism. It is worth to contemplate in the contemporary world too, and if possible, appropriate according to our inclinations and intensions living in the present. It is a mode of following tradition and yet making it relevant for the present universally.

Notes

1. *Studies in Buddhism*; Chinchore, M.R.; pp.285-99; 327-343.
2. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; Ch.18, K.34-36, pp.131-34; K.77-81, pp.142-3;
Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra; Ch.2, K.1-7, pp.21-22. *Buddhānām lakṣaṇām jñānam----*/ *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*; Ch.3, K.60, pp.69-70; Ch-10, K.781, p.158; K.864, p.163.
3. Asaṅga in the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* states that language must have six qualities: *Snigdha* (polite), *Mrduka* (softness), *Manojña* (intense), *Manorama* (pleasing), *Śuddha* (clear) to interpret the truth; Ch.12, K.9, p.78.
4. Here it is pertinent to note that Asaṅga in his *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* [pp.70, 131], explains that there are three verbal modes of expression, viz. *Lipi* (script), *Gaṇanā* (counting numbers) and *Mudrā* (drawing figures); and out of that scriptural language is one. Study of language is an essential component of education (even according to Buddhists), and hence within the five essential subjects to be studied, *Śabda-vidyā* is one. For further details see also my article on *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* especially discussion on *Pañca-vidyā*; Chinchore, M.R.; *Studies in Buddhism*; p. 315. See also *Studies in Buddhistic Culture of India*; Lal Mani Joshi; pp.126-7,143.
5. It is worthwhile to note in this context that comprehension/knowledge (*paṭisamṛbhidā*) has four aspects, viz. insight into principles (*Nāma-jñāna/dharma-cakṣu*), the objective meaning/denotation (*artha- jñāna*), the connotation/ etymological meaning (*niruktiabhilapa- jñāna*), and finally the intuitive/insighting-power (*pratibhana/pratibha-jñāna*). *Paṭisamṛbhidāmagga*; Ch.4, See also *Abhidharma-dīpa* with

Vibhāṣā-prabhā-vṛtti; Ch.7, K.513-14, p.393; Warder, A.K.: *Indian Buddhism*; p. 299.

6. *Bodhi of the Buddha; Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*; Ch.5. K.53, p.94. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; Ch.19, K.75-80, pp.166-67. See also Warder, A.K.: *Indian Buddhism*; pp. 44-45.
7. *Tuḥṣṇīmbhāva*; *Ibid*; pp. 48-9. *Mahāvastu*; Ch.4. *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*; p. 3. *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*; pp.143-44 quoted in Chinchore, M.R.; *Studies in Buddhism*; p.322.
8. On Gods' request to speak; *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*; Ch.1, p.3; Ch.3, K.23, p.48; Ch.7, K.24-34 pp.110-12.
9. Teaching should be according to listener's interest; *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; p.1, 4, *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*; Ch.2. K.47, p.30; K.55, p.31.
10. *Mārga-darśaka / Kovida*; Asaṅga; *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra*; Ch.1, K.20, pp.7-9. *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*; Ch.7, K.12, p.107. *Lalitavistara*; Ch.1, K.5. p.3.
11. For different methods of teaching, *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*; Ch.2, K.109, p.38. Nakamura, p.71; Winternitz, p.68.
12. Rather, later on in the *Mahāyāna* tradition, we find that the Buddha was insisting that *tāpātchedāt ca nikṣat sūvarṇamiva ----Tattva-saṃgraha*; Vol-II, Ch. 26, K. 3587 p.1115.
13. Please see for details my paper 'Duhkha: An Analysis of Buddhist Clue to Understand Human Nature', in *Studies in Buddhism*; pp.181-194.
14. *Atāno pradīpo bhava*; *Dhammapada*, Verse. 160-61. *Sutta-nipāta*-513/ 17- 23, 622/43-46. *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*; pp.143-4. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; Ch.12, K.2-3, p.76.
15. *Śrāvaka-bhūmi* of Asaṅga; p. 354 fn. *Abhidharma-dīpa* with *Vibhāṣā-prabhā-vṛtti*; p.3 fn.
16. *Arya-satyas* even are numerically four and not one.
17. *Culla-vagga*; 5/33/1. See also for further discussion on variety of *Bhāṣas* and scripts. *Lipi, mudrā and Gaṇanā, kāyavākkarma* in the *Lalita-vistara*; p.218.
18. *Artha-viniścaya-sūtra*; p.71. *History of Indian Literature*, Winternitz, p.1011.
19. *Nava-aṅgas*; Asaṅga; *Śrāvaka-bhūmi*; pp.134-40. See also Asaṅga; *Abhidharma-samuccaya*; Pradhana, P. (ed.); pp.78-9. And also Chinchore, M.R.; *Studies in Buddhism*; p.313,

20. *History of Indian Literature*; Winternitz; pp. 12-13, 68.
21. *Dīgha-nikāya*, 33/1/10. *Abhidharma-samuccaya* of Asaṅga; p.64.
22. Although in early stages Buddhism stressed on *Adhi-prajñā*, *Adhi-samādhi*, and *Adhi-sīla* in contrast to non-Buddhists traditions as a way to live, later on, it seems, followers of the thoughts of the Buddha stressed on the middle-way, leaving the decisions to the concerned using their potentialities; *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; Ch.5, K.8-11, pp.22-23. Ch.10, K.11, p.54; Ch.11, K.1, p.55; Asaṅga; *Śravaka-bhūmi*; p.261. *Abhidharmadīpa*, p.3. See also *Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka-śāstra with Candrakīrti's Prasannapadā*; Ch.18, K.4-8, pp.151-157.
23. Asaṅga in *Yogācāra-bhūmi* gives five transcendental characteristics of *Parāmārtha-* 1] *Anabhilaya /Avyakta* (inexpressible), 2] *Advaya* (non-dual), 3] *Avitarka/ Avicikitsā* (non-discursive), 4] (*Bhinnābhinnā*) neither different nor identical, and 5] *Samatā* (equality of all things); In this context it is also worth to see Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhumi*, printed as an Appendix (III) in the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, p.128. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; Ch.6, K.1-4, pp.24-25; Ch.10, K.75-80, pp.166-67; Ch.11, K.13-16, pp.59-60; See also *Abhidharmadīpa*, Ch.5, K.304, pp.262-63.
24. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; intro. pp. 2, 18.
25. *Abhidharma-samuccaya* of Asaṅga; pp.36-38, 62-63.
26. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; p.24; [and p.92 corresponding to the three kinds of *Śūnyatā*. and corresponding to *Nirvāṇa*-p.143]; *Abhidharma-samuccaya* of Asaṅga; *Parikalpita, Paratantra, Parinispanna*, pp.31, 84.
27. *Parikalpita-lakṣaṇa, Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; Ch.10, K. 31-39 pp.63-67; p.167.
28. *Abhūta Parikalpita* is defined by three marks: *jalpa* (thought constructions), *artha* (association of ideas) and *samjñā* (applicative use), and out of them *artha* (association of ideas) is due to *nāma* (nouns/words), *pada* (letters), *vyañjana* (terminations), *lakṣaṇa* (marks of differentiations) and *prayoga* (functions); i.e. the five modes of *vikalpas* created by mind. Asaṅga; *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra*; Ch.11, K.15, 24, 27, 30, 39, pp.55-75.
29. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; Ch.11, K.15-31, pp.60-65.
30. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; *Śilpakarmasthānavidyā*; Ch.6, K.6, p.28; Ch.17, K.25-27, pp.131-32. *Ibid*; *Bodhisattvakāyavāksaṁpatyā samparimo bhavati*; p.90-91. *Ibid*; *Bodhisattva viv*

idha-guṇa-vardhamānā bhavati; pp.23-24.

31. *Paratantra; Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; *Ibid*; Ch.6, K.1, p.24; Ch.11, K.40. pp.64-65; Ch.18, K.81-104. pp.143-53; Ch.19, K.75-78. pp.166-67.
32. *Karma* is not only *Kāyika* (physical/material bodily), but it is of three kinds: *Kāyāvācāmanah* Asaṅga; *Abhidharma-samuccaya*; p.23.
33. *Kṣaṇika* is trividha; *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; pp.143-7.
34. *Ibid*; Ch.6, K.1, p.24.
35. *Ibid*; Ch.11, K.13, p.59.
36. *Laukika-lokottara* — *Nirvikalpa*, Asaṅga; *Abhidharma-samuccaya*; p.18. *Nirvāṇa*-Asaṅga; *Abhidharma-samuccaya*; p.12.
37. In this context it is worth to note how words originate and are momentary, explained in the *Lalita-vistara*, Ch.13, K.111-16, pp.127-8. See also *Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka-śāstra* with *Candrakīrti's Prasannapadā*; pp.176-77; *Abhidharmaśāstra*; pp.109-113.
38. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; Ch.19, K.75-79, pp.166-67; Ch.20, K.56-61 pp.179-180.
39. By sharing knowledge we grow, the moment we use/misuse it as a power, we degrade and ruin ourselves, is witnessed by history. Hence, dissemination of knowledge is essential.
40. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; Ch.17, K. 89-91, pp. 146-153.
41. *Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka-śāstra* with *Candrakīrti's Prasannapadā*; Ch.18, K.6, pp.152-53.
42. *Bodhisattva, Citta-ālaya-vijñāna*; *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; Ch.19,K.75-80,pp.166-67
43. It emphasises on living *Yoga*, and that's why it is known as *Yogācāra*.
44. *Abhidharma-samuccaya* of Asaṅga; pp. 67-77; *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; pp.15-16, 70- 73, 97, 126, 158-9, 173-75.
45. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; p.58.
46. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; pp.23, 126. *Abhidharma-samuccaya* of Asaṅga; pp.90-91.
47. Asaṅga; *Śrāvaka-bhūmi*; pp. 6-7,192-93.
48. Asaṅga in the *Yogācāra-bhūmi* talks about seventeen *bhūmis*; p.1.
49. *Lokottarajñāna*, *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga; pp.6, 32, 63, 83,104,151.

