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Contents

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Editorial

The theme we have chosen for this issue of *Jnanadeepa* is: **Inter-human Relationships in an Interdependent world**. The issue explores the contribution which different religions and disciplines can make to the shaping of human life and relationships in a world which is becoming increasingly more aware of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things.

There are two articles in this issue which discuss the contribution Indian religions can make to the structuring of human life and relationships in today's world. The first deals with Bhagavad Gita's message of harmony in an interdependent world. The mystical insights of the Gita enable us to look at the world as a divine abode, as a divine body, as a divine process and a divine dharma. For the Gita the world is a reality of interconnectedness. Such a vision of the world brings with it the human responsibility to promote this interrelationality in a harmonious process. We need to become aware that there is a deep bond between humans and the things of nature and take responsibility for the preservation of the integrity of creation and the promotion of harmony in society. The second discusses the folk religious world-view and points out how folk religions create and affirm the interrelationships not only between human beings in society but also between humans, nature and the supernatural powers. The folk religions have the potential to question and subvert the unjust and discriminatory elements in our caste-based society. They can also positively orient humans to care for nature and not to exploit it for selfish purposes. Thus they can make a significant contribution to the creation of a just, egalitarian and eco-friendly society.

There are three articles in this issue which develop Christian perspectives on interhuman relationships. The first deals with the significance of the Christian faith in the Triune God for our life in society. The author believes that the Trinity is a theological representation of interrelatedness in the human and cosmic community and that it is a model of humanistic and inter-religious trilogue. He also points out that the Trinity provides an alternative paradigm of power in church and society. The second deals with Jesus Christ and shows how Jesus' way of being human is a challenge to authentic human unfolding through interrelationships. Jesus has revealed to us the mystery of human existence on earth and taught through his life that self-emptying love is

the heart of human interrelationship. The third discusses the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:29-37. After dealing with the love commandments of Jesus in a general way, the article shows that in this parable the neighbour is defined from the perspective of the one in need. Hence the command to love the neighbour has a universal application since all humans are in a sense people in need. Besides, the love commandment is present, in one form or another, in all religious traditions. Hence it can serve as a firm basis for interreligous dialogue and collaboration.

There is an article in this issue which discusses the significance and implications of feminism in an interdependent world. It points out that feminism as a movement and a way of life emphasizes values like mutuality, co-responsibility and partnership leading to genuine interdependence between men and women. Building on the theme of interdependence, feminism from the grassroots argues that stories of women's agency and resistance are crucial in understanding the world of today. And this calls for an attentive listening to these stories.

Finally, there is an article which makes scientific and anthropological reflections on reality as relationality. Basing himself on the findings of modern science about reality and the human self, the author contends that the world is a network of interrelated entities. Because of development beyond our control, we are unable to publish now some articles from other disciplines like psychology and sociology which were originally planned for this issue.

However, included in this issue are two articles on development which were originally meant for the last issue. The first offers some Christian reflections on development. Basing himself on the Christian tradition and taking into account the social teaching of the Church, the author develops some Christian perspectives on development. The second deals with the role of the Church in the development of Goa. There has been a progressive abandonment of the Portuguese legacy. The post-colonial Church in Goa has made a renewed commitment to the promotion of the development of the State and expressed its readiness to be an active partner in the collaborative effort for regeneration. The Church believes that it is her sacred duty towards humanity to help in the integral development of the human person and human society. This is certainly a progressive step.

Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ
Editor

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The Bhagavd Gita's Message of Harmony in an Inter-dependent World

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Abstract: The great scriptures of the world religions have been consistently speaking of a spiritual power that binds everything together in an evolutionary process. Rta, Dharma, Yajna, Tao and Reign of God are some of the symbols which point to this unifying reality. In the light of that religious sages look at the world as a gift from the divine source and as a responsibility as well. It is a grace to realise that everything is bound with everything else in a divine ambience and it is a responsibility to promote this inter-relationality in a harmonious process. Global spirituality is a matter of mystical experience and ethical demand.

In this study the author explores how the *Bhagavad Gita* looks at the world as a reality of inter-connectedness with the mystical insights and ethical demands that it involves. The author concludes that the contribution of the Bhagavad Gita to the shaping of our life and structuring of our relationships in a *globalised* world that is becoming increasingly conscious of the inter-dependence of things and persons as follows: (i) the realisation that we live and grow in a divine ambience; (ii) the deep bonding between humans and the things of nature within the divine process; (iii) the understanding of human creativity as participation in the divine work of yajna, of dharma (iv) the responsibility to preserve the integrity of the environment and promote harmony in social life; (v) compassion as the characteristic of a person who lives in inner freedom.

Keywords: Bhagavad Gita, yajna, dharma, rta, dharma, inter-relationality.

The world is shrinking to a global village in which everyone almost knows everyone else. One's television is like a window open to the larger universe. One's internet gives access to the entire world. Within a few hours one can cross the continents. Within seconds one can reach someone at the other end of the world. Interdependence of nations, interconnectedness of cultures and interrelationship of peoples characterise the new age in which we live. A global consciousness evolves, in which everything is intimately related to everything else. Political policies and market interests seem to determine the dynamics of this evolution. Is there a spiritual awareness that underlies this global consciousness?

The great scriptures of the world religions have been consistently speaking of a spiritual power that binds everything together in an evolutionary process. Rta, Dharma, Yajna, Tao and Reign of God are some of the symbols which point to this unifying reality. In the light of religious sages look at the world as a gift from the divine source and as a responsibility as well. It is a grace to realise that everything is bound with everything else in a divine ambience and it is a responsibility to promote this inter-relationality in a harmonious process. Global spirituality is a matter of mystical experience and ethical demand.

In this study I am exploring how the Bhagavad Gita (ca. 300 BCE) looks at the world as a reality of inter-connectedness with the mystical insights and ethical demands that it involves.

The World as Divine Abode

Gita does not speak of a God who is above the world or outside the universe. God is within the universe. Divine presence vibrates in every atom and enlivens every living cell. The entire universe is permeated by the divine presence and dynamised by the divine energy. God is the creative source, the life-giving abode and the liberative goal of the universe: "I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings" (10:20). "I am the origin and the dissolution, as well as the power house of all" (9:18).

Things are born from an unseen source, and merge into an unseen state; in between they manifest the divine presence in a rich diversity.

(2:28). "I am the source of all. Everything proceeds from within me." (10:8) And "I am the end of everything." (10:32). The world is the divine abode. The entire universe exists in the Divine. (9:5)

God is in the world as a dynamic, life-giving presence. "All this universe is spun on God" (*protham*, 7:7). "As the mighty wind, blowing everywhere, subsists in the etheric space, so do all beings subsist in me" (9:6). The divine presence is the inner energy that binds everything together to a dynamic *whole*. "All this universe is permeated by me." (9:4). "All existences abide in God and by him all are permeated." (8:22). The entire universe is soaked in the Divine. God abides in all.

With beautiful poetic images the Gita describes the immanence of the Divine in all things:

> I am the taste in the waters, light in the moon and the sun, sound vibrations in etheric space. I am the pure fragrance in the earth, brightness in fire, life-giving source in all beings. I am indeed the eternal seed of all existences. (7:8-10).
>
> The splendour of the sun that illumines the whole world, the soothening light of the moon and the brightness of the fire – know that as mine. It is I that enters the womb of the earth and sustains all beings with vital energies. I am indeed the life-sap that flows through the entire vegetation. In the bodies of living beings I work as the digestive fire. And in the hearts of all I dwell bringing about clarity of perception, wisdom and the removal of doubts (15:12-15).

With these insights the Gita makes it clear that we live and move in a divine milieu. There is nothing that is just *material* in this universe. Every atom is energised by the divine vibration. Every living cell is nourished by the divine life. The entire universe is like a tree: the divine presence is like the life-giving sap that permeates the entire tree. (15:1).

The World as Divine Body

The symbol of the body surfaces in various forms in the Gita in order to describe God as the inner mover, the inner Self. "I am the

Self seated in the bodies of all" (10:20) "I dwell in their bodies" (16:18). "The supreme Self, the highest Spirit, dwells in this body" (13:22). Every being, animate or inanimate, is the body of the indwelling Spirit. In the human body there is a spiritual subject-consciousness: "An eternal divine particle enters the body and functions as the inner source of life" (15:7). From within the *heart* the divine Master "dispels the darkness born of ignorance with the shining lamp of wisdom "(10:11) The supreme Spirit unfolds itself through the individual spirit, which in turn manifests itself through the physical body. God is the ultimate subject of all. Yet the freedom of the individual soul is affirmed (18:63).

Not only the individual bodies, but the entire universe is looked upon as the body of God. "With hands and feet on every side, with eyes, heads and faces on all sides, with ears turned in all directions, He dwells in the world, enveloping all" (13:13). In the revelation of the *cosmic form* of the divine Lord Arjuna is graced with the vision of the universe as the body of the Lord (ch.11:9-13). "Arjuna beheld the whole universe with its manifold divisions converged in the One: in the body of the God of gods" (11:13). Overwhelmed by this magnificent vision Arjuna exclaimed: "I behold Thee, infinite in form on all sides, with numberless arms, bellies, faces and eyes, but I see not Thy end or Thy middle or Thy beginning, O Lord of the universe, O form universal." (11:16). For Arjuna – who actually represents any human seeker – this is a vision that is frightening and fascinating at the same time. When the Divine touches the human, the human soul recoils within itself in fear and yet it is liberated to soar beyond the limits of its finitude. The fantastic vision described in Gita ch. 11 is an eruption of the cosmic consciousness.

Along the line of the upanishadic description of the divine indweller (*antaryamin*) the Gita speaks of God's presence within the heart of all beings. "The Lord abides in the heart of all beings" (18:61) "As the inner Light beyond all darkness he is seated in the heart of all (13:17). "I am lodged in the heart of all beings" (15:15). Heart is here the symbol of the innermost divine space from where God acts as the ultimate subject of all. He is the knower, the to-be-known and knowledge as well. (15:15). Just as the individual soul activates the human body, the Divine as the universal Spirit activates the entire universe, which is the body of the Divine, the field of its

self-unfolding. "Know me as the knower of the field in all fields" (*kshetram* 13:2).

The World as Divine Yajna

The Gita describes the world as divine body not in a static sense, but referring to the inner divine dynamism. God's presence within the heart of the universe is like the dynamic axis of a wheel. The entire universe is like a wheel and God is the axis of it. There is a propelling energy constantly emanating from within the divine centre; this makes the wheel of the universe revolve in the proper direction. On the Vedic and Upanishadic background the Gita describes the entire universe as a God-driven wheel (*yajna-chakra*). On a wheel everything is connected to everything else. This inter-connectedness is the secret of its proper functioning. The divine presence in the universe brings about harmony and well-being of all. (*yoga-kshemam*, 9:22)

Actions evolve out of the divine Centre. "From Brahman work arises; Brahman is born from the Imperishable" (3:15). Here the term *Brahman* could mean both the divine subject and the matrix of nature as activated by the Divine (14:3-4). The entire universe is a divine process activated by works evolving from the divine axis and mediated by finite agencies. Gita calls this process *yajna*. Through yajna the divine energy penetrates everywhere (3:15). All beings participate in this cosmic process of divine yajna. What really disturbs this process of cosmic harmony is human greed (*kama*). The greedy one strives to keep everything for the gratification of the ego (*aham-kara*). Hence only through freedom from greed (*nish-kama*) can humans participate in the divine yajna. Throughout the Gita there is a constant insistence on an attitude of nish-kama. "You have responsibility for action alone, but never a claim on its fruits. Let not the fruits of action be the motive; neither let there be any attachment to inaction" (2:47).

There are basically two ways of human participation in the divine yajna: rituals and sharing. Yajna has a cultic and ethical aspect.

Sacred ritual, according to the Gita, has a cosmic significance. A ritual is performed not to gain any personal benefit but to promote the integral well-being of all. It is a symbolic participation in the

divine sacrifice. God is the ultimate "priest and recipient of all sacrifices" (9:24). Brahman offers Brahman in the fire of Brahman (4:24). "I am the ritual action, I am the sacrifice, I am the ancestral oblation, I am the healing herb, I am the sacred manthra, I am the melted butter, I am the fire and I am the oblation" (9:16). Through a properly performed ritual one enters the divine energy-field. One lets one's life revolve harmoniously within the divine wheel of life. One is thus liberated from the grips of greed. Ritual action means total self-surrender to the divine master, who is the life-centre of the universe. Human yajna is participation in the divine yajna. Hence the unique power of rituals. Through rituals we humans nourish the divine process of yajna in the universe. "From food contingent beings live; food derives from rain; rain comes from yajna; yajna is born of work; work evolves from Brahman" (3:14). Yajna therefore integrates human livelihood with the divine source, and all things with the divine centre. Yajna relates the spokes of finite realities with the divine axis on the cosmic wheel.

The second inevitable form of human participation in the divine process is sharing. If yajna is born of work, one may ask, what sort of work? Karma (work) in the Gita refers primarily to action done without greed, not to cultic operations. Yajna in the form of ritual is based on yajna in the field of works. Referring to the deeper meaning of ritual offerings (9:26) the Gita says: "Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, or give away in alms, whatever penance you perform, do it all as an offering unto me" (9:27). Here life becomes a yajna. Sacred ritual gives a quality to life. Ritual makes a person God-centred. The way of life is then characterised by sharing: caring for the goods of nature and for the welfare of humans.

The World as Divine Process

Within the divine yajna the world evolves as a process of inter-relationship between humans and the things of nature. "In the beginning the Creator-Lord created all beings along with yajna. He admonished them: By yajna you should bring forth, and this shall be for you that which fulfils all your desires" (3:10). Here yajna means the basic attitude of sharing and caring with an inner freedom

from possessive greed. Only with such an attitude can life be promoted. Hence the next injunction: "With yajna shall you foster the gods (*deva*), so that the gods may foster you in return. Thus fostering one another you shall achieve the supreme good" (3:11). The term *deva* does not mean the iconographic forms of gods and goddesses, but the life-giving powers embedded in nature. The Vedic seers sensed the divine energies communicated through the powers of nature and hence these were praised as divine channels of life and grace. The divine call to foster gods would then mean the human responsibility to sustain the life-giving elements of nature like the fertility power of the earth, the purifying element of the rivers, the refreshing *prana* of air and the awakening energy of the sun. Humans are duty bound not to poison the earth or devastate the forests, not to contaminate the water sources or pollute the air-space. If we poison the earth, the earth will poison our body. If we cause pollution in the air, the air space will pollute our lungs. If we contaminate the water sources we have to bear the consequences of epidemics. When we cause an undue raise of CO2 in the atmosphere we have to expect radical climatic catastrophes. There is a deep inter-conntectedness between every reality in the universe. We live in a cosmic web, which is a gift and a responsibility. This is what the Gita refers to when it says: "fostering one another you shall achieve the supreme good" (3:11). Through the intertwining of humans and the things of nature the divine wheel of life in the cosmos revolves. In this process all beings are bonded together. At depth it is a sacred bonding, a divine relationship, a mystical *perichoresis*, for the Divine is the axis of the wheel. The divine energy transforms everything (9:4, 11:38). God dwells in us and we dwell in God (9:29, 12:8).

The text continues harping on the ethical responsibility. "Fostered by yajna the gods will give you the fulfilment of your desires. The one who enjoys their gifts without giving to them in return is verily a thief" (3:12). If we humans take care of the nourishing powers of nature, they will take care of our needs. If however we extract from them in greed without providing for their sustenance and preservation we are exploiters. And this disturbs the revolving of the divine wheel in the cosmos. Destruction of environment is a crime. Economic growth at the cost of environmental crisis is not worthy of being called development or progress. It is rather *theft*, for it devastates

the life-base of peoples and deprives the future generations of their sustenance. Greed (*kama*) is the root-cause of all disorder in the world. (3:37; 2:62-63)

The earth is our mother. Earth nourishes our life with food and water, with fresh air and balanced heat. We humans have the right to take out anything from the earth only after making sure that the life-sustaining powers of the mother earth are secured. "The good people eat only what is left over from yajna. Thus they are released from every taint. The wicked ones however cook food only for themselves; what they eat is sin" (3:13). Here Gita makes a clear distinction between two basic attitudes to nature: that of nourishing the life-lines of nature and that of destroying them. It has been a venerable tradition in Indian families to consider eating as a sacred exercise. Food is taken with gratitude to mother earth and with the willingness to share it with the hungry. The one who eats food participates in the generous life of the earth and in the gracious presence of the Divine as well. Food is to be shared generously with others. The guest – *athithi* =the one who comes unannounced – is to be welcomed as God! The Gita's injunction is inspired by the Vedic precept: "He who does not nourish the guests and eats alone, eats but sin" (Rig Veda, 10:117:6). This is reflected in the ordinance of Manu too: "He who cooks only for himself eats sin" (Manusmtriti, 3:118).

Work done without a concern for the welfare of others and the integrity of the environment is bondage. "This world is bound by bonds of work except where that work is done in the sense of yajna. Therefore fulfil works with inner freedom and in view of yajna" (3:9). Works done out of greed disrupt the cosmic order. Works done as yajna (service) promote the rhythm (*rta*) of the universe within the Divine. The central message of the Gita is liberation from the grip of greed to the horizons of spiritual freedom. In this process the entire humanity and the whole universe is involved. "The works of a person whose greedy attachments are overcome, who is interiorly liberated, whose mind is firmly grounded in *jnana*, reach integration, for his/her works are done in the sense of yajna" (4:23). Yajna is the path to mukti, integral liberation, in the life of an individual, in society and in the process of nature as well.

The World as Divine Dharma

The Gita speaks not only of eco-responsibility but also of social concerns. What evolves through healthy inter-personal relationships is harmony (dharma). The term dharma comes from the verbal root *dhr*, which means to hold, to support, to integrate. Dharma is the state of being held together, the process of integration, the situation of justice and peace, the experience of harmony in social co-existence. From within our heart God brings about integration and welfare: *yoga-kshemam*. (9:22). The world is the divine milieu wherein dharma evolves through the participation of humans in the divine work of bringing about dharma.

Dharma is a divine work. Ultimately it is the divine presence that binds human hearts together in love and harmony. God is the ground of dharma: "I am the foundation of the eternal dharma" (14:27). God is not presented here as an external law-giver nor as the Lord of life above the universe, but as the inner controller, the universal Self within the human self (15:15), the Self hidden in the heart of all beings (10:20), the energising axis of the wheel of the universe (3:16). God is actively present in the evolution of nature and in the historical development of humanity. God is the ultimate agent of the establishment of dharma (*dharmasamsthapana*, 4:8). The divine power overcomes the blocks of the negative forces (*adharma*, 4:7) and steers the evolutionary process on the path of dharma. In this divine involvement there is a concern for the liberation of the oppressed (*sadhu*, 4:8). The *sadhus* are those who are victimised by the greedy evildoers and whose strivings (*sadhana*) are blocked by the negative forces. Hence the assurance that God intervenes to remove these and to liberate the *poor*.

Dharma demands human participation in the divine work. Humans are creative agents in the process of bringing about dharma in all realms of life. Hence the call to work for the welfare of the world. "The witless ones perform their works out of attachment to the works. The enlightened ones do their works out of an intense concern for the integral welfare of the world" (*lokasamgraham*, 3:25). When one is intent on gaining fruits for the gratification of the desires of the ego, the works performed are in fact bondage to the ego. This is the root cause of *adharma* prevailing in human societies. When, on

the other hand, works are done only with the motivation of bringing about integration and welfare in society, they contribute to the process of dharma. In the latter case justice and peace, freedom and fellowship are promoted. The Gita makes a strong critique of the manifold forms of greed in human life: economic craving for wealth (16:13), political craze for power (16:14), social claim of nobility (16:15)) and religious rituals performed for personal favours (16:15). These aberrations degrade human life and destiny (16:20).

World as Human Responsibility

In the light of these reflections we can understand human life as active participation in the divine process of life. Human endeavours have a creative role in the revolving of the cosmo-theandric wheel of life. Human yajna evolves in the divine yajna. Inter-human relationships unfold in a world that is inter-dependent within the divine ambience. What binds the *I* and the *thou* to an integral *we* is the divine power of love that permeates the universe. God is experienced as the power of love (7:11) for the deepest mystery of the Divine is that God loves us. (18:64). The mystique of cosmic inter-dependence blossoms forth in the ethic of human inter-personality. What are some of the characteristics of shaping one's life out of the divine Centre? The Gita mentions certain basic attitudes of a liberated person.

The primary perspective is that of *equal-mindedness* (*samatvam*, 2:48). When one looks at things with a divine eye (11:8) one is endowed with the grace of seeing God in all things. "One sees me everywhere, and sees everything in me" (6:30). One experiences the world as the temple of God, permeated by divine energies. The inter-connectedness of realities gets a theonomous dimension. The consequence is equanimity. "One sees the Self in all beings, and all beings in the Self; so does one see the same in all" (6:29). This spiritual vision renders inner freedom: freedom from greed. One is thus enabled to be equanimous towards friend and enemy(12:18), to respect the saint and the sinner alike (6:9), to welcome generously the comfortable and the disturbing ones (14:24), to remain undisturbed in distress and non-elated in gain (2:56), to be content in favourable and adverse circumstances (6:7). There is an inner freedom from being swayed between dualities (5:3). A basic *indifferentia* characterises one's attitude to life.

This does not mean that one becomes callous towards the struggles of life. Sensitivity to the divine presence in all things makes one deeply sensitive to the sufferings of people. The hallmark of a liberated person is *compassion*. While listing the traits of a person who lives in love with God (*bhakti*) the Gita first mentions compassion: "The one who hates not any being, but is friendly and compassionate towards all, free from the greedy thoughts of *I* and *mine*, equanimous in joy and suffering...that one is dear to me" (12:13). In inner freedom one commits oneself to the work of the integral welfare of the world with *great enthusiasm*. (*chikeershu*, 3:25). Life is then motivated by a passionate concern for the well-being of all beings (*ratah*,12:3). Inter-personal relationships in an inter-dependent world are characterised by genuine love.

A third characteristic of a liberated person is genuine *inner joy*. The classical insight is that the Divine is bliss (*ananda*). Life shaped from the divine Centre would then be a joyous life. There is a deep-rooted peace and contentedness which gives rise to a joyful attitude to life. "When one sees the Self in the self through the Self, one rejoices in the self; it is a joy that is experienced at the deeper buddhi level; it transforms one's life even in the midst of suffering" (6:20-23). It is a joy that is expressed in sharing and caring, for the world is experienced as the abode of the Divine. One does one's work with joy due to the conviction that it is participation in the divine work. This makes the person free from the grips of fear and anger (2:56). "My devotee is a person with an unfailing joy in life" (12:14).

What then is the contribution of the Bhagavad Gita to the shaping of our life and structuring of our relationships in a *globalised* world that is becoming increasingly conscious of the inter-dependence of things and persons? Five insights seem to be important: (i) the realisation that we live and grow in a divine ambience; (ii) the deep bonding between humans and the things of nature within the divine process; (iii) the understanding of human creativity as participation in the divine work of yajna, of dharma (iv) the responsibility to preserve the integrity of the environment and promote harmony in social life; (v) compassion as the characteristic of a person who lives in inner freedom.

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Jesus' Way of Being Human: A Challenge to Authentic Human Unfolding through Inter-relationships

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Abstract: It could be said that God became a man so that humans may become truly human. Jesus' life and his message answer the fundamental human unfolding through interrelationships. After analyzing Jesus' insights into the mystery of humans, the author goes on to study self-emptying love as the heart of human inter-relationship. To encounter Jesus means to encounter the meaning of one's own human existence. The human quest for meaning ends in him because he is discovered as the beginning and the end of one's life, the Alpha and the Omega. Jesus reveals the mystery of humans more than the mystery of God because he reveals God's dream for humans and for the human society by living God's way of living an authentic human life. The most striking quality of his life was that no one was excluded from his love. His was an all-inclusive, self-emptying love. Jesus revealed that humans can become truly humans by encountering God as their loving Abba, other humans as brothers and sisters and by relating to nature as manifesting the presence of God. When humans encounter everything and everyone as a theophany, they will recognize the value of their lives and they will reach out with self-emptying love to those who suffer various kinds of discrimination and de-humanization. They will stand against the anti-kingdom forces and suffer the consequences of their stand. Indeed, their 'costly discipleship' will bring meaning to their lives.

Keywords: self-emptying love, inter-relationships, theophany, agapeic love.

One of the most fascinating and challenging revelations of Jesus during his earthly life was about humans and what they could become. This he did through his life and message. Jesus Christ is often proclaimed as the one who revealed God to us. Of course, in a unique way he revealed God, because he was God who became man. But more than revealing who God is, he revealed the identity of humans and their God-given capacity to unfold themselves as humans. It could be said that God became a man so that humans may become truly human. Jesus' life and his message answer the fundamental questions humans ask about themselves: "What is my identity as a human being or who am I?" and "What is the meaning of human existence?"

1. Jesus' Insight into Mystery of Humans

Jesus was born into an ordinary working class family. Probably following the traditional profession of his family he trained himself to be a carpenter. Everybody knew him as a carpenter's son (Mk 6:2-3). He knew the struggles of a family that had to earn its daily bread through hard work and toil. He also knew the difficulties of those who were not hired for work for a day or two and what that would mean for a family that depended on the only wage-earner of that family. Almost thirty years of his life he lived as an ordinary Jew without any special education or a privileged position that would mark him out as someone special or unique either in his style of living or in his way of dealing with others. He was very much a part of the Jewish society of his time. He shared the religious and secular ideas of his time. He was not expected to be someone different from any of his contemporaries who eked out a living through working in the vineyards or skilled labourers like him in Galilee, a relatively poor region of Palestine. So in all matters of daily life he was very much like anyone of them, an ordinary Jew of the Galilean country-side. But there was something unique about him which was not a part of the religious consciousness of his contemporaries. This was not noticed at all by his fellow humans. That something that set him apart from his contemporaries was his experience of being constantly drawn to that Ultimate Love whom everybody called God.

Jesus' intimate relationship with God grew according to his psycho-physical growth. Even as a boy he felt so drawn to this Love. He was taken hold of by that Supreme Love. He could not but express this love which was spontaneously arising in him except by invoking this God as 'Abba'. Probably he did not reveal this intimate relationship with God and his way of addressing him as Abba until at a later time in his life. Such a way of addressing God would have alienated his own relatives and friends from him, because it would have been considered by them as an unorthodox and unacceptable way of addressing God, who was believed to be absolutely transcendent. In spite of this belief in God's absolute transcendence, the Hebrew bible, which Jesus and contemporaries were familiar with, narrated also that their God was so close to his people like a loving father who carries his child on his hips and dandles him on his knees (Hos 11:5f) or that he was more caring and loving than a mother who cares for her child (Is 49:15). Jesus' God-experience was like that of a child who experiences a deep, affectionate and reassuring love and care of his loving parent. In this love of his Abba, he saw himself, other humans and the entire world.

He 'grew in wisdom' (Lk 2:52) about the entire reality around him and grew in his intimate relationship with his 'Abba'. Probably during his baptism at the Jordan he was given an extraordinary inner experience of being loved by God, whom he habitually turned to as his Abba. In this transforming experience he saw himself as well as everything and everyone enveloped and bathed in that ineffable Love. The evangelists narrate this integral experience of Jesus in terms of a theophany (Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10-11; Lk 3:21-22; Joh 1:32) in which the Spirit of God descended on him in the form of a dove and the voice from heaven affirmed Jesus as the 'beloved Son' of God.

By baptizing people in the Jordan, John, the Baptist, prepared the people whom the Jewish society considered 'sinners' for a new way of ordering their lives in communion with God that would change their lives and their society. These were considered 'sinners' because they were economically poor, ritually impure and socially outcasts. They were captives of their given identity by those who claimed themselves to be guardians of the social and religious order. The rich and the powerful who wielded both religious and secular

power determined who should be at the centre of society and who should be at the periphery. The 'lowly' had no dignified place in the society that was ruled by those who were 'proud in their heart', 'mighty on their thrones' and 'rich' with material possessions. But all were captives of some force or the other. Either they were slaves of their own illusory identities or captives of the identity given by society and religion. They were all so crippled by a paralysis of mind and heart that they could not move forward in their self-realization as humans in the way intended by God. They were 'blind' to their own God-given possibilities to become what they are called to become. They needed someone to liberate them from this captivity, open their eyes to see themselves and their possibilities clearly, to remove the paralysis of their mind and heart acquired through centuries of accumulated impositions of rules and regulations and through the oppressive systems and structures. It was in this situation that Jesus emerges out of the Jordan with a new vision about his identity and an awareness that he was commissioned to proclaim that new order of society of God's rule., to "release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Lk 4:18).

Jesus felt empowered by God's Spirit to see humans, their society, and the entire creation from God's point of view and make the people aware that God's reign is within them and amidst them to be recognized, accepted and celebrated. He became aware that God's reign began with him and that he was the agent of establishing the Kingdom. He saw that both the poor and the rich , the so-called holy people and the so-called sinners, the ritually pure and the impure, the law-abiding and the law-breakers were all in need of liberation. They all needed to become authentically human as his Abba intended them to be. He felt urged, anointed and appointed to bring the good news of this liberation to those who were captives of their own selves, of their dehumanizing society, of the world of their making, of the religion of their ritual practices. He knew for certain that they were captives of a God of their own religious systems. This God of religion was for the temple, the Sabbath, laws and the status quo. He knew that this was not the real God whom he had been experiencing throughout his life and more intensely and deeply at the moment of his baptism at the Jordan. For this God of Jesus, humans were more

important than Sabbath, laws, temple and the status quo. For this God moral purity was more important than ritual purity because "there is nothing outside a person that going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile (Mk 7:15). For his God humans were more important than religious systems and structures which were meant to help humans to relate to God.[1] Jesus stood against such religious structures and their leaders when he found that the religion itself had become a hindrance to human unfolding instead of enhancing it. His Abba is the God of unconditional love and forgiveness, who wants all humans to experience wholeness of life through a loving relationship with him and with fellow-humans and with the entire creation.

Leaving the banks of the Jordan, Jesus broke the boundaries of his own self-understanding as the member of the family he was born into and as the member of the society he belonged to.[2] This society had given him an identity as it would give to anyone belonging to that society based on one's family and the trade one practiced. This is evident from the fact that the people were astonished at Jesus' new identity after his baptism in the Jordan as he went about preaching about the coming of God's reign. They asked, "Is he not Joseph's son?" (Lk 4:22b) or "Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands! Is he not this carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us? " (Mk 6: 2b-3). They could not categorize him. He did not fit into their system of identifying persons based on their birth and positions. Usually people accept and internalize the identity given to them by society without daring to question it. Their self-understanding is determined by what other people think about them. They become captives of such assigned identities! But Jesus' Abba-experience was such that he crossed both the boundaries of his family and his society and proclaimed that only in accepting God's plan for humans expressed in the metaphor of the 'Kingdom of God' or "God's reign' humans can authentically become humans!

In his experience of God as his Abba he discovered the meaning of the mystery of his own human existence as the one who was empowered to bring about God's kingdom. In the discovery of his authentic self in relation to God, other humans and the entire creation

he discovered the meaning of every human existence. He was certain that humans could unfold themselves to the maximum if they could share his Abba-experience. Once they experienced God as the beginning and end of their lives, they would find meaning for their lives. They would experience his unconditional love and forgiveness. They would see everything permeated by his presence. Everything would be a theophany! They would see everyone as their brother or sister born in the same womb of God, belonging to a net-work of relationships. No one could be excluded from this communion. There would be no high or low among humans, no high caste or low caste or outcast! No discrimination whatsoever! No Jew or Gentile, male or female, old or young. All form one household of God belonging to one another as God's children.. Each one would expand the space of his heart and mind to embrace everyone and everything as God would do. Jesus discovered that humans are humans only to the extent that they consciously and freely relate with other humans and love everyone unconditionally as God would do, including enemies and those who persecute them (Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27). He discovered that the human vocation was to become 'perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect' (cfr Mt 5: 48) because this Father does not exclude anyone but includes all without any discrimination.

Jesus knew for certain that structures and systems, ideologies and practices, whether they are religious or secular, are designed to oppress humans and are sinful and as such must be denounced and removed. He was prepared to give up his life for this mission of prophetically denouncing those sinful structures of dehumanization found in the society of his time and positively announcing the values of the Kingdom that would usher in a world of right human inter-relationships and communion. He lived and proclaimed that human life would become meaningful only to the extent one gives one's life for others in love.

2. Self-Emptying Love: The Heart of Human Inter-relationship

Jesus valued every human life because he experienced his Abba as an anthropocentric God. God's concern was for humans and their unfolding as humans in relation to him and to the world he had

created. The whole of nature was a scripture for humans to understand every creature as a manifestation of God's presence so that humans could raise their minds and hearts to God and relate to him and everything and everyone through him. In his teaching through parables, symbols and metaphors Jesus used things of ordinary life to show the inter-relations that exist between God, humans and the world. The lilies of the field, fig trees and vineyards, birds of the air and fish of the sea, serpents and scorpions, sheep and goats, foxes and horses, mountains and mustard seeds, barns and beds, stones and streets, pearls and treasures, light and salt, bread and wine etc., were transformed into effective symbols of communicating certain insights into the mysteries of God's relation to humans, human relationship among themselves and the values of the Kingdom..

Jesus recognized that humans lose the meaning of their lives when they freely alienate themselves from their own selves, their God, other humans and nature. When humans choose to alienate themselves from God, the origin and end of their lives, in order to be independent from God, they seek to become absolute masters of their lives. They try to be 'autonomous' or a law unto themselves. Independent of God they seek to be independent of other humans. They see others as a hindrance to their advancement in life. They devise means to suppress and oppress others. They create systems and structures of dehumanization. Alienated from God and other humans their thoughts and actions vitiate the entire human society. Injustice, oppression, war and violence, sickness of body and mind, corrupt practices and discrimination and dehumanization result from the selfishness and egoism of some who have no 'fear of God and regard for humans'. They create a world of evil beyond human control. Anyone born into this situation is affected by it. Not only human society but the entire creation is affected by this situation of evil, and humans end their lives by encountering a meaningless death.

Jesus, through his life and message reverses this process of humans' degradation as humans and their tragic end in a meaningless death.. As the Mystery of God in history and in the world, he transformed both history and the entire creation. As a man, through his free, intimate, personal and unique relation to God as Abba, he showed that humans become truly humans to the extent that they relate to God because they are created for this life of communion

with God. From his intimate and loving union with God, he realized that humans must live a life of self-emptying love for one another, practising justice, making peace with all, forgiving and reconciling people and living an authentic fellowship with everyone as one's own brother or sister. He formed a community of disciples who would share his God-experience and live these values and belong to a new society of God's dream which he called the Kingdom of God. By establishing this community he broke the power of the world of sin. And he entrusted this small community with the task of proclaiming the good news that it was possible for human beings to experience wholeness and liberation through him and by belonging to the Kingdom.

It was clear to Jesus that the source of every human existence was the infinite love of his Abba. Human life would be meaningless if one were not open to acknowledge and accept this unconditional love which flows into all humans both individually and collectively. Jesus knew for certain that the response to this infinite love is possible only through humans' self-emptying love for one another. So his great love commandment includes both love of God and love of one's neighbour. In fact, Jesus combined the two love commandments of the Old Testament (Deut 6:4-5 and Lev 19:18) into one all inclusive commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (Mt 22:37) and You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt 22:39). This one commandment is the 'great commandment' as it is the basis of all other commandments. It includes all the others. Therefore, according to this commandment, we love God by loving our neighbour.[3]

Humans can unfold themselves as humans to the extent that they are able to respond to God's love by loving other humans as God would love, that is, unconditionally. This love is not a sentiment but an active and effective love towards those in need. The New Testament calls this love *agape*. Agapeic love expresses itself in doing good to others in need without any thought of one's own advantage. In a society of Jesus' vision which he called 'the Kingdom of God' authentic love would express itself in relating with everyone as brothers and sisters and reaching out to everyone in need, whatever that need be. The greatest need of any human being is the need to be recognized, accepted and respected as a person. But in a society that is hierarchically structured humans are not recognized and respected

for what they are as human persons but because of their belongingness to a high class or low class, to a particular ethnic group or a gender or because of their position of power. In this scheme of things a large majority will be condemned to live on the periphery of society without any recognition or acceptance because they do not belong to any 'respectable class or caste'. To reach out to those in need of recovering their God-given dignity as humans would mean that one should confront the situation of structural sin of oppression, injustice and dehumanization and suffer the consequences of standing for the values of the Kingdom. In fact, Jesus was killed for standing for the cause of a God who loves humans and opposes everything that prevents human unfolding.

Jesus revealed that human life is meaningful not by what one has or what one achieves but by what one gives in self-emptying love. This was the heart of his teaching and preaching. He lived this ideal to the very end of his life. Even at the cost of his life he stood against the rich and the powerful, the religious leaders and the scholars of his time, because of their blindness which prevented their seeing their true selves as those called to be the members of the Kingdom of God because he loved them. His table-fellowship with the poor, the marginalized, the outcasts and the so-called sinners revealed that in authentic love there are no 'insiders' or 'outsiders', no 'we' or 'they'. There is only one family with God as the loving parent and all his children as brothers and sisters. Wherever humans reach out to one another in self-emptying love, God's kingdom becomes a reality, human life becomes meaningful and Jesus is alive!

3. Conclusion

To encounter Jesus means to encounter the meaning of one's own human existence. The human quest for meaning ends in him because he is discovered as the beginning and the end of one's life, the Alpha and the Omega. Jesus reveals the mystery of humans more than the mystery of God because he reveals God's dream for humans and for human society by living God's way of living an authentic human life. The most striking quality of his life was that no one was excluded from his love. His was an all-inclusive, self-emptying love. Jesus revealed that humans can become truly humans by

encountering God as their loving Abba, other humans as brothers and sisters and by relating to nature as manifesting the presence of God. When humans encounter everything and everyone as a theophany they will recognize the value of their lives and they will reach out with self-emptying love to those who suffer various kinds of discrimination and de-humanization. They will stand against the anti-kingdom forces and suffer the consequences of their stand. Indeed, their 'costly discipleship' will bring meaning to their lives.

Notes

1. Cfr. J. Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads,* London: SCM Press, 1978, pp.204-209
2. J.Parappally, "Jesus, the Boundary-Breaker: The Revelation of What it Means to be Human," in A. Amaladass & R. Rocha, (eds.), *Crossing the Borders: Essays in Honour of FrancisX D'Sa on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, Chennai: Satyanilaym Publ., 2001, pp.243-254
3. G.Soares-Prabhu, "The Synoptic Love-Commandment: The Dimensions of Love in the Teaching of Jesus," *Jeevadhara,* 13/74 (1983), pp.85-103.

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A Triune God for our Interdependent World

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Abstract: Jesus has revealed God not as an undifferentiated, isolated monad but as *Tri-Une*, a Trinity whom we know and address as Father-Son-Spirit. Christians often overlook this *Tri-Une-ness* of God and hence the need to retrieve the God image in all its fullness. Theologians today seek to reinterpret the Trinity in consonance with the 'signs of specific times and places' in the field of 'social trinitarianism'. Basic to this approach is the Biblical insight that human beings are created in "the image and likeness of God." And the basic fact of our humanity is that a person achieves personhood only by being-in-relationship with others. The ideal of human relationship is not just dependency on an 'other' – for this could be a ruse for self-seeking – but interdependence with others. True love and genuine relationship between two persons is tested by openness to a 'third'. Thus, there is need to seriously examine the 'third' as the 'first point of community or conflict'.

Down the Christian centuries, theologians have sought to meaningfully evolve a God-image in consonance with Jesus' revelation of God as *Abba*, his Father, He, himself, as Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Counselor who are One. This revealed truth could only be articulated by analogical language and the analogy of human love and relationship gradually began to be used for developing a God image. More than striving to articulate doctrine, the Christian community found in the Tri-Une God a model for concrete Christian living that had its impact on their preaching and sacramental life.

In today's local and global context, rich in diversity and yet plagued by the evils of globalisation, casteism, postmodernism and fundamentalism, the Trinity could serve as a theological representation of interrelatedness – respecting diversity within the quest for unity and equality of all peoples. Besides, the Trinity provides us with an 'alternative paradigm of power' revealing to us the kenotic God who impels us to empty ourselves so that all God's children may enjoy the fullness of life. Finally, the Trinity

also holds a promise for what might be called 'trinitarian trilogue' that could bring together people of all religions and no religion whatsoever, based on the common ground of our interrelatedness that can only be nourished by the love, renunciation, compassion, self-sacrifice and self-giving preached and practised by believers of all religions, in general, and by all peoples of goodwill.

Keywords: Trinity, Triune, Third, Economic Trinity, Kenotic God, God image, God of Jesus Christ, Trinitarianism, Trinitarian Theology, Social Trinitarianism, Contextual Trinitarianism, Interdependence, Community, Personhood, Person-in-relationship, Persons in God, Unity-in-Diversity, Dialogue, Trilogue.

1. Introduction

"Christians are, in their life, almost mere 'monotheists'," wrote Rahner,[1] meaning, most Christians find it difficult to relate to the *tri-unity* of God. Daily we pray to "Our Father", invoke the name of Jesus and seek the Spirit's gifts. And though we begin and end our prayers with Trinitarian invocations, we tend to be speechless when it comes to saying something about the Trinity. It's not surprising, therefore, that the British Council of Churches' document on the Trinity is entitled "The Forgotten Trinity."[2] To compensate for this amnesia of the Trinity, theologians are today reinterpreting the Trinity in language intelligible to Christian communities in diverse contexts. This paper seeks to understand the Trinity in today's context. However, at the outset we note that, while expressing what is known about God through revelation (*Deus revelatus*), the Trinity always remains a mystery (*Deus absconditus*)[3] that, as the Church cautions, "even though communicated in revelation and received by faith, remains covered by the veil of faith itself and shrouded as it were in darkness."[4]

2. The Starting Point of Trinitarian Reflection

We could reflect upon the Trinity using a deductive method launching out from the doctrine of the Trinity in order to see how such a doctrine is meaningful for our context. Conversely, we could also begin with an inductive approach whereby we reflect upon the

contextual realities around us to get insights into the nature of God, who we firmly believe is the Creator of everything and everyone. Created as we are "in the image and likeness of God," it is fitting that we look at the human reality to grasp the mystery of God, even if imperfectly. Thus, in this article we shall move 'from below upwards' to develop a contextual understanding of the Triune God. Schoonenberg succinctly states:

> All our thinking moves from the world to God, and can never move in the opposite direction. Revelation in no way suspends this law. Revelation is the experienced self-communication of God *in* human history, which thereby becomes the history of salvation. With reference to God's Trinity, this law means that the Trinity can never be the point of departure. There is no way that we can draw conclusions from the Trinity to Christ and to the Spirit given to us; only the opposite direction is possible.[5]

Taking context as our starting-point, with an interdisciplinary approach, let's briefly look at the national and global contexts for these must mould our reflections.

3. Contextual Considerations: National Level

From among the many characteristics of the Indian context let us mention just three:

(a) *Diversity*: There is no country in the world with a diversity that can match India's.[6] Many speak of India not as a country but as a continent, for in it coexist peoples of many states (many of these with populations as large as European nation-states), with each state having its own language, culture, dress, regional traits and so on. Moreover, even within a state, there are diverse dialects as expressed by the Gujarati saying: "*Gaon, gaon, boli badlai*," meaning, "Language changes every two or three miles." The fact of India being a 'nation' too is contested not just on the grounds of political theory,[7] but because of the fact that the Indian state encompasses peoples of diverse ethnic groups. Thus, on the one hand, one may argue that India must be proud of its diversity, on the other, diversity has often led to vociferous demands for separate homelands be they

of the Khalistan, Hindutva or Telangana brand, often breeding violence. The dangers of separatism notwithstanding, India has survived remarkably well as the world's biggest democracy for more than half a century with a commendable degree of *unity-in-diversity*.

(b) *Inequality*: India is characterised by gross and glaring inequality among its peoples. In the economic sphere, India can boast of the world's wealthiest citizens – the Mittals and Azim Premji, among others. But, according to the Planning Commission's poverty estimate, there are 30.17 crores of Indians below the poverty line, with 72% of these living in rural areas.[8] Besides economic inequality, there is widespread social inequality. The caste system has been effective since times immemorial. Many theorists have mapped the contours of caste,[9] and some argue that, to some extent, modernity has mitigated its evil effects. However, Béteille holds that, "from whatever angle we view the case, the modern principle of equality was largely absent in traditional Indian society. True enough, equality was acknowledged on the metaphysical plane, but it had hardly any place on the plane of everyday social and political existence."[10] This continues even today. It's not enough to declare, for example, that inequality has been abolished *legally* by the Indian State since, *in practice*, it is the basis upon which society is structured – overtly or covertly – into the so-called 'high castes' and the so-called 'low castes' whose members are often treated worse than animals. With complex issues like reservations to negotiate, caste considerations fragment the polity even further. Worse still, caste is not just something characteristically 'Hindu', for it is practised in religions like Christianity and Sikhism, that professedly treasure 'equality' as an ideal.

(c) *Religiosity:* India has mothered major world religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism – and has been a gracious hostess to 'minorities' like the Muslims and the Christians, whose number often exceeds that in Christian and Muslim nations. Almost every Indian is deeply religious not only in the private space of the home, but also in the public sphere where temples and mosques, *yatras* and *pujas*, as well as religious symbols seek bold expression of Indian religious identities. Indian religiosity is characterised by the following: (i) There is great diversity in religious expression, (ii)

the problem of the 'one and the many' though philosophically important to India's elite scarcely affects the masses, (iii) Indian religions have witnessed prolific exchange of religious beliefs and practices with marked eclectism, (iv) there is nothing like pure *dharma* belonging to some 'sacred sphere' divorced from the so-called 'secular' since *dharma* also influences cultural practices, social structuring, economic exchanges and political alliances, (v) although early Vedic Hinduism advocated a *varna*-based hierarchical ordering of society, Hindu theism, Buddhism, Jainism, the folk cults, *bhakti* and local movements were expressions of anti-hierarchical attitudes that resulted in resistance and protest,[11] (vi) the values of detachment, renunciation, asceticism and compassion are integral to Indian religiosity, and finally, (vii) it is not easy to divide religion and politics in India since religion enters each and every facet of human life and affects them all.

4. Contextual Considerations: Global Level

For the purposes of brevity, we shall, once again, mention three movements or processes that seem to be shaping the global context:

(a) *From Nationalism to Globalism*: We live in the age of globalisation wherein the world has seemingly contracted into a 'global village'. While amazing advancements are seen in the realm of science, planetary exploration and InfoTech leading to a collapse of boundaries between nations and peoples, we confront newer borders among peoples on the basis of cultural and religious identities, economic and social inequalities, political and nationalist aspirations and the like at the global level. Thus, while the G-8 nations and MNC-entrepreneurs of the New World brag about exciting possibilities latent within global processes, many bemoan the loss of the 'person' and 'community' to the tsunami tides of market mechanisms[12] that affect the world's poor,[13] who mostly inhabit the so-called 'Third World' nations of South Asia and Africa. In its dynamics and sweep, globalisation tends to create common eco-socio-politico-cultural systems shared by the world's citizens, and thus, to understand its root repercussions, one must study it from diverse perspectives: economic, political, cultural, societal and religious. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the details

of the same, but we only note here that globalisation has irreversibly altered the way we think, act, live and relate to others.

(b) *From Modernism to Postmodernism*: From the sureties of modernism, today's world seems to float upon the unsure, unsettling foundations of postmodernism. Postmodernism fosters "incredulity towards metanarratives,"[14] and calls for respect to 'difference' in relating to the 'other'.[15] At root, while modernism has been monistic and unitary, postmodernism celebrates plurality and diversity. In repudiating all forms of totality and universalism, postmodernism seems to respect personal freedoms and differences; but it strikes at the root of religious certitude – especially that of a religion like Catholicism – to arrive at any form of universal truth. Moreover, it destroys any hopes of constructing meaningful community since any project of 'community building' itself is regarded as an oppressive, totalitarian enterprise that calls for some commonality, common ethic and responsibility, which are all bane to the postmodern mind. While modernity made an idol of rationality, postmodernism eroded the epistemic foundations of the Enlightenment and argued that language and meaning are entirely self-referential and can never make contact with the world. Understandably, such arguments undermine the very foundations of religion and theology, based as they are on meaning and claims to truth and universality. Thus, postmodernism poses a serious challenge to theology.

(c) *From Religious Hospitality to Interreligious Hostility*: It seemed that, with the rise of knowledge, the proliferation of democracies, the birth of multicultural nation-states and increased recognition of peoples' rights worldwide, the 20th century witnessed greater freedom to practise and propagate one's religion. The religious values of unity, tolerance, hospitality, compassion and service seemed to aid religious communities to respect the 'other' and foster what was good in them. However, recently, the world has witnessed widespread 'religious violence' with analysts arguing that we're heading towards bloody global clashes not between people of different countries but between religions and cultures.[16] Religiosity itself is assuming aggressive hues with Hindutva hostility directed against India's religious minorities, Islamic and Palestinian fanaticism in the Middle East, Christian fundamentalism in Europe and North

America, etc.[17] Furthermore, with advances in military technology, the degree of violence is greater and large sections of humankind are being victimised on religious grounds. Rather than 'binding' human beings globally, as it is supposed to do, religion is 'blinding' human vision and giving rise to frightening forms of violence.

5. Who is a Person? A Phenomenology of Personhood and Relationship

Having made some preliminary contextual observations, we now enter into a discussion of 'person,' to understand the axiom: "There are three 'persons' in one God." The main bone of contention in Trinitarian doctrine down the ages has been the concept of 'person'. Thus, we'll seek to understand personhood and relationship with examples from our context:

Early this year newspapers reported that a 27-year old woman, Rochom P'ngieng, who disappeared in the jungles of Cambodia at the age of eight, suddenly reappeared, and an elderly couple claimed that she was their long lost daughter.[18] Rochom reportedly got lost while herding buffaloes and lived in the jungles without contact with human beings. Journalists who saw Rochom said: "She can't speak any intelligible language," "She's half-human and half-animal," and "She's weird. She sleeps during the day and stays up at night." This was probably due to the fact that Rochom didn't have any personal relationships with human beings for a long time. She lived an independent life, so to say, and it wasn't surprising, therefore, that she could neither communicate in any intelligible language nor live as a normal human being and was described as being "half-animal".

Based on Rochom's case, we could assert that, when a human being enters into various relationships, s/he grows into being a true 'person'. Indeed, every human being is necessarily born from relationship – irrespective of its quality – since the sexual union between man and woman causes the birth of a child. At birth, except for the genetic factors that could lead to differences in the development of different infants, all newborns equally have the potential to grow up to be responsible adults in society or irresponsible, antisocial elements. This is the whole 'nature-nurture

polarity' that depends largely on the relationships that a child has. Psychologists like Erik Erikson (and his 8-stages of development), Harvey, Hunt & Schroder (and their studies on cognitive development) and Lawrence Kohlberg (researching moral development), among others, have tried to explain psychosocial stages of development on the basis of a child's interactions with its family and environment. In India, Sudhir Kakar studied how Indian children are schooled in the Indian – mainly Hindu – context with interactions with family members and the larger landscape of Indian culture.[19] Without entering into details, we observe that, from an infantile stage of dependence, children grow through an adolescent, reactionary stage of independence and finally settle for interdependence, with the realization that we only survive in society through processes of mutuality, reciprocity, sharing and cooperation.

Discussing the indispensable role of relationships for the attainment of true personhood, we could examine the various types of relationships that can be built. One could certainly relate with animals, as in the case of my nephew, James, who was so attached to his dog, Benjy, that boy and beast could scare be separated. This is a one-sided affair since one can hardly say: "Benjy, the dog, loves James." The faithfulness of a dog doesn't stem from love and freedom but from necessity and instinct. Next, there's the possibility of one avoiding human relationships and isolating oneself with a degree of independence. I'm reminded of the lyrics of Simon and Garfunkel's popular 1970's song: "I am a rock, I am an island ... hiding in my room... safe within my womb ... I touch no one and no one touches me." The loner goes on to sing, "I have my books and poetry to protect me," and ends with: "and a rock feels no pain, and an island never cries." It's clear that the songster lives alone, has no friends, suppresses his emotions and 'protects' himself with books and poetry. It's likely, today, that one could protect oneself from entering into any meaningful relationship with others and yet mitigate one's loneliness by surfing TV channels or chatting in cyberspace. Such situations are rare, border on the pathological and do not require much comment.

Relationship requires more reflection in cases involving two or three persons. Earlier, I'd accept a saying like, "Two is company,

three is a crowd," that suggested that relationship between two persons is perfect, whereas 'three' implies imperfection or excess. However, after dabbling in youth and family counselling, I'd rephrase the saying as: "*Two is comfort, three is community or conflict.*" I illustrate this with some examples: The Romeo-Juliet or *deshi* Laila-Majnu love relationships seem etched in popular consciousness with strands of immortality and unto-death faithfulness woven into them. However, there's another equally evergreen Bollywood theme, i.e., the "*hum-tuum-whoh*" or "I-you-s/he" one that attracts attention. Here, a boy falls in love with a girl and the two swear to love each other eternally. Life is heavenly. Suddenly, a 'he' or 'she' – the 'third' – enters into the relationship and creates heartache or heartbreak for one or the other of the friends. This 'third' turns what seemed like heaven into hell. Interestingly, Sartre's famous axiom, "Hell is other people" comes from his play 'No Exit' wherein three unknown and unrelated persons are locked together in a room with no possibility of escape.[20] Each one realizes how unpleasant the company of the 'other' is and how each of them creates hell for the other two – a case of "three is conflict."

Another example could be that of a married couple that enjoys marital bliss for years. The attention and energy of each spouse is exclusively directed towards the 'other'. The birth of a child could initially be a source of great joy, but could also lead to conflict because now, besides giving time and attention to each other, the couple must care for the child. There is the possibility of either spouse giving so much attention to the child as to neglect the 'other' spouse, leading to resentment and conflict. Or, it could also happen that the husband and wife are so lovingly lost in each other as to neglect the child. Seen from anyone's viewpoint – i.e., father or mother or child – it is easier to relate only to just the 'other' rather than to include a 'third'. Yet, it is only when the love of two opens out to a 'third' that true love is tested and 'company' (that can often be self-seeking comfort) blossoms into what could be called 'the first moment of community' with the possibility of either communion (positive) or conflict (negative).

The possibilities as well as the problems inherent in a relationship of 'three' can also be illustrated in the field of human communication.

For example, when two people enter into a conversation, they can either find some common topic to discuss and agree or disagree with each other, or they might choose to remain silent. Suppose another person, a 'third', enters into the conversation, a new situation arises whereby whoever is talking must make sure that the other two are drawn into the conversation. If not, it will happen that only two persons will be involved and the 'third' will be left out. Now, what will happen should a fourth person arrive? The numbers four, five, six or 'many' can be broken up into smaller units of 2s and 3s and are not problematic since, if, for example, a fourth person arrives, there's the possibility of the group of four breaking up into 2 sets of 'couples' and the level of 'comfort' can again be reached.

The reason for my insistence of testing authentic relationships on the basis of 'three' and not 'two' is simple: what often appears to be true love between two persons might not really be so, for, what is initially a close relationship could really turn into a 'closed relationship' unwilling to accommodate the 'third' – be it in the form of children, or other people, or of viewpoints very different from what the 'two' hold as ultimate, or even in the form of an Absolute. The danger of an 'exclusive two' is that each one is likely to so totally depend – or 'over depend' – on the 'other' as to lose one's freedom and personal identity and seek to control and manipulate the 'other' for one's 'needs', even if unconsciously.

Dependency in relationships is, to some extent, natural. We all depend on each other for 'basic needs' like food, shelter and clothing, as well as for 'higher human needs' like acceptance, affection, appreciation and so on.[21] However, there is another nuance to 'being dependent' as in the case of being 'alcohol dependent' or 'drug dependent'. Here, the word 'dependence' has the connotation of "inability to do without ——." In the case of a relationship between two persons, over-dependency can cause a blurring of identities, give rise to unreasonable expectations and needs from the 'other', which, if unmet, can lead to disappointment, disillusionment and depression. Given the risks and problems involved should a person seek to be independent or overly dependent on the 'other', we must admit that the only viable option left for us to relate effectively with the 'other' and with society, at large, is in being 'interdependent'.

To ideally be person-in-relationship is not merely to manage 'two-way affairs', so to say, but to realize and relish the fact that I am interdependent with 'many' – be they persons or other beings. This implies sharing, cooperation, give-and-take and solidarity at every level of existence. Moreover, any relationship with an 'other' person always brings the relationship within the purview of a 'third' of any type. This demands great caring, caution and even critique in relationships. For, e.g., even in interdependent relationships, the question of 'unequal interdependence' or '*de facto* interdependence',[22] arises as when two groups are interdependent, but function on a principle of inequality. We mentioned above that inequality is glaring in India since casteism, feudalism and bonded labour still exist. Here, the dominant group's socio-economic status depends on the loyalty and labour of the subordinate group, and the latter, due to deprivation and subordination, has no choice but to depend on the upper class/caste or master/employer for survival. Such interdependence is unethical since the relationship is based on power, inequality and exploitation. Thus, to foster a human community, interdependence must be ethical and based on respect and reciprocity, sharing and solidarity.

Having argued that relationships of interdependence constitute our personhood, we now trace trajectories that could orient what we could call a 'Trinitarian Theology of Interdependence'. To do this, I offer three propositions – interrelated and each flowing from the previous one – by drawing upon Christian Tradition, as well as the contextual considerations and previous discussions on 'person' and human relationships:

6. Proposition One: The Trinity is a Theological Representation of Interrelatedness

Throughout the Christian era,[23] trinitarian theologizing arose not in order to expound trinitarian doctrine divorced from life, but in order to *re-present* God by means of a '*theological re-presentation*' in the light of the new religious experiences arising from the life-death-resurrection of Jesus, who not only claimed to be God's Son, but whose claims were validated by his resurrection. In the early Christian *re-presentation* of God, we find 'traces of trintarianism'

in three reference-points: (a) God, who Jesus addressed as *Abba*, Father, (b) the Spirit, who Jesus promised would be their Teacher and Counsellor, and (c) Jesus himself, whose self-awareness seemed that of Son claiming a unique relationship to God. There is no well-developed trinitarian theology in the NT,[24] and Paul, for example, can at best be called a 'latent trinitarian' whose main purpose was to proclaim God's salvation through the *experience* of Christ and the Spirit.[25] Note that, on the one hand, the trinitarian passages in the NT are not dogmatic assertions but descriptive theological affirmations; and, on the other, these were being widely used by newborn Christian communities in their sacramental and liturgical practices, uppermost among which was the baptismal liturgy.[26] Common to early trinitarian confessions was the aspect of their *relevance for community life.* This new life was possible only through their 'experience of salvation'[27] in the Spirit and in Jesus who taught them that God is *Abba*,[28] Father – intimate and approachable (Gal 4:4-7; Rom 8:15-6). This relationship of God's nearness and intimacy animated their own teaching and liturgy, as well as their daily life. And soon there emerged discussions about 'person' and the nature of love in reflecting about God.

It was Tertullian [160-220] who first used the word *Trinitas* for Trinity,[29] and *persona* for 'person,' in the sense of an 'actor's mask' or a 'face' to signify a juridical subject (*homo, vir*).[30] The focus here was on individuality and legality. Boethius's [480-524] definition – popular for centuries – "an individual substance of a rational nature," added the dimension of rationality.[31] Much later, Aquinas [1125-74] held that 'person', with regard to God, signified a 'subsistent relation' in the inner life of God.[32] And, closer to our day and supporting Aquinas, Rahner substituted 'person' with "distinct manner of subsisting."[33] All these theologians were employing philosophical terms familiar to people of their contexts;[34] yet, rather than capture the essence of personhood and relationship, their focus seems more individualistic, legalistic and rationalistic.

Alongside the philosophical reflections on 'person', Trinitarian theology was being articulated by analogies;[35] for, truly "we have no choice whatever but to speak of God in terms derived from our experience of creaturely reality – that is, by analogy."[36] And, in

keeping with Jesus' use of imagery to speak about God, the most widely accepted analogy for traditional speech about God was drawn from the nature of love. Augustine [354-430] first used 'relationship' and the analogy of love to explain how the divine substance exists in the three Persons: the Father being lover (*amans*), the Son being the beloved (*quod amatur*) and the Spirit being the mutual love (*amor*) passing between the Father and the Son, proceeding from both, and uniting the three divine 'persons'.[37] Later, Richard of St. Victor [d.c.1173] further developed the analogy of love in terms of a movement from self-love (Father) to mutual love (Father-and-Son) and to shared love (Father-Son-Spirit).[38] However, while Augustine started from nature and the human person being created in the *imago Dei*, the "image and likeness of God," Richard began from 'persons' and analysed love in human relationships. For both, love was not some abstract philosophical notion, but a concrete attribute that fostered interpersonal relations.