50. *Abhidharma-samuccaya* of Asaṅga; intro. p.29.
51. According to Buddhism *Prajñā* is of three kinds – *Srutamayī* (human fund of knowledge acquired through the tradition of the learned), *Cintāmayaī* (acquired through independent discursive thinking) and *Bhāvanāmayaī* (contemplative intuition), which means feelings and emotions along with thoughts and sensations are to be paid enough attention to.
52. Asaṅga in the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra*, while explaining the excellence universally, has stated that it (yasya yatra yathā yāvatkāle yasmin pravartate/), is aprameya (difficult to know) Ch.9, K.41, p.43.

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A Church that Is Poor and for the Poor: Counter-Cultural Soli- darities and Transformative Pedagogies for Catholic Faculties in India

(Inaugural Lecture '*Schola Brevis*' at Jnana-Deep Vidyapeeth, delivered on June 10, 2013)

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Abstract

Pope Francis's vision of a poor Church for the poor is a call to be more authentic and focused in our mission. However, we need to constantly contextualise our understanding of what it means to be poor for our Church today and every day; as also who the poor are and how they are to be served. It is particularly pertinent for ecclesial studies in a poor country. For as institutions of higher learning Catholic faculties are concerned with not just the transmission but the transformation of the social heritage of the Church.

Given the huge institutional investment of the Church, what is needed today is prophetic witnessing not just by charismatic individuals, but by Church institutions. Catholic faculties are called to give such prophetic institutional witness.

Pope Francis's vision and mission for the Church is a defining moment, a kairos, that challenges local churches to come out from our comfort zones to a prophetic witness that contextualises their option for the poor and the promotion of justice in solidarity with them. This demands a renewed priority for charismatic elements in the

Church and its institutions, even as it must still be balanced by the institutional one.

This requires an option for a pedagogic praxis that is liberative and transformative in counter-cultural solidarity with the poor. Such pedagogies focus less on teaching course content than on transforming learners and reorienting teachers. Taken together these pedagogies have the potential for a community that is creative and humane, ethical and non-violent, participative and affirmative, inculturated and diverse. Catholic faculties are missioned to a critical and constructive role in facilitating such ecclesial communities in solidarity with and for the poor, for they encapsulate the learning and the teaching Church, *ecclesia docens*, *ecclesia discerns*, in the quest for the kingdom of God.

Keywords: Church of the poor, Church for the poor, Pope Francis, *ecclesia docens*, *ecclesia discerns*, liberative praxis, Kingdom of God

1. Francis, Man of Poverty, Man of Peace

When Benedict the XVI resigned the papacy, a first in six hundred years, he opened the door to unanticipated change. The relentless exposure of scandals in the Church, even at the highest levels had precipitated a crisis of credibility that could no longer be ignored. The Roman Church seemed once again to be pulling up the draw bridges and withdrawing into a fortress. The secular world was again seen negatively, as posing new threats rather than calling the Church to face pressing challenges for which a Eurocentric approach was tellingly inadequate. A discredited, divided, discouraged central administration of the institutional Church was in urgent need of renewal and reform. And except for some dissenters Church officials and dignitaries seemed to be subservient and/or in “dangerous denial,” (Hanvey 2013) too easily mistaken for loyalty.

This was the shadow side of the Church. However, while the Churches of the old world were clearly on the decline, the new ones on the periphery were growing in numbers, still finding their own identity and their place in the sun. The geography of

the Catholic Church was changing and a new history was waiting to be born and nurtured.

Agenda for Renewal

As the cardinals at the General Congregation meetings preceding the papal election gathered to take stock of the contemporary situation in the Church, they were seized with the seriousness of the crisis and the urgency to address it effectively. From what actually transpired among the cardinals in and outside those conferences we know that

Many cardinals had focused their speeches on specific issues, whether it was strategies for evangelization or progress reports on Vatican finances. Cardinal Bergoglio, however, wanted to talk about the elephant in the room: the long-term future of the church and its recent history of failure. ...

For days they had heard speeches about “new evangelization,” a term from past popes that many cardinals used to honor their memory while disagreeing over what it meant. Suddenly, they were hearing someone speak about justice, human dignity. (*Wall Street Journal*, April 14, 2013, Meichtry & Galloni)

This was a game changer. In a four minute intervention on March 7th, by Cardinal Bergoglio of Buenos Aires speaking in Spanish from bullet point notes, the focus changed from the “new evangelisation” for a post-Christian Western world to a *re-evangelisation* of the Church itself. In retrospect this was surely the defining moment of truth. To set an appropriate context for the theme of my lecture I quote his full text here:

“Evangelizing implies Apostolic Zeal

1. - Evangelizing pre-supposes a desire in the Church to come out of herself. The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all misery.

2. - When the Church does not come out of herself to evangelize, she becomes self-referential and then gets sick. (cf. The deformed woman of the Gospel). The evils that, over time, happen in ecclesial institutions have their root in self-referentiality and a kind of theological narcissism. In Revelation, Jesus says that he is at the door and knocks. Obviously, the text refers to his knocking from the outside in order to enter but I think about the times in which Jesus knocks from within so that we will let him come out. The self-referential Church keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him out.

3. - When the Church is self-referential, inadvertently, she believes she has her own light; she ceases to be the *mysterium lunae* and gives way to that very serious evil, spiritual worldliness (which according to De Lubac, is the worst evil that can befall the Church). It lives to give glory only to one another.

Put simply, there are two images of the Church: the Church which evangelizes and comes out of herself, the *Dei Verbum religiose audiens et fidente proclamans*; and the worldly Church, living within herself, of herself, for herself. This should shed light on the possible changes and reforms which must be done for the salvation of souls.

4. - Thinking of the next Pope: He must be a man who, from the contemplation and adoration of Jesus Christ, helps the Church to go out to the existential peripheries, that helps her to be the fruitful mother, who gains life from “the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing” (<http://vexilla-regis.blogspot.in/2013/04/pope-francis-pre-conclave-thoughts-on.html>).

The cardinals, who were aware of the crisis in the contemporary Church could not escape the challenges posed in the two images of Cardinal Bergoglio: a Church that comes out of itself to listen and proclaim, and a self-referential Church turned in on itself with a kind of theological narcissism, a spiritual worldliness. And so the new pope must be one to help the Church to reach out to the existential peripheries.

Surely this is a challenging agenda for a divided and discouraged and often an indifferent Church with an over bureaucratized and overtly authoritarian administration. It certainly was strong but much needed medicine for “a house that needs putting in order”. (Mickens 2013) Yet taken seriously, this had the potential to lift the Church out of the present crisis. The election of Cardinal Bergoglio, a man not considered papabile before of the conclave, on its second day, March 13th, 2013, as the 266th successor of Peter, was an emphatic endorsement of this vision. I think of it as a kairos that could once again open the windows of a stuffy Church as Pope John XXII did with Vatican II.

Defining Moment

This was truly a defining moment of grace for the Church and its implications are just unfolding before us, but lest nostalgia of the past and a romance of the future take us away from a serious commitment to our task in the present, Pope Francis has

clearly and emphatically, indicated the basic implication of his vision for the Church. As the vote-count pointed to a winner, a fellow cardinal in the conclave reminded Cardinal Bergoglio not to forget the poor after his election, and so he chose the name ‘Francis’, as “the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation” (Clarke 2013).

He expanded on this in his first meeting with the media on 16th March, referring again to his choice of patron, as he sighed: “Oh, how I wish for a Church that is poor and for the poor” (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/16/us-pope-poor-idUSBRE92F05P20130316>, Reuters 16 Mar 2013).

In his first public homily, on 19th March, at the inauguration of his papal ministry he set a tone and standard that has been re-emphasised and reinforced since. He urged us “not be afraid of goodness, of tenderness!” and speaking of himself as “the New Bishop of Rome, the Successor of Peter, which also involves a certain power,” he reminded all: “We must never forget that authentic power is service, and that the Pope too, when exercising power, must enter ever more fully into that service which has its radiant culmination on the Cross” (Vatican Radio <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-homily-for-inaugural-mass-of-petrine-ministry>).

In his homily at the morning mass on 24th March at Santa Marta residence, where he is still residing, Pope Francis spoke of the Church not as an NGO, but “a love story that has gone on for so long, ... each of us is a link in this chain of love” (Vatican Radio 24 Mar 2013 “Church is a love story” <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-church-is-in-a-love-story>; Vatican News 24 Mar 2013) No wonder he was so critical of priests who refused to baptise the children of single mothers: “These are today’s hypocrites, the people who are clericalising the Church, those who are blocking the people of God from salvation” (cited by McDonagh 2013).