If, like Augustine, we begin with the basic Biblical insight that we are created in the "image and likeness of God," then, the basic fact of human interrelatedness must necessarily tell us something about God. Note that we earlier only discussed about the interrelatedness of human beings. But, quantum theory today stresses an even deeper underlying fact that the cosmos comprises webs of interrelatedness,[39] and that all natural phenomena are intimately and inseparably connected to each other.[40] Indeed, quantum theologians, today, find that recent research gives rich insights into trinitarian theology:

> God is first and foremost a propensity and power for relatedness, and the divine imprint is nowhere more apparent than in nature's own fundamental desire (exemplified in the quarks) to relate – interdependently and interconnectedly. The earthly, the human and the divine are in harmony in their fundamental natures, in their common propensity to relate and to enjoy interdependent coexistence.[41]

Thus, from God's created world and activity (the *oikos*, economy) we get a glimpse into the nature of God (*ontos*, divine immanence): that in God there is interrelatedness. Yet, it is not enough to assert that God is a "propensity and power," for, Christian revelation

discloses the *personal nature* of the Divine expressed by the relationship Father-Son-Spirit. Thus we state: "Trinity is a theological re-presentation of interrelatedness."

There is a great difference when we say, "human beings are interrelated" and "The Triune God – Father-Son-Spirit – is interrelated." In the former case, we refer to the *capacity* or *potentiality* to enter into relationships and thereby to develop 'personality', which is the sum total of the moral, attitudinal and behavioural qualities one imbibes and possesses. Here, as we earlier discussed, the more and better relationships that one '*has*', the more and better are one's chances of growth and actualizing one's personhood into a balanced personality.[42] In this sense, when we speak of a person being relational, we mean that s/he *has* relationships or is relational in a secondary sense. But, when we say 'God is relational' and speak of 'person' in God, we assert that being relational belongs to the *essence* or *nature* of God.[43] While we *have* relations, God *is* the relations that God has.[44] Or, in other words, for God, '*to be*' and '*to be in relation*' is one and the same thing. Trinity thus tells us about the fullness of God, eternally in *Tri-Une* communion,[45] with the love and goodness of each 'person' flowing out to the other two and with each 'person' dwelling in the other two:[46] a Divine Interdependence.

Trinitarian interrelatedness implies that God is a 'community of inclusion' – always One, a unity; but this unity is a *Tri-Une*-ness that always includes and reconciles the Three. While unity is maintained, the distinction between persons is also retained with perfect equality, transparency and reciprocity. Thus, trinitarian interrelationship challenges our context at three levels: [a] it is a critique to ideologies and structures built on bases of inequality and duality like casteism (high-low), patriarchy (man-woman) and racism (white-black); [b] it condemns the 'communities of exclusion' created by processes of globalisation that maim and marginalize the world's poor, and, [c] it challenges the selfish individualism and narcissism of ideologies like postmodernism and secularism that surreptitiously undermine the foundations of family and community.

7. Proposition Two: The Trinity Provides an Alternative Paradigm of Power

We observed earlier that religion today is being abused to subserve the interests of fundamentalist groups, worldwide. These groups tap the 'power of religion' to construct a 'religion of power' that seeks to subjugate and alienate others. This they do by evolving and manipulating religious symbols thereby unleashing what Bourdieu terms 'symbolic violence'.[47] Likewise, Christian thinkers too have submitted to the authoritarianism of emperors rather than authoritatively preach the salvific message of Jesus. Eusebius of Caesarea [c.265-339], for example, developed the idea that the Kingdom of God was replicated on earth as 'image' in Constantine's empire. As a result, Constantine was regarded as an image of *Logos*-Christ-King, reproducing the image of God, the Father,[48] on earth. Eusebius set the Church so firmly in the Christian empire that it became difficult to distinguish the two. Later, though he did not identify the City of God with the earthly city besieged by evil, his theology became a 'political Augustinianism' that inspired a political monotheism.[49] Here, the conflation of religion and politics neither respected the mystery of the Triune God nor promoted the life of the community.

After stressing that the Trinity is a theological representation of interrelatedness, we go further by stating that this interrelatedness will be fostered only if, in consonance with the true logic of love, there is not self-seeking but self-donation. In Jesus, this self-donation reaches its zenith in his *kenosis* or self-emptying (Phil 2:5-11), most forcefully manifest in his death, which is neither merely a Christological nor a Pneumatological event, but a deeply Trinitarian one. In Jesus' passion, death and resurrection, we see how the Tri-Une God is not the apathetic, unaffected God of Greek philosophy, but the involved, Crucified God who becomes "a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles," yet in whom the Christian community experiences the "power and wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:23-5). The *kenosis* in the Trinity can be seen right from the first moment of the Incarnation with God moving out of Godself, so to say, to assume human form. God's activity unfolds at the margins and among the marginalised of Bethlehem, and reaches its climax at Calvary,

"outside the camp" (Heb 13:11-3), which is the space beyond the religious world of Law and the cult,[50] the space where the defiled victims of sacrifice are burned.[51] Here, God's perfect love is revealed in self-sacrifice.

Jesus' passion is his Father's willed action. It is a trinitarian act since: first, Jesus does not escape his passion but surrenders to his Father's will; second, the Father silently suffers through the passion and refuses to free Jesus from the cross, and third, from the core of this act of sacrificial love there is the offering "through the eternal Spirit" (Heb 9:14) and the outpouring of the Spirit (Jn 19:34).[52] The historical abandonment and the eschatological surrender coincide on the cross as "unity in separation and separation in unity."[53] In the cross, Father and Son are totally separated by Jesus' abandonment, and yet, intimately united in surrender. It is a deeply trinitarian event because, between the Father who forsakes and the Son who is forsaken, between the loving Father and the beloved Son, there proceeds the sacrifice itself, the Spirit, who justifies the ungodly, rescues the forsaken, forgives and reconciles the sinner, and, eventually, vindicates the victim and raises the dead. Besides supported by Scripture,[54] this dynamic of trinitarian action-passion-restoration reveals the power of the kenotic God whose love is not manifest, so to say, as 'couple love' between Father-Son or Son-Spirit or Father-Spirit, but as triune communitarian self-surrender, which is the ultimate act of faith disclosing the supreme, paradoxical power of love in apparent powerlessness.

Traditionally, the so-called 'great' religions speak about the Divine in terms of fullness – be it Hinduism's *purnam* or Christianity's *pleroma*,[55] the latter having its roots in Aristotle's 'unmoved mover' developed by Aquinas for whom God was *Actus Purus* (pure act).[56] But, applying a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' to constructions of fullness that are cognitive conceptions, often esoteric and alienating, the Trinity also provides an alternative paradigm of power with a focus on kenosis. Besides being more amenable to postmodern thought, a kenotic God more importantly becomes a source of inspiration and strength for India's crucified masses who see in Christ's kenosis a God in suffering solidarity with them. Simultaneously, the kenotic God also critiques and condemns those who appropriate power for themselves and exploit and enslave others

be it in the realm of politics or economics or religion, or be they individuals, MNCs or G-8 nations.

8. Proposition Three: The Trinity as Model of Humanistic and Interreligious Trilogue

God's kenosis as seen in trinitarian light has important implications not merely for 'dialogue' as commonly understood, but also for what we shall term 'trilogue'. Whether in general terms,[57] or as literary form,[58] or in a more technical sense as used in the academy by the disciplines,[59] 'dialogue' refers to an exchange between two subjects or communities, most commonly identified by the binary *I-Thou*,[60] or *Self-Other*. Even if, at times, more than two persons/parties are involved in this exchange, the 'more-than-two' factor is again either identified as *Thou-Other* or simply as 'plural' or 'many'. Barring Homi Bhabha and Martin Buber who speak of *thirdspace* or *Third* as *hybridity* or some Absolute, respectively, *Thirdness* is not taken seriously. However, in our reflection on human relationship, we noted that the 'third' is the first point of community or conflict. Moreover, many of the world's religions have trinitarian conceptions of the Divine like Hinduism's *Trimurti* (Brahma-Vishnu-Siva) or *Saccidânanda* or Buddhism's *Trikâya* (*dharmakâya-nirmanakâya-sambhogakâya*) or the Zoroastrian trio of Zurvan, the mighty god of time, and his two sons, Ahriman (active force) and Ormazd (passive force) and so on. The three, thus, seems to be one of the archetypes of religious consciousness, which calls for further reflection that is not possible within the confines of this article.

To explain 'trilogue' I use the words of the French Marxian thinker, Lefebvre, who writes: "Triadic analysis distinguishes itself from dual analysis just as much as from banal analysis. It doesn't lead to a *synthesis* in accordance with the Hegelian schema ... [it] links three terms that it leaves distinct, without fusing them in a *synthesis* (which would be the third term)."[61] Thus, while the aim of dialogue normally seems to be some *synthesis* or *consensus*,[62] *trilogue* maintains a *three-one tension* and *always* takes the two towards the 'three', ever uniting, yet, retaining their individual identities. Thus, in the interrelatedness of any two entities – in this case two 'religions' – trilogue will demand not only making space

for the 'other' but also for a 'third'. We are accustomed to simplify realities in terms of simple binaries: black-white, high-low, good-bad and so on. The challenge of Trinitarianism is to view reality neither solely in terms of binaries (which would be too simplistic) nor just in terms of pluralism (which could run the risk of not taking difference seriously) but as 'three-dimensional'. This always involves a tension.

In the meeting of religions, Trinitarian trilogue will seek to bridge the apparent tension between the 'prophetic religions' or the 'word religions' (like Judaism and Islam) with a strong focus on the One, and the 'mystic religions' (Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism) accommodative of the Many.[63] Moreover, there is the possibility of creating space for humanistic, even atheistic, ideologies, since at the heart of trinitarian theology is kenosis or what has been called 'weak ontology of the divine'.[64] This could also be the starting-point for interfaith encounters, especially with religions like Buddhism:

> If we dare to continue to search for parallels with Buddhism, it seems to me that we should start by comparing it with Emptiness or, better still, with the "Great Death" that is necessary in Buddhism to awaken persons to the "Great Life." The *kenosis* of God in Christianity, God's self-emptying at the cross, has to stand at the center of interreligious dialogue. The transcendence of God, who transcends our religions, is revealed for Christians more in suffering than in resurrection ..... Emptiness in Zen may be a parallel to the *kenosis* of God in consequence of God's love in Christianity. However, they are not identical, because God's love in Christianity is a love that manifested itself in history, specifically in the cross. Precisely because it is such self-emptying love, it has to deny any claim of absoluteness and superiority of one religion over another.[65]

Much of 'religious terrorism', today, is aimed at gaining power of various types.[66] But, as we've seen, religions also value detachment, renunciation and compassion. While stressing this commonality of values, Trinitarian trilogue will strive to respect and reaffirm differences. Thus, whether one promotes peace and life on

account of *shûnyatâ* and compassion of Buddhism,[67] or moved by kenotic Trinitarian love, or impelled by the *karuna* (mercy) or *tyaga* (sacrifice) enjoined by Hinduism, or opted for a *weak ontology*[68] to combat the evils of secularization and so on, we would all be striving in the same direction rather than claiming absoluteness and superiority over the others. Trilogue will ever make us aware that beyond one's own view, there is not only an 'other' viewpoint, but also a 'third' – ever present on the horizons that call for the building of community.

9. Conclusion

Today, scientists propose that the whole cosmos is interconnected. Split down to its minutest subatomic particles called 'quarks', matter can be seen and studied only in groupings of twos and threes, thereby proving that the capacity to relate is at the very heart of Nature.[69] Scientific theories apart, we've tried to examine the 'person' and the fact that personhood is realised only when the human potentiality to relate with others is actualised in the building of human relationships. We looked at relationships of twos and threes and tried to stress that it is only when the love between two persons is open to some 'third,' that such love is genuine and fosters growth. From our reflections on the context and human interrelatedness, we posited three propositions that are tentative and yet provide pointers for further theologizing along Trinitarian lines. Our arguments hinge around the power of love manifested not by 'other-domination' but through 'self-donation' or kenosis or *shûnyatâ* or *karuna* or *tyaga*, which is the condition for the possibility of building up relationships between individuals, religions and nations, at large. Therein lies our future.

More than a century ago Fedorov held that "The Trinity is our social programme."[70] The past fifty years, in particular, have seen 'social Trinitarianism' being developed with pregnant possibilities for fostering life in community. If God created us in the divine image and likeness, then, we can neither be 'mere monotheists' nor 'dualists' for this would amount to reductionism and a refusal to recognize the God of Jesus Christ revealed in history. Only when we believe in, worship, and orient all life towards the Triune God do we become fully Christian, truly Indian, deeply human – after

all, these are not-one, not-three, but tri-une. That is what the kenotic God *is*. And intends us to be.

Notes

1. Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, London: Burns and Oates, 1986, p. 10.
2. See *The Forgotten Trinity: Report of the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today*, London: British Council of Churches, Inter-Church House, 1989.
3. David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*, New York: Seabury Press, 1975, p. 183, points out the dipolar nature of God: "a concrete pole which is eminently social and temporal, an ever-changing, ever-affecting, ever-being-affected actuality, and an abstract pole which is well-defined – if 'concretely misplaced' – by traditional Western reflection upon the metaphysical attributes of the Wholly Absolute One."
4. J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 6th ed., New York: Alba House, 1996, nn. 131-2.
5. P.J.A.M. Schoonenberg, "Trinity – The consummated covenant: Theses on the doctrine of the trinitarian God," *Studies in Religion* 5/2 (1975-6), p. 111.
6. See, for instance, André Béteille, "Indian's Heritage of Diversity," in *Antinomies of Society: Essays on Ideologies & Institutions*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 198-204; also M.S. Gore, Unity in Diversity: The Indian Experience in Nation-Building, Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2002.
7. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York: Verso, 1996, questions the very possibility of 'nation' and terms these as 'imagined communities'.
8. See *The Hindustan Times*, Thursday, March 22, 2007, p. 8.
9. See, for instance, M.N. Srinivas, *The Dominant Caste and Other Essays*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987; Louis Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988; Nicholas Dirks, Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India, Delhi: Permanent Black & New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002; and Steven M. Parish, Hierarchy and its Discontents: Culture and the Politics of Consciousness in Caste Society; Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, among others, for good analyses of the dynamics of the caste system.

10. Béteille, Ibid., p. 203.

11. See Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, vol. 1, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1966, pp. 67-9, 214-6, 308-13.

12. Noam Chomsky, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order,* Delhi: Madhyam Books, 1999.

13. See Michel Chossudovsky, *The Globalisation of Poverty: Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms,* Goa: The Other India Press and New Delhi Madhyam Books & Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, 1997; also Michael Amaladoss, ed., Globalization and Its Victims: As Seen By Its Victims, Delhi: Vidyajyoti & ISPCK, 1999; also Jon Sobrino and Felix Wilfred, eds, "Globalization and Its Victims," Concilium 5 (2001), for analyses on the effects of globalisation on the world's poor.

14. See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p. xxiv.

15. See Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978. Derrida does not define 'difference' (French, '*différance*'); but, in Margins of Philosophy, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, p. 11, explains: "Différance' is the non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences."

16. See, for instance, Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order,* New Delhi: Viking and Penguin Books, 1996, who hypothesizes that in the near future the world will increasingly be polarised on the basis of religio-cultural configurations.

17. See Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, for insightful analyses of the various cases of religious violence.

18. This news item appeared in *The Hindu*, Friday, January 19, 2007.

19. See Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980.

20. See Jean Paul Sartre, No Exit and Three Other Plays, New York: Random House, 1955.

21. One can think here of Abraham Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' with 'physiological needs' at the base of the pyramid and the 'self-actualization needs' at the top, or even of Henry Murray's list of 20 human needs.

22. Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Bandra, Mumbai: St. Paul Publications, 1988, 43-6, n. 26, distinguishes between '*de facto* interdependence' and 'moral interdependence'.

23. See, for e.g., Bertrand de Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, Massachusetts: St Bede's Publications, 1981; also Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972, for concise histories of Trinitarian theology.

24. It can be said that: "The NT contains no doctrine of the Trinity;" see, Donald H. Juel, "The Trinity and the New Testament," *Theology Today* 54 (1997), p. 313; also, Fortman, ibid., p. 32.

25. See Gordon D. Fee, "Paul and the Trinity: The Experience of Christ and the Spirit for Paul's Understanding of God," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium*, ed. S. T. Davis et al., New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 49-72, for details. In brief, Fee argues that Paul has an 'economic trinitarian' idea of God, and perhaps an 'ontological trinitarian' one, as well, although its philosophical and theological nuances are unclear to theologians.

26. This emerges from the arguments of de Margerie, ibid., pp. 39-44. He argues that the presence of Mt 28:16ff in Scripture and its incorporation into the baptismal liturgy of the early Church indicates the significance of the Trinity for the community. He also discusses other NT trinitarian texts

27. Fee, "Paul and the Trinity," ibid., p. 52, stresses that Pauline Trinitarianism emerges out of Paul's 'experience' of 'salvation'. Footnote 9 says that Paul's God/Christ/Spirit triad is changed to God/Spirit/Son in Gal 4:6.

28. See Luis M. Bermejo, *Abba, My Dad!* Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2003, for a good scriptural and systematic exposition of God as Abba of Jesus and Abba of all human beings.

29. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978, p. 113.

30. See Fortman, p. 113, for nuances of what Tertullian meant.

31. Ibid., p. 163. What Boethius stressed about 'person' was substantiality, intellectuality & incommunicability.

32. In *Summa Theologica*, Ia.29. Note that Aquinas begins with divine internal relations rather than human.

33. Rahner, Ibid., p. 113.

34. Joseph T. Lienhard, "Ousia and Hypostasis: The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of 'One Hypostasis'," in *The Trinity*, ed. S.T. Davis et al., p. 103, holds that such terms are "crafted on the workbench of theologians, and even for them, it is more of a convenient abbreviation than the last word that might be uttered."

35. Theological language is always metaphorical, symbolic and analogical. Though 'analogy' imputes 'likeness' it also always implies 'unlikeness'; hence, never exhausts the truth contained in reality-in-itself.

36. See William Hasker, "Tri-unity," *Journal of Religion* 50/1 (1974), pp. 1-32, who develops this thesis. The quote is from p. 2; see also John A. Thurmer, "The Analogy of the Trinity," Scottish Journal of Theology 34/6 (1981), pp. 509-15.

37. See his De Trinitate, book IX, especially ch. 8, for this point. See also J.N.D. Kelly, ibid., pp. 276-9, and Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, New York: Herder, 1970, pp. 232-4, for details on Augustine's analogies

38. For further details on the Trinitarian theology of Richard St. Victor, see Fortman, 191-4 and Ewert H. Cousins, "A Theology of Interpersonal Relations," Thought 45 (1970), pp. 56-82.

39. See, for instance, Paul Davies, *The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World*, New York: Touchstone Books, 1992, who argues for the existence of God on the basis of the world of nature.

40. See, for instance, Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, London: Flamingo, 1991; esp. chs 10 & 11.

41. Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Quantum Theology*, New York: Crossroad, 1998, pp. 82-3.

42. See Harriet A. Harris, "Should We Say that Personhood is Relational?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51/1 (1998), pp. 214-35, for an insightful analysis of the questions of 'person', 'personhood' and 'relation'.

43. See E. Schillebeeckx and B. Iersel, eds., "A Personal God?" Concilium (1977), for diverse aspects of God as person.

44. See Nicholas Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God: A Reading of the Apostles' Creed*, Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 1992, p. 32.

45. Abhishiktânanda, Saccidânanda: *A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1974, p. 98, asserts: "God's life is indeed Communion; Being is essentially Communion." Hence, he coins the word samsat, meaning, 'being-with' for the divine existence.

46. Theologians have tried to express this in various ways. In the East, John of Damascus [675-749] first used the word perichoresis (Greek, for co-penetration or co-inherence) to describe the relationship between the three divine persons: Father, Son and Spirit. Its Latin equivalents, circuminsessio or circumcessio used by Thomas Aquinas [1125-74] and Bonaventure [1221-74], respectively, convey the same meaning.

47. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991. 'Symbolic violence' is a term used by Bourdieu and quoted by Joe Painter, "Pierre Bourdieu," in Thinking Space," ed. M. Crang and N. Thrift, London and New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 246.

48. See Remi Brague, "On the Christian Model of Unity: the Trinity," *Communio International Catholic Review* 10 (Summer 1983), p. 153.

49. See Yves Congar, "Classical Political Monotheism and the Trinity." God as Father? Concilium (March 1981), pp. 33-5; also Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993, pp. 194-7.

50. Dom Aelred Cody, "Hebrews," in *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. R.C. Fuller et al.,, London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1969, p. 1238, interprets this as the world outside of cultic religion.

51. Myles M. Bourke, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R. E. Brown et al., Bangalore: Theological Publications of India, 1968, p. 402, sees this as referring to the Day of Atonement where the flesh of the victims was burned outside the camp. In Jesus' case, he was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem, the holy city.

52. This passage speaks about "blood and water" flowing out of Jesus' pierced side. In John's gospel, water is the sign of the Holy Spirit (see 3:5; 4:10,14; 7:38-9). This symbolizes Jesus giving up the Spirit

53. Jürgen Moltmann, "The Crucified God: A Trinitarian Theology of the Cross," *Interpretation* 26/3 (1972), p. 293.

54. There are many Scriptural passages that support this interpretation; for instance, "God so loved the world that he gave [up] his only Son" (Jn 3:16). Paul, likewise, alludes to its eschatological dimension: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?" (Rom 8:31). God abandons his son in the darkness of sin, evil and death. Christ is "made to be sin" (2 Cor 5:21) and he became "a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). In the cross, not only does the Father give up the Son, but the Son also gives himself: "[T]he Son of God, [who] loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20)

55. Plerosis and pleroma (Greek, meaning 'plenitude') refer to the "fullness of God" and the full measure of Christ's divinity (Col 1:19, 2:9). It is the opposite of kenosis or kenoma (Greek, meaning 'emptiness').

56. Earl Muller, "Real Relations and the Divine: Issues in Thomas's Understanding of God's Relation to the World," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995), pp. 673-95, addresses issues raised about Aquinas's thought.

57. 'Dialogue' (Greek, dialogos, meaning 'through word') commonly refers to a conversation carried on between two or more persons or to a verbal interchange of thought between them.

58. As literary form it is "a carefully organised exposition, by means of invented conversation, or contrasting philosophical or intellectual attitudes." See *New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.v. "Dialogue."

59. See, for instance, Sundar Sarukkai, "The 'Other' in Anthropology and Philosophy," *Economic and Political Weekly* 32 (June 14, 1997), pp. 1406-9.

60. The I-Thou is the term popularised by French philosopher Martin Buber in a book by the same name.

61. See his *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, London & New York: Continuum, 2004, p. 12.

62. One will immediately think of Hegel's 'synthesis' and John Rawls's 'overlapping consensus', respectively. While not excluding them, our trialectic thinking transcends these two concepts.

63. This thinking is in line with Raimundo Panikkar, *The Trinity and World Religions: Icon-Person-Mystery,* Bangalore: The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1970; also see his "Toward an Ecumenical Theandric Spirituality," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 5/3 (Summer 1968), pp. 507-34.

64. This is a term coined by Gianni Vattimo, *Belief,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, pp. 20-68, who develops the idea of kenosis within a secularist and atheistic context.

65. Sybille Fritsch-Oppermann, "Trikâya and Trinity: Reflecting Some Aspects of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 30/2 (Spring 1993), pp. 258-9.66 See Juergensmeyer, ibid., pp. 187-95, for a good analysis on the power sought by the perpetrators of such violence. 67 Donald W. Mitchell, Spirituality and Emptiness: The Dynamics of Spiritual Life in Buddhism and Christianity, New York: Paulist Press, 1991, chs. 1,3,4 develop creation, redemption and sanctification as the kenosis of the Father, Son, Sprit, respectively, and see points of convergence between Christianity's kenosis and Buddhism's shûnyatâ.

68. Vattimo, ibid., 65, sees the 'weak ontology' of kenosis as an antidote to secularisation of the present.

69. O'Murchu, ibid., 79.

70. Nikoloi Federov [1829-1903] was a Russian Orthodox philosopher and theologian.

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The Parable of the Good Samaritan: The Love Commandment and the Convergence of Religions

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Abstract: Jesus' teaching that the praxis of love of neighbour is the means to inherit eternal life therefore is of interest to all, irrespective of their religious or ideological backgrounds, since it deals with a value that is shared universally. So the author takes up the parable of the Good Samaritan and develops a perspective that affirms this illustration of love of neighbour as a point of convergence of religions, given the presence of and emphasis on love of neighbour in all religions. Then the author traces the love commandment in other religions. The author concludes that the followers of different religions do not have to give up or ignore the differences which exist among them. It is possible that agreeing and working together on this common point of convergence of the love commandments might bring down unwarranted prejudices, promote mutual respect and a sense of camaraderie among them. It can also open up new avenues of understanding and promote closeness on an ongoing basis, thus contributing positively to the climate of dialogue and co-operation. Thus the love commandments have a great potential to promote convergence in the encounter of religions.

Keywords: Love commandment, dialogue of religions, neighbour, parable of the Good Samaritan, universal love commandment.

Introduction

The example story of the Good Samaritan is one of the most fascinating parables of Jesus and is found only in the gospel of Luke. In the gospel context it illustrates love of neighbour, one of the two love commandments, love of God and love of neighbour, which Jesus confirms as the means for inheriting eternal life. After confirming these as means to inherit eternal life Jesus proceeds to give this illustration of love of neighbour in tackling the questioner's query

as to who his neighbour is. In the process the illustration shows rather how to be a neighbour, with a challenge to the questioner to act like the Samaritan, the hero of the parable, and thus inherit eternal life.

As the question about the means for eternal life is a burning one engaging all religions in some way, the parable is of interest to all. It concerns all also because love of neighbour as a maxim or commandment is present in some form in all religions as one of the core demands/principles of religious and/or ethical life. Jesus' teaching that the praxis of love of neighbour is the means to inherit eternal life therefore is of interest to all, irrespective of their religious or ideological backgrounds, since it deals with a value that is shared universally. We shall in the following treatment focus on this parable and develop a perspective that affirms this illustration of love of neighbour as a point of convergence of religions, given the presence of and emphasis on love of neighbour in all religions.

1. The Lukan Love Commandments

The parable of the Good Samaritan is part of the discussion in Luke's gospel on the love commandments and the means to inherit eternal life.[1] In Luke the quotations of Deut 6,5 and Lev 19,18 which go to make up the Synoptic love commandments (Mk 12,28-34 + par) and initiate the discussion on them are found in 10,27. The discussion on them not only forms part of the Travel Narrative (9,51-18,14), thus figuring much before the account of the Jerusalem ministry where it is found in Mark and Matthew, but also flows into the example story of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10,29-37), the illustration of love of neighbour, the second love commandment, and then into its illustrative counterpart, that of the first love commandment, the episode of Martha and Mary (10,38-42)[2].

a. The Lukan Development of the Love Commandments and its Literary Structure

Thus the Lukan discussion of the love commandments itself, compared to that of Mark and Matthew, is extensive and as just hinted at actually occupies the whole of Ch 10,25-42. Its first unit, Lk 10, 25-28, deals with the definition of the means to attain eternal

life. But in the two units that follow the two love commandments receive illustrative treatments in reverse order, that is, chiastically. Thus Luke 10,29-37, which is the example story of the Good Samaritan, exemplifies the second love commandment, wherein the scope of love of neighbour, is radically extended to embrace all, including a national enemy, and in 10,38-42, the episode of Martha and Mary, the content of love of God, the first love commandment, is concretized as engagement with Jesus and his teaching[3]. Both illustrations are balanced in characteristically Lukan style between the story of a man and that of a woman. Both contain a contrast between a "hero" or "villain" or "villains". The stories qualify each other and complement each other. Luke also parallels 10,25-28 and 10,29-35 by using the same formal structure for both. In each case we are given (1) a reason for the lawyer's question; (2) the lawyer's question; (3) a counter question by Jesus; (4) the lawyer's answer; and (5) Jesus' concluding challenge.[4]

Thus the discussion clarifies that the praxis of these commandments taken together in their interdependence and gradation are the means to inherit eternal life- that too as interpreted by Jesus and is intended by the context. Hence it can be said that to inherit eternal life one must fulfil these commandments as taught by Jesus (in the discipleship of Jesus) in the New Testament[5].

Thus in this discussion Luke takes the commandments of love of God and love of neighbour as an adequate summary of the Jewish Law and a valid statement of what God requires as conditions for inheriting eternal life (vv 25-28). But the evangelist also wants us to see that Jesus extends the scope of love of neighbour to include all, even national enemies, that is, beyond every traditionally accepted limit (vv 29-37), and he would have us link the love of God with attachment to Jesus' own person and teaching (vv 38-42).[6]

b. Practical Thrust

The Lukan version of the love commandment operates on the practical plane. This is clear from the fact that the citations of the love commandments are made in connection with the question regarding the means to inherit eternal life (10,25). From the literary point of view this practical orientation is stressed by the inclusion

created around the episode with the terms "***poiein***", "to do", and the "*zo*" root ("life/live") occurring in v25, the opening verse, and repeated at the end of v28. This will be repeated in v37 at the end of the linked parable, where its imperative form "***poiei***", "do" recurs as in v28.[7] By this inclusion Luke stresses that to attain eternal life it is important to love besides God one's neighbour (v28), which is nothing other than to practise compassion (v37a) as the Samaritan has done (cf. v37b: "***poiei omoios***")

c. Functional Togetherness and Mutuality of the Love Commandments

In Luke's formulation the two commandments are introduced with the same legal imperative "***agapeseis***", "you shall love" and are joined together with a coordinating "***kai***", "and" without the repetition of the verb "***agapeseis***". By choosing this formulation the evangelist emphasizes their closeness to each other and their inseparability. This is an important thematic in the Lukan development which is also reflected in the rest of the gospel and Acts. As Kiilunen points out, the functional togetherness and mutuality of the love commandments is something which Luke has asserted repeatedly in his gospel. Thus in 10,29-37, for instance, persons who "*ex officio*" represent God's love or should represent it, fail in their love of God in reality because they overlook love of neighbour (cf. 10,31-32). In the Zachaeus episode, which forms part of the special material of Luke, Zachaeus exhibits love of God in his attitude to Jesus (19,3-6) as well as love of neighbour (v8) where the financially testified "love of neighbour" (v8) in all probability comes from Luke's redaction. Kiilunen in fact thinks that the whole episode (Lk 19,1-10) must be seen as a demonstration of genuine conversion in the sense of the praxis of the double commandment, as the simultaneous turning to God and neighbour. The interconnection of these is also stressed in the Acts, Luke's second volume. Thus the way these two aspects combine for Luke is seen in the example of Cornelius who is not only a "God fearer" but also gives alms (Act 10,1-2). We have here a Gentile Roman characterized in the perspective of Luke 10,27.[8] Similarly, in Lk 7,36-50 love of God and love of neighbour combine in a deed of love done to Jesus (v38). This act of the sinful woman is interpreted as an expression

of love of God, of her conversion, and the woman has her sins forgiven because of it (7,47). It is also significant that in all four cases love of neighbour is expressed, in one way or another, as financial sacrifice.[9]

d. The Neighbour Defined from the Perspective of the One in Need

A most important preoccupation of the Lukan development of the love commandments is the clarification of the idea of "neighbour" and its extension. This happens in the example story (10,29-37) of the Good Samaritan.

In this illustration of love of neighbour the neighbour, is clearly defined from the perspective of the victim, who is in dire need. From a victim's perspective, if the situation is desperate enough, even a despised Samaritan is a welcome neighbour.[10] In clarifying this, Luke at one and the same time both extends and universalizes the idea of the neighbour. For Luke although the action of the Samaritan is commendable in itself, it has broader implications. It makes it self-evident that from the perspective of the desperate victim "the Law's demand for love of neighbour should bridge to any needy human being; that its practice should not be restricted to a closed community, even if that closed community is the community of the divine covenant."[11] It thus both extends and universalizes the idea of the neighbour. In this context the wording of 10,37 underlines the main point of the parable namely, that looking at it from the point of view of the desperately needy, the practice of mercy makes the passer-by into a neighbour".[12]

Concurring with this, Schürmann shows how looking at the question from the point of view of the one in need involves a radical transformation of the Old Testament idea of neighbour. He says:

> The question should not be raised from "my" standpoint (v29: "my neighbour") but must be raised from the standpoint of the one in need before me. The one in need makes me into his "neighbour", transforms me. As a result the concept of "neighbour" is at one and the same time de-limited, transformed and de-theorized out of the Old Testament and Jewish conceptions.[13]

e. Stress on "Doing" and the Detailing of the Giving of Help

Within this perspective the doing of the love commandments is repeatedly underlined in the narrative,[14] which must be seen as one of its major characteristics. This consistent stress on "doing" makes the doing of compassion indispensable for the attainment of eternal life (v36). One can even speak of the indirect presence of a warning in the context because of the importance and urgency of this motif, which is emphasized with a double demand for action and practice (cf. 10,28.37).

The theme of doing is emphasized also by the detailed description of the giving of help. Thus the Samaritan on seeing the helpless victim is moved with compassion. He goes to him and binds up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. He then sets him on his own beast and brings him to an inn and takes care of him. The next day he takes out two denarii and gives them to the innkeeper saying, "Take care of him and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back" (Lk 10,34-35). In this connection the Samaritan's generous financial spending for the man's care is especially striking and is in keeping with Jesus' teaching in Lk 12,33. Luke here teaches the right use of possessions, an important Lukan motif, (cf. Lk 8,2-3;16,9-13;19,8; Acts 20,40-47), and in particular demonstrates how the concrete doing of the commandment, the active love of neighbour, looks like and how it expresses itself as ***"splagchnisthenai"***, "showing of compassion" (v33) and as ***"to eleos poiein"***, "doing of mercy".[15] All these emphases associated with the doing of the love commandment depict its newness in Jesus' kingdom proclamation and are essentially and indispensably linked to the crucial question of the means of attaining eternal life.

f. The Dynamics of the Parable for its universal Application

The dynamics of the parable that the neighbour is defined from the point of view of the victim is crucial. So too is the insight that one who acts as a member of the people of God should is a neighbour. The victim transforms one into a neighbour. If one acts as a member of the people of God should in relation to the victim that person is

such a neighbour. He is a member of God's people who fulfils the commandment to love the neighbour (Lev 19,18) and he inherits eternal life. These insights universalize the praxis of this commandment and transform the praxis of the commandment into the means to inherit eternal life according to the teaching of Jesus. Since such a course of action is possible for all, irrespective of their religious and/or ideological backgrounds, this teaching identifies a means for everyone to be part of God's people by acting as a member of the people of God should and thus inherit eternal life. ("Do this and you will live". Lk 10,28b). Its role as the means for everyone to inherit eternal life is thus crystal clear.

II. The Universal Presence of the Love Commandments

The praxis of the love commandments as means to inherit eternal life as Jesus defines it is a universal means at the disposal of everyone not only because it is possible for all to act in this way but also because the commandment itself is present in all religions in some form. The pervasive presence of the love commandments thus makes it a point of convergence for all religions as a means for inheriting eternal life.

a. The Presence of the Love Commandments in all Religions

The Love commandments (love of God and love of neighbour) are present in all religions in one form or another. It is probable that the Biblical teaching on them in the Old Testament (Deut 6,4-5 and Lev 19,18) and their development into well defined, hierarchically graded and interrelated commandments in the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic love commandments of the New Testament (Mk 12,28-34 + par) have had a universal impact in establishing these commandments as core demands that should animate authentic religiosity. But what is meant here by the universal presence of the love commandments is not this probable development. What is asserted by it is the love commandments' presence in the sacred lore of religions in some form even before such a development and even unrelated to it.

b. The Love Commandment is known to all Peoples in different Ways

In this connection the widespread presence of the "Golden Rule"[16] is perhaps the most significant evidence. The "Golden Rule" is found in both positive and negative form. In both forms they are a rendition of the love commandment. The "golden rule" in its negative formulation runs like this: "Do not do to anyone what you do not want any one to do to you," while its positive formulation runs: "Do to others what you would want to be done to you". Till recently, it used to be asserted that while the "Golden Rule" in its negative formulation occurs also outside the New Testament, the "Golden Rule" in its positive formulation is found only in the New Testament. However, it is now conclusively established that the "Golden Rule," both in its negative and positive formulations, is found outside the New Testament. Thus the negative form of the Golden Rule occurs in pre-Christian Judaism. Hillel, for instance, summarizes the law to a proselyte in the following words: "What is hateful to yourself, do to no other: that is the whole law and the rest is commentary" (*b. Sabb.* 31a). It is also found in Tob 4,15, in Ep. Arist. 207-8 (with the positive also indicated), and in the Jerusalem Targum of Lev 19,18.[17] It is also widely known in different cultures and religions.[18] Since the "Golden Rule" is an equivalent rendering of the love commandment as found in Lev 19,18, it follows that its widespread occurrence argues to the pervasive presence of the love commandment in a certain approximate form.

This also points to the fact that the love commandments are written into the socio-religious and socio-cultural structures of all peoples. Cross-cultural studies can easily establish this statement as every cultural Anthropologist can testify. Without going into specifics we can thus assert that the logic of the "Golden Rule" is present in the mores and behavioural practices of all peoples in one way or the other.

We can even go beyond this and state that it is also present in every individual in the form of innate humanity, even if the quantum of it might vary from person to person. Yet there is nobody who does not practise the "Golden Rule" at some time or the other in his or her life however morally indifferent or even perverse that person might be.

In this connection one may mention the contention of Klaus Berger in his investigation of the love commandments in their *religionsgeschichtliche* background or in their background of the history of religions. Berger holds that the Hellenistic and more closely Philonic idea of *"eusebeia"* (devotion to God) and *"dikaiosyne"* (righteousness, one's deeds of right relation to the neighbour) as the basic principles of religion actually made possible the combination of Deut 6,4-5 and Lev 19,18 in Hellenistic Judaism understood as the sum and substance of the Law and came into Christianity through its influence.[19] Even if one does not agree with Berger's contention about the influence of this double principle on the formulation of the biblical love commandments, his work does demonstrate the existence of this double principle as the quintessence of Hellenistic religion and Philonic philosophy. *"Eusebeia"* and *"dikaiosyne"* thus constitute the basic principles of religion. In general terms this can be said about all religions, in so far as both these principles underlie all of them in some form as vertical and horizontal elements constitutive of them. It is therefore undeniable that *"eusebeia"* and *"dikaiosyne"*, or love of God and love of neighbour in some form underlie all religions and that therefore all of them participate in the love commandments to a certain degree.

c. The Wide Diversity of Religions and the Love Commandments' Presence in them

The above assertion is true despite the wide diversity of religions and their tenets. We do have religions which have various divergent standpoints and orientations such as monotheistic, polytheistic, atheistic (Buddhism, Jainism)[20] and varieties of tribal religions which are mostly animistic. But across this wide spectrum of fundamental diversities there still exist the love commandments in some form, at least in the form of the "Golden Rule" in either its negative or positive formulation, as basic tenets which the religious person must accept and practise.

d. Illustration from Personal Experience

I have personally experienced the spontaneous response of people based on love and compassion, which has strengthened my belief in

the presence of the love commandments in people's religio-moral world constituting a strong source of motivation for them. Thus one day I saw accidentally the fixtures of persons/families who have signed up for all 365 days of the year for providing breakfast and/or a meal for the inmates of Mother Teresa's home for the destitute as I went there to celebrate the Eucharist. Among the vast majority of these people who took the trouble to come and sign up for this act, almost 97 % were non-Christians, mostly Hindus. Nobody has put any pressure on these people to take such a step. It is a spontaneous act of bounty on their part. Surely, these people have responded to God's call in the example of Mother Teresa to respond in compassion and love to the miserable and the suffering. That such a response happens year after year, with many standing in the waiting list, shows that the love commandment in some form is embedded in their religious consciousness and they respond to it in their lives when occasion offers.

e. Illustrations from Contemporary Experience

Examples like the above can be multiplied from contemporary experience as well, particularly when tragedy strikes. Thus when unexpected natural calamities like Tsunamis, earthquakes or human-made disasters like wars produce in their wake an immense amount of human sufferings in the form of deaths, displacements and refugees one comes across an outpouring of goodness from people across the globe. On such occasions we have seen many people responding in love and compassion sharing their resources generously and also volunteering to do relief work besides contributing in myriad ways to the alleviation of situations of misery. These are impressive and telling demonstrations of how people respond to the love commandment spontaneously, the love commandment which forms part of their religio-moral world and written into their humanity. In these one can see how God activates the fulfilment of the love commandment to let people inherit eternal life.

f. The Dialogue of Religions and the Love Commandments as Point of Convergence

Given its pervasive presence both in the legacy of religions and/or in the spontaneous response of people in love and mercy, it is

surely possible to agree in the dialogue of religions on the praxis of the love commandment as the point of convergence of religions. This seems to be something on which all can agree and co-operate for the good of all. This is the contribution that the parable of the Good Samaritan in the discussion on the love commandments makes to the communion of Religions.

For this the followers of different religions do not have to give up or ignore the differences which exist among them. It is possible that agreeing and working together on this common point of convergence of the love commandments might bring down unwarranted prejudices, promote mutual respect and a sense of camaraderie among them. It can also open up new avenues of understanding and promote closeness on an ongoing basis thus contributing positively to the climate of dialogue and co-operation. Thus the love commandments have a great potential to promote convergence in the encounter of religions.

From the point of view of Jesus' teaching regarding the means to inherit eternal life, all can attain eternal life if they respond to the needy. The vertical dimension of religions (the love of God) is taken care of in the context of each religion's understanding of the Divine or, in the case of non-religious secular movements, by the absoluteness of the ideology that inspires them, like the conception of a classless society in Marxism.[21] Besides, it is already addressed in the act of loving the neighbour in deeds of love and the self-transcendence they involve.[22] In the act of such self-transcendence in a deed of love of neighbour, the Dinivne is in fact simulatneoulsy acknowledged and obeyed implicitly.

Needless to say, this does not do away with the call of Jesus to inherit eternal life by radical and total following of him as was demanded of the rich ruler (Lk 18,18-30). But this will be for the disciples of Jesus and for those who are called by Jesus to belong to them. These two forms of inheriting eternal life can therefore co-exist. This understanding can thus also co-exist with the dialogal thrust of seeking the convergence of religions on the basis of the praxis of the love commandment.

Notes

1. The first part of this article, the analysis and interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan as part of the discussion on the love commandment in Luke, draws substantially on my recently published article (Cf. G. Keerankeri, S.J., "Inheriting Eternal Life. The love Commandment in Luke (Lk 10:25-28 [-37]38-42)" *VJTR* 70(2006) 183-197) since the subject matter of these is the same.
2. Cf. For the rationale for this division see G. Keerankeri, S.J., "Inheriting Eternal Life. The love Commandment in Luke..", 184, n. 2. As pointed out there the inclusion of the last portion of this division, Lk 10,38-42, the vignette of Martha and Mary is not accepted by all but the discussion at this point and the development in that article in general show its legitimacy based on significant scholarly support. Sometimes the change of scene indicated in 10,38: "As they went on their way he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house" is adduced in support of its non-inclusion in this discussion. Generally speaking a change of scene indicates a change in subject also. But there are several reasons to see a continuity of the thematic of the love commandment discussion in this episode which impel one not to apply the criterion of change of scene rigidly lest one discount the significance of this thematic unity. Besides, the minor change of scene actually seems to play a salutary role in maintaining the proper balance in the development of the two love commandments in their interrelationships which is an important goal of the Lukan discussion, in so far as it serves to obviate diminishing the power of the illustration of the love of neighbor in the example story of the Good Samaritan by an immediate emphasis on the primacy of the first love commandment. The change of scene serves to forestall such an effect while at the same time providing an opportunity to affirm this primacy more delicately.
3. As C. H. Talbert, Reading Luke,125, clarifies: "Luke 10.38-42 asserts that to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind means to sit at the Lord's (Jesus') feet. To sit at a person's feet was the equivalent of "to study under someone: or "to be a disciple of someone" (cf. Acts 22.3- Paul was raised "at the feet of Gamaliel"). To love God with your whole being, Luke says, is to be a disciple of Jesus".
4. Cf. J. Nolland, Luke 9,21-18,34, 2/3, (*World Biblical Commentary* 31b) Dallas 1993, 579-580. Similarly, C. H. Talbert, Reading Luke, *A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel,* Crossroad, New York, 1984, 120.
5. It must be pointed out that Luke discusses this question in two different contexts in the gospel: first in 10,25-37+38-42; and then in the episode of the rich ruler (18,18-30). The questions are in fact identical: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life", though in the first case Jesus is addressed "Teacher" and in the second he is addressed "Good Teacher". The relationship between these two discussions is of importance. Both deal with the place of the Law in the attainment of salvation. In the first case Jesus defines that the

praxis of the love commandments, the quintessence of the Law, is the means to inherit eternal life. In the second, however, more radical steps are also demanded for the same. Although Jesus proposes the observance of the Decalogue commandments (18,20-21) as the means to it, when the ruler states that he has observed all these from his youth Jesus replies: "One thing you still lack" (18,22b) and goes on to demand: "Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (18,22c). A number of further radical steps are thus involved in the second instance. Renunciation of all that one has, as well as giving it to the poor are preliminary steps which must be followed up with the following of Jesus which is the core demand. As pointed out in the above article, (Cf. G. Keerankeri, S.J., "Inheriting Eternal Life. The love Commandment in Luke..", 187, n5) regarding the interrelationships among these two answers one may state the following: the first is addressed to all irrespective of their religious backgrounds. It is a universal demand and constitutes the usual means of inheriting eternal life open to all. The second seems to be a specifically Christian answer that is not demanded of all but only of the disciples of Jesus and those who are specifically called to belong to them by a special call. In this connection see, Robert J. Karris, "The Gospel According to Luke", in R. E. Brown; J. A. Fitzmyer, R. E. Murphy (ed) *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, (Theological Publications in India) Bangalore, 2002, 702.

6. For a clarification of the nuanced way Luke underlines the interrelationships among the two love commandments and their hierarchical gradation see, G. Keerankeri, S.J., "Inheriting Eternal Life. The love Commandment in Luke", 192-194.
7. Cf. J. Nolland, Luke 9,21-18,34, 2/3, 582.
8. Cf. J. Kiilunen, *Das Doppelgebot der Liebe in Synonptischer Sicht, Ein redaktionskritiscer Versuch über Mk 12,28-34 und die Parallelen*, (Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia) Helsinki 1989, 62-63.
9. Ibid, n. 46.
10. Cf. J. Nolland, Luke 9,21-18,34, 2/3, 595.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 596. It also could be seen as making him in reality a member of God's people since he acts as a member of God's people should act.
13. Cf. H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, (2a/3), (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament) Freiburg. Basel. Wien 1994, 147 (translation ours).
14. Cf. "poiein", "to do" v25; "tuto poiei", "do this" in v28; "ho poiesas", " the one who did" in v37a; "poiei", "do.." in v37b.
15. Cf. J. Kiilunen, *Das Doppelgebot*, 74-75.
16. This designation is the qualifier given to Mtt 7,12/Lk 6,31, the parallel sayings in th Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plane respectively,

since the Middle Ages. It is "golden" in the sense of "most precious and importatnt", Hans Dieter Betz, The Sermon on the Mount, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1995, 509. The term "rule" refers not to a legal regulation but to an ideal moral principle, D. M. Beck, "Golden Rule The"., *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol 2, (ed) George Arthur Buttrick, Abingdon Press Nashville, 1962, 438

17. Cf. Donald A. Hagner, Matthew 1-13 (*World Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 33A) World Books, Dallas, 1993, 176. Also, Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Sacra Pagina Series Vol I) The Liturgical Press Collegeville, 1991,105-6. Although the negative and positive forms are two ways of saying the same thing Hagner believes that the former is more original and perhaps also more fundamental. According to him the latter is the superior form and is considered to be the fuller expression of practical morality. Thus while the positive form includes the negative form, the negative form cannot be said to include the positive.

18. In this connection H. D. Betz observes: "Indeed, the Golden Rule was regarded as one of the ground rules of human civilization ...". He continues, "...as scholars have discovered since the Enlightenment and demonstrated by large collections of parallels, the Golden Rule was known to nearly every culture, even prior to its literary transmission. In the West, the Golden Rule is first attested by Herodotus, who may have learned it from the Sophists. In the East, Confucius knew it, and it is found as well in the Mahabharatha and in Far Eastern gnomological collections". Cf. Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 509. Similarly, D. M. Beck, "Golden Rule The", *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol 2, 438, states: "Though Jesus gave his own wording to the Golden Rule, the thought in it is widespread in ethical and religious teachings of many peoples. Confucius taught the negative form. Ideals of conduct somewhat similar to the rule are known in the literature of the early Greeks and Romans and in the tenets of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam."

19. Klaus Berger, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu. Ihr historischer Hintergrund im Judentum und im Alten Testament.* Teil I: Markus und Parallelen WMANT 40, Neukirchen 1972.

20. Budhism and Jainism claim to be atheistic religions aiming only at the ultimate goal of nirvana. While this is true at the level of doctrianal or philosophical formulations, it is a moot point whether they do in actual practice, especially at the popular level, adhere to this profession of atheism or instead become in some form theistic.

21. The absoluteness of an ideology and its goals which one sees in secular ideologies in fact transforms them into quasi-religions with the absoluteness of the ideology and its goals taking the place of the Divine in religions.

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But, Why Aren't We Listening? *When Silence Speaks*

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Abstract: Interdependence is and ought to be as much the ideal of humanity as self-sufficiency. Human beings are social beings. Without interrelation with society and with the cosmic world, humanity cannot realize its oneness with the universe. It is social interdependence that enables humans to test their faith and to prove themselves on the touchstone of reality. Feminism as a movement, ideology and a way of life also emphasizes values like mutuality, co-responsibility and partnership leading to a genuine interdependence between men and women. Building on this theme of interdependence, feminism from the grassroots argues that stories of women's agency and resistance are crucial in understanding the globe. In a world of growing interconnectedness we are coming to realize more and more that women's destinies are tied up with men's, the dalit woman's freedom is inextricably bound to that of the Brahmin woman. Feminism thus emphasizes the significance of the relational and the narrative self, that can only exist and persist through relations with others and as a being that can cause change, can be recognized and can tell its story.

The author shows that behind the facade of imposed silences there are life-giving testimonies of power emerging in and through the dynamic gestures of the powerless. Transforming these gestures into hope-filled visions is the task of the Christian theologian. Such a task demands our collective attention in the interest of liberating and empowering listening.

Keywords: Feminism, story, silence of women, silent resistance, text and intertextuality, narrative, intertextual interpretation, dialectics of power and powerlessness, overt resistance,

For us, a language is first and foremost someone talking. But there are language games in which the important thing is to listen, in which the rule deals with audition. Such a game is the game of the just. And in this game, one speaks only inasmuch as one listens, that is, one speaks as a listener, and not as an author. - Lyotard[1]

1. Introduction

My mother has always been and still is the uniting bond, the interconnecting link in our family. Four years back, in 2003, when I lost my beloved sister in a road accident she moved over to Goa from our home in Calicut to look after my nieces who were just four and eleven years then. This summer my mother suffered a devastating cerebral hemorrhage, which rendered her unconscious and totally helpless, but only in human eyes. The world around me sighed in despair, their gestures communicating hopelessness and pity.

For me, my mother in bed, unconscious and almost struck by a paralysis of the body, never appeared as a sign of helplessness. In the couple of months that passed by, I started sensing, even as she lies with her seemingly fixed and unmovable body, the aura of strengthening energy surrounding her very person. A new mode of communication emerged between us, a silence louder and more apparent than other silences that I have encountered, a speechlessness that reverberated with meaning. Her eyes, her body, nay her whole being, started to vibrate divine messages, even when I was far away from her physically. I began consulting her during moments of difficult decision-making. In the past two months of her seemingly unconscious state I have communicated with her much more than in all the forty plus years of my existence as her much loved daughter. Her new mode of being weaves a novel thread of connectedness not only within my family but also between friends and well-wishers who, prior to this event, I did not know existed. Her circle of connections is large concurring with her large-heartedness. It is as if even in sickness she continues her sacred mission of interlacing a matrix of interconnectedness between people.

I often wonder why people around her, the doctors and nurses included, cannot capture the healing power of the silence that emanates from her being. It seems as if the force of silence has been

stolen from us by this industrial and technological civilization. As I begin to write this paper it is the healing, uniting and interconnecting power of this stillness that strikes me almost urging me to place my thoughts and feelings on record. I am reminded of other instances of rich silences that spoke a new language. In this paper I analyze three such events that vibrate and resonate with meaning as they use silence as a channel for creating human and cosmic networks.

The contribution of this paper has to be contextualized within the general theme of this issue of *Jnanadeepa:* "Inter-human Relationships in an Interdependent World." Interconnectedness has become the buzzword everywhere with the recent revolution in communication and information technology. We live in a very relational world, where very small events in one part of the world can have a huge impact on another part. In fact, growing population, international migration, easy inflow of capital and so on in the last couple of centuries have hugely increased the level of global interdependence compared to older times, making us more and more influenced by events happening far from us in time and space. Interdependence is and ought to be as much the ideal of humanity as self-sufficiency. Human beings are social beings. Without interrelation with society and with the cosmic world, humanity cannot realize its oneness with the universe. It is social interdependence that enables humans to test their faith and to prove themselves on the touchstone of reality.

Feminism as a movement, ideology and a way of life also emphasizes values like mutuality, co-responsibility and partnership, leading to a genuine interdependence between men and women. Building on this theme of interdependence, feminism from the grassroots argues that stories of women's agency and resistance are crucial in understanding the globe. In a world of growing interconnectedness we are coming to realize more and more that women's destinies are tied up with men's, the dalit woman's freedom is inextricably bound to that of the Brahmin woman. Feminism thus emphasizes the significance of the relational and the narrative self, that can only exist and persist through relations with others and as a being that can cause change, can be recognized and can tell its story[2]. The self it affirms is constituted by social interaction in the telling of its story and this social interaction can have both language and

silence as its medium. However, feminism revolutionizes silence, by affirming the paradox that silence has to be heard, otherwise it is of no use. Feminism affirms that women must be freed from the trap of silence, and in order to move out of this cage, feminism makes noise with the pregnant silences of women in order to call the world to a new kind of listening. It is in as much as we listen with new ears and look with the eyes of a seer and prophet that we build a united world of relationships and life-giving interactions.

Just as my family and I were initially deaf to my mother's silence, we as humans have not understood the richness in the silences of the impoverished men and women of our country and the world. My experience of communion in the tranquillity of my mother's being challenges me to hermeneutically analyze the rich silences of other women that impart an empowerment that forges revolutionary bonds. In this paper I propose to analyze three rich instances of silence which are significant events proclaiming the power in the mutuality and partnership that invest women's lives. I will analyze them from a feminist perspective in order to uncover and explicate the treasures feminism holds for the future of humankind.

2. Speaking and Listening

In her influential yet much criticized essay entitled "Can the Subaltern Speak"[3], feminist and postcolonial thinker Gayatri Spivak makes a fundamental distinction between speaking and talking. For Spivak, a speech act is a transaction between the speaker and the listener. Often, the subaltern makes an attempt at self-representation. However this act of representation is not heard. The hegemonic listener does not recognize it, because very often the subaltern's representation does not fit into the official institutional structures of language. This failure of the fulfilment of the speech act is what Spivak calls "not speaking."

Speaking demands a simultaneous activity, the activity of listening. Spivak forces us to take in for a critical questioning the discomforting answers or the lack of it, to the question "Can the subaltern speak?" What must we, as Christian theologians and as the Church, do to hear and recognize the continuing *han* of the *minjung* or the non-verbal sighs of Asian women or the groanings

of the *Dalits*? As Christian theologians Spivak's query is important. I believe that her question has become more important with the advent of global capital and the war on terror unleashed by the Empire because it adds various shades to the reality of interconnectedness.

The concern to 'hear the unheard voices into speech' is a task entrusted to the feminist, the theologian and anyone who has received a mission within the Church. What is being emphasized by this is the responsibility each of one us has as people who have been commissioned. Responsibility, for Derrida, is composed of 'response' plus 'ability', that is, the ability to respond, to hear, whereby it is a play of listening and speaking. This would entail listening to that which has been silenced in speech. However, even as I emphasize the responsibility of the Christian theologian to represent the "silenced majority", I simultaneously feel the need to warn against the attempt of the Christian intellectual to 'recover' the 'voice' of the silenced, for fears that this would end up being a 'logocentric' project. Moreover, I suspect that the Christian intellectual faces the danger that in the very act of representing, i.e., speaking for and speaking about the subaltern she/he risks reproducing the subaltern's silence. This failure on the part of those in authority to listen was evident in the post-Tsunami scenario when people who lost not only their homes and fishing boats but also their entire livelihood were disgusted at the 'we know how to help you attitude' of the government and the non-governmental organizations who as a matter of fact were queuing to help out. Quite contrary to this, people from the Tsunami hit areas wanted to be heard. Herein is a plea to the Christian theologian to unlearn his or her privilege and to learn from below, whereby instead of *speaking for* the subaltern, we must learn to *speak together with the subaltern.* This would be a practice of subversive listening that creates conducive conditions for the "invisible", the "unsaid" to emerge. Such an approach, I think, shifts the focus from the traditional logocentric strategies of resistance to the possibilities of subversion through a listening that transforms the power dynamics between the active speaker and the passive listener and is a crucial aspect of the politics of rupturing hegemonic discourses.

That there is no easy way out of this paradoxical dilemma is being hinted at by Preman Niles in one of his articles. Niles narrates the experience of Kosuke Koyama, the Japanese theologian, who once tried to explain John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word" to his colleague, a Buddhist monk. The monk, without any qualms at the middle of the theological lecture stopped the theologian and commented, "Christianity is a very noisy religion." Winding up his narration of the story, Niles poses a rather thought-provoking question: "How can a noisy religion that gives rise to a noisy theology communicate to one for whom the Ultimate is Silence."[4]

The logocentrism of Christian theology is not only redundant to the pregnant silence of the Buddhist monk in question but also arid to the people in the margins whose expressions of loss, pain and struggle are often through ritualistic performances enveloped in silence. In order to be able to hear these stories a shift in theologizing needs to take place. Feminists call this a transformation from the dry logocentrism of theology to the *experience* of the poor and marginalized as the starting-point of all theology. Feminists also affirm that such a shift will help us to take cognizance of the range of voices and capture the performative strategies women employ not often with the intention of making their voices heard but more often with the dire need of subsistence. Such a transformation of theology will expose the "enormous and effervescent realm of 'hidden transcript' of activity contesting domination"[5]; transcripts which capture voices not expressed within any version of a public or dominant domain. These hidden yet dynamic transcripts containing life and blood strokes of a compelling nature highlight indeed with urgency the limitations of mainstream models in capturing their testimonies about the violence and oppression against them. In order to be able to truly listen, a shift in theologizing needs to take place, a shift from logocentrism to experience.

3. Capturing the Silent Resistances

Resistance as a phenomenon and as a concept has obtained a new interest in the social sciences as a way of exploring the subjectivities and agency of subaltern groups. A significant aspect of such research has been the attempt to explore ways in which the

material and discursive features of domination and subalternity are related. In other words, much of the attempt of scholars both in the Asian and Western context have been to investigate the manner in which the notion of resistance can be used to understand the subject-hood of the marginalized. There are two kinds of resistances that women engage themselves in – material everyday resistances and the resistance aimed at negating the discourses that legitimize their continued subjugation. Given the stark conditions of domination in which rural women are entwined and the oppositional practices with which they confront these conditions, Scott insists that subaltern resistance is not (a) organised, systematic and cooperative, (b) principled or selfless (c) having revolutionary ideas, and (d) embodying ideas or intentions that negate the basis of domination itself. Scott opines that to expect subaltern resistance to be systematic and organized from a logical perspective is to "fundamentally misconstrue the very basis of economic and political struggle conducted daily by subordinate classes in repressive settings."[6] Scott develops an alternative conceptualisation of everyday resistance as anonymous, disguised, opportunistic, cautious, compromised, often unorganised, micro-practices – which he argues are more productive, safer and potentially as oppositional as the grander gestures more commonly accepted as 'legitimate' resistance. While I agree with Scott's observation regarding the subtle factors and therefore the complex nature of subaltern resistances which cannot be 'contained by the grander gestures,' I maintain that a general statement regarding subaltern resistances as not having revolutionary ideas, or not embodying ideas that negate the basis of domination does not really capture the radical, contextual, dynamic nature of indigenous resistance strategies. The three texts of resistance or silent defiance that we will deal with in an internarrative or intertexual analysis does in my opinion differ with Scott's observation.

The desire to locate a site of resistance is the defining characteristic of any marginal group - be it dalits, prostitute women or rural women in any context. Foucault expresses this concisely, in the well-known dictum, "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power."[7] This desire is to be seen in relation to their determination to forge for themselves an identity in

opposition to the hierarchy or paternalism of dominant groups. Scott rightly opines that resistance in these texts is not necessarily an overt act of confrontation but one that can be retrieved and accessed through attentive listening.