But he is not just a romantic, he is realistically down to earth as well. Demonstrating his collegial style in “taking up a suggestion which emerged during the General Congregations, prior to the Conclave of Cardinals, [he] has set up a group to advise the government of the universal Church and to study a draft revision of the Apostolic Constitution Pastor Bonus on the Roman Curia.... The first joint meeting of the group is fixed for 1-3 October 2013.” (Vatican News Service May 2013 No. 10). But we can also anticipate a personalist and human touch in his administration. In a speech in 2009 he said:

“We cannot truly respond to the challenge of eradicating exclusion and poverty if the poor are an object, the target of paternalist and charitable action by the state and other organisations, and not subjects, for whom the state and society create conditions that promote and protect their rights and allow them to build their own future” (cited by McDonagh 2013).

Setting the Context

This introduction locates the stand point of Pope Francis with the poor and for the poor, so central to the authentic inspiration of Jesus. 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”, as also in the Evangelii Nuntiandi in 1975. It is a vision that still awaits a more comprehensive and convincing expression in the mission of the Church today.

The world scenario that the Church sought to address then has only gotten more compelling since this crying urgency for faith and justice for the Church in our world of today. The contemporary scandals in Church have precipitated a crisis of

credibility and the pressing need of serious renewal and reform. Pope Francis's call for "a Church that is poor and for the poor" is a radical and counter-cultural call for 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 multitudes of the powerless; of the pursuit of self-referential individual goals not the common good of all. Moreover, Pope Francis radicalises his vision of this poor Church for the poor with the charismatic and inspiring patron he has chosen: 'Francis,' as "the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation."

Pope Francis's vision of a poor Church for the poor is a call to be more authentic and focused in our mission. However, we need to constantly contextualise our understanding of what it means to be poor for our Church today and every day; as also who the poor are and how they are to be served. It is particularly pertinent for ecclesial studies in a poor country. For as institutions of higher learning Catholic faculties are concerned with not just the transmission but the transformation of the social heritage of the Church.

What does the option for the poor mean today in the wider context of our Christian tradition? How must his option be exercised in the social situation in which we and the local churches live? What sort of justice must this option promote? How do we develop an effective Christian praxis for the service of the faith and the promotion of justice? What are some of the implications of this for priestly and religious formation. These are some of the questions we will try to deal with here.

Too easily avoidance of such questions or superficial answers to them escape the real challenge they represent, and negate the claims they make on us. In this presentation, 'Lectio Brevis' I will attempt to outline this in broad brush strokes. Bear with me if I fall short of this brief.

II. The Dilemmas and Dialectics

The way we conceptualise a situation frames, if it does not determine, our response to it. Insightful understanding is necessary for relevant and effective involvement. And vice versa critical reflection and involvement is essential for deeper understanding and more insightful conceptual models. The way the option for the poor is conceptualised in a Marxian social analysis would differ from that within a human rights perspective. A Christian option for the poor expresses a faith option in terms of the good news of Jesus and is premised on the relevance of the poor to the kingdom of God as receivers and witnesses to God's word. For "the poor must be seen as those through whom God shapes our salvation history" (Pieris 1986: 346). The scriptural basis for this can hardly be contested.

The four dilemmas articulated here are not to be understood in the context of the Hegelian thesis-antithesis-synthesis but rather as a hermeneutic reading of one against the other (dialectic) so that from the clash and fusion of horizons, from which something new, something beyond both horizons emerge. More than a synthesis this is a transcendence.

Universal Openness and Preferential Option

Our preferential option for the poor derives from the Biblical understanding of the *anawim*, the vulnerable ones who have only Yahweh for their protector. Quoting Isaiah Jesus too describes his mission in Luke (4: 16-21), as one of Good News for the poor, liberty for captives, healing for the sick, freedom for the oppressed. But this option presents us with a dilemma: how do we reconcile this preference for the poor, even if they are the majority in our society, with the universal salvific love of God that must include all even the wealthy? Can good news for the poor be good news for all, for the rich? Isn't it really bad news for the some? The Gospel cannot be against the rich, even when it denounces riches, nor opposed to the powerful even when it critiques the use of power.

However, divided the rich and the poor may be, the haves and the have-nots, the powerful and the powerless, there is only one Gospel to be preached to all, only one kingdom to which all are invited. This only sharpens the dilemma of ministering the Gospel in two opposite directions. It is not unlike the tension of serving two irreconcilable masters. And all too often it is the more rich and powerful ones who prevail. Too often universal openness leaves out the poor, not by choice but by default, an optional preference for the rich displaces any preferential option for the poor! Freeing the poor from their poverty often requires the freeing the rich from their wealth!

In attempting to resolve this dilemma we begin with the experience of our tradition. Here the Gospel is basic, and in the Gospel the ministry of Jesus is basic, and the basic thrust of this ministry is to the poor, the '*anawim*'. The ministry of Jesus excludes no one, but the authenticating sign of this is that the Good News is preached to the poor. What authenticates Jesus as "Good News" for the poor is the healing, the forgiveness, the wholeness, the justice this promotes for the lowliest, the widow, the orphan, the outcaste.

The dilemma must be read as a creative dialectic between universal openness and preferential option in this manner: The universality of the Gospel is always the necessary condition for a preferential option for the poor, which in turn is the essential authenticating sign of the good news for all. Hence the openness of any Gospel ministry must be critiqued by reference to its relationship to the poor and so a preferential option for the poor is no longer defined in negative terms as an option against the rich. However, in a complex situation, while it may not be possible for all to work directly for, or identify with the poor, it must be possible for everyone to work at least indirectly for, and be in solidarity with them.

Liberation and Reconciliation

Moreover, even though working for the poor might necessarily involve taking sides in a conflict situation, which may not be open to an immediate reconciliation of those involved, at least until emotions subside and memories heal. Yet as followers of Jesus we must never positively exclude this reconciliation, which is indeed integral to the Gospel. For an option for the poor cannot involve hating anyone else. It is sin we reject not the sinner. Rather we must reach out in fundamental openness and reconciliation.

All too often it is precisely the rich and powerful who by their riches and power oppress the poor and the powerless, set themselves in opposition to the Good News for all as well. It is only when they realise their real alienation, their estrangement from themselves and others, their need for a ‘physician’ to heal them to health that they can hear the Good News addressed to them and accept it. Only when their riches and power are put to the service of the kingdom can their personal lives be aligned with God’s salvific history. Empowering the powerless is meant to make for an equitable distribution of power in our society. Giving voice to the voiceless is to give all a chance to participate and contribute to the common good.

In the ultimate analysis the option we make for the poor must always reach out to the kingdom and integrate its values into our strategies and struggles for the liberation of the oppressed. For ultimately our vision of the kingdom cannot be one of conflict and coercion, it must be one of harmony and freedom. Hence if we do start with conflict, we must ultimately end with reconciliation.

Faith and Justice

The evangelical option for the poor is not a paternalist one of do-gooders motivated by feel-good emotions and/or pity for the hapless. Rather it is one premised on a Biblical understanding of Yahweh and the *anawin* as the hears and doers of God’s word. It is motivated by the new command of Jesus “to love one another as I have loved you”. This ‘agape’, benevolent

love, of Jesus privileges the least of his brothers and sisters. It is a love premised on faith. However, a Biblical faith is always one that does justice. Thus our preferential option for the poor authenticates the mission of the Church, just as the promotion of justice for them authenticates our faith.

In 1971, the Universal Synod of Bishops on “Justice in the World,” made justice for the poor an integral part of the preaching the Gospel: “Christ lived his life in the world as a total giving of himself to God for the salvation and liberation of people” (*Justice in the World* 1971 No. 31), so too “the mission of preaching the Gospel dictates at the present time that we should dedicate ourselves to the liberation of people even in their present existence in this world” (*Justice in the World* 1071 No. 35). The obedience of faith demands the promotion of justice for the poor.

This is not a ‘tension between other-worldly faith and this-worldly justice, but rather a creative dialectical synthesis between a salvific faith that inspires justice and an active justice inspired by faith. And today, particularly in Asia, our service of the faith must reach out in inter-religious dialogue, and our promotion of justice must include peace and harmony, for legitimate freedoms and community identities are sensitive issues of justice. When extremists and fundamentalists exacerbate collective tension, the poor and vulnerable suffer the most and become easy targets when tension spill over into violence.

Institution and Charism

An institution is a means to an ends, never an end in itself. However, without a continuing inspiration institutions tend to stagnate and fall out of sync with the changes around them; without a functional routine organisations tend to instability and become ineffective in their environment. A dynamic, dialectic relationship between charisma and routine keeps institutions on the path of relevance and stability. Max Weber (1947: 358-373) called this the routinisation of charisma, so necessary to preserve

the charisma, yet so easily marginalising it. This constitutes an inescapable dilemma, but the dialectic tension could be a source of creative growth and innovative adaptation, rather than of chaotic confusion and of staid inflexibility.