The following section proposes to analyze two subaltern narratives or two situations of "performative resistance" by women in marginal contexts and a Scriptural text from the Gospel of Mark. As events that have been narrated and circulated, written and published, read and discussed, they have assumed the stature of texts. Some texts have an evocative power and can engage in a fruitful dialogue with people. The ensuing dialogue may result in a world of innovative and promising possibilities. When such an interaction happens, new meanings are produced and the text becomes not only a meaningfully structured discourse, but also one that becomes the harbinger of hope and good news.

4. Narratives, Texts and the World of Inter textuality

4.1. The first text: The narrative of the chipko movement

On 26 March 1974, a group of peasant women in the Reni forests of Garhwal Himalaya, under the leadership of Gaura Devi, the head of the local village women's organization, succeeded in chasing away timber felling contractors through *a simple ritual of hugging the trees*. In course of time this event became a milestone in the evolution of the world famous Chipko movement. A number of activists with remarkable philosophical richness and social commitment have devoted their lives to this movement. Today this movement of peasant women has extended from the North to the South, and collaborates with other movements.

4.2. The Second Text

The second text or linguistic event that I propose to analyze here is a lesser known event and act of resistance. It is from the world of women in prostitution[8].

Pushpa[9] came to Madras in 1989 trusting a lady who promised to help her in her misery. She was only 28 then and had lost her husband

in an accident. Her in-laws pushed her on to the streets with her 2 daughters and a son. The 'kind' lady who promised help brought her to a home in Madras where she ran a brothel. Between tears, Pushpa related, "See where I have landed? If my brothers or sisters had helped me, I would not have been here. In fact I had even registered my name in the employment exchange. In addition I had also worked for some time as an attendant in a medical college. Only after I came here did I come to know that the 'kind' lady ran a brothel inside her house." Pushpa sent her children to Kerala, to one of her sisters' homes. "As I sent money regularly, my sister had no problem in keeping them with her," she narrated. "Believe me, I haven't gone to see my children at all. I continued to work as a prostitute, as I needed money for my children's education. Having sinned once, I couldn't come out of it. If my family had supported me when I was in trouble, I would not have come to Madras or entered this profession." "Sister," she cried, "Please don't think that I felt happy selling my body. No, I did not. I tried working as a maid in several houses, but there too I had to face the advances of men. I cried a lot on the first day. It was very demeaning and sad for me to be arrested by the police and sent to jail. I tried to kill myself several times by drinking poison and taking sleeping pills. I even poured petrol on myself. Tell me, what is the use of living a life like this? I do not have anybody. I have not seen my children since 1990. I couldn't be present when my daughter was getting married. Still, I went there and saw my daughter's marriage ceremony from another room. Only my sister knew I was there."[10] As if to conclude her story with a befitting benediction she told me something very touching. "I am Pushpa. When I was a child my father used to lovingly bring flowers for me everyday, saying that he loved his "Pushpam" very much. Now this Pushpam's body is a mass of eroticized flesh. My father, who died when I was a teenager, will weep if he sees his Pushpam's body being mutilated. But I cannot give my children a good future if I do not deface myself. I have to break my body for the sake of my children. God alone understands my pain. Every morning I offer one flower to God as a symbol of my pure self."

4.3. The third text

Mk. 15:37, "And Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up His Spirit."

Narratives are for marginal communities what texts are for the elite. These accounts resound with meaning, spill over their own limits, point beyond themselves and therefore have implications for our present situation. They become a springboard or a medium for recovering the lost identities of the silenced through the process of repetitive performance.

5. Intertextual Interpretation

With the aim of listening to their non-verbalized resistances, intertextual exchanges are made to take place between the matrices of the three texts

1. The hugging of the trees by rural women
2. Daily symbolic offering of Pushpa and
3. Mk. 15:37, "And Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up His Spirit," which denotes the 'powerlessness' of Jesus in his death and suffering.

Philip Wickeri in delineating for us the contours of a kenotic mission which is founded on a kenotic listening, draws our attention to this "kenosis of God who emptied himself taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness" as he suggests that for us Christians "mission begins with powerlessness, not power." Such a kenotic mission can take place only to the extent that we receive and take part in the invitation to be listening partners in a dialogue with other people, which if it "does not make you different, then it is not dialogue and you are not involved in mission."[11]

Kim Yong-Bock in his article, "The Bible Among the *Minjung* of Korea: Kairotic Listening and Reading of the Bible," describes new ways of reading the text by an involved 'kiarotic' listening and dynamic interaction with the context. The context for Yong-Bock is the 'power in powerlessness' of the *Minjung* as they respond actively to the 'kairotization' of the Biblical text that occurs in God's time of fullness. This kairosis, Yong- Bock affirms, takes place through social

events and the contingencies of history/herstory that invests the process of kairotization with life and blood corporeality. A kalrotic listening therefore calls us to humbly lend our ears to the events in people's lives that have kalrotic significances for them.

The three texts of our 'intertextuality exercise' are events that emphasize the kairotic moment in the lives of our protagonists and thereby in their corresponding communities. All three are body related experiences, which contain in them a dialectic of powerlessness and power. In this dialectic the protagonists of our narratives are related.

5.1. The Dialectic of Power and Powerlessness

(Sovereign servant vis-à-vis Subjugated Servant)

Even though Pushpa was silenced by the cruel system of prostitution, through her constant ritual of offering her "pure" body to God she projects her subversive agenda. Though her space in society and culture is limited she employs her creative subjectivity in the sphere of ritual and religiosity. Her female/feminist agency with its 'autonomy in religion making' seeks to nullify the patriarchal powers that punish her. And she finds recourse in a nature offering that for her not only represents her self but also claims God. Claiming God also means being claimed by God. A mutual claiming of this nature is very much part of the gospel stories too. For instance the woman with the hemorrhage claims Jesus by daring to touch his garments. Jesus' response to her comes as a gift; he claims that he has been transformed through this dialogical encounter with the "powerful woman" who rendered him "powerless" for Jesus says, "Power went out of me."

The exchange of agencies that transpires between Jesus and the woman with the hemorrhage is synonymous in many ways with the exchange that happens daily between Pushpa and her God. It echoes in significant ways Lewis Hyde's description of the act of gift-giving in his study of so-called primitive cultures. In his book entitled *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, Hyde writes, "The bonds that gifts establish are not simply social; they may be spiritual and psychological as well. There are interior economies and visible

economies... Gift exchange is the preferred interior commerce at those times when the psyche is in need of integration."[12]

Pushpa's performance in a daily act of spiritual homage can be seen as having in effect two types of significance. Firstly, such an ordinary yet sublime ritual was her way of manifesting resistance to a society that considered her spoilt, impure and loose for being a prostitute. Her belief in a God who takes a preferential option for the poor urges her to offer a pure flower to God as a symbol of her body, which in turn reinforces her faith in herself. Through her routine observance of the flower offering she contests the notion that she is naturally or essentially impure. If she is unchaste it is also because societal structures have forced her into prostitution.

Likewise she also confronts the tendency in society and culture to associate her identity with the feminine body considered a sexual commodity. In other words, she challenges the notion that treats women as synonymous with body, and prostitutes as mere eroticised flesh or sensual objects. Accordingly, if the body of the woman is violated, her entire self becomes spoilt. Furthermore, society considers her impure, but she trusts that God will not consider her impure. This reveals that she is constantly trying to adjust in creative ways with society's imprint of spoilt on her body. While she manifests no intentions of giving into society's stamp, she also resists such an appellation and challenges society to look into its tactics of evading responsibility for its wrong doings. This is also evident in a sharing of another prostitute, "We may be prostitutes, we may be ostracized by society – but we are human beings. You may not believe it, but like you people, we are also capable of feeling joy and grief. Like you, we also laugh when we are happy. Like you again, our cheeks also are flooded with tears when we are lashed by bitter sorrow. Surely you will not grudge these equal rights of humble women like us...."[13]

Secondly Pushpa also recounted to me the rehabilitative effect of this self-constructed spiritual performance of offering the flower. "It helped me," she illustrated with gestures, "even to forgive the 'kind' lady who cheated me into prostitution." In a lowered voice she continued her narration, "One morning I felt moved to visit her. She was sick and in bed. Prior to this special day, I was filled with

remorse and anger. But on that day when I went to her bedside I had different kinds of emotions in my heart. I sat beside her and stroked her hand. She looked at me with intense sadness. She couldn't speak. But her eyes spoke and her tears washed the pain of revenge in my heart. I felt like a bird in flight, so light and so free. After that we became close friends. We also started relating to other women in the same profession like friends. We support each other a lot and find immense consolation in this. Last year we went together for the convention of sex workers and it was very strengthening." This reconciliation helped both of them to create networks of women bonding among sex workers. Thus this execution of spiritual agency becomes one way of reclaiming her self through bonding with God and with other women who are marginalized.

5.2. Overt Resistance

The event of the Chipko women hugging the trees can be seen as a kairotic moment (God's moment of intervention/incarnation "sambvami yugé yugé") because simple rural women who were considered to be 'powerless and faceless entities' unite together in the simple act of 'hugging trees.' Ramachandra Guha, in his narrative of the chipko movement, underscores that these women were placing their bodies between the trees, that is, their extended bodies,[14] and the hackers who were ready with sharp axes. The sharp axes symbolizing the might of the powerful could at any moment go down on the backs of the 'hugging women' tearing their flesh into pieces. A critical theologizing has the ability of bringing into our awareness the "kairotic impact" of this moment both for the dominant Indian culture and for the lives of Indian women under the yoke of cultural codifications.

Firstly, various metaphors are used in the Indian context to describe nature and the universe, both the cosmic world and the world of humans. One concept that is frequently used is *lila.* Accordingly, creation is the divine play of God and the universe is a body or a stage in which God's play of continuous creation takes place. Creation is also seen as a feat that is accomplished by the self-sacrifice of God, for the Divine *lila* is also the divine mother who creates. In addition, *lila* is also seen as the divine play in which

Brahman transforms himself into the world, as a result of which the world is also seen as the extended body of God[15], *Brahman* is the great magician who transforms himself into the world and he performs this feat with his 'magic creative power' (*Maya*).

Secondly, though the dominant Hindu philosophy considers nature to be an extension of God, and therefore not something to be dominated over, its underlying philosophy of women as the ground and men as the seed buttresses the patriarchal codification of nature as synonymous with women as opposed to culture as representing men, which is a characteristic feature of all dominant cultures including Christian cultures. This is practically seen in the fact that women could not be possessors of land, because women themselves are 'the ground on which the seed (sperm) is sown.' Such an understanding has also informed the whole role of motherhood in India. Feminist anthropologists in India have discussed the problem of motherhood from the perspective of Indian women. A woman's procreative role was originally a source of power. However, it has been rendered powerless through its subjection to male domination. Considered a field in the possession of the owner of the seed i.e. semen, motherhood makes a woman susceptible to male domination. Maternal responsibility is used as an alibi to exclude a woman from power, decision-making and a participatory role in public life. Motherhood and mothering perceived as the bringing forth of new life and its sustenance, so essential to human survival, paradoxically becomes instruments of subordination. The feminist dilemma therefore is: how to retrieve motherhood as a source of liberation. This is different from the glorification of motherhood that equates it to self-denial. Even the status accorded to motherhood is conditional on her accepting motherhood as self-denial. In addition to this, rural women and poor urban women are deprived of nourishment, safe birthing, adequate antenatal care, child care facilities and so on. [16] In this regard it is befitting to quote Sherry Ortner who says, "Women everywhere must be associated with something that every culture devalues. There is only one that would fit that description and that is nature... Culture attempts to control and transcend nature, to use it for its own purpose, culture is therefore superior to the natural world and seeks to mark out or socialize nature.[17] In short, though the dominant Hindu philosophy considers the cosmos as God's body in addition to the fact that the creator God is mother, this has not fully

ensured the understanding of Indian women as people having their own rights and wisdom.

Thirdly, the women, who hugged the trees as a sign of resistance, were rural uneducated women who are considered to be objects under the purity/pollution ideology of the caste system, challenge the very system, turn it upside down and become protectors of both the extended body of God, their own bodies, the bodies of their husbands and the body of the community.[18] This is an empowering moment of reclaiming the power of their bodies which patriarchy has rendered powerless. These women move the system closer to its own integrity, if only one inch at a time. Joan Chittister,[19] in her very refreshing and dynamic reinterpretation of the book of Ruth, makes an interesting cartography of the journey undertaken by Ruth and Naomi in view of their empowerment and liberation. In her words, "By pushing the system beyond its limits, by refusing to stand silently by, by claiming their part of the will of God, Naomi and Ruth provide a metaphor for what it means to be a woman."[20] These women of the Chipko movement too, just as the other women whom we encountered, in their very act of silent resistance provide a metaphor for women in our contexts. It is encouraging to note that with their combined action the sports company, the Transnational Corporation representing the powerful empire, had to abandon their project of felling trees. The Chipko movement currently has spread to many parts of India including Karnataka in the South and gained the status of a pan Indian movement manifesting the networking potential it has liberated.

Maria Arul Raja in his very fruitful and creative attempt to create a critical and intertextual dialogue between the dalit world of defiance and the matrix of defiance from the Markan Jesus, highlights the human sensitivity, communitarian inclusion and ethical priority of Jesus vis-à-vis the arid traditionalism, cultism and rigid ritualism of the Jewish religious codes and authorities. He also illustrates how such an intertextual reading is filled with cumulative transformative power not only for the community of dalits, but also for the ongoing process of theological encounter of the Christian community. Such a process, he argues, "should continue till the last veneer of every type of dehumanizing hierarchy is peeled away from the human memory."[21]

The subaltern woman has always spoken, she has spoken in alternative ways that have challenged and continue to challenge not only imperialist and casteist discourse but also us, who have been slow to or refused to hear and acknowledge when and how these voices have spoken. Even though we don't listen, the subaltern woman claims her power to speak not only for herself but also for the sake of all the women yet unborn. She opposes her oppression with the scant weapons at her disposal within the boundaries of her patriarchal community and, although it may not seem significant, it has an impact on the slow wheels of change.

6. Conclusion

We have encountered different shades of silences in this study:

- The silence triggered by sickness
- The silence imposed by cultural restrictions
- The silence of economic domination
- Silence as instigated by physical violence

We have also seen that, behind the facade of imposed silences, there are life-giving testimonies of power emerging in and through the dynamic gestures of the powerless. Transforming these gestures into hope filled visions is the task of the Christian theologian. Such a task demands our collective attention in the interest of liberating and empowering listening.

True hearing happens only in a context of rich silence. It is linked with the subjective experience of the theologian's and the community's encounter with the divine. As Jalaluddin Rumi the Sufi mystic sang, "To hear the song of the reed everything we have ever known must be left behind." There is a world of silence, which goes inwards energizing the self within to embark on the journey that goes outwards to enter into the lives of others. The accounts of silence and silent performances that we encountered in this article, be it the enrapturing silence of my mother or the embracing silence of the rural women, the healing silence of the woman in prostitution or the redeeming silence of Jesus on the cross, all of them call us to embark on an onward pilgrimage, thus enriching the self of the other as we enter into constructive partnerships. In the examples of the women

that we encountered it is evident that, though theirs is a speechless presence, it is not a message of helpless subalternity. In this context we as Church must not only ask the question: Can the subaltern speak? Instead, the question must be: if he or she has been speaking for centuries, why aren't we listening?

Notes

1. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Just Gaming*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,1985) 71
2. Susan Brison, "Outliving Oneself: Trauma, Memory and Personal Identity" in Diana Tietjens et. al. (eds.) *Feminist Rethink The Self*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 4 – 50.
3. Gayatri Spivak Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism & The Interpretation of Culture*. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. (London: Macmillan, 1988). pp. 271-313.
4. D. Preman Niles, "The Word of God and the People of Asia," in Understanding the Word: Essays in Honour of Bernhard W. Anderson, ed. James T. Butler, Edgar W. Conrad, and Ben C. Ollenburger (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1985),281.
5. Joshua Price, Cf. Joshua Price, "Violence Against Prostitutes and a Re-evaluation of the Counterpublic Sphere" in *Genders*, 34, 2001 (online version on http://www.genders.org/g34/g34_price.html) 7.
6. James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, (New Have: Yale University Press, 1985)
7. Michael Foucalt, *The History of Sexuality: Vol 1. An Introduction*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) 78
8. There is a move to reject the appellation prostitute in favour of 'sex worker' with a view to emphasizing the recognition of prostitution as another form of work, i.e. 'sex work,' its hazardous nature notwithstanding. "Sex work per se is not the problem," they argue, "abuse, violence and criminality are the social problems." While I understand this move from the perspective of affirming the dignity of women in the trade, I am reluctant to call prostitution as work for a couple of reasons. Work by its very definition assures an atmosphere and space conducive for growth and well-being, whereas prostitution by its very nature is an inherently violent institution and offers no security for the women involved in the trade. An important question to be posed here is whether in an attempt to protect women in prostitution, they minimalize the systemic violence deep-seated in the system it self. In *Casting Stones: Prostitution and Liberation in Asia and the United States*, the author, Rita Nakashima Brock emphasizes that to "use the term 'work' as if selling one's body for sexual use were the equivalent of typing someone's letter or serving someone food, masks too much to be useful much of the time." Hence I chose to use prostitution instead of the word

sex work and prostitute instead of commercial sex workers. Rita Nakashima Brock and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite. *Casting Stones: Prostitution and Liberation in Asia and the United States.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996) (Catholic Religious Press, Gender Studies Award 1997).

9. Pushpa is her real name. I have asked her permission to use her name to which she agreed.
10. Interview of 3.01.2005
11. Philip Wickeri, *Scripture, Community, and Mission: Essays in Honor of D. Preman Niles,* (Hongkong, London: CCA, CWM, 2002) 344
12. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property.* (New York: Vintage, 1979) 58
13. Sumanta Banerji, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2000) 107
14. In the Indian understanding nature is our extended body.
15. Sankara the exponent of advaitic philosophy affirms that our extended body is the environment and it contains the never ending supply of energy and information that is available to us. There is no boundary between our body and our extended bodies. Each breath that we inhale and exhale is a reminder of the continuous conversation taking place between our physical body and our environment.
16. Maithreyi Krishnaraj, "Motherhood: Power and Powerlessness" in Jasodhara Bagchi (ed) *Indian Women: Myth and Reality*, (Hyderabad: Sangam Books, 1995) 34-43 (Reprinted 1997)
17. As quoted in Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar, "Significance of the 'Body' in Feminist Theological Discourse" in *Bangalore Theological Forum*, Volume XXXIII, No.2 December, 2001, 80-98 See 89. I also want to emphasize that this underlying philosophy is becoming a tool for cultural nationalists and conventionalists who pose as guardians of Indian culture to unleash terror on women, which is shown in the increasing rapes in the capital city and other metropolitan cities that are frequent highlights of the newspapers. The general argument is in favor of the abusers, who claim that it is men's duty to see that women dress the way tradition expects of them.
18. But the much believed notion in these cultures is that a son must light the pyre of the father only then the father will attain *moksha.*
19. Joan Chittister. *The Story of Ruth: Twelve Moments in Every Woman's Life,* (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000)
20. Joan Chittister. *The Story of Ruth: Twelve Moments in Every Woman's Life,* (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000) 25.
21. A. Maria Arul Raja, "Breaking Hegemonic Boundaries: An Intertexual Reading of the Madurai Veeran Legend and Mark's Story of Jesus" in Philip Wickeri (eds.), *Scripture, Community, and Mission: Essays in Honor of D. Preman Niles,* (Hongkong, London: CCA, CWM, 2002) 256-265.

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Humans, Nature and Gods: Their Interrelatedness in the Folk Religious World-View

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Abstract: This article shows that folk religion plays a mediating role between society and the individuals, between humans and nature. On the one hand, it takes for granted the existing caste-based social structure and the plausibility of inter-human relationship within caste-system. On the other hand, it also reveals its potential to interrogate and subvert the unjust and discriminatory categories of inter-human relationships within the caste-system. On the one hand, it takes for granted the 'given' relationship between humans and nature in a geographical setting. On the hand, it positively orients humans to care for nature and not to exploit it for their selfish ends. Along this line, the article shows how folk religions create, affirm and confirm the concept of inter-relatedness not only between human beings in society, but also between humans, nature and supernatural powers.

In this article, the author shows how folk religion can play the role of social critique by demonstrating how folk religious rituals like possession, trance and divination can become effective means of questioning and correcting some of the ills in the inter-human relationships in Indian society operative both at the interpersonal and at the societal levels. Thus folk religions have the potentiality to percolate the ideas of inter-relatedness at various levels of relationships: humans' relationship with other humans, human's relationship with the supernatural beings-gods, and humans' relationship with nature. Thus folk religions have given a more comprehensive and holistic picture of reality that intertwines and integrates the different dimensions of reality.

Keywords: Folk religions, subalternity, social identity, possession, sakti, social network.

Introduction

This article makes an attempt to show that the folk religious domain in India is not just the remnant of the past but is a continuous process of creation, acceptance and rejection of the multifaceted reality that undergoes change at the structural level and subsequently at the inter-relational levels. More specifically, it argues that folk religion plays a mediating role between society and the individuals, between humans and nature. On the one hand, it takes for granted the existing caste-based social structure and the plausibility of inter-human relationship within the caste-system. On the other hand, it also reveals its potential to interrogate and subvert the unjust and discriminatory categories of inter-human relationships within the caste-system. On the one hand, it takes for granted the 'given' relationship between humans and nature in a geographical setting. On the hand, it positively orients humans to care for nature and not to exploit it for their selfish ends. Along this line, the article shows how folk religions create, affirm and confirm the concept of inter-relatedness not only between human beings in society, but also between humans, nature and supernatural powers.

To begin its inquiry, the article deliberates on key idea 'caste' which serves as the foundation of inter-human relationships in Indian society. Then it goes on to study the events of folk rituals, pilgrimages and communal meals etc. in order to show how they facilitate and nuance inter-human relationships. Further, the paper moves the discussion of inter-relatedness from among humans to that between humans, nature and supernatural powers and discusses it under such titles as "Inter-connectedness as axial relationships," "Humans' relationship with Nature and Folk Religion," "Interdependent humans and independent gods," and "Sakti: A Power of Unification." Finally it shows how folk religion can play the role of social critique by demonstrating how folk religious rituals like possession, trance and divination can become effective means of questioning and correcting some of the ills in the inter-human relationships in Indian society operative both at the interpersonal and at the societal levels.

Caste, Inter-human Relations and Society

Since caste is the key to the understanding of social life in India, it is undeniably an organising principle of inter-human relations in

this land. No meaningful sociological inquiry into human relationships in India can take place without taking into account the role of 'caste,' because the inter-human relationships in India are very much ordered, controlled, maintained and subordinated by caste-relations. Hierarchy and holism, which are central values of caste-relations according to Dumont, continue to be the key principles which influence the inter-human relationships beyond one's family in the realm of civil society. There is no doubt that, all over the world, family is the most fundamental unit where a person experiences the first tier of inter-human relationships. The human relationships in the family are something 'given,' not chosen by the individuals. In India, the 'givenness' of inter-human relationship extends to the other members of society through the caste-system. Traditionally speaking, caste-system presents one set of people in society (one's caste men/women) as your own and another set of people (the other caste people) as different from you. It prescribes and proscribes different moods and motivations of human interaction with people of different castes. The *varnashrama* dharma clearly spells out the range of possible human relationships for each caste. The caste system, on the one hand, knits together the different segments of society into one whole, by providing a unitary framework in which everyone is related to everyone else in society through a religiously sanctioned social structure. On the other hand, it is divisive. It divides the whole of human society into hierarchical units where one always stands higher or lower than the others in society. Subsequently, it offers a comprehensive and a pre-programmed set of possibilities for human relationships in society. Of course, it provides divisive and discriminatory conceptions of human interactions.

Now the question that arises is: What is the relationship between caste and folk religions in this regard? Do they influence one another in a way that conditions the possibility of inter-human relationships in our society? My submission in this article is that folk religions play ambivalent roles in this area. It is true that they support the caste and thus uphold the range of inter-human relationships prescribed and proscribed by the caste system. It is also true that they unfold every now and then their potential to subvert the caste-system and thereby trigger off a certain egalitarian attitude and

humane outlook in inter-human interactions. As we proceed, both these roles will become clear.

Inter-human Relations, Sources of Resilience and Folk Religions

Kinship, caste and neighbourhood—the different forms and structures of inter-human relationships function as effective mechanism of resilience in Indian society. They provide ready-made primordial ties to cope with the crisis and the displacements occurring in the wake of floods, famines and other calamities[1]. "When an industrial strike, a communal conflict, danger due to vulnerability during a war or because of terrorism necessitates a safer haven, the kindred of recognition and co-operation provide the first refuge."[2] On such crisis situations, the relatives tend to move from cities to villages or from villages to cities, offer their help and return to their places of work when difficulties are overcome. Thus kinship mediates the rural-urban interconnections both for villagers and for city dwellers. Thus the ties of kinship and caste have provided the social base for cooperative action in the face of calamities.

Now folk religious festivals become occasions that not only bring people together as one people of a place but they also strengthen their bonding as one community. Various folk religious rites can be viewed as a process of ritualisation of their solidarity. When a shaman predicts the fortune of the village during divination or when he/she undertakes ritual hunting of village boundaries or when she or he performs rituals on behalf of the village, the sense of kinship and solidarity is evoked, recalled and reinforced, more unconsciously than consciously, through highly orchestrated and emotionally packed ritual performances.

Besides, it must be noted that "these vibrant institutions mediate between the individual and the state in organising the resources of the state to reach the village in times of crisis,"[3] and it is often during the time of folk religious festivals that an effective process of communication and negotiation takes place between the village leaders and the state machinery. For instance, in one of the folk religious festivals, I heard the shaman telling the local M.L.A (member of legislative assembly): "You have come to pray and get

the blessing of our god. But have you honoured the god and his people? During the floods, the main road to the village and to my temple are washed away. Why did your officials not care to repair it?" In an another incident, a *tashildhar* was told by the shaman: "You have come here to get darkness dispelled in your life. But you have not dispelled darkness in this village. Why have you not placed the street-light in my village?" Thus the folk religious arena operates as a site of multifunctionality: it is a point of interaction among the kindred of the village community, and a site of negotiation of power between the village community and the state; it revitalises the inter-human relationship among the villagers through its rituals and accentuates the bonding among the village community through a process of ritualisation and by projecting its collective self against the state authorities. However, this collective self is not a finished product. It is continuously in the making through co-operation between individuals and caste groups. In the rural setting, celebration of religious festivals is the most important event when collaboration between people of different backgrounds reaches its high-point

Folk Rituals as a Form of Social Net-work

Folk religious rituals and festivals become conspicuous occasions when the need for co-operation between different families and castes is felt, sought for and realized in concrete forms. They construct and confirm inter-human relationships in the given society through creative indigenous methods that generate collective sentiments among the folk, not only in the rural areas but also in the urban slum settings. Adrian Mayer takes note of the group condolences cutting across religious boundaries in a Malwa village of central India.[4] In most parts of India, both in the urban and in the rural areas, the moment the news of someone's death is heard people irrespective of caste, creed and ethnicity, gather at the house of the deceased for sharing in the grief and arranging for the funeral rites. Here rituals become not only a site for the display of human solidarity but also a point of convergence of various peoples that transcends their religious and social boundaries. Besides, in various other kinds of rituals like providing safe passage to pilgrim centres or escorting and receiving wedding parties etc... people, regardless of their social affinities, gather together at the village boundaries. Here, once again, the ritual

activity becomes a nodal point that incorporates different caste groups not only in the geographical space of the village but also in the social space of their habitat through the specialised roles they play. Chauhan draws our attention to the ritual of *dhundh* or search in Rajasthan, which is observed to take note of all births during the year, and a coconut is offered on behalf of the parents to a burning pole. Every house that has lost a member during the year is visited, to share the grief of the non-participating household and to incorporate it within the normal ritual status.[5] This again demonstrates the power of folk rituals to bring about human solidarity in society. He also takes note of the folk religious practices in Rajasthan preceding Dussehra festival wherein on the concluding day gifts are offered at three ends of the village and a procession of flag masts from all the deities that belong to different casts and clans are carried to a pond towards the south. All the villagers join the procession which culminates in the immersion of the flag masts in the pond, and a soothsayer forecasting the weather and other fortunes for the whole village in the following year. Numerous examples of this kind can be recounted all over India, and they all reveal the fact that ritual complexes set in motion sentiments of common belonging. They play a crucial role in constituting and confirming the bonds of an already existing social network. But what kind of social network do they strengthen? In whose favour do they function?etc., are crucial questions that need to be probed—which we will take up later. In the meantime, let us focus on another event which can bring about a sense of common belonging and facilitate inter-human relationships.

Pilgrimages and the Expansion of Inter-human Relationships

Pilgrimages have long been recognised, by quite a number of writers, as occasions when people of 'little republics' and 'isolated villages' are not only brought together as one people i.e., as pilgrims, but they also help people to expand their vision of life and to have fresh experiences both sacred and secular. They act as magnets for bringing together people of distant and seemingly unconnected communities into active interaction. A few deities and occasions of worship provide chances for periodic gatherings engaging sets of

people from various localities. Since the regional and folk pilgrim centres ensure greater certainty of travel and return to the village, they get repeated more frequently, reaffirming the orthogenetic nature and coherence of the region and its villages.[6] They also serve as special marketing centres at that level. For instance, Chauhan notes that people returning from Ramdeoji purchase musical instruments to be used in devotional performances back home.[7] Pushkar festival is also known for its trading activities wherein people buy animals, strings and decorations besides wool and skin; the Ganga *snan* at Garh Mukteswar near Agra is associated with trade in donkeys and bullock carts, and Sivaleperi near Tirunelveli (Tamilnadu), Bateshwar near Agra is associated with an animal fair. The important thing about such fairs is the greater participation of rural folk and special appeal they hold for women and children, all anticipating these periodic exhibitions with enthusiasm—which also helps them transcend village boundaries, meet, interact, share views and opinions with other women from other villages. Thus their human relationships get expanded—which is not so possible in the closed atmosphere of village communities. These human interactions take place more spontaneously yet intelligently in the market places while people do purchasing or in a situation of entertainment while they comment on dance, drama and ritual performances.