The dialectic tension between the ‘institutional’ and ‘charismatic’ is inherent in any society and pervades its social sub-systems, whether these be political, religious, educational or otherwise. In the Church this translates into the dialectic dilemma between the charismatic prophetic element and the institutional priestly one. Indeed, while all charismatic inspiration and authority needs institutionalization for continuity, yet at the same time it is alienated by these same institutional structures. However, as Thomas O’ Dea has insightfully argued: “religion both needs most and suffers most from institutionalisation”. (O’Dea 1963:74)

However, in our understanding of the Church the prophetic element is primary, in that it is inspired by the Spirit and grounded in the religious experience of our God and his Christ. Institutional structures cannot be ends in themselves. They are but means to serve the dynamic charisms that the grace of the Spirit of Jesus inspires. (Rahner 1964) This prophetic critique keeps the Church faithful to its mission of witness and service, just as the institutional church in turn provides the protection and context for the continuing expression of, and encounter with the Spirit.

The love of God in Jesus Christ founds the Church and is quintessential to its charisma and spirit. If it is to be preserved across generations in different lands, then it necessarily must get institutionalised. When the Church becomes self-referential and inward looking, then organisation takes priority over inspiration, means displace ends. Both are necessary for the kingdom of God, already now but not fully yet. Charisma brings dynamism and creativity to an enterprise, bureaucracy stabilises and institutionalises this.

III. Institutional Implications

Vision and Mission

As Christians we gather in the name of Jesus to be sent forth to witness to the Good News he brought us with his life, death and resurrection. Our mission as Church is to be living witnesses to this mystery of salvation that embraces the whole world. Our image of the Church as the “ark of salvation”, precariously afloat in the deluge of this world, must change to envisaging the Church as the “universal sacrament of salvation” (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, No. 48), the locus of encounter with Christ and his kingdom.

This change of perspective will lead to a new emphasis on the Church as movement and not just hierarchical organisation, and a new balance between its institutional and the charismatic dimensions. In this necessary polarity prophetic witness ought to be prioritised over institutional contingencies. But first we need to discern the signs of the times as good Pope John urged us in order to respond faithfully to them.

This requires listening receptively and actively to others with our heart and head; engaging with them in active discussion to understand and be understood; and then discerning a way forward together. More importantly, to discern we must listen and follow the Spirit, who touches us sometimes with the gentleness of a quiet cooling breeze or in the innermost silence of our hearts, as a compelling still small voice that will not be silenced, if we only will listen; at other times the Spirit may come like a terrifying earthquake or tsunami engulfing all in its path.

How do we incarnate and express this mission for the Church, in both its institutional and charismatic dimensions? *Given the huge institutional investment of the Church, what is needed today is prophetic witnessing not just by charismatic individuals, but by Church institutions. Catholic faculties are called to give such prophetic institutional witness.* For in our complex, confusing

world of networked organisations, a prophetic witness is most effective when it is a cooperative and a corporate one. This will be difficult and demanding, but over the long haul such prophetic institutions will break new ground and beat new paths for others to follow. As replicable exemplars they can have a multiplier effect, and thus a much larger and better quality impact. For this we need to strategically position both our institutions and ourselves in them. Given our limited resources in facing the enormous challenges confronting us how can we best position ourselves most effectively?

Positioning Ourselves

A rich and powerful organisation can express its option for the poor by assigning the task to a specialised institutional set-up within and compartmentalising it, or out sourcing it to another organisation without funding it. This does generate goodwill for the organisation and contribute to the common good as well. But in both instances the option for the poor remains on the margins of the institution, never its central focus. Corporate social responsibility functions like this and is popular with business organisations that see it as a long term profitable investment in public relations.

But the institutional Church is not in the business for profit, neither is it a non-profit NGO. The Church as the people of God is a movement with a vision, inspired by an understanding of salvation history, “a love story”, Pope Francis would say, which impels it on its mission: “the love of Christ compels us.” (2 Cor 5.14) This is where we must locate the option for the poor. Just as the love of God and the love of neighbour cannot be separated, neither can the love of Jesus and the love of his poor. So to love Jesus as he loved us, we must love the poor as he loved them, especially the last and least among his people.

How does a rich and powerful Church position itself on the side of the poor? Does it express its love for the poor by divesting itself to identify with them, or by using its resources in solidarity

with them, serving them, or sharing with them, or even risking for them? Surely this requires contextualised discernment. But the necessary condition for this is an openness and transparency in confronting the questions institutionally as a Church. For the resources of the Church are never for its itself nor for Churchmen. They are always held in trust for the last and least among the poor who are its real riches. Inevitably the poor are alienated and marginalised in a rich Church and by default if nothing else, becomes a Church for the rich, including its Churchmen.

Where do committed Christian position themselves in this scenario? Will we allow the winds of many cultures to blow about our house with confidence or do we fear we will be blown off our feet? In our plurireligious situation are we willing to pursue an intra- and an inter-religious dialogue at whatever level is feasible with whomever is willing to be engaged? Will we dare to ask: what kind of Church do we want to be? However, in changing circumstances and new situations, past successes are not always the best guide to future initiatives. We need a paradigm shift, an intuitive leap of the imagination for a breakthrough in understanding (Kuhn 1970: 92-110)

When formulae for success are repeated long past their shelf-life, they become an impediment to more creative and adaptive innovation and yesterday's success becomes our worst enemy today, for they can calm us into a comfort zone and leave us out of sync with our surroundings. For in our continuing and rapidly changing world, the risk of change can be threatening even paralysing. But often the risk of *not changing* can be even greater, for delay or postponement will lead to stagnation and irrelevance, or worse.

Prophetic Witness

A prophet is one who critiques his people from within their tradition and history, and calls them to face the future with a new and creative fidelity to their original inspiration. In a religious tradition, the prophetic witness is more involved with renewing the

original inspiration and spirit of a religious tradition in response to the changing signs of the times. The priestly function is a necessary complement to this and is more concerned in preserving the content of the religious tradition and its institutions. Thus the prophet plays an essential charismatic role in critiquing of the Church, the priest a necessary institutional one in administering it.

Hence a clericalised Church will be a Church for its priests, an inward looking self-referential Church preoccupied with preservation. A Church for the poor must be a prophetic Church concerned with transformation. This call us not to just do better what we have done in the past in changing contemporary circumstances, but to revisit and draw inspiration from the original charisma that founded our tradition, and do here and now in our time what the founding charism inspired the apostolic community to do then and there in theirs.

The basic question is not to ask, ‘what did Jesus do in his time?’, and do the same in ours. But ‘what would he do now?’, and ‘what is he calling us to do today?’. For this we must have “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16) and be guided by the spirit of Jesus, to read and interpret the signs of the times and act on this in creative fidelity to his vision and mission. A living tradition needs this authentic fidelity to carry it forward. A slavish repetition of what was done generations ago can only mean a dead one eventually.

How we proceed to do this with our large institutions, especially for Catholic faculties of seminaries, will require careful step-by-step planning, and prudent and courageous implementation. But first this will demand a reorientation of perspective and an adequate training of personnel for it. This is the most effective contribution our Church can make to our people and our country today. I believe this is the prophetic witnessing that we are called to today; it should constitute the criterion and critique of all our ministries.

Suggest two images of the counter-cultural prophetic for our times: one who walks this earth as Jesus did and takes the path less trod so as to make a difference; and one who sets his sail against the wind and braves the stormy sea.

IV. Pedagogic Praxis

The vision of a “Church that is poor” with a mission “for the poor” must be expressed in ministries, both prophetic and priestly. This is a compelling vision and mission but there is no detailed blue print available for such a model Church, if indeed there will ever be. Demanding this at the very beginning of the venture, too easily becomes an excuse for the status quo. If we must know precisely where we are going and exactly how to get there even before we start, we will never begin the thousand mile journey with the first step; we will be left where we are cursing the darkness with unlit candles instead of beginning with a few small steps before any giant leaps are possible.

Our attempt here will not be to outline a balance between utopian ideals and practical constraints, nor to enumerate criteria for a discernment of ministries, much less to present guidelines for implementation or evaluation of our apostolates. Rather it will be to elaborate a framework for a Christian praxis of faith-action, i.e., for action-involvement and faith-reflection as an on-going process. What is attempted then is to initiate a search for an authentic faith-understanding of, and an action-response to the Word of God and the Good News in our situation.

Liberative Praxis

Church has created exemplary institutional models that have been replicated by others. It has set standards of performance which have become reference points for many. But new and changing circumstances often call for a breakthrough with a paradigm shift. We need a contemporary praxis for a contemporary contextual theology and an “epistemological breakthrough for a theological one” (Sobrino 1985: 25).

Hence in a Christian praxis of action-reflection, faith-understanding will represent the reflection dimension, and our involvement in our world the action one. Faith-understanding must of course be premised on an experience of our tradition including scripture, just as action-involvement must be founded on an experience of our situation including a critical analysis of it. It is necessary then to hold these two, faith-understanding and action-involvement in a dialectical relationship; to interpret our past traditions so that it speaks to our present life-situation, and respond to this present situation so as to reach out to an eschatological future.

Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1972) used 'praxis' to indicate something beyond committed practice or involvement even if this were inspired by a consistent ideology. In the Freirean sense praxis refers to an on-going process of action-reflection-action: an action-involvement inspired by a first understanding is followed by a further reflection and a consequent deeper understanding, which in turn allows a more effective action involvement. Thus both action and reflection refine and deepen each other in a kind of hermeneutic circle.