Folk Shrines, Communal Meals and Religious Rituals

In the folk shrines, the religious festivals of three days or eight days culminate in a communal meal, called by various names such as *pataipu*, *kazhiuttal* etc.. The cooked food offered to the deity on behalf of a village or a community is shared by all. While the communal meal reveals the intimate relationship between the deity and the people, it also helps them realise their solidarity with other human beings, transcending their socio, economic and religious affinities. A high caste can eat with the low caste, a rich person might greet a low caste, a Muslim woman will dine with a Hindu woman, who consider one another more as devotees of that deity than as people of a particular background. A sense of religious hospitality is also demonstrated while individual families cook *pongal* or a meal in the vicinities of the shrine to fulfil their religious vows. They whole-heartedly welcome all people around them—irrespective

of caste, creed, age and sex to take part in their sacred meal offered to the deity but shared by human beings. Besides, various folk religious rituals such as Pongal and Makarasankranti offer occasions to people to venerate animals like bulls and cows and offer special meals to them as a sign of gratitude for the cooperation rendered by the animals in the agricultural activities, thereby making the farmers acknowledge the interconnection and interdependence of different beings in the world

Inter-connectedness as Axial Relationships

The folk world-view locates the domain of relationships between humans, gods and nature on two axes, the horizontal and the vertical. Human beings relate to other human beings, to nature and to gods at both the levels. A member of a caste relates to the other members of his or her caste on a horizontal axis. But when a man or woman relates to the other caste men/women he/she operates on vertical relationships, because a person is always inferior or superior to 'others' in the caste hierarchy. Similarly, when people relate to nature by farming or fishing etc.. they operate on the horizontal plane. They consider it equal to them; they treat it as if it is theirs. However, there are occasions when they consider nature and its entities superior to them. They believe that nature is more powerful than them. Various folk religious rituals performed at various occasions indicate that people revere and venerate nature, and take cognisance of the fact that nature can affect the lives of people. Such ritual expresses people's belief that they are part of nature and that this belongingness to nature is primordial to their existence. Similarly, people's relationship to gods/goddesses can be placed both on the horizontal and vertical planes. On the one hand, their gods and goddesses are equal to them, as they were once humans who are now deified. Various rituals such as blood sacrifice and cooked food in fact treat the gods and goddesses as humans. But, on the other hand, these gods and goddesses are superior to them. They can control the lives of humans as they are more powerful than humans. Various folk religious rituals such as ritual hunting, possession dance and divination highlight the vertical dimension of people's relationship with gods/goddesses. Thus the folk religious world-view offers a perspective on reality in which everything is connected with and

related to everything else both vertically and horizontally. While this perspective arrays the different aspects of reality on a twin axis, it has multiple functions: it brings the different dimensions of reality together; it helps people to maintain a healthy balance between the two axes by providing different sentiments of relationality—the horizontal axis evokes the feeling of sameness with other aspects of reality, while the vertical axis triggers off sentiments of difference; it generates attitudes of friendliness, care and proximity on the one hand, and a sense of respect, awe and distance on the other. Having said this, let us focus on how concretely these characteristics are realised in human beings' relationship with nature through the mediation of folk religions.

Humans' Relationship with Nature and Folk Religion

Most folk religious rituals, especially the agrarian folk rituals fashion human relations with nature, and transmit habits of practice and attitudes of mind to succeeding generations, thereby guaranteeing the perpetuation of an ecologically-oriented religious world-view. "Religious world-views propel communities into the world with fundamental predispositions toward it because such religious world-views are primordial, all-encompassing, and unique."[8] Religious worldviews help humans fully absorb the natural world within them, thereby providing human beings "both a view of the whole and at the same time a penetrating image of their own ironic position as the beings in the cosmos who possess the capacity for symbolic thought: the part that contains the whole—or at least the picture of the whole—within itself."[9] Further, only religious perspectives enable human beings to evaluate the world of nature in terms distinct from all else. "[T]he natural world is evaluated in terms consonant with human beings' own distinctive (religious and imaginative) nature in the world, thus grounding a self-conscious relationship and a role with limits and responsibilities."[10] Religions do play a vital role in sustaining ecology. They provide essential wellsprings of human motivation and concern that shape the world as we know it. We will understand nature better when we understand the religions that form the rich soil of memory and practice, beliefs and attitudes which fashion people's relationships with the cosmos.

One of the functions of folk religious rituals in the agrarian setting is to tackle the threats and deal with the hazards that endanger the agricultural land, and to take care of the environment. The realm of folk rituals, which often emerge out of agricultural concerns, are in fact a reflection of people's keen interest in the maintenance of land and its resources. It is an ingenious invention of mechanisms and strategies by which the environment is cared for and its resources effectively managed. E.N Anderson, who has documented indigenous practices with impressive details notes that "All traditional (indigenous) societies that have succeeded in managing resources, well over time, have done it in part through religious or ritual representation of resource management"[11] He observes how, in various case studies, ecological wisdom is embedded in myths, symbols, rituals and cosmologies of these people.

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

Besides, folk religion, by its belief in the existence of different kinds of spirits, exhibits its understanding of interconnectedness in the universe. But it is commonly understood that this folk logic is often irrational and superstitious, since folk rituals seem to lead to manipulation of nature. Nevertheless, through its repertoire of rituals, folk religion embeds the '*deep time*' metaphors[12] of the interconnectedness of the universe in the collective unconscious of the cultural members. It teaches them that one aspect of reality can harm or help, make or break another dimension of reality. The project of 'modernity' has forgotten this dimension of 'inter-connectedness,' as Heidegger has pointed out. Folk religions are right in telling us *that* different dimensions of reality can affect each other, but they are perhaps inadequate in their explanation. They are not scientifically well founded (hence appear to be at fault) in their

understanding of *how* they can affect each other and *how* they can be related to through the process of ritualisation. However, some scholars have highlighted the inadequacy of science itself to understand the totality of the universe and its nitty-gritty which local forms of knowledge believe in.

> Science, with its quantum mechanics methods.. can never address the universe as a whole; and it certainly can never adequately describe the holism of indigenous knowledge and belief. In fact, science is far behind in the environmental movement. It still sees nature as objects ("components" of biodiversity is the term used in the Convention on Biological Diversity or CBD) for human use and exploitation.[13]

Yet another area where folk religion contributes to the totality and interrelatedness of reality is its concept of interdependent relationship between humans and the gods.

Interdependent Humans and Independent Gods?

In the folk religious world-view, gods of varying degrees of power can enrich or control the different aspects of human life. As gods are understood as embodied powers, i.e., substance as well as power, humans' interaction with them at the horizontal axis involves transaction of substances. Many transactions in the Hindu folk world involve substance – receiving substance, giving substance, "exchanging" substance. Because giving is valued over receiving, men must not only give to the gods (in services and food), but also receive from them. This explains the logic of '*prasadam*', the leftover of offerings made to the gods and returned to the worshipper after the gods have taken their share.[14] While the consumption of these leftovers reiterates the worshiper's inferior status—which makes him/her realise the vertical nature of one's relationship with the gods/goddesses, it also provides a means to appropriate the power of gods that can have effects on different aspects of human life, including the sphere of human relationships centred around the deity. Further, while such practices reinforce the idea of an intimate relationship between the deity and the worshippers, they also affirm and strengthen the web of interconnectedness between gods, nature and humans.

Conceptions of power operate not only in god-(wo)man and (wo)man-(wo)man relationships, but also in god-god relationships. Wadley maintains that, according to Indian conceptions, all beings are filled with some sort of power or the other but in varying degrees. Gods also differ in their possession of power. Some gods embody more powers than others. Thus, there is a hierarchy of deities in terms of power. A deity of small or limited powers is, in many senses, as much under the control of higher, more powerful beings as (wo)men believe they themselves are. If a given deity can cause conditions of distress and another can remove them, then the latter can undo the actions of the former and can therefore be regarded as more powerful. This once again highlights the idea of interconnectedness and the dependent situations of gods themselves in the folk religious sphere

Conceptions of power operate also between (wo)man and (wo)man relations in the Indian society. Men/women are also powerful beings in one way or another. They too are born with their share of powers of the universe. They too can alter their substance and thereby their powers through various means. Within the caste hierarchy, as intermediaries between (wo)men and god, Brahmins are more powerful than others, while the Dalits are the least powerful. In general, Brahmins obtain more power than others *by* their birth according to *karma* (action in their previous lives). But they must continue to maintain and increase these powers by correct actions in this life. This will prescribe one set of relationships with high castes, prescribe or proscribe another set of relationships with low castes.

In contrast, the low caste folk shamans obtain their powers through their actions in this life, by manifesting the deity to others through 'possession'. Through his mediating role of intervention through divination, which helps the devotees, both the high caste and low caste, to overcome crises in life, he/she becomes more powerful than others. Enabled by his ritual power, he establishes a new range of human relationships which other low castes do not get or obtain. Thus power, either 'given' by birth or 'acquired' through religious engagements, does play a role in constricting and constructing a range of human relationships in Indian society.

Besides, the power possessed by the folk shamans is also capable of bringing about harmony at various levels.

Sakti: A Power of Unification

From the perspective of folk-world view, the 'sakti' possessed by the oracles is pre-eminently a moral and creative, not an immoral and destructive, power. Its moral creation takes the form of unification, especially, the unification of human beings. Through divination the folk shamans try to cure the folk of the alienating physical ailments and bring about union and harmony within oneself. He or she is not only a healer of physical diseases but also a healer of interfamily squabbles, reuniting husband and wife, or in-laws or brothers or relatives.[15] Through the mechanism of *Sattiyam* (promise), the *sakti* of god/goddess is seen as a power of 'settlement' and 'union' that puts to rest all apprehensions and suspicions, and restores the relationships between people. When the folk have recourse to the deity in the event of 'marriage' or 'child-birth' etc.. the folk gods are perceived to help find the right marriage partners, and bring about life-long union between a man and a woman, or are seen as a powerful divine power that ensures the arrival of a new member into a family at the time of delivery, which gives rise to a new set of human relationships between the child and the parents, between the child and other siblings of the family, and between the child and the other members of the clan. Thus the conceptions of supernatural power in folk religions can be described as instrumentalisation of such power that operates on a set of relationships to bring about hopeful intra-human harmony and inter-human ties. Nevertheless, these powers, in the form of spirits, are also capable of challenging and straightening out the inhuman relationships in our society.

Possession and Ritual Healing: A Coping Mechanism in inhuman treatments

Sudhir Kakar, who made a psychological inquiry into India and its healing traditions, has come out with interesting findings in this matter. His study on the phenomena of the treatment of the sprits in the Hindu temples draws our attention to the involvement and integration of the patient's relatives in the healing process. Many

rituals that need to be carried out in the temple require the active participation of the family members. Thus the healing process "requires a polyphonic social drama that attempts a ritual restoration of the dialogue not only with the patient but with the family."[16] By participating in rituals together with the patients, the family members too seem to accept their share of the blame for the patient's problems. Thus, some of the folk temple healing practices implicitly acknowledge the fact that spirit possession is the result of 'lack of care' and 'rupture in family relationships' and the solution to it needs to be sought in repairing the damage done in family relationships.

Besides, a belief in 'evil spirits' as the cause for diseases prevails more among people who find themselves in socially vulnerable positions. 'Spirits' attack those who are in a liminal situation, a situation that has deep-seated uncertainties in relationships. A grieved wife, a humiliated daughter in-law or a notorious man etc.. are the ones who often get possessed. I.M. Lewis notes that spirit-attacks are found more among politically 'impotent' people. Dube observes that "The signs of physical discord are the signifiers of an aberrant world."[17] When a battered wife or a despised daughter-in-law gets possessed, she makes use of the opportunity to question the injustice done to her, to suggest measures of amendment that will repair the damage done to her and to ensure that such cruelty will not continue. Through the technique of possession, she can make a powerful statement about the inhuman relationships she finds herself in. In such situations of social liminality and political vulnerability, external agents, such as the 'evil spirits' are treated as responsible so that internal causes—insurmountable most of the times—can be coped with. "The desired transformations in the world focus upon healing as a mode of coping with and transforming an oppressive social order."[18] Folk religions are not only capable of dealing with inhuman relationships at the interpersonal level. They also can challenge the unequal and unjust relationships that exist between different social groups, which gives rise to social conflicts.

Social conflicts, Social identities and Subaltern Religions

Conflicts accompany social existence, and each society carries differences of viewpoints—and of interests—which in turn could

pull the social fabric apart. It is during the time of social conflicts that the interhuman relationships between different groups are at their lowest point, which are otherwise taken for granted in normal circumstances. During this period of social crisis, it is very conspicuous that interhuman relationship of the in-group gets strengthened while that of the in-group in question and the other opponent out-group(s) almost ceases to exit. Suspicion, hatred, aggressive feelings, hostile communications accrue between different warring communities. It is also during this time that the different stake-holders withdraw their share or hold back their contribution to society, which seriously affects the inter-dependent character of society. For instance, doctors by refusing to treat the patients, scavengers by refusing to clean etc., can show that they are capable of maligning the interconnectedness of society. Each group's share of the interdependency of society becomes a potential weapon to communicate to the larger society how serious an issue is for oneself and how important is a segment's contribution to the maintenance of the whole. However, it is to be noted that society has put in place certain mechanisms like shared ideologies and common worldviews, and institutions like caste and religion to deal with conflicts. The former in the agrarian setting provides the social integration needed for maintaining the agricultural cycle as well as full round of ritual and social activities.[19] The latter, religion in general, provides symbolic orders promulgating ideologies and practices of an integrative sort—often embedded in society's everyday practices. It supplies concepts and ideas which specify how one should act. It not only specifies the norms and courses of action, but also specifies implicitly or explicitly, the limits within which a particular norm applies.[20] Besides, folk religion, through its ritual network, does reinforce the idea of co-existence and co-operation of different hierarchical social segments. Thus it does provide a system of ordering or devices of regulation that help pre-empt the possibility of a good deal of conflict.

However, the folk religious realm is also capable of doing just the opposite. It has potentiality to destabilise the existing social orders and question their inherent inequality. They provide beliefs and practices which are instruments in the articulation of the rebel consciousness. The works of Guha, Saurbh Dube, Dirks and others,

who have studied different forms of folk religions through a series of historical events of resistance indicate that folk religion is a powerful arena, wherein subaltern consciousness is constituted and through which the agency of marginal peoples can be expressed. Theoreticians call this brand of folk religions 'subaltern religions'. They have highlighted the potential of folk religion to interrogate the existing unjust and unequal inter-human relationships in the caste hierarchy of Indian society, and to establish a more equalitarian and just socio-religious system like the Satnami movement in Chattisgarh and Ayya Vazhli Movement in Tamilnadu.

In these religions, the marginal people often make use of ecstatic religious practices such as shamanism and divination for social protest and aggressive self-assertion in peripheral situations. I. M. Lewis, who has studied the phenomenon of ecstatic religiosity, notes that "possession most generally expresses aggressive self-assertion. In peripheral cults then, this aggressive self-assertion embodies the shrill voice of protest directed against other more fortunate members of society."[21] The 'Performance' theorists, who have studied the folk religious phenomenon, also hold that through various religious performances, life is interpreted, identity is created, and the folk "create polyphonic, aesthetically stylised, idealised projections of themselves to reconfirm and celebrate their multifaceted identities."[22] What is manifest in this hidden script are the attempts and aspirations of marginal peoples for an egalitarian society wherein a genuine inter-human relationship is possible, which is otherwise absent in the present social structure.

Conclusion

To conclude, this article shows that folk religions have the potentiality to percolate the ideas of inter-relatedness at various levels of relationships: humans' relationship with other humans, human's relationship with the supernatural beings-gods, and humans' relationship with nature. Thus folk religions have given a more comprehensive and holistic picture of reality that intertwines and integrates the different dimensions of reality – the human, the cosmic and the divine into a single whole, thereby generating a balanced attitude of mind, respectful disposition of heart and caring habits of

human actions towards the whole of reality and its different dimensions. In this endeavour, folk religions were probably too careful to disrespect nature and its entities – which has left them with superstitious practices and irrational beliefs.

Notes

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 428.
4. Adrian Mayer, *Caste and Kinship in Central India—A Village and Its Region.* Delhi: Universal Book Stall, 1960 (1986).
5. Chauhan, Village Community, p. 415.
6. Ibid., p. 422.
7. Ibid.
8. Sullivan "Preface" in John A. Grim ed., *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology,* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Centre for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School. 2001: xi-xii
9. Ibid., p. xii.
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11. Anderson, *Ecologies of the Heart: Emotion, Belief, and the Environment,* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 166.
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Reality as Relationality: Some Scientific and Anthropological Reflections

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Abstract: This is an article on identity, change and relationality as constitutive of reality. Starting from the day-to-day experience of counting, the author shows that much more than individual monads or numerals (0-9), it is the positioning or patterns that matter in real life. Then he takes up one contemporary scientific theory to show the significance of relationality. Thereafter he proceeds to reflect on some anthropological issues like the renewal of the cells in the body and the notion of personality, as the focus of our attention. Finally, stressing the relationship between the scientific notion of "centre of gravity" and that of the self, and showing that the self (and reality itself) is in fact a network of interrelating entities, the author speaks of the essential relationality inherent in nature.

Keywords: identity, change, relation, reality, self.

There is an example derived from a story in Plutarch (46-126 ACE), which is often used to clarify the problem of identity and change. Theseus was a legendary king of Athens famous for many exploits, and appearing in works by many authors and on countless vases. The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned from Crete had thirty oars and was preserved by the Athenians down to the time of Demetrius Phalereus.[1] They took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place. This ship became a standing example among the philosophers for the question of things that change. Some thinkers hold the view that the ship remained the same, while others contend that it was not the same.

In the renewal process of the ship, there comes a point at which none of the original components remain. Is it then the same ship? Thomas Hobbes[2] asks: If someone went around picking up the discarded parts and constructed a (new) ship with them, which would be the better candidate for being the original ship?[3] This raises the question of whether an object which has had all its component parts replaced, remains fundamentally the same.

In this article I try to indicate that reality is basically relational. Starting from the day-to-day experience of counting, I show that much more than individual monads or numerals (0-9), it is the positioning or patterns that matter in real life. Then I take up one contemporary scientific theory to show the significance of relationality. Thereafter I proceed to reflect on some anthropological issues like the renewal of the cells in the body and the notion of personality, as the focus of our attention. Finally I indicate the relationship between the scientific notion of "centre of gravity" and that of the self and show that the self (and reality itself) is in fact a network of interrelating entities.

1. Counting the Uncountable

Pythagorean philosophy was the prime source of inspiration for Plato and Aristotle; the most influential philosophers in history![4] The school of Pythagoras was every bit a religion as it was a school of mathematics.[5] The basis of the Pythagorean philosophy is stated as follows:

> There are three kinds of men and three sorts of people that attend the Olympic Games. The lowest class is made up of those who come to buy and sell, the next above them are those who compete. Best of all, however, are those who come simply to look on. The greatest purification of all is, therefore, disinterested science, and it is the man who devotes himself to that, [sic!] the true philosopher, who has most effectually released himself from the 'wheel of birth.'[6]

The Pythagoreans believed that all relations could be reduced to number relations. The assertion that "all things are numbers"

aptly sums up their philosophy. This generalization stemmed from certain observations in music, mathematics, and astronomy. The Pythagoreans noticed that vibrating strings produce harmonious tones when the ratios of the lengths of the strings are whole numbers and that these ratios could be extended to other instruments. They knew, as did the Egyptians before them, that any triangle whose sides were in the ratio 3:4:5 was a right-angled triangle. The so-called Pythagorean theorem, that the square of the hypotenuse of a right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides, may have been known in Babylonia, where Pythagoras travelled in his youth. The Pythagoreans, however, are usually credited with the first proof of this theorem. In astronomy, the Pythagoreans were well aware of the periodic numerical relations of the heavenly bodies. The *celestial spheres* of the planets were thought to produce a harmony called the music of the spheres. Pythagoreans believed that the earth itself was in motion. Greek mathematicians, as well as the The Pythagoreans, believed that whole numbers and their ratios could account for geometrical properties. The most important discovery of this school which upset their own belief was the incommensurability of the diagonal of a square with its side. This result showed the existence of *irrational numbers.*[7]

The most eminent mathematician of the last century, Bertrand Russell, commented: "It is to this gentleman that we owe pure mathematics. The contemplative ideal – since it led to pure mathematics or contemplation – was the source of a useful activity. This increased its prestige and gave it a success in theology, in ethics, and in philosophy."[8] Mathematics, so honoured, became the model for other sciences. *Thought* became superior to the senses; *intuition* became superior to observation.[9]

Though modern science will not approve of all that Pythagoras stood for, it is evident that number played a very important role in the existence of reality as we know them.[10]

In this article, what I want to stress is the role of relationship and placement in the ordinary counting with numbers. The zero, which is credited to the Indians,[11] is crucial at least in the counting

system. What is significant is that the value of a number is based not only on its numerical value but on its positioning. Here zero constitutes an additional aspect of the number system and contributes to its meaning.[12]

Thus the number system that we use in our routine life enables us to appreciate the fact that it is the relationship and the sequencing between the entities that makes the system meaningful. Incidentally we may note that by using finite numerals by humans have devised a way of reaching the infinite. From the above observation it is evident that, though number does matter, "pattern prevails and configuration counts" both in the numerical system and in the larger life system.[13]

2. Quantum Mechanics and the Paradoxical Principle of Nonlocality

After having indicated the significance of pattern and placement in the number system, I investigate just one of the most important and apparently the weirdest scientific theory of today, quantum mechanics.[14] Being such a well-estabhlised theory, I am forced to limit myself to the discussion of a few features of quantum mechanics that point to a deeper relationality of reality.

a. Beyond Local Realism

In physics, the principle of locality affirms that distant objects cannot have direct influence on one another: an object is influenced directly only by its immediate surroundings. The principle of locality asserts that an event which happens at one place can't instantaneously affect an event in other place. For example: if a distant star were to suddenly blow up tomorrow, the principle of locality says that there is no way we could know about this event or be affected by it until something, *e.g.* a light beam, had time to travel from that star to Earth. Apart from being intuitive, locality seems to be necessary for the theory of relativity, which predicts that no signal can propagate faster than

the speed of light. This was stated as follows by Albert Einstein in his article "Quantum Mechanics and Reality":

The following idea characterises the relative independence of objects far apart in space (A and B): external influence on A has no direct influence on B; this is known as the Principle of Local Action, which is used consistently only in field theory. If this axiom were to be completely abolished, the idea of the existence of quasi-enclosed systems, and thereby the postulation of laws which can be checked empirically in the accepted sense, would become impossible.[15]

Local realism[16] is the combination of the principle of locality with the assumption that all objects must objectively have their properties already before these properties are observed. Einstein liked to say that the moon is "out there" even when no one is observing it.

Local realism is a significant feature of the classical general theory of relativity and the classical Maxwell's theory, but quantum mechanics apparently rejects this principle. Every theory (like quantum mechanics) that is compatible with violations of Bell's inequalities must abandon local realism.[17] Different interpretations of quantum mechanics reject different parts of local realism.

In most of the conventional interpretations, such as the version of the Copenhagen interpretation in which the wave-function is not real, the many-worlds interpretation, and the interpretation based on consistent histories, it is realism that is rejected. This implies that the actual definite properties of a physical system "do not exist" prior to the measurement of the wave-function. The wave-function that is integral to quantum mechanics is only interpreted as a mathematical tool used to calculate the probabilities of the outcome of the experiments.

In the version of the Copenhagen interpretation where the wave-function is real, it is the principle of locality that is violated. The wave-function is a real object that exists prior to the

measurement, but the measurement causes the wave-function to collapse which is a non-local process.

The Bohm interpretation of quantum mechanics always wants to preserve realism, and for that it needs to violate the principle of locality to achieve the required correlations. In fact, it needs to violate not only locality but also causality, which seems to imply a real conflict with the special theory of relativity because real, superluminal signals would have to be propagated.

b. Nonlocality and Action at a Distance

Coulomb's law in classical physics of electrostatics appears to be a theory with action-at-a-distance - Coulomb's law deals with charges which have always been static. Efforts to develop a theory of interaction between moving charges, electrodynamics, led to the necessity to introduce the concept of a field with physical properties. In the theory of electrodynamics as formulated in Maxwell's equations, interactions between moving charges are mediated by propagating deformations of an electromagnetic field. These deformations propagate with the speed of light and therefore do not violate special relativity. The deformations of the field can carry momentum independently, thus facilitating the conservation of angular momentum.

Newton's theory of gravity offered no prospect of identifying any mediator of gravitational interaction. His theory assumed that gravitation acts instantaneously, regardless of distance. Newton had shown mathematically that if the gravitational interaction is not instantaneous, angular momentum is not conserved . Kepler's observations gave strong evidence that in planetary motion angular momentum is conserved.

This problem has been resolved by Einstein's theory of general relativity, in which gravitational interaction is mediated by the deformation of space-time geometry. Matter warps the geometry of space-time and these effects are, as with electric and magnetic fields, propagated at the speed of light. Thus, in the presence of matter, space-time becomes non-Euclidean, resolving the

apparent conflict between Newton's proof of the conservation of angular momentum and Einstein's theory of special relativity. In Newton's theory of motion, space acts on objects, but is not acted upon by objects. In Einstein's theory of motion, matter acts upon space-time geometry, deforming it, and space-time geometry acts upon matter.

According to Albert Einstein's theory of special relativity, instantaneous action-at-a-distance was seen to violate the relativistic upper limit on the speed of the propagation of information. If one of the interacting objects were suddenly displaced from its position, the other object would feel its influence instantaneously, meaning that information had been transmitted faster than the speed of light.[18]

Thus paradoxically, quantum mechanics, unlike classical mechanics, seems to introduce the two principles of non-locality and action at a distance! Qualities which are really "spooky," but experimentally verified!

c. Spooky Action at a Distance

A physical theory is said to exhibit *nonlocality* if, in that theory, it is not possible to treat widely separated systems as independent.[19] The simplest example of a non-local system is a wave (which is not localized in space nor in time), or a wave function.[20] Because every object in our universe obeys the principle of wave-particle duality, then all objects in our universe are non-local.

Or, more technically: A physical theory is said to exhibit *nonlocality* if, in that theory, it is possible to violate a Bell inequality. This definition implies the possibility of measuring the nonlocality of a certain theory in a simple way - as the extent of the maximal possible violation of a Bell inequality. The term is most often reserved for hypothetical interactions that occur outside the backward light cone. Nonlocality does not imply a lack of causality only in the case when "ethereal," not "causal," information is transmitted between systems. The theory of special

relativity shows that in the case where causal information is transmitted at superluminal rates, causality is violated. For example, if information could be exchanged at superluminal rates, it would be possible to arrange for you to be killed before your grandfather is born, which leads to causal paradoxes. Some effects that appear nonlocal in quantum mechanics may actually obey locality, e.g. quantum entanglement. Entanglement produces non-classical correlations between spatially separated particles in specific states, and that is the counter-intuitive but relational dimension of quantum mechanics.

Quantum mechanics frequently uses the notion of two paired or entangled particles. Quantum entanglement is a strange property that links particles, however far apart they are. Measuring a quantum property on one particle immediately affects the other. Nonlocality in quantum mechanics refers to the property of entangled quantum states in which both the entangled states "collapse" simultaneously upon measurement of one of their entangled components, regardless of the spatial separation of the two states. This "spooky action at a distance"[21] is the content of Bell's theorem and the EPR paradox.[22]

In physics, action at a distance is the interaction of two objects which are separated in space with no known mediator of the interaction. This term was used most often with early theories of gravity and electromagnetism to describe how an object could "know" the mass (in the case of gravity) or charge (in electromagnetism) of another distant object.

Einstein was one of the first to notice very strange features of entanglement. He used it to criticise the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, on the ground that entanglement implied what he called "spooky action at a distance".[23] His claim was addressed by Bell in 1964 as indicated in the following section.[24]

d. Bell's Theorem: Relatedness of Reality

Bell's theorem is the most famous legacy of the late Northern Irish physicist John Bell.[25] It is notable for showing that the predictions of quantum mechanics are not intuitive. It is simple and elegant, and touches upon fundamental philosophical issues that relate to modern physics. Bell's theorem states: "*No physical theory of local hidden variables can ever reproduce all of the predictions of quantum mechanics.*"[26] In simpler words, Bell proved that the results predicted by quantum mechanics could not be explained by any theory which preserved locality. In other words, if you set up an experiment like that described by Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen, and you get the results predicted by quantum mechanics, then there is no way that locality could be true. Years later experiments were done, and the predictions of quantum mechanics proved to be accurate. In short, locality is dead.

So Bell's Theorem asserts that reality must be non-local and it is remarkable for several reasons:

1. It is a mathematical proof, not a conjecture or speculation;
2. It is a proof about Reality not Appearances. How often does one find such a window into the nature of reality?
3. It is counter-intuitive: why should everywhere local facts need to be supported by a non-local reality?

Irish physicist John Stewart Bell considered the EPR system and showed with a devilishly clever proof that all conceivable models of Reality must incorporate this instant connection. What Bell showed is that despite the fact that Relativity prohibits instantaneous connections, despite the fact that no such connections have ever been observed either in EPR experiments or any other, despite the fact that quantum theory itself predicts no observable instant connections, despite all these considerations from Fact and Theory, the Reality of the EPR particles is such that their initial contact must create an instantaneous voodoo-style link between them below the level of appearances

Current physical theories incorporate the upper limit on propagation of interaction as one of their basic building blocks, hence ruling out instantaneous action-at-a-distance. At the same time, however, such instantaneous action at a distance appears to be an essential feature of some very fundamental quantum mechanical effects like entanglement and quantum nonlocality.

The question of whether this 'spooky action' at a distance constitutes a violation of the relativistic upper limit on the propagation of interaction is not straightforward. According to the laws of quantum mechanics, entanglement cannot be employed for relaying information from one place to another. Such an interpretation of quantum mechanics also creates the problem of indistinguishability between particles.

Thus quantum mechanics, one of the "most successful theories"[27] in the whole history of science, poses serious questions on the nature of reality and specifically on the localized, monad nature of matter. One can imagine that the dual nature of light can easily be extended to matter. This implies that light (and matter and therefore reality as such) can be simultaneously considered a wave and a particle.[28] Thus the wave nature helps us to appreciate the "waving nature" or interacting aspect of reality. Thus quantum mechanics tells us that our intuitive understanding of reality does not always correspond to it and that the principle of locality is not always obeyed! This implies one of the other strange results of modern physics, which is that the act of measuring a property always changes the system you are measuring. In other words, "spooky action at a distance is part of nature." Thus the universe is 'nonlocal at the level of individual events'.[29]

3. Antropological Insights

After having studied some of the scientific insights that indicate the relationality of nature, I take up some specific human issues: that of the body and the self. Here too I attempt to indicate the focusing aspect of human being, that open ourselves to a interlacing and relational dimension of the human being.

a. Our Skin Sheds Itself...