In this process activist and intellectual, worker and researcher, teacher and student are both necessary complements to each other. Hence praxis becomes a meaningful process both to expand our own horizons of action and reflection, and allow them to fuse with others in an ever more humanising on-going process. For if indeed action and reflection are essential components of human life an integrated humanism must embrace both.

Surely this is also true for the integrated Christian and a holistic Christianity. Thus when St. Anselm spoke of "fides querens intellectum," faith seeking understanding, he was in fact referring to a faith commitment that needed to be reflected on and analysed in order to be made the more meaningful not just to oneself, but to others as well. But we could equally speak of understanding seeking faith, intellectus querens fidem! So just as faith-experience is clarified in understanding, so too does our

understanding, when it reaches its human limits at one level, seek a faith that will breakthrough to a deeper insight at a higher level of comprehension. It is precisely such a hermeneutic circle that will lead to the deeper understanding and a more enriched faith in an on-going process.

However, praxis is located not in the line of interpretations alone, as with existentialist or transcendentalist hermeneutics, but in the line of action: interpreting the word of God to change reality, evaluating the change, and going back to reinterpret the word in a reiterated process (Sobrino 1985: 224).

Counter-Cultural Solidarity

In an alienating consumerist society enthralled to mammon, a poor Church for the poor must be a counter-cultural community of solidarity and subaltern sensitivity. In the concrete context of South Asia, solidarity for justice must stand against the gross injustices and the shearing divides of a society which threaten to engulf and sunder it. A counter-cultural solidarity for justice for the poor cannot be premised, not on self-centred individuals or self-referential institutions, but rather on persons-for-others and an other-centred communitarian ethic that does not place person and community in contradiction but is premised on a complementarity of persons in community.

To break through the securities and constraints of the present will demand a new paradigm to challenge Church institutions to become other-oriented prophetic instruments of transformation and change, not just self-referential ones of transmission for preservation. In other words, to be part of a prophetic resolution rather than the institutional status quo, even at personal and institutional cost. Counter-cultural solidarity opens new possibilities for the future; not just to interpret the world as philosophers attempt to do, but to change it as prophets effectively do.

For this we will need to decolonize our minds from much of the baggage of past practice, too easily justified as the wisdom of the ancients, Veterum Sapientia. But such ancient wisdom, if

it is not to remain ancient and become dated, must be critiqued and rethought anew before it can be authenticated and reaffirmed by each new generations as a living and ongoing tradition. This demands a single hermeneutics of continuity and of change, both as complementary constituents of the development of doctrine. Operationalising this vision and mission with a liberative praxis in academic faculties can only be viable with a correspondingly transformative pedagogy, a pedagogy for teachers to do with students and for students to demand from teachers.

V. Transformative Pedagogy

In our understanding pedagogy cannot be reduced to an academic discipline or a behavioural science. For it implies a multi-dimensional process. The transformative pedagogies for institutional change sketched here are suggestions to this end. But they will necessarily have to be fine-tuned and elaborated to suite the local context before they can be implemented critically and creatively. Moreover, the institutional context situates the interpersonal one within it. These pedagogies are implemented at both levels to generate a virtuous circle of affirmation and support for a transformation of persons and communities.

Such transformation can make for truly creative growth and the liberation of subaltern cultures and disadvantaged groups. This is what Paulo Freire's *Cultural Action for Freedom* is all about. (Freire 1973). For "structures of pedagogic transaction, once established, do not give in to change easily" (Kumar 1992: 38). In sum then our pedagogic options must embrace hope and struggle, value transformation and change. "In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often" (Newman 1945: 39).

Pedagogic Options

John Dewey's seminal essay, *Education and Democracy*, (1961) elaborated the goal of education for an educated, active, participatory citizenry for democracy. For Dewey learning embraced the whole of one's life in order to transform it. Learning

was not limited to schooling, though it was institutionalised there, but the locus of learning was all through the whole of our life in society. All socialisation processes ought to be socially transforming, not just preserving ones. Thus a transformative pedagogy would mean the “reconstruction or the reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increased ability to direct the course of subsequent experience.” (Dewey 1961: 89-90)

At the institutional level, the organisational climate constitutes the context in which this individual interaction takes place. Changing an institutional culture and structure has inherent limitations. When a big-bang reform threatens to produce a backlash, change can be effective with incremental steps that have a small perhaps, but more importantly a cumulative impact on some of the critical dimensions of the system. These can eventually add up and succeed in systemic change, as when an institution crosses its point of no return, and tips over into a new equilibrium and even bringing radical change. But to be effective this demands a committed a praxis of action-reflection-action as a reiterated process.

However, for any urgent, radical renewal a change-initiative must be implemented and followed up with action to facilitate understanding and acceptance of the consequences by those adversely effected. Much of the negative reaction to Vatican II was precipitated by an inadequate initiating and catechizing of all the faithful concerned into an authentic understanding of the Council, both the *ecclesia discerns* and the *ecclesia docens*, the teaching and the learning Church.

Pedagogy as a Creative Art

Creative relationships cannot be standardized, for a relationships always imply something of the uniqueness of the persons involved. However, one can at least begin to indicate the broad characteristics and practices to distinguish between constructive and destructive relationships. Teaching necessarily implies a relationship which depends on the competence and credibility

of the teacher, and the preparedness and openness of the taught. To be a creative teaching the relationship needs must be both personalised and a contextualised.

In other words, it must be sensitive to the personal freedom and the social circumstances of both the teacher and taught. This is a precondition for a creativity that is both personally and socially transformative. This is why teaching it cannot be standardised, it is an art learnt by practice not from theory. Failed learners are correlative to failed teachers, and blaming the victims only perpetuates the failure of both. Blaming institutional structures, or circumstances becomes an escape into our comfort zones of doing nothing. Rather we must do what we can now so that we will be able to do what needs to be done later. Blaming personal circumstances or institutional structures easily becomes an alibi for settling into our convenient comfort zones. Rather we must use the freedom we have and build on the available to expand and enhance both, in a step by step process that ratchets up our effectiveness and creativity.

Pedagogy as a Humanist Discipline

The humanist dimension of pedagogy concerns the development, “the drawing out”, of human potential: mental abilities, technical skills, emotional resources, aesthetic taste of the student. Too easily these humanist aspects of education are made means to some larger career goals. Rather, they ought to be integrated as more mediate ends into more final ones. However, too easily one can assume that ends always govern the choice of means. On the contrary, means often have an inherent dynamic of their own, with unintended consequences that displace the original goals at individual and institutional levels. Such a pedagogic process cannot claim to be humanist with any credibility. A humanist pedagogy will resist such a displacement.

For example, examinations are meant to be an essential part of the pedagogic process, as feedback mechanism to monitor both the student’s progress and more crucially the teacher’s performance. It

is unfortunate that examinations are mostly used only to evaluate students and as gate-keepers to the next stage in the system. For most students examinations become an inhumane trauma today. But examinations are now so embedded in our institutions that they have acquired their own intrinsic logic and self-perpetuating dynamic. A necessary evil, more truly evil than really necessary.

Pedagogy as Ethical Transformation

Syllabus construction is concerned with content and teaching methodologies with the development of skills and disciplines. These are essential dimensions of any pedagogic process in any education system. However, underpinning this process and supporting the system, there must be a foundation of ethical values. A value-neutral pedagogy can only make for a ‘valueless’ education!

For ethical values too must be communicated to, and internalised by young students. Indeed this must be part of the very definition of education if it is to have a moral purpose. Few pedagogues would contest this, even if the system, especially in higher education ignores it. The critical challenge is to integrate value formation and value commitment into the pedagogic process with the priority of goals, not just conditionality of means. An emphasis overridingly on the intellectual will inevitably relegated the ethical and moral values to the margins of the system. This is surely of critical importance in any kind of humanist education, especially in this country today where social changes have precipitated nothing short of a moral crisis of values.

Moreover, value neutrality cannot but implicitly support the established values and consequently the status quo. However, if the change we seek to initiate is to be counter-cultural, it must be value-premised in terms that operationalise our vision and mission. Thus we cannot be content with articulating merely notional values that may legitimate our educational enterprise. At best this amounts to nothing more than a statement of intent, at worst it is a cover up for hypocrisy. Rather we must seek to actualise these values both at

the individual and institutional level. This can only be done in the actual practice of individuals, especially the significant ones, and the real allocation of resources, especially the scarce ones.

Values at the individual level, are better witnessed to by being and doing, than learnt from teaching and preaching. Moreover, a contradiction between action and word is seen by young people as hypocritical and evokes cynicism. Hence the integrity of life and example of the teacher is most crucial. For many students the teacher as an exemplar for students is a lasting influence they will take with them. Further, at the institutional level, the organisational climate constitutes the context in which this individual interaction takes place. For the ethical atmosphere of an institution is made by the values experienced in its decision-making. We preach honesty in Church and chapel, but practicing it in examinations requires invigilation, and for assignments verification against plagiarism. And strangely the disjunction seems to go unnoticed!

Pedagogy of Violence

Stressing the conservative function of pedagogic transmission to the negation of the liberative one of transformation, “reproduces the dominant culture, while subordinating and co-opting the non-dominant ones” (Heredia 1996: 241). Such a pedagogy is implicated in an act of violence across generations, that is, the violation of the subordinate identity and culture by superordinate ones. This results in an alienation than cannot be creative, but only reproduce what has been banked.