Recently, *The New York Times* published an article which posited that whatever be one's age, the body is many years younger. In fact, even the middle-aged may be just 10 years old or less, as far as the body cells are concerned. This arises from the fact that most of the body's tissues are under constant renewal and has been underlined by a novel method of estimating the age of human cells. Its inventor, a Swedish scientist, Jonas Frisen, believes that the average age of all the cells in an adult's body may turn out to be as young as 7 to 10 years. But Dr. Frisen, a stem cell biologist at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, has also discovered a fact that explains why people behave their birth age, not the physical age of their cells: a few of the body's cell types endure from birth to death without renewal, and this special minority includes some or all of the cells of the cerebral cortex.

In the scientific circles, it was a dispute over whether the cortex ever makes any new cells that got Dr. Frisen looking for a new way of figuring out how old human cells really are. Existing techniques depend on tagging DNA with chemicals but are far from perfect. Wondering if some natural tag might already be in place, Dr. Frisen recalled that the nuclear weapons tested above ground until 1963 had injected a pulse of radioactive carbon 14 into the atmosphere. Breathed in by plants worldwide and eaten by animals and people, the carbon 14 gets incorporated into the DNA of cells each time the cell divides and the DNA is duplicated.

Most molecules in a cell are constantly being replaced but the DNA is not. All carbon 14 in a cell's DNA is acquired on the cell's birth date, the day its parent cell divided. Hence the extent of carbon 14 enrichment could be used to figure out the cell's age, Dr. Frisen surmised. In practice, the method has to be used on tissues, not individual cells, because not enough carbon 14 gets into any single cell to signal its age. Dr. Frisen then worked out a scale for converting carbon 14 enrichment into calendar dates by measuring the carbon 14 incorporated into individual tree rings in Swedish pine trees.

Having validated the method with various tests, he and his colleagues have the results of their first tests with a few body tissues. Cells from the muscles of the ribs, taken from people in their late 30's, have an average age of 15.1 years, they say. The epithelial cells that line the surface of the gut have a rough life and are known by other methods to last only five days. Ignoring these surface cells, the average age of those in the main body of the gut is 15.9 years, Dr. Frisen found. Similarly, the human body constantly creates, from materials consumed, new component parts and cells, as old cells die. The average age of cells in an adult body may be less than 10 years.[30]

This team then turned to the brain, the renewal of whose cells has been a matter of much contention. The prevailing belief, by and large, is that the brain does not generate new neurons, once its structure is complete, except in two specific regions the olfactory bulb that mediates the sense of smell, and the hippocampus, where initial memories of faces and places are laid down. This consensus view was challenged a few years ago by Elizabeth Gould of Princeton, who reported finding new neurons in the cerebral cortex, along with the elegant idea that each day's memories might be recorded in the neurons generated that day.

Dr. Frisen's method enables all regions of the brain to be dated to see if any new neurons are generated. So far he has tested only cells from the visual cortex. He finds these are exactly of the same age as the individual, showing that new neurons are not generated after birth in this region of the cerebral cortex, or at least not in significant numbers. Cells of the cerebellum are slightly younger than those of the cortex, which fits with the idea that the cerebellum continues developing after birth.

Another contentious issue is whether the heart generates new muscle cells after birth. The conventional view that it does not has recently been challenged by Dr. Piero Anversa of the New York Medical College in Valhalla. Dr. Frisen has found the heart as a whole is generating new cells, but he has not yet measured the turnover rate of the heart's muscle cells.[31]

Thus the anthropological findings regarding our own bodies are interesting. On the average our body cells last about ten years. At the same time there are specific cells that last from the beginning of our life. This throws light on how dependent our bodies are on the changing cells. The interesting question that comes out of this investigation is: if our cells keep on changing, what gives us a permanent self or identity? Are our bodies like the ship of Theseus, which is given the same identity only by external observers?

b. The Centre, that Is the Self

What is a self? I will try to answer this question by developing an analogy with something much simpler, something which is nowhere near as puzzling as a self, but has some properties in common with selves. This leads us to investigate the phenomenon of self or personhood, using another scientific notion of "centre of gravity." In physics, the centre of gravity is an imaginary point in a body of matter where, for convenience in certain calculations, the total weight of the body may be thought to be concentrated. The concept is sometimes useful in designing static structures (e.g., buildings and bridges) or in predicting the behaviour of a moving body when it is acted on by gravity.[32]

The centre of gravity, a well-behaved Newtonian concept, is not an atom or a subatomic particle or any other physical item in the world. It has no mass; it has no colour; it has no physical properties at all, except for spatio-temporal location. It is a fine example of what Hans Reichenbach would call an *abstractum*. It is a purely abstract object. It is a theorist's fiction. It is not one of the real things in the universe in addition to the atoms. But it is a fiction that has a neatly defined, well delineated and well behaved role within physics.

This theoretical *abstractum* is a robust and familiar idea. Consider a chair. Like all other physical objects, it has a centre of gravity. If you start tipping it, you can tell more or less accurately whether it would start to fall over or fall back in place

if you let go of it. We're all quite good at making predictions involving centres of gravity and finding explanations about when and why things fall over. Place a book on the chair. It, too, has a centre of gravity. If you start to push it over the edge, we know that at some point it will fall. It will fall when its centre of gravity is no longer directly over a point of its supporting base (the chair seat). The key terms in it are all interdefinable. And yet it can also figure in explanations that appear to be causal explanations of some sort. We ask "Why doesn't that lamp tip over?" We reply "Because its centre of gravity is so low." Is this a causal explanation? It can compete with explanations that are clearly causal, such as: "Because it's nailed to the table," or "Because it's supported by wires."

We can manipulate centres of gravity. For instance, I change the centre of gravity of a water pitcher easily, by pouring some of the water out. So, although a centre of gravity is a purely abstract object, it has a spatio-temporal character, which I can affect by my actions. It has a history, but its history can include some rather strange episodes. Although it moves around in space and time, its motion can be discontinuous. For instance, if I were to take a piece of bubble gum and suddenly stick it on the pitcher's handle, that would shift the pitcher's centre of gravity from point A to point B. But the centre of gravity would not have to move through all the intervening positions. As an *abstractum*, it is not bound by all the constraints of physical travel.

Consider the centre of gravity of a slightly more complicated object. Suppose we wanted to keep track of the career of the centre of gravity of some complex machine with lots of turning gears and camshafts and reciprocating rods – the engine of a steam-powered unicycle, perhaps. And suppose our theory of the machine's operation permitted us to plot the complicated trajectory of the centre of gravity precisely. And suppose that we discovered that in this particular machine the trajectory of the centre of gravity was precisely the same as the trajectory of a particular iron atom in the crankshaft. Even if this were discovered, we would be wrong even to *entertain* the hypothesis

that the machine's centre of gravity was (identical with) that of the iron atom. That would be a "category mistake". A centre of gravity is *just* an *abstractum*. It's just a fictional object. But when I say it's a fictional object, I do not mean to disparage it; it's a wonderful fictional object, and it has a perfectly legitimate place within serious, sober physical science.

A self is also an abstract object, a theorist's fiction. The theory of the self may be regarded as part of psychology, phenomenology or hermeneutics, or soul-science (*Geisteswissenschaft*). The physicist does an *interpretation* of the chair and its behaviour, and comes up with the theoretical abstraction of a centre of gravity, which is then very useful in characterizing the behaviour of the chair in the future, under a wide variety of conditions. The hermeneuticist or phenomenologist or anthropologist sees some rather more complicated things moving about in the world – human beings and animals –and is faced with a similar problem of interpretation. It turns out to be theoretically perspicuous to organize the interpretation around a central abstraction: each person has a *self* (in addition to a centre of gravity). In fact we have to posit selves for *ourselves* as well. The theoretical problem of self-interpretation is at least as difficult and important as the problem of other-interpretation.[33]

I propose that we take this analogy seriously. "Where is the self?" a materialist philosopher or neuroscientist might ask. It is a "category mistake" to start looking around for the self in the brain. Unlike centres of gravity, whose sole property is their spatio-temporal position, selves have a spatio-temporal position that is only grossly defined. Roughly speaking, in the normal case if there are three human beings sitting on a park bench, there are three selves there, all in a row and roughly equidistant from the fountain they face. Brain research may permit us to make some more fine-grained localizations, but the capacity to achieve *some* fine-grained localization does not give anyone grounds for supposing that the process of localization can continue indefinitely and that the day will finally come when we

can say, "That cell there, right in the middle of the hippocampus (or wherever) – that's the self!"

The chief fictional character at the centre of that autobiography is one's *self*. And if we still want to know what the self *really* is, we are making a "category mistake". After all, when a human being's behavioural control system becomes seriously impaired, it can turn out that the best hermeneutical story we can tell about that individual says that there is more than one character "inhabiting" that body. This is quite possible. All that is required is that the story doesn't cohere around *one* self, *one* imaginary point, but coheres around *two* different (even conflicting) imaginary points

We sometimes encounter psychological disorders, or surgically created disunities, where the only way to interpret or make sense of them is to posit in effect two centres of gravity, two selves. One isn't creating or discovering a little bit of "ghost in the machine" stuff in doing that. One is merely creating another abstraction. It is an abstraction one uses as part of a theatrical apparatus to understand, predict, and make sense of the behaviour of some very complicated things. The fact that these abstract selves seem so robust and real is not surprising. They are much more complicated theoretical entities than a centre of gravity. And remember that even a centre of gravity has a fairly robust presence, once we start playing around with it. But no one has ever seen or ever will see a centre of gravity. As David Hume noted, no one has ever seen a self, either.

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.... If anyone, upon serious and unprejudiced reflection, thinks he has a different notion of *himself*, I must confess I can no longer reason with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may,

perhaps, perceive something simple and continued, which he calls *himself*; though I am certain there is no such principle in me.[34]

Though the self is not empirically perceivable, we are aware of it and we are to some extent our own selves. Thus the self is an indicator of the relationship that involves our body and goes beyond it. Further, it is insightful to see the relationship between the self and one's body. Obviously, without the material body, there is no centre of gravity and so without the physical body, there is no self. And the self may be visualized also as the "focusing centre" that deals with the interrelationship between various physical parts of the body. Since it is not itself physical, it can balance the web of relationship originating from various parts of the body. Thus the self may be seen as the best example of the relationality of reality.

4. Conclusion

Starting with Pythagoras, we saw the importance of numbers (monads) and then went on to see how we can have a concept of infinity using finite numbers. Here the placement or pattern is crucial to draw the significance of the number system. Then we proceeded to see the intricate and highly successful theory of quantum mechanics which leads us beyond local realism. This implies that, according to quantum mechanics, in reality action at a distance is possible, which is truly "spooky." Since such spooky interactions are verified experimentally, all that we can say is that however counter-intuitive it may be, reality is much more profound, paradoxical and relational than we can imagine. Further, quantum mechanics implies that nonlocal at the level of individual events, that is, there is an inherent relationship in reality which goes beyond any local boundaries. This is truly a metaphysical relationship, going beyond the appearances. After the scientific understanding I discussed two basic anthropological domains: renewing of our physical body approximately every ten years and the relationship of the centre of gravity to the self. In all these undertakings, I have tried to illustrate that relationality is intrinsic to reality. The whole of the cosmos is interconnected,

just like the human body, which through networking and interconnection form the person or self that I am.

Therefore, a monadic understanding of ourselves as entities may be practical at times, but is definitely inadequate to cope with the complexities of contemporary times. We are the ever widening horizon of our consciousness, which definitely includes our physical entity and incorporates the intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions of being alive. In this sense we are not mere individuals, but patterns or relationships. We could very well describes ourselves as the nodes of the network or the focus of interactions.

From a religious point of view, it is easy to see that when Christians affirm God as love, they proclaim the essential relational nature of God. In the same sense, the doctrine of creation is essentially affirming an intrinsic relationship of dependence between the Creator and creation. In this sense without belittling the monadic dimension of reality, contemporary science rediscovers the relational aspect of reality, which vibes very well with the deepest religious insights. Humans are thus not individual entities but horizons that merge and fuse with similar horizons. Such an enhancing vision throws some light on our understanding of the self and personal identity. Therefore counting the uncountable is useful at times, but we need to realize that counting prepossess something more than the countables!

Notes

1. Demetrius Phalereus (345283 BCE), an eminent Athenian orator, statesman, and historian, born at Phalerus, a seaport of Athens; was held in high honour in Athens for a time as its political head, but fell into dishonour, after which he lived retired and gave himself up to literary pursuits; died from the bite of an asp. See http://www.fromoldbooks.org/Wood-NuttallEncyclopaedia/d/demetriusphalereus.html.. See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theseus.
2. *De Corpore*, 2, 11, 7.
3. http://www.answers.com/topic/ship-of-theseus#wp-_note-2. Since all the websites have been addressed in June-July, 2007 the exact date of accessing is not given for other online references that follows.

4. Pythagoras (580-500 BCE) was born in Samos on the western coast of what is now Turkey. He was reportedly the son of a substantial citizen, Mnesarchos. He met Thales, likely as a young man, who recommended he travel to Egypt. It seems certain that he gained much of his knowledge from the Egyptians, as had Thales before him. Probably because of continual conflicts and strife in Samos, Pythagoras settled in Croton, on the eastern coast of Italy, a place of relative peace and safety. Even so, just as he arrived, Croton lost a war to neighboring city Locri, but soon thereafter defeated utterly the luxurious city of Sybaris. This is where Pythagoras began his community or school.
5. For example, here are some of the rules he enjoined on his followers: To abstain from beans. Not to pick up what has fallen. Not to touch a white cock. Not to stir the fire with iron. Do not look in a mirror beside a light. Vegetarianism was strictly practiced probably because Pythagoras preached the transmigration of souls. The school of Pythagoras represents the mystic tradition in the scientific!
6. http://www.math.tamu.edu/~don.allen/history/pythag/pythag.html.
7. http://www5.geometry.net/detail/scientists/pythagoras_of_samos.html
8. Bertrand Russell, http://www.math.tamu.edu/~don.allen/history/pythag/pythag.html.
9. http://www.math.tamu.edu/~don.allen/history/pythag/pythag.html.
10. Here it is important that the atomic number and the basic constants of nature may be alluded as examples.
11. In around 500 ACE Aryabhata devised a number system which has no zero yet was a positional system. He used the word "kha" for position and it would be used later as the name for zero. There is evidence that a dot had been used in earlier Indian manuscripts to denote an empty place in positional notation. It is interesting that the same documents sometimes also used a dot to denote an unknown where we might use x. Later Indian mathematicians had names for zero in positional numbers yet had no symbol for it. The first record of the Indian use of zero which is dated and agreed by all to be genuine was written in 876. see J J O'Connor and E F Robertson, "The History of Zero" http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/HistTopics/Zero.html.
12. Another related notion which may be used to draw the significance of position is obviously the use of alphabets in coining words. More on it will be taken up by me in another forthcoming article.
13. The same could be said of the genetic coding in biology and the periodic table of elements in chemistry. What really matters in the genetic code is not merely the number of genes, but how they are located or their sequence.

14. Physicsweb describes quantum mechanics as "weird and wonderful." It goes on; "Quantum mechanics is the most accurate theory we have to describe the world ... Quantum mechanics is a great deal more than a theory; it is a whole new way of looking at the world. When it was developed in the 1920s, quantum mechanics was viewed primarily as a way of making sense of the host of observations." http://physicsweb.org/articles/world/12/12/19. See also D Lindley 1996 Where Does the Weirdness Go? Basic Books, New York.

15. "Quanten-Mechanik und Wirklichkeit", *Dialectica* 2:320-324, 1948, accessed at http://www.pkblogs. com/abraxas 23/2005 /10/principle -of-locality. html.

16. In philosophy this is opposed to constructivism, which is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own "rules" and "mental models," which we use to make sense of our experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences. See Jacqueline Brooks and Martin Brooks, *In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms*, 1993.

17. Most physicists believe that experiments have demonstrated such violations, but some local realists dispute the claim, in view of the recognised loopholes in the tests.

18. Any means of communication faster than the speed of light of prohibited by Einstein's theory of relativity. See http://www.pkblogs.com/abraxas23/2005/10/principle-of-locality.html.

19. Gary Felder, "Spooky Action at a Distance: An Explanation of Bell's Theorem" http://www4.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/kenny/papers/bell.html.

20. The existence of the wave function collapse is required in the Copenhagen interpretation; the so-called transactional interpretation and in a "spiritual interpretation" in which consciousness causes collapse. On the other hand, the collapse is considered as redundant or just an optional approximation in interpretations based on consistent histories, the many-worlds interpretation the Bohm interpretation and the Ensemble Interpretation.

21. "Spukhafte Fernwirkung". In 1982 the French scientist Alain Aspect verified this experimentally. Today this theory has been proved beyond doubt.

22. In 1935 Albert Einstein and two colleagues, Boris Podolsky and Nathan Rosen (EPR) developed a thought experiment to demonstrate what they felt was a lack of completeness in quantum mechanics. This so-called "EPR paradox" has led to much subsequent, and still on-going, research.

23. As indicated in the previous note, the origins of this topic is a famous paper by Einstein, Rosen and Podolsky (EPR) in 1935; its title was *Can Quantum-Mechanical Description of Physical Reality be Considered Complete?* They considered what Einstein called the "spooky action-at-a-distance" that

seems to be part of Quantum Mechanics, and concluded that the theory must be incomplete if not outright wrong. As you probably already know, Einstein never did accept Quantum Mechanics. One of his objections was that "God does not play at dice with the universe." Bohr responded: "Quit telling God what to do!"

24. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonlocality.
25. In 1975 eminent scientist Henry P. Stapp called Bell's Theorem "the most profound discovery of science." See http://physicsworld.com/cws/article/print/1332.
26. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bell%27s_theorem.
27. The prestigious *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* states: "As the theory of the atom, quantum mechanics is perhaps the most successful theory in the history of science." http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/quantum mechanics-copenhagen/. In the same vein the *Encyclopedia Britannica* says: "n spite of the overwhelming practical success of quantum mechanics, the foundations of the subject contain unresolved problems." See http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9110312/quantum-mechanics.
28. If light is a wave, but what kind of a wave is it? An ocean wave is not a thing, it is a property of water, something that water does. If there is no water there is no wave. So if light was a wave, what was waving? This was the most urgent question that physicists were asking. By the time an adequate answer was found, light would end up being described as both a particle and a wave. Yet how could it be both? This would be the first of many paradoxes that would begin to question our common sense notion of how the universe operates.
29. Another way of relating matter and energy (E=mc^2) made famous by Einstein is not necessarily related to our interest of relating matter to relationship. It is true that in the physical world, energy causes interaction and relationship, but energy and relationship cannot be equated.
30. Nicholas Wade, "Your Body is Younger than you Think" http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/02/ science/02cell.html?ex= 1280635200 &en=65bd5e6cef9fec79&ei= 5088 &partner=rssnyt&emc=rss. Jonas Frisen, a stem cell specialist, after having conducted experiments with Carbon 14 dating on DNA, concludes that the average age of all the cells in an adult's body may turn out to be as young as 7 to 10 years.
31. Nicholas Wade, "Your Body Is Younger Than You Think" *The New York Times* August 2, 2005.
32. http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9037797/centre-of-gravity.
33. http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/selfctr.htm.
34. *Treatise on Human Nature*, I, IV, sec. 6.

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Christian Reflections on Development

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Abstract: Development is an epithet that is often used when referring to the progress of countries that are economically disadvantaged. It presupposes a world in which disparity exists and where the right of disadvantaged countries to remedy their condition is recognized by those who have it in their power to help. It would include creating the conditions and structures for growth, advancement in culture and learning, a higher standard of living, being self-reliant and providing more than merely subsistence level resources for citizens in the developing countries. This article seeks to explore some humane and Christian perspectives that enable development to be fulfilling and, therefore, humanizing. We begin by asking about the meaning of development. The author concludes the article by asserting that the true practice of religion encourages accountability to at least three constituencies: the nations that are being developed, the nations that are participating in the development process and God who, as source and goal of humankind, is experienced in the different religions in the world.

Keywords: Populorum Progressio, Pacem in Terris, meaning of development, Papal teachings on development, Christian perspectivdes on development, common good, sharing, accountability.

The encyclical of pope Paul VI *Populorum Progressio* (The Development of Peoples) deals specifically with the development of peoples as it takes place in the developing nations.[1] Understandably, the pope does not deal with development as a social scientist would but as a person who authoritatively explicates the Christian view of development. Further, he treats of development comprehensively so that the ultimate meaningfulness of human development is viewed as humankind's forward march to its God-appointed and God–directed destiny. The occasion of its issuance is used also to refer to other Church documents dealing with social

questions: the obligation of the 'haves' to the 'have-nots', of the developed nations to the less developed nations, and of the less humanized context to the more humanized context for human growth.

Development is an epithet that is often used when referring to the progress of countries that are economically disadvantaged. It presupposes a world in which disparity exists and where the right of disadvantaged countries to remedy their condition is recognized by those who have it in their power to help. It would include creating the conditions and structures for growth, advancement in culture and learning, a higher standard of living, being self-reliant and providing more than merely subsistence level resources for citizens in the developing countries.

In the first world, countries possess the ability to offer their citizens not only the wherewithal to survive but also the opportunity and requisite means to realize their human potential to a considerable degree. For countries in the third world development is often seen as a process of catching up with the developed countries since the first world is viewed as having better attained the goals that third world countries admire: money power, hegemonic status and access to avenues of power and authority in the affairs of the world.[2]

Developing countries often have economies that are dependent on agriculture though some have an industrial base as well, e.g. India and Brazil. The following paragraph well describes the significant characteristics of developing countries:

> They are characterized by very low income per capita (by Western standards), and therefore low savings. Development has often been held back by rapid population growth, crop failure, drought, war, and insufficient demand (at a reasonable price) for their commodities, crops and goods. In addition to many bilateral aid agreements, there are the aid programmes of the international agencies, such as the United Nations, Commonwealth Development Corporation, Alliance for Progress, and the US Aid. There are also many privately-funded charities with aid programmes. Western banks have lent large sums to the developing nations and overdue debt servicing has proved to be a problem.[3]

It is a moot point, however, if development should be restricted to merely realizing the goals pursued by the countries termed 'developed'. Human potential does not come to its full realization by satisfying merely material needs as listed above, even when these needs are seen to be the sole concerns of the developed nations. Human persons are transcendent, and the spiritual in all humankind must be addressed if development is to be truly human. Religion plays an important part in manifesting and articulating the transcendent aspect of human persons and the need to respond to the questions raised. Christian anthropology—as part of Christian theological reflection—seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of the human phenomenon in terms of ultimate meaning. From a Christian perspective, developmental concerns include even transcendental factors in addition to those that can be classified as material and temporal since Christian anthropology is a

> ...critical reflection on the origin, purpose, and destiny of human life in the light of Christian belief. In distinction from cultural and physical anthropology, which, as disciplines of a social science, undertake empirical analyses of specific human societies, theo logical anthropology employs a variety of methods (e.g. transcendental reflection, historical investigation, phenomenological enquiry) in its study of Scripture, the Jewish-Christian tradition, the findings of the social sciences, contemporary life and thought (e.g. philosophy), and the Church's experience (e.g. worship, communal life, and service).[4]

Development must affect the total person both at the level of the individual and the community. In addition to being concerned about GNP, balance of payments, foreign exchange reserves and growth rate in a country, it should envisage development as actively linked with the world of the spirit, ethical norms, faith, the building up of persons and communities, and the practice of values that witness to the divine. Besides, development must be seen as a parametrical concept since deficiencies that must be overcome in the world are many and varied. One may begin by categorizing a country as economically underdeveloped in relation to another that is an economic powerhouse. However, it is possible that the developed country could be classified as underdeveloped as far as its cultural and ethical standards are concerned. In each case, which are the

factors that enable us to discover authentic development taking place in the world? How would religion, specifically Christianity, contribute to the process of development taking place?

This article seeks to explore some humane and Christian perspectives that enable development to be fulfilling and, therefore, humanizing. We begin by asking about the meaning of development.

Part One: Development: Its Meaning

The Victorian Era marked a period in the 19th century when Victoria (1819-1901) was queen of England (1837-1901) and mechanization was introduced into industrial production with spectacular results as far as manufacturing goods for mass markets was concerned. The march of progress was seen as unstoppable, and England became the dominant colonial power in the world. The Great Exhibition of 1851 held in the Crystal Palace gave expression to the accomplishments and achievements of the country. Science and technology were viewed as passports to development both in England and throughout the world, and the human cost of such development was forgotten.[5]

One can be grateful that Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903) issued *Rerum Novarum* on May 15, 1891 and that this was the first major encyclical to address the concerns of the workers who suffered from the conditions created by the Industrial Revolution. From that time until the pontificate of pope John Paul II, the popes have often called attention to development and the rights and duties of both the developed and the developing countries. However, it was Karl Marx who by analyzing the dynamics of industrial production first drew attention to the plight of the worker. The first volume of *Das Kapital* (1867) preceded *Rerum Novarum* by 24 years, and while one can disagree with Marx's ideology and pronouncements on religion, he must be credited for his concern for the worker who paid the cost for progress in the Victorian Era.[6] After 74 years, the prophetic utterances about communism made by Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) were shown to be period-bound and largely inaccurate as to the spread of communism. However, the cause of the proletariat, and by implication of the disadvantaged and oppressed, was well served and set in motion a series of papal

documents that addressed profound questions to the economically developed countries and reminded them of their obligations towards those that were developing.

The 20th century has been a time of great advance in the sphere of science and technology. But the euphoria generated by an era of unprecedented inventions, space travel, the emergence of independent states, and visions of the world as a 'global village', has been tempered by two world wars, the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic weapons, the Cold War and fundamentalist militancy. Progress in the fields of science and technology did not mean automatically that the world had become a safer place in which the human family could reside in peace and tranquillity. Attitudes of mind and heart needed to be cultivated so that care, love, hope, ethics and religion would be fostered and practised by all men and women.

A sustainable future for the world as a whole—especially as championed by the votaries of justice, peace and ecology—continues to be seen as a necessary prerequisite for development. It must take into account the need to build up the family of humankind into a community of shared values that transcends the world of mere materialism. It is then that development can take on a human face, that progress will be understood as more than mere economic gain or increase, and men and women will enjoy a Spirit-filled destiny in the world.

In the past, tracing the history of peoples that were Europe-centred was seen as synonymous with plotting the course of humankind's development. In doing so, development meant the growth of learning, appreciation for order and the rule of law, the extension of European culture to those outside Europe and, later on, the new world, and the exercise of political influence over the colonies subjugated by Portugal and Spain. In a word, development was confined to a particular society and little attention was paid to the advancement of those who were colonized. The Second World War changed the political map of the world but countries that gained political independence did not have the means to satisfy the needs and wants of their citizens.

The setting up of the United Nations on October 24, 1945 is a milestone in the history of the world. The aim of the UN body was to preserve world peace and foster international cooperation. While

international cooperation among the nations began through the different bodies in the UN, the Church in its social teaching drew attention to Christian principles that would make for authentic development. In the next section, Christianity's contribution to development—especially in the papal teachings—will be reviewed.

Part Two: Development and Papal Teachings

Today's use of the term 'development' is of recent origin. Even so, it has undergone changes in its meaning. After the Second World War it was focused on nations that were economically poor; later—and taking its cue from humanists—it was applied to fostering culture, human rights and justice. Gradually it began to touch on human fulfilment as a whole.

> For the Christian humanist, development will mean even more than making of this world a livable place with decent human conditions, a fair sharing of riches, and freedom and opportunity for all. In a deeper sense humanization will not be completed until the cosmos itself becomes man's, subject to his domination, stamped in his image. For, man's vocation (we have the authority of Genesis for it) embraces the transforming of this world. Genesis 9,2-3. Man is called to be the cosmos' saviour. Through his spirit man must give form to the world and to its forces. Through himself, he must rationalize and spiritualize his world. As priest of the world, man stands at the altar of the universe to offer creation, through Jesus the Recapitulator of all things, back to God, its Creator. Through man, in Teilhard de Chardin's eloquent expression, the cosmos finds spiritual unity with the Omega.[7]

The newer understanding of development was well articulated by Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia in July 1968 when he addressed the World Council of Churches at Uppsala:

> The process of development implies a total transformation. It involves in developing countries the shedding of traditional values, beliefs, and indeed, behaviour relative to membership of traditional organizations or socio-economic and political groups...It

involves the birth of new values and beliefs in relation to life and new institutions which give expression to new ideas and principles.[8]

Ivan Illich views the Christian Church as making a special and specific contribution to development as a whole:

> Only the Church can "reveal" to us the full meaning of development. To live up to this task, the Church must recognize that she is growing powerless to orient or produce development. The less efficient she is as a power the more effective she can be as a celebrant of the mystery.
>
> This statement, if understood, is resented equally by the hierarch who wants to justify collections by increasing his service to the poor, and by the rebel-priest who wants to use his collar as an attractive banner in agitation. Both make a living off the social service the Church renders and both in my mind symbolize obstacles to the specific function of the Church, which is the annunciation of the Gospel.
>
> This specific function of the Church must be a contribution to development which could not be made by any other institution. I believe that this contribution is faith in Christ.[9]

It would be difficult to unearth the concept of development, as we know it today, from the books of the bible. In the Old Testament, we find different and sociologically distinct groups referred to as "peoples" but in contrast to these there is the people of Israel. Israel is conscious of itself as called by God to be his people. The events that take place in the national history of Israel slowly lead them to grasp the meaningfulness of their status as God's people and this status will find its eschatological fulfilment in the New Testament. But society in the past was mainly agrarian and not as mobile as today's communities that are highly industrialized, governed mainly through democratic structures and situated in a world that has been brought together by trade, culture and interests.

The New Testament too contains little evidence of a developmental process that is sketched out. It remains a testament that people with faith receive and witness to in their lives. One looks

in vain in the New Testament to discover a blueprint of how development should be envisioned and put into practice. Just as Jesus leaves us a vision for the Church but not a blueprint, so too the teachings of Jesus and the inspiration they provide lead one to engage in developmental activity. In doing so one is being faithful to the gospel imperative of loving one's neighbour as oneself. The biblical vision of what Jesus taught did not canonize any one structure of secular authority.[10]

As the enduring witness to the salvific event of Jesus Christ in the world, the Church continues to urge peoples and nations to commit themselves to developmental activity as a sign of God's Reign taking more definite shape in the world. Beginning with Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, the social doctrine of the Church as reflected in succeeding papal encyclicals makes it abundantly clear that development is an obligatory task of developed countries. At the same time, they caution against understanding development in purely materialist terms. Subsequent encyclicals on social questions have clarified the stand of the Church on the means that can be employed in the process of development.

Hailed even in the Soviet Union as of moment, pope John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (May 15, 1961) confirmed the efforts of persons who grouped themselves in society and formed social institutions that were recognized by law (no. 59). Such associations were seen as benefitting the individual, who would otherwise have found it difficult to act on his own.