Excluding the cultural context of the students illustrates this pedagogic violence. Moreover, once this culture of oppression is internalised it appears to be the natural order of things, and hence go uncontested and the incontestable. The potential of people to learn from their experiences, even the negative ones, is perverted by excluding liberative experiences from the learning process, or forcing them into an interpretive grid of the dominant culture. This precisely is the violence of such a pedagogy, and the more pernicious for not being overt. For as Habermas rightfully remarks:

“not ‘learning’, but ‘not-learning’ is the phenomenon that calls for explanation at the socio-cultural level of development”! (Habermas, 1975).

Thus in our education system “the role of strengthening group solidarity among the educated” is far more prevalent than the one “of disturbing traditional hierarchies”. (Kumar 1991) Our churches and communities are trapped in the system. They must swim against the tide, or go with the flow. This is part of the hidden agenda of the system, where power relations are concealed, and the violence internalised. Notoriously such a pedagogy socialises the dominant to be confidently assertive and the dominated to be humbly submissive! Pedagogic violence then becomes an effective means to replace the crude authoritarian imposition of the dominant cultures and institutions.

Precisely because pedagogic violence is transmitted and expressed symbolically, it appears to be non-violent, whereas in actuality its violence is all the more effective and resilient for being the more subtle and hidden. Paulo Freire’s incisive critique in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1972) demonstrates how this “banking system” of education leads to an internalisation of the oppressor and silences protest.

Pedagogy of Silence

However, the culture of protest may remain subterranean for long periods. It may find expression in low-intensity continuing encounters or dramatically irrupt in violent clashes. It may find expression in a people’s or a student movement that can precipitate sudden, even violent change. Till then an adaptive pedagogy of ‘silence’ results in a more passive, but all the same alienating violence, including that of the victims against themselves in self-deprecation and hate. This easily leads to repression and inhibits the pedagogic process.

Most often we fall into such a pedagogy of silence by default. We don’t speak up because we have not been asked or have nothing to say or are afraid to say it. But one cannot be neutral in

the face of such pedagogic violence. Silence at such moments from significant persons in their lives, leaves an unexplained emptiness, a sensitive space with which the young have to cope with on their own. The vacuum is readily ‘colonised’ by other explanations and interpretations so easily available with the overload of today’s communications media. (Kumar 1996) Fundamentalism of various kinds, religious and otherwise, can be located here.

The Pedagogy of Affirmation

The first step in this direction must be an authentic affirmation of the cultures of non-dominant groups, not an uncritical idealisation or a romantic indigenism. These easily become regressively isolationist. The negative aspects of a culture need to be purged just as much as the humanising aspects must be carried forward to add to a critical and constructive cultural identity. Such a critique of these cultures can lead to a humanising counter-culture, otherwise we will just have a displacement of one kind of dominance by another. Anything less begins to be patronising.

When the knowledge and skills, the values and lore of these groups is exiled from the formal learning process then such exclusions only reinforce negative identities and social alienation, whether these be deliberate options, or part of the hidden agenda in our education system (Taylor 1992). Academic faculties reflect the society in which they function. Thus the gender divide is reflected in how women are still at the margins in our academic faculties, whether as students or as teachers. Class-caste, ethnic and racial exclusion is much sharper and cuts much deeper in our society. The poor, dalits and tribals do not find themselves at home in our institutional culture, which can be quite alien to theirs. Neither does the syllabus content or teaching methodologies motivate or challenge them. What begins in school is carried forward and reinforced later in our academic faculties.

Pedagogy of Contextualisation

This is a necessary step in a transformative pedagogy of change. For divorced from the social context the expression of

a faith-tradition cannot be made relevant. However, this will not automatically happen unless alternative understandings can be made to question conventional wisdom and suggest more relevant contextualised responses. A relevant contextualisation of a faith-tradition can address contradictions and lacunae between a notional faith and a real one, (Newman 1979: Ch 4, 34-93), it can make the difference between a new and creative expression of faith and a tired old repletion of the catechism.

For this we need to identify and study new and relevant initiatives, and support and learn from them wherever we find them. If these ventures help our people to comprehend and critique their world, we will already have begun a transformative change of lasting effect. Thus will they begin to understand and interpret their world, their local community and their church to reconstruct it in more creative and humane ways. If pursued consistently and persistently, it will eventually have an impact beyond to the larger social context.

Pedagogy of Pluralism

Given that collective identities are becoming increasingly chauvinistic and jingoistic in South Asia, a pedagogy for pluralism is now all the more urgent. Furthermore, given the rich and complex plurality that obtains in our society, a pluralism within a democratic framework would be a necessary condition for a tolerant, dialogic and peaceful society. Pluralism is not to be mistaken for a relativism of an equality of all truths, but rather it means an equality of respect for difference, and an equality of the freedom to be different. This demands an openness and rootedness best illustrated by Gandhiji when he said:

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).

At individual level the pedagogic objective is the ability to cope with multiplicity and plurality as givens in our world without falling into dogmatism or relativism in responding to these; at

the collective one, it is to facilitate and construct multiple open identities in opposition to singular closed ones. This affirmation of inclusive multiple identities is crucial in opposing a pedagogy of violence without perpetrating another violent response.

Pedagogy of Tolerance

A pedagogy premised on tolerance must be non-violent and a negation of all pedagogic violence that promotes suspicion and hate. It must include a politics of recognition with its concern for the identity and dignity for all, as opposed to the “culture of silence” that results from the politics of domination, and as distinct from any kind of chauvinistic affirmation of collective identities and interests. Here it is precisely the non-dominant groups that are best placed to play the lead role. For as Freire so eloquently insists: “this, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well” (Freire 1972: 21).

Non-violent pedagogies of tolerance can be spread across the spectrum of the various levels of tolerance (Panikkar 1983: 20-36). At the pragmatic level it would be a pedagogy of adaptive coping and creative enabling. This would have to include technical skills and emotional discipline.

At the intellectual level a pedagogy of tolerance would encourage a spirit of inquiry and promote the joys of discovery, provided reason as an instrument of the intellectual inquiry does not fall into an aggressive intolerant rationalism. There are of course other ways of searching and experimenting outside a positivist methodology, as with the artist and the yogi. But these must never become obscurantist or magical.

At the ethical level would demand a pedagogy of freedom and responsibility. Inter-personal encounter and social involvement and other such experiences in a supportive and reflective learning context can be of immense pedagogic potential here. At the spiritual level will express itself in a pedagogy of love and celebration, not merely of repentance and detachment. For

this our rich religious and spiritual heritage can be drawn on and adapted to our contemporary context.

Pedagogy of Dialogue

Tolerance is the necessary context for a culture of dialogue. If we grant that dialogue is essential to the human condition then it must be a dialogue precisely, that breaks the silence and opens communication, discredits suspicion and creates trust. Though the level of tolerance will dictate the openness of dialogue. For our pedagogic purposes here, we can give a working definition of dialogue education as “the intentional creation of situations in which people can make acts of knowing, characterized by an atmosphere of dialogue and a problem-posing use of educational aids and techniques, and with the aim of developing a critical consciousness” (Wren 1977: 27).

The first step towards this communication and trust is to validate the voices of voiceless people so that “learning occurs within conversation, and not as top-to-down instruction between the teacher and students” (Aronowitz and Giroux 1985: 12). This is a dialogic “pedagogy which must be forged *with*, not *for* the oppressed, (be they individuals or whole peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity,” (Freire 1972: 25) or else it might well become a monologue, or worse, a dialogue of the deaf where everyone talks and no one listens! For Freire human beings are in dialogue to transform the world, and hence everyone, “no matter how ‘ignorant’ or submerged in the ‘culture of silence’ he may be, is capable of looking critically at his world in a dialogical encounter with others.” (Richard Schull, “Foreword” in, Freire 1972: 12)

Moreover, such a dialogic pedagogy is also opposed to ‘the banking system of education’ that is so regressively preoccupied with educational transmission to passive recipients that has too little if any space left for a critical transformation of the system or the development of its participants. This has now become chronically endemic to our system in this country,

even as it pretends to be ever so superficially modelled on the traditional guru-shisya relationship. Thus shisyas are expected to be respectful and docile to their gurus. And here: “docility means ‘teachableness’ and is simply the quality of being willing to follow simple instructions and to have confidence in the instructor” (Kerrigan 1979: 32).

However, in today’s pluralist, democratic world:

any approach to critical thinking, regardless of how progressive it might be, will vitiate its own possibilities if it operates out of a web of classroom social relationships that are authoritatively hierarchical and promote passivity, docility, and silence. Social relations in the classroom that glorify the teacher as the expert, the dispenser of knowledge, end up crippling student imagination and creativity; in addition, such approaches teach students more about the legitimacy of passivity, than about the need to examine critically the lives they lead (Giroux 1988: 64).

Authoritarian, top-down transactions are intrinsically anti-dialogic, horizontal relationships too must be critiqued and deepened, if the pedagogy they sustain is to be the more effective, for the various degrees of dialogue with regard to the relationship of the ‘self’ to the ‘other’.

Thus for a pragmatic dialogue, where the other is the limitation of the self, a dialogic pedagogy would here mean learning to cope with differences through compromise rather than confrontation. Where the other is intellectually perceived as the complement of the self, then such a pedagogic dialogue would attempt extending and developing the self with the cooperation of the other.

At the ethical level, where the other becomes the responsibility of the self, then the pedagogy would focus on establishing equity and equality for the self and the other. And finally in a spiritual understanding of the other as the fulfilment of the self, such a pedagogic dialogue would celebrate one another.

Pedagogy of Peace

Such transformative pedagogies add up in a pedagogy of peace. Thus the affirmation of inclusive multiple identities is crucial in opposing a pedagogy of violence without perpetrating another

violent response. Dialogue must cope with differences within an I-thou relationship of self and other, not an ego-alter one, a perspective of we and they together, not a them versus us one. The limits of tolerance must be set up within the norms of a democratic pluralism.

Further the substantive content for such a non-violent, affirmative pedagogy for dialogue and tolerance must be founded on a sensitivity to the other that expresses itself in multiple ways in the diverse arenas of inter-personal and social encounter: such as being non-authoritarian and non-judgmental in personal relations, a non-dogmatic religious openness, a positive appreciation of other cultures, a facility with languages other than one's own, a commitment to equitable gender relations, a respect for egalitarian group rights and fundamental individual rights, an ecological awareness and aesthetic sensitivity....to mention but a few.

Hence our pedagogic options must be premised on a fourfold foundation: a normative or rule-based pluralism, a purposeful or goal-directed dialogue, a positive or value-committed tolerance, and an enabling or process-oriented peace. Thus a culture of peace founded not on power as domination, but on power as enabling. This is power that derives from moral authority, as when Jesus taught. Only such moral non-violent power can be the foundation of a peace inclusive of justice, freedom and harmony, in which we learn to live and work for common goals for the common good, in harmony with each other and the whole of creation. This is precisely what a pedagogy for peace must attempt to do.

Ongoing Process

Theoretical perspectives must translate into concrete practices in the classroom which then carry over into other areas of social interaction. However, over-elaborating an agenda for action only ends with a mere wish list. To be practical and implementable we need to prioritise, to operationalise structures and plan within a timeframe. This is good managerial procedure. However,

for a prophetic witness we need to discern where the Spirit is calling us. Hence what starts in the discussions here must be carried forward in discerned decisions followed by a consensus on a viable action plan, which then is competently managed and continually reviewed. For fidelity to the Spirit is an ongoing process of discernment and decision.

We must not lose sight of means and ends, lest we allow means to become unintended ends in themselves and displace the intended ones, nor compromise with unjust means and corrupts ends. Hence for a Christian praxis of action-reflection-action, both process and product are important and must not be compromised or corrupted. The contribution of the Church to India today must be in terms of a prophetic witness to the kingdom of God to which we are all called. I believe this is our best contribution, it is a challenge we all are called to face together as a believing, prophetic community of sharing and caring.

VI. Quest for the Kingdom

This requires an option for a pedagogic praxis that is liberative and transformative in counter-cultural solidarity with the poor. Such pedagogies focus less on teaching course content than on transforming learners and reorienting teachers. Catholic faculties are missioned to a critical and constructive role in facilitating such ecclesial communities in solidarity with and for the poor, for they encapsulate the learning and the teaching Church, ecclesia docens, ecclesia discerns, in the quest for the kingdom of God.

Taken together these pedagogies represent an ongoing process in quest of an inclusive community that is creative and humane, ethical and non-violent, participative and affirmative, inculcuated and diverse, tolerant and dialogic; a community of peace and harmony, of sharing and caring reaching out to all God's creatures, a sacrament of salvation for the world.

We know that the final answer to our questions or the ultimate solution to our problems is always beyond the horizon of our capacity but never beyond the horizon of our hope. For our

complete enlightenment and fulfilment will come only with the resurrection, which is already now but not fully yet. In view of this eschatological goal, what a genuine praxis does promise is an expansion of our horizons, even as we allow these to clash and fuse with other horizons of understanding and of involvement.

Pope Francis's vision and mission for the Church is a defining moment, a kairos, that challenges local churches to come out from our comfort zones to a prophetic witness that contextualises their option for the poor and the promotion of justice in solidarity with them. This demands a renewed priority for charismatic elements in the Church and its institutions, even as it must still be balanced by the institutional one.

Cardinal Bergoglio had described the new pope in the pre-conclave Church General Congregation of cardinals: "He must be a man who, from the contemplation and adoration of Jesus Christ, helps the Church to go out to the existential peripheries, that helps her to be the fruitful mother, who gains life from "the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing."

We believe Pope Francis will hold himself to that brief, and Catholic faculties in turn can do no less than to pledge a creative fidelity to his vision and mission so spontaneously and inspiringly proposed: 'A Church that is poor and for the poor'. This cannot be a 'self-referential', 'worldly Church'. It must be as he said, a "Church which evangelizes and comes out of herself, the *Dei Verbum religiose audiens et fidente proclamans*", hears and proclaims the word of God. Pope Francis 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."

May his vision inspires us to define anew and to renew the mission of academic faculties for an Indian Church, "which evangelizes and comes out of herself," "to go out to the existential peripheries" and resist the temptation of a "worldly Church, living within herself, of herself, for herself."

I thank you for this opportunity to address you at the beginning of a new academic year.

(NB. This presentation draws on my earlier work some of which is referenced below with others)

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Humans as “Between Beneath, Before and Beyond”

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Who am I? What do I know? What can I hope for? In answering these profound questions, the above two quotes can remind us of the human being's transcending nature. The French mathematician and philosopher, Blaise Pascal said: "Man infinitely transcends man." Another French thinker Albert Camus claimed, "Man is the only creature that refuses to be what he is."

One quote expresses that transcending nature positively and the other negatively. Humans are unique since in the very process of understanding and answering fundamental questions about ourselves, we are drawn into the question still more. This book is a modest attempt to understand the human nature with a view to fulfilling our human potential to the fullest.

This book by philosopher-scientist, Prof Kuruvilla Pandikattu, explores the ever evasive nature of the human being. It is divided into three broad parts. The first part, Human Fecundity, deals with the positive or the creative dimensions of human existence, which enables a person to create meaning and enhance significance in her or his life. The second part, Human Frailty, delves into the frictional and tensional aspects of existence. Here we encounter the challenging dimension of our existence. The third part,

The Human Fallibility, treats the fragile dimensions of human encounter, dealing with our actual brokenness and vulnerability. Together, the three parts throw further light onto the seemingly endless creative, tensional and paradoxical aspects of ourselves. Finally, the concluding section muses on the human yearning for authenticity and reflects on the tensional or creative aspects of human nature, and thereby justifies the title, “Between Beneath, Before and Beyond.”

Part I. Human Fecundity: Fertile Experience

Part I focuses on the human capacity to interpret experiences creatively and make meaning out of them. The first chapter in this section attempts to focus on human beings as story-tellers. It is through stories that we as humans understand ourselves, and history reveals stories are the best means of reflecting on ourselves. Our story-telling has more than entertainment value. It provides us with a way of life with which we are so fascinated. On that note, this chapter also criticises some of the present story that we live, and offers suggestion for another more creative and viable story, of which will enable us to better live our lives. This chapter, then, is an invitation for us to be story-tellers, and open to the creative and narrative part of our human nature.

The second chapter in Part I takes up a related narrative issue, the subject of myths, and how they shape human culture. Myths provide meaning and significance to our lives, in that they frame them in a larger picture. Existential and archaeological myths are means by which humans try to reconcile the paradoxical dimensions of life. Since myths enable us to live the reality of contradictions meaningfully, by giving us ideals to live by, myths may be considered as more classical and elaborate stories. Based on Michael Ende’s classical and popular novel, *Momo*, this chapter helps us to appreciate the mythical dimension of our lives, and enables us to overcome evil and to essentially make human life goal-oriented or directional. It is in this chapter, that we study human beings as myth-makers.

The aim of the third chapter in Part I is to appreciate the role that imagination (or creative dream) plays in the very understanding of ourselves and God. Viewed from this perspective, we can say that imagination is crucial to our self-understanding. Because we can dream and imagine, we are able to create a world about which we can debate. It is this human capacity that permits us to enlarge or widen our life horizons. Thus, imagination provides us with the potential to make our experiences fertile and our world creative. Human beings, then, are creative dreamers.

The final, chapter of Part I studies the aesthetic experience of human beings. It looks at the human person as a seer or an artist. Following Paul Ricoeur's methodology, this chapter will first deal with the singular nature of the beautiful. Then, it will reflect on the symbolic and hermeneutic function of art and its significance, including music. Finally, there will be a discussion on art as it relates to ethics, in other words, the artist in relation to the artisan. That is to say, with reference to works of art, the artist plays a role in making the world aesthetically and morally better. That role indicates the symbolic and humanizing nature of art leading to human fecundity.

To summarise, Part I works with the fertile and creative dimensions of human experience. Those fertile and creative dimensions enable us as humans to make sense of our diverse experiences and evolve further our creative ability.

Part II. Human Frailty: Frictional Existence

Following the discussion on the human creative dimension, Part II treats the frail and frictional aspects of our human life-experience. It takes seriously the broken, fragile and vulnerable dimensions of our human nature. It takes up significant human issues like freedom, development, capability, poverty, suspicion and trust, all of which make our every-day-life feeble and delicate.