> (59) Certainly one of the principal characteristics which seem to be typical of our age is an increase in social relationships, in those mutual ties, that is, which grow daily more numerous and which have led to the introduction of many and varied forms of associations in the lives and activities of citizens, and to their acceptance within our legal framework...
>
> (60) This development in the social life of man is at once a symptom and a cause of the growing intervention of the State even in matters of such intimate concern to the individual as health and education, the choice of a career, and the care and rehabilitation of the physically or mentally handicapped. It is

> also the result and the expression of a natural, wellnigh irresistible urge in man to combine with his fellows for the aims and objectives which are beyond the means or the capabilities of single individuals. In recent times this tendency has given rise to the formation everywhere of both national and international movements, associations and institutions with economic, cultural, social, sporting, recreational, professional and political ends.

Transposing this principle to development, one can say that the church would support nations that together take a stand against a policy that demeans the rights of the human person, e.g. South Africa, before the apartheid policy was disowned. The task that developing countries must apply themselves to is tellingly brought out by Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*:

> (41)...modern civilization itself often complicates the approach to God, not for any essential reason, but because it is excessively engrossed in earthly affairs. Developing nations must know how to discriminate among those things that are held out to them; they must be able to assess critically and eliminate those deceptive goods which would only bring about a lowering of the human ideal, and to accept those values that are sound and beneficial, in order to develop them alongside their own, in accordance with their own genius.
>
> (42) What must be aimed at is complete humanism. And what is that if not the full-rounded development of the whole man and of all men? A humanism closed in on itself, and not open to the values of the spirit and to God Who is their source, could achieve apparent success. True, man can organize the world apart from God, but without God man can organize it in the end only to man's detriment.

Today, first world countries are developed economically, socially and politically. However, many of the underdeveloped countries would seem to have a more concrete and functional sense of religiosity than the developed ones. In matters of religiosity, is it not correct to claim that these countries are underdeveloped? An answer in the affirmative is possible only if development is not restricted to

the economic, social and political spheres. In fact, for pope Paul VI, the context of development is "the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human." (20) The pope continues to identify those conditions in detail:

> (21) Less human conditions: the lack of material necessities for those who are without the minimum essential for life, the moral deficiencies of those who are mutilated by selfishness. Less human conditions: oppressive social structures, whether due to the abuses of ownership or to the abuses of power, to the exploitation of workers or to unjust transactions. Conditions that are more human: the passage from misery towards the possession of necessities, victory over social scourges, the growth of knowledge, the acquisition of culture. Additional conditions that are more human: increased esteem for the dignity of others, the turning toward the spirit of poverty, co-operation for the common good, the will and desire for peace. Conditions that are still more human: the acknowledgement by man of supreme values, and of God their source and their finality. Conditions that, finally and above all, are more human: faith, a gift of God accepted by the good will of man, and unity in the charity of Christ, Who calls us all to share as sons in the life of the living God, the Father of all men.

Clearly, pope Paul VI has traced an axis for types of development that includes at its summit faith in God as that which most truly humanizes men and women in this world. This was in line with the idea of Mother Teresa who spoke about the exchange that should take place between the world of persons who were economically well-to-do but lacking faith, and the economically deprived who were rich in faith!

Populorum Progressio no. 19 shows that the pope was well aware of the pitfalls of understanding development uncritically

> Increased possession is not the ultimate goal of nations nor of individuals. All growth is ambivalent. It is essential if man is to develop as a man, but in a way it imprisons man if he considers it the supreme

> good, and it restricts his vision. Then we see hearts harden and minds close, and men no longer gather together in friendship but out of self-interest, which soon leads to oppositions and disunity. The exclusive pursuit of possessions thus becomes an obstacle to individual fulfilment and to man's true greatness. Both for nations and individual men, avarice is the most evident form of moral underdevelopment.

Pope John XXIII had already drawn attention to this same point in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963). Speaking about the common good and its content, the pope says the following:

> (58)...the common good of all *embraces the sum total of those conditions of social living, whereby men are enabled to achieve their own integral perfection more fully and more easily.*
>
> (59) Men, however, composed as they are of bodies and immortal souls, can never in this mortal life succeed in satisfying all their needs or in attaining perfect happiness. Therefore all efforts made to promote the common good, far from endangering the eternal salvation of men, ought rather to serve to promote it.

Through all the writings of the popes on social questions, there is an insistence that (a) those helping and those being helped possess the same human dignity; (b) that material assistance does not fulfil all the needs of persons since they possess transcendence and have immortal souls; (c) that interactions between the economically rich and the poor should be carried out in a spirit of sharing.

Part III: Christian Perspectives on Development

In the concluding section of this article, an attempt is made to put together some perspectives that should characterize any development process.

I. *An Attitude of Sharing*

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10/29-37) remains as the enduring paradigm of the close relationship that human persons share with one another in this world. In choosing to go to the aid of the person who is in need, the Samaritan shows that he recognizes his neighbour as his other self. In the case of developed nations helping other developing nations, the message of this parable is surely pertinent. The vitiating factor in helping developing nations is

supplying them aid "with strings". A Christian way of sharing is to give to another what one deems necessary for oneself, no less.

To act as a Christian is think of the good of the other. In all development activity, the other's culture, beliefs and way of life must be respected. Exclusion on the basis of creed, code or cult must be eschewed. Collaborative efforts are justified because of the human dignity that is shared by persons of different faith persuasions.

2. *Working for the Common Good*

The common good is predicated of all the individuals who make up a community. The world is seen as a global village from certain angles. However, power blocks and elite interests—globalization tends to foster selfish interests—which are present in developing as well as developed countries in the world often succeed in hijacking agendas meant to benefit the common good. The invasion of Iraq seems to be a clear example of selfish interests causing much distress and destruction to the people living in the Middle East.

Collective action derives from democratic values that are practised by peoples and nations. Such action is not the imposition of the rule of the majority—read "developed countries"—but offers all sections of society a chance to be heard and listened to. Development that will benefit all peoples and nations must be carried out in a democratic context; otherwise the fruits of development could easily benefit private interests but not the general public.

3. *Accountability*

The success that development efforts are supposed to bring must be checked out. A case in point is the Sardar Sarovar Project. Mr. Dilip D'souza comments insightfully on the roles of persons like Medha Patkar and her associates in their struggles:

> Over the years, Medha Patkar and the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) have fought much more than just the construction of a dam in the Narmada river. They have fought to question this very idea of development. What is it? What has it done for us? Whose development is it? Whom has it benefited? Whom has it hurt?[11]

In the spirit of Matthew 25 (The Last Judgment) the true practice of religion encourages accountability to at least three constituencies: the nations that are being developed, the nations that are participating in the development process and God who as source and goal of humankind, is experienced in the different religions in the world.

Notes

1. May 26, 1967.
2. One can think of the G-8 summits, the power blocks in the world even after the Cold War, the countries that can exercise vetoes in the UN Security Council and the unjustified and illegal occupation of land by countries possessing conventional and atomic might.
3. David Crystal: *The New Penguin Encyclopedia*, Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 2002, "Developing Countries," p 447.
4. Robert A. Kreig: "Theological Anthropology" in *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism* edited by Richard P. McBrien, New York, 1995, p 64.
5. The novels of Charles Dickens (1812-1870) illustrate well the social evils in the wake of the Industrial revolution.
6. The USSR came to an end in 1991 when, after the *Glasnost* initiated by Gorbachev after 1985, the Russian Federation came into existence. 1991 was also the year in which pope John Paul II issued his encyclical *Centesimus Annus* to commemorate pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* and the beginning of many encyclicals that dwelt on the social doctrine of the Church. It is somewhat disappointing that *Centesimus Annus* in numbers 41-42 desists from honouring Marx for stirring the conscience of the world in regard to the plight of the workers.
7. Philip Land: "Social and Economic Processes of Development" in *Theology meets Progress* edited by Philip Land, Gregorian University Press, Rome, 1971, p 4.
8. See Phhilip Land, p 9.
9. Ivan Illich: *The Church, Change and Development*, edited by Fred Eychaner, Urban Training Center Press, (Herder and Herder), New York, 1970, p 17.
10. During the time of Constantine the Great in the 4th century, there was an understanding that he was God's chosen to exercise (monarchical) authority in the secular state. This was the foundation for judging regicide unacceptable; it was also the paradigm that Henry VIII employed when he made himself the head of the Church in England. Gradually, however, even after popes had expressed their reservation with socialist trends in society, the gospel message is understood as compatible with democratic government.
11. Dilip D'Souza: *The Narmada Dammed, An Inquiry into the Politics of Development*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2002, p xiii.

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The (Latin) Christian Church in Post-Colonial Goa: The Portuguese Legacy and the Development Process

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Abstract: This study is a micro level study that is restricted to the role of the Church in the development of the post-colonial state of Goa. The pastoral effectiveness of the Church in Goa particularly after liberation, has definitely been on the positive side *kudos* to the 'educated' and self-confident clergy and laity of Goa. The priests, religious and laity have grown with experience at all levels and are well conscientised and equipped to continue the task of "building the kingdom of God on Earth without leaving all concerns to life beyond". The socio-religious dimension of the Church in Goa can be further studied and evaluated within the broader perspectives that are related to 'confrontation', 'governance', 'institutionalization' and 'policing' particularly after the State that was hitherto a 'standard bearer of the Portuguese State' has ceased to remain so in the post-liberation period. It is argued that much of the Church history is written by the missionaries and from the missionary perspective and this is never delinked from the Eurocentic, Christocentric and Lusocentric perspective. In analyzing the role of the post colonial Church in Goa, we undertake a dispassionate analysis so that we are able to understand the Church within a larger historical context.

Keywords: Goa, *Novas Conquistas,* colonialism, Church and development, Christian sects.

The 'discovery' of an ocean route to the East Indies by the Iberian seafarers was an important enigma as it marked the dawn of the 'Vasco da Gama Epoch' in the history of Asia[1]: an 'Epoch' that drastically changed the subghat image of Goa into a thalossocratic one – at least in the colonial literature.

'Discoveries' are generally perceived to be "mere accidents in history". But, this was not the case with the Portuguese because they did not come merely as traders, "...if there were no merchants who go and seek for earthly fortunes in the East and West Indies, who would transport the preachers who take the heavenly treasures there"[2]. While the former were well known as *Conqistadores*, the latter can be termed as *Conquistadores das almas.*

Having consolidated their shoestring Empire in the East, the Portuguese established the Metropolitan Sé of the *Estado da India* at *Velha Goa.* The territorial jurisdiction of the Portuguese in Goa in the first half of the 16th century was limited to the *Velhas Conquistas*[3]. The geographical conditions of the land together with the appropriate socio-economic and political milieu enabled the Portuguese to set up an entrepôt port in 'Goa' and use it as a springboard for a delve into the Indian Ocean World Economic System. Further, the *Padroado* obligations and the close alliance between the Cross and the Sword 'morally bound' the Portuguese Monarchs to evangelize, christianize and lusitanize the "newly discovered lands", Goa being no exception to this. From here, they undertook a 'Spiritual Conquest of the East'[4] wherein they tried to christianize and lussitanize the people and give a realistic form to the *Respublica Christiana.* This was a conscious effort that was legalized by the Crown and sanctified by Papal Bulls like the *Romanus Pontifex, Inter Caetera, Regimini Militantis* etc. The missionaries assumed the role of the 'standard bearers of the faith'. The State supported them in this 'divine enterprise' of "swiftly possessing the souls and riches of the East". Both, *a priori* and *a posteiori*, assimilative and discriminative and 'carrot' and 'stick ' policies were used to lure the converts and punish the non-converts[5].

This 'conscious' effort resulted in the 'formation' of *Goa Dourada* that is aptly described as "a tiny piece of Portugal that was implanted onto the tropical soil"[6] and it was not uncommon for a casual visitor to remark, "*Aqui é Portugal.*" The *Gomantak Punyabhumi* of the yesteryears was temporarily forgotten and

gradually replaced by much the touted Golden Goa paradigm, that considered Goa to be " a limpet clinging onto the West coast of India"[7]. However, it was not long before the Goans realized that they were denaturalized and denationalized to the extent of being "rendered as aliens to their own soil"[8]. The *Konkan Kashi* or the cool and refreshing land that was the "abode of the Gods" was superseded by the 'Rome of the Orient'.

But, what was ignored was that even by the 20th century, the Portuguese had been successful in alienating a small section of the Goans from their *Mai Patria*. The majority of the Goans, particularly those who lived along the peripheries of and in the *Novas Conquistas*[9] or in British India, continued to follow the Indian lifestyle and had an emotional attachment to India; they represented the *Goa Indica* paradigm[10]. It must be noted that the *Velhas Conquistas* included only 1/5th of the present day Goa. The *Novas Conquistas,* that included seven *talukas,* were acquired only in the eighteenth century and even here, only 14% were converted till 1961[11]. Before the arrival of the Portuguese, Goa was not a *tabula rasa* and hence we speak of *Goa Indica* and even *Goa Rustica*. The chroniclers and the chronicle-based historiography denied the Goan people and the hinterland a separate existence. They were relegated to the status of being mere objects and a geographical expression.

Even the Lusophiles, who were temporarily overwhelmed by the 'Latin, Christian' culture, gradually assimilated it and evolved a composite or syncretic culture. The product of the 'cultural metabolism'[12] or a recreation of "what existed among and what was thrust upon the Goans" is an essential component of the Goan diaspora or the 'Goan identity'. The presence of the Portuguese influences gave Goa an unique identity- an identity that was 'essentially different from the Indian and Portuguese identity. This is evident in the popular myths, folk culture, festivals, symbols *et al* all of which provide a 'base' to a Goan. The composite or syncretic culture that grew therefrom is termed *Goa Indo Portuguesa*. This was Indian in form but Iberian in content. The converts, for instance, followed a

Lusitanian lifestyle, but they did not give up the Hindu practices. Goan Christians felt at home to seek greater affinity with their colonial brethren in religion. Incidentally, the Goan Hindus have their own variants of wounded identity and this cannot be resolved too simplistically. The Christian farmers cut paddy sheaves and took them in a procession to the village temple to be blessed by Brahman priests before the harvest[13]. Many Goans felt the oppression of the caste structure or of the traditional class structure. Many had changed their religion to escape from these structures and with the hope of improving their life conditions. The caste conflicts were obvious in the Confraternities that were created on caste-basis and the colour of the *opmus* clearly distinguished a *Bammon* from a *Charddo* and the two from a *Shudra*. The caste exclusivism is illustrated by an incident that occurred in the Parish of Guirim that had a Confraternity of Jesus and that of Our Lady of the Rosary. A friar instructed an old woman to call upon the name of Jesus on her deathbed but she was indignant and replied angrily: "*Jezú? Jezú nam! Jezú tencho!* "(Jesus? There is no Jesus, Jesus belongs to them) Obviously, she was of *Charddo* caste, and the Confraternity of Jesus was composed of the brahmins![14] . The concept of the 'colonial other' existed whether consciously or unconsciously. But we cannot blame personalities or institutions that were involved in the 'State sponsored' venture because we have to see them "in the historical context in which they functioned"[15]. The psychology of the Portuguese has to be understood as 'Conquerors', 'Traders', 'Discoverers' and 'Christianizers,' while that of the Goans has to be considered in the context of their being the 'Discovered', 'a Conquered People', 'a Captive Trading People' and a 'Christianised People'[16]. Several aspects of Christianization and the Cultural Encounters that took place thereafter are available and these can be used for a better analysis of the Colonial Church within the paradigm of Decolonisation[17].

In history, a few theories remain static. Theories are generally based on facts and these facts constantly change as and when

'new' sources are 'unearthed'. Moreover, theories are based on the 'historiographical constructs' that are adopted by the historians. As such, the Imperialist approach is generally contradictory to the arguments that are made by the Indologists and Nationalists, while those of the Orientalists are 'essentially' different from those of the Subalterns. In recent times, the Theory of Modernity, that focused on meta narratives and empiricism, was gradually abandoned in favour of Post Modernity: a theoretical construct that consciously ignores the foundational theories and macro-level analysis. Such an approach takes into account contextual micro-level variations. It is inter-disciplinary in approach and anti-foundational in content. The source value of Church records in recording the organization and activity of the Church in Goa are outlined by the scholars in Indo-Portuguese history[18].

In studying the role of the post-liberated Church in the Goan context, I have made use of tradition-modernity continuum to explain the formation of a post colonial identity in what can be called a *Gemeinschaft* and has grown into a *Gesellschaft.* In addressing the formation of such an identity and the expression of the same through the participation of the institutionalized Church in the various social movements in Goa, one has to take into account the historical facts as well as the Little Traditions that "existed in the minds and hearts of the people" in general and the Church in particular that were never allowed to be expressed fully either because of the close alliance between the Sword and the Cross, or because of the obligations of the *Padroado Real,* or later because of the division of loyalties between the *Padroado Real* and the *Propoganda Fidei* that was fully manifested in post 1961. But it must be noted that an identity *per se* has its base in the past and the discourse between the past and the present can be best understood by those communities who have lived through the past and have been assimilated into the present.

In the post- Republican period there was a whiff of liberalism. The global struggle with the Dutch assumed severe proportions.

Besides this, the Portuguese had to deal with the Marathas, Sondekars, Mughals and other local enemies. The mainland was also engulfed by a 'hydra of nativism'[19] that took the form of spontaneous insurgencies and nationalist discourses. The revolts of the 'unsung heroes' and the ideologies of the 'voiceless in Goan historiography' need to be analyzed. Ironically, the Portuguese were unable to sustain the colonial vestiges because the sea-borne Empire was undergoing a twilight. There was a strong demand in favour of the secular clergy. The Thalosocratic State and the *gaonkars* refused to contribute for the maintenance of the Christian cult. The Portuguese had to use their own methods to extract the agrarian surplus and gain the support of the locals. In fact, the Lusitanian culture was now dependent on the local realities.

During the liberation movement, Salazar stated "...what needs to be noted in Portuguese India is the mentality, the outlook on life and the spiritual atmosphere... Goa is a transplantation of the West onto the Eastern lands; the expression of Portugal in India"[20]. His close alliance with the Pope (*Concordat* of 1940) had become a subject of criticism even in Portugal as were his anti-liberal policies. Even Nehru admitted that Goa was different from India. Most Goan Christians who were faithful to the Goan Church Magisterium collaborated with the 'civilizing mission' that was emphasized by Dr. Salazar in the *Acto Colonial do Estado Novo.* The Nationalists were forced to change their domicile to the neighboring Indian territory and they along with those who rose against the Fascist Regime were condemned as 'bad Catholics' or excommunicated and even denied a Church burial on grounds of being 'communists'. What was forgotten was that one cannot understand the Latin or Christian aspect of Goa *en masse* without delimiting the geographical parameters and defining its components. Microcosm studies have to be undertaken, as a Goan is a patrilocal individual. It is important to pose new questions to the old issues and in certain cases pose a counter perspective to the dominant ideologies.

After liberation, the local, national and international press eulogised the Indian intervention in the liberation of Goa. In December 1961[21], there was an announcement that Rome had appointed the Lisbon based, Dom Jose Pedro da Silva as the new Auxiliary Bishop of Goa with the right to succeed as the Patriarch instead of a qualified and experienced Goan in accordance with the *Mater et Magistra* of John XXIII. Hence, the liberation of Goa did not cause any violent upheaval in the administration of the Church of Goa[22]. Following liberation, the Portuguese Patriarch in Goa maintained a low profile and moved out after the Second Vatican Council. At that time till 1971, there was a decrease in the Christian population from 38% to 34% while the number of Hindus increased from 384378 to 496389. Over the next decade, the number of Christians was 31% and in 1991, this figure stood at 29.86%[23]. In 1963, Msgr Francisco Xavier da Piedade Rebello then emerged as the 'natural leader': the Bishop and Administrator Apostolic of Goa[24]. Thereafter, the Church in Goa found it difficult to retain the colonial legacy. Some Christians felt that it was this legacy that gave Goa a distinct identity vis-a- vis the others who took the *longe duree* into consideration and asserted that the Goan identity had its roots in the pre-Portuguese setup and hence, it was not very different from the larger Indian identity. This issue rang out loud and clear during the Opinion Poll.

The political developments of the post-Liberation period have been complex. In less than a year after liberation, the Panchayati Raj Institutions were established in the Goan villages. Further, the elections in October 1962 changed the 'very nature' of the political process in Goa as they were based on universal suffrage. The Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), with its *Bahujan Samaj* ideology and Marathi language, was used as an expression of populism that sought to whip up communal feelings[25]. While the Hindu elite vote got divided between the Congress and United Goans Party (UGP), most of the Christians rallied around the UGP, but the MGP won with an absolute majority in the first elections and continued to rule over Goa for more than a

decade. The church of Goa has been accused of encouraging a vote to keep Goa out of Maharashtra in the first Assembly elections and in the Opinion Poll of 1967. Incidentally, a large number of under-aged seminarians of the Rachol Seminary voted in the Opinion Poll against the merger of Goa.

After 1967, there were major changes within the Catholic Church at the National and International levels. The Second Vatican Council stressed the responsibility of the laity and motivated the Church to introspect into its functioning. Termed as an 'Ecumenical Revolution', it propagated the concept of 'Liberation Theology' that focused on the involvement of the Church in societal issues. To implement the decisions of Vatican II, a Seminar on 'The Church in Goa Today' was held in 1968 as a preparation for the National Seminar on 'The Church in India Today' that was scheduled for 1970. The latter gave importance to the establishment of a Senate for the priests, Diocesan Centres for Social Apostolates and a Pastoral Bulletin. At this Regional Seminar, the socio economic welfare activities of the Church were reviewed and the Church acknowledged that it had made valuable contributions to promote the socio-economic welfare of the people through Parishes, religious congregations and lay organizations through its own limited means. Further, the Church in Goa stressed Recognition, Respect, Cooperation and Multireligious Solidarity[26]. Though it took ten years to set up a Diocesan Pastoral Council and to establish Parish Level Councils, it was a sort of 'Democratic Revolution' that took place within an ecclesiastical set-up that was led by the laity along with the Diocesan and Religious priests and nuns[27]. There were appeals in favour of indigenous saints. It was accepted that Fr Agnelo deserved to be canonized and that Fr Jose Vas would serve as a model to the Diocesan secular clergy[28].

A scan of the leadership of the Church over the last four decades indicates that it was both enlightened and pro-active. In the '60s the Church played a pivotal role in influencing the voters. In the '70s, the Church lent its open support to the

Ramponkars or one of the 'traditional' fishing communities in Goa who were fighting against mechanized fishing and purseing that was carried out by the trawler owners. On January 30, 1978, the Archbishop issued a Circular which pleaded that an exclusive zone of 5 kms. from the shore should be reserved for the *Ramponkars*[29]. As a sign of solidarity, several nuns and priests participated in the agitation. One of the religious who was involved in the issue stated that the "official Church which was silent upto now... for the first time in recent years had come out openly and officially against the adamant attitude of the Government and opted for justice for the voiceless poor"[30]. The then Chief Minister extended the war by supporting a rebel nun and even tried to humiliate the Archbishop by threatening to withdraw his priority pass for crossing the ferry. This largely tainted her popularity before the Christian voters, who were strongly agitated over the issue of the Freedom of Religion Bill, 1978 and the hostility of the Chief Minister to the same. In 1973, the Church raised its voice against the Zuari Agro Chemicals Limited that was situated at Zuarinagar in Vasco da Gama area on the ground that it polluted the coastal waters. Given the seriousness of the situation, the Church backed the Anti-Pollution Campaign in 1974 to fight the menance of pollution.[31] The Social Action Forums have been instrumental in organizing the clergy and the laity to participate in anti-Goan and anti development projects. The Service Centre for Diocesan Action was set up in 1976. The contribution of the Church to the development of Goa and the "collaboration with other organizations to bring about the socio-economic development of Goa was the main thrust of this Centre"[32].

Since the '80's, the Church was directly involved and has indirectly patronized several NGO's that were fighting a battle against Tourism[33]. The '80s witnessed a tussle between the *Konkaniwadis* and the *Marathiwadis* with the former asserting their stand that Konkani was the official language of Goa. On February 1, 1987[34], the Church expressed its solidarity with the pro-Konkani faction. Later, the pro-Konkani movement was used

to ensure the "separate status for Goa". When the Official Language Bill was passed, the Pastoral Bulletin welcomed the compromise as "a better part of realism, though it did not hide its disappointment manifested in the use of a rather strong expression "bigamy" to describe the place accorded to Marathi in the Bill"[35]. The Church played an important role in the Anti Merger Issue. It demanded a "separate political status for Goa" and was fully backed by the United Goans Party in this regard. There were several reports that the priests gave open and worse still 'political' speeches from the pulpits[36]. Both the clergy and the laity made their presence felt at public meetings and marched on the streets against the proposed merger of Goa into the neighboring States. The Church also raised its voice against the commercialization of the Carnival that was projected as a 'Christian tradition 'at the Carnival float that was held in Delhi in 1983 on grounds that it "jeopardized the ethical values". The Pastoral Bulletin of 1 February, 1984, openly referred to the "coming *tamasha* of Carnaval" and warned the Catholics not to allow their children to fall prey and be pleasure toys for the benefit of the Tourism industry. The Church even went a step further and protested against the celebration of Carnival in the Panjim Church square and demanded a ban on the same. At the forefront was the Diocesan Centre for Social Action that carried out the propaganda campaign against this event. The citizens along with the Christians of Margao under the Diocesan Centre for Social Action paraded on the streets along with two MLA's, priests and nuns against the Carnival parade. After three years of an 'organised effort', the Church forced the Government to withdraw its patronage of corporate-sponsored Carnival floats. In 1993, the Central Ministry for Tourism insisted that Carnival was important for the promotion of Tourism in the State, The State took precautionary measures and set up a Screening Committee that was headed by a Christian[37]. This had an appropriate effect and since then, Carnival has been a muted affair.

The Church has vociferously opposed several developmental projects that were allegedly opposed to the interests of the Goans. It was in the forefront to oppose the coastal alignment of the Konkan Railway Corporation, as it was a threat to the fragile coastal ecology and to the 'space' and identity of the Goans. It was opined that it was passing through the thickly populated villages thereby disrupting the life of the Goans. The Church backed the 'mutinous' villagers of Salcette and other villages and was instrumental in the formation of the All Goa Citizens' Committee for Social Action that spearheaded the protests and pressurized the Court to change the alignment. Priests, nuns and lay Catholics participated in various forms of protests and extended full support to the campaign for realignment[38]. The Archbishop himself wrote a letter to the Prime Minister requesting him to intervene in the matter, while "mobs of Christians" attacked the labourers and destroyed the equipment at the KRC construction sites. In spite of all these efforts that were put in by the Goans including the Church, the anti-KRC agitation failed.

The role of the Church in the anti-Metastrips agitation is too well known to be repeated. In opposing the setting up of Metastrips at Sancoale, the Church pointed out issues of spawned hutments, sanitation, public health, overcrowding etc and directly confronted the State against the implementation of the project[39].. The logic was clear: the effluents from the imported scrap would pollute the Goan ecology. The Church encouraged the local Christians to rally around the Anti-Metastrips Citizens' Action Committee that was turned into the "public voice of the Church" overnight. Priests organised rallies and made passionate speeches at public meetings as the Church assumed an activist role. The newspapers carried the photographs of two priests who were injured in this agitation. Referring to the agitation on the Zuari bridge, the Church assailed the atrocities of the police and the Government on the 'innocent citizens'. The Archbishop personally visited those who were on a fast unto death outside the Secretariat[40]. The Church also lent its support to the anti-

Nylon 66 agitation, a people's agitation that was intended to counter the polluting factory that was proposed to be set up in Keri, Ponda. The spokesman of the Church appealed to the State Government to pay "heed to the just demands of the oppressed people and to bring the crisis to a satisfactory solution"[41].

In 1990, the Archdiocese of Goa hosted a Consultation on Tourism that was sponsored by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI). Since then the Church has been instrumental in raising the banner of protest against the bane of Tourism in the State[42]. In the elections of 1994, the Church launched an unscrupulous attack on the political situation in the State. In his message on the Justice and Peace Sunday, the Archbishop requested the Christians to vote out the "politicians who have been supporting projects that were detrimental to the good of Goa and the Goans".

The Church has raised its voice and even imposed bans to curb the proliferation of social evils among the Christian laity. The menace of alcohol is sought to be curbed by setting up units of the Alcoholics Anonymous in the Parishes. An official ban is imposed on the serving of alcoholic drinks within the Church premises. The Diocesan Pastoral Council vehemently opposed the steady growth of alcoholism and appealed to the State Government to curb the advertisements for alcoholic drinks and the issue of new licenses for bars and liquor shops. The Church also appealed in favour of the prohibition of the advertisement of alcoholic beverages at the functions that were organized by Church institutions[43]. Periodic efforts are made to avoid the consumption or association of alcohol at and with Catholic rituals. The Archbishop of Goa spoke in terms of a Radical Church that could serve as an instrument of Social Revolution. He periodically called upon the laity to attack the "roots" of the problems that were faced by society and "to eliminate the causes rather than the effects of social injustice". The proposal to make Goa a Free Port was openly opposed as it would be a threat to 'Goa's Sovereignty'[44].

In the nineties, the Church in Goa had developed an 'ideology of resistance' and rallied against the politicians who wanted to sell Goa to the forces that were out to destroy Goa's economy, culture, social composition, demographic profile and identity . The Church as an institution and the Archbishop as the head of the Church in Goa periodically raised concerns about the undemocratic attitudes of the Government. The Church in Goa has had the benefit of being backed by a genre of 'conscious' laity. Recently, there was a statement that was issued by eight Goan writers and artists, who requested the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to put restrictions on Doordarshan so that it was restrained from telecasting road shows and beach parties in Goa as a part of the Millenium New Year celebrations on ground that "the telecast is a direct attack on our cultural ethos"[45].

The post-colonial Church has taken progressive steps to promote inter-religious dialogue and to strengthen Hindu Catholic solidarity. The Church has been vehement in denouncing acts of Communalism and Communal Disharmony as is evident from the strong critiques that were made against the allegedly 'communal' activities that included the minor bomb blast in St Andrews Church, Vasco da Gama, Saleli and later in Sanvordem and the minor outbursts in Kundaim, Chicalim, Assagao, St Estevam etc. When the Hindus in India wanted the Pope to publicly apologize for the atrocities' of the Catholic Church in the colonial past, the Goan clergy denounced this as they found it unjustifiable. Secularism has been the ideal of the Church of Goa as indicated in the proceedings of the Diocesan Synod. There are efforts even among the religious in favour of Indianization and Swadeshi. In 1999, the Archbishop of Goa voiced his dissent over the Target Asia Mission on the ground that the Church would be isolated if this target was followed. In the elections of 2002, the Church called upon