The first chapter in Part II studies the unique human capacity for freedom in terms of the finite self, and opening oneself to the infinite. Using Paul Ricoeur's phenomenology of fallibility

and freedom, this chapter relates freedom to the finite human capacity to reach out to the infinite. We as humans experience our freedom as both limiting and enabling. We remain always open to the infinite and yet are rooted in or bound to the finite. The swing, or the tension, between the two poles – bound finitude and unbound infinity – makes humans the unique creatures that we are. It is in this unique “in-between-ness” that we can situate and understand our own freedom. By doing that, we situate humans as in perpetual tension.

The second chapter in this section treats freedom from the categories of capabilities. It examines the first Nobel Laureate’s, Amartya Sen, understanding of poverty as lack of freedom, which in turn helps to appreciate Sen’s notion of development as freedom. This understanding demands us to apprehend freedom as going beyond unfreedoms, and making ourselves capable of approaching well-being. Then, at the philosophical level, and borrowing from Ricoeur, this chapter presents an analysis of the crucial human fallibility, and relates it to freedom and various forms of unfreedom. Finally, from an anthropological point of view, we study Sen’s and Ricoeur’s suggestion that creative discourse could be a means by which to befriend human frailty and cultivate freedom both as a means to human realisation and end in itself. In summary, this chapter exposes us to the dilemma of being human.

The dilemma of being human is studied further in the third chapter, which tries to appraise the human situation hermeneutically. Following Ricoeur’s treatment, the final chapter of Part II traces the long hermeneutic journey from suspicion to trust. Doing this enables one to appreciate the self in terms oneself and the other. With reference to humans’ historical conditioning of our own growth, this chapter focuses on the bodiliness of human experience and the ethical importance of human existence. It may be noted that one leads to the other. In this sense, we are “care concerned of the other.” Each one of us cared for and are called to care for each other. So, it follows, humans are seen as the bounded openness

moving from suspicion to trust and from oneself to the other. It is by maintaining this movement that we realise ourselves.

Part III. Human Fallibility: Fragile Encounter

Part III takes up the tragic dimension of the precarious human existence. This final part of the book delves into the fallible and violent aspects of the human heart and society. This discussion leads to an opening of sorts. In that opening lives a realistic hope, an experiencing the “joy of Yes despite the sadness of the finite.” That “joy of Yes” affirms, unconditionally and unequivocally, our human precarious and precious life.

The first chapter deals with the theme of violence and sinfulness. Without attempting to give a philosophical analysis of the origin of sin and evil, what is presented are some of the dynamics at work in the emergence of evil. What is discussed is based mostly on Paul Ricoeur’s and Ernest Becker’s work. Ricoeur points out that the disproportion that characterizes human beings makes evil possible, though not always. Such a disproportion opens the way to sin and evil. The natural progress from *bios* to *logos* has enhanced human life greatly and caused an evil force to develop an enlarged horizon. With reference to evil, Becker’s work showed the psychological dynamics at work, whereby evil multiplies itself in the very attempt to eliminate it. Both Ricoeur and Becker trace the existence of evil (and also goodness and freedom) to the disproportion or in-betweenness in the human condition. This chapter, to summarise, is a phenomenological description of the emergence and progress of moral evil in individual human beings and human society.

The treatments of violence leads to the second chapter and its predominant theme, which is to attempt forgiveness. Based on the insights of Ricoeur, this chapter reflects on the depth of fault and the possibility of forgiveness both at the theoretical and at existential level of human beings. Individual history is contrasted to the collective history of a community. At the individual level, humans can speak meaningfully of a “happy memory”, but for

a community such a “happy memory” does not always exist. That discussion naturally leads to topic of the act of genuine forgiveness (both at the collective and individual levels) to the art of creative forgetfulness. Such an approach hopefully provides useful insights for dialogue between and reconciliation of cultures, without which humanity cannot survive. Thus, the aim of this chapter is not so much to focus on the depth of fault, but to remind ourselves of the travesty of justice that human beings – both as individuals and cultures – are capable of committing. Also, this chapter attempts to encourage an opening of ourselves to the promise and possibility of forgiveness – even forgiveness between cultures, which today’s world so badly needs. It is the capacity of human beings to forgive that gives hope to humanity. Such a hope is taken further in the next chapter, which focuses on the human ability to reach out to others and nature.

The third chapter of Part III takes up the issue of prayer from phenomenological and a-religious perspectives. In this chapter on spiritual exercise and experience, the agonies and ecstasies faced by the world today are discussed. What is asserted is that the uniqueness and versatility of a spiritual exercise is tested by the actual life situation of the community: how far it promotes life, fosters joy and furthers love. After understanding spirituality primarily as an experience, what is attempted is to situate a meaningful spirituality (and spiritual experience) on our collective and contemporary human experience. Next, then, is a discussion on the human longing and fulfilment that is embedded in every spiritual quest – leading to an appreciation of spiritual exercises as an experience of love conditioned by our context and open to the whole of reality. And it follows that that experience can cause a person to appreciate the uniqueness and versatility of spiritual exercises and experiences, which leads to a renewed vision of God, world and humans. The focal point of our human spirituality, then, is LIFE in its varied forms searching for fullness, which does not negate the debilitating human experiences of sin and evil in our lives.

The concluding chapter looks at humans as “the between, before and beyond.” In the first section of this chapter, using the ordinary alphabets, we try to indicate that language and reality is more than monadic letters. Then, we take up two scientific theories to indicate the inherent connectedness of the whole reality. We also employ another contemporary scientific finding to show us that we do not perceive much of the empirical world, which can help us to be humble in our approach to the larger world. Then in the light of our scientific study, we recognise human beings not as pure entities (“independently subsisting objects”) but as an evolving horizon that is ever becoming. Finally, we dwell briefly on love as relationality constitutive of reality, which is ever enlarging and expanding.

This book, interdisciplinary in character, takes the scientific world seriously and is open to other fields of enquiry. Some scientific data and religious insights from both Christian and Hindu traditions for reflection are used. Since Prof Pandikattu has been specialising on Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), who is widely recognised as one of most distinguished French thinkers of our time, these reflections are heavily inspired by Ricoeur’s insights. So these reflections are not an exploration of Ricoeur’s thought, but based on or inspired by him.

As such, each of these chapters of the book forms an independent unit, and gives its own insight into human nature. Still, the general aim of the book is to trace the common thread running through the chapters and arrive at an evolving, tensional and creative understanding of the human person as poised between the present and the past, between the actual and potential, between good and evil, between freedom and non-freedom, between the real and imagination, and between authenticity and inauthenticity. The goal is to show that it is in maintaining and not denying the tension that we as humans can truly realise ourselves as the ever open horizon.

The title of the book, “Between Before and Beyond,” may need some explanation. Firstly, it refers to the tensional existence

of human beings, in terms of time. We live in the present, always anticipating the future. So we carry the past, in fact all our past experiences, with us. Secondly, it points to the existential longing for more, which is inherent in human beings. Never satisfied with what we have, we yearn for more, and this more is characteristic of our existence. Thirdly, at the philosophical level, we are always one step ahead of ourselves. When an actuality is realised, a new potentiality emerges, inviting us to transcend ourselves. It is in this “already and not yet” that we exist. We are the horizon that is ever elusive: ever receding and inviting at the same time. We are ourselves transcendence –open to The Beyond – and we remains always limited!

Throughout the discussion Prof Kuruvilla Pandikattu has been trying to see the inherent creative tension that is present in human persons. This creative tension enables humans to be ever open to the new horizon of possibilities.

The tension between the past and the future is only one of the creative paradoxes that we are exposed to. In this book, we first talked of the richness of human experience in terms of fertile experience. That human beings can come up with creative stories and myths in experiencing, encountering and articulating the world indicates the power of imagination that is intrinsic to us.

We then addressed the frail and frictional aspects of human existence in terms of the tension between finite actualities and infinite possibilities (freedom). Next, we dwelt on the participative dilemma involved in human development that is both material and spiritual. After that we studied the tensions between a hermeneutics of trust and suspicion, between time (temporality) and history that gives us identity.

In the third part of the book, we dealt with the fragile and fallible human experiences of sin, forgiveness and redemption (through prayer). The experience of sin and woundedness and healing and wholeness for the whole, make longing a necessary and vulnerable part of being human. Such experiences of forgiveness

and prayer open us to a new and hope filled affirmation of life.

Finally, emphasizing the creatively paradoxical and tensional aspect of human beings, we focused on the human person as the “in-between-ness” — the present carries within itself past experiences and future possibilities. This may sum up the nature of the human being.

Such a predicament or “between-ness” surrounded by “before” and “beyond” may be also found our tensional and dynamic existence between:

- The past and future (temporal tension)
- now and eternity (temporal tension)
- transcendence and immanence (anthropological tension)
- life and death (“law of life”)
- verb and noun (the linguistic level)
- here and there (spatial tension)
- body and soul (anthropological tension)
- failure and hope (experiential tension)
- joys and sorrows (existential tension)
- memory and forgetfulness (existential tension)

This book is related to two others books which the author is bringing out in the immediate future. The next book “Ever Approachable, Never Attainable,” focuses directly on science-religion dialogue and “Gratefully and Gracefully,” focussed on human dying, another area of author’s specialisation. In all the three volumes, he has been using scientific and religious insights critically and creatively contributing to science-religion dialogue.

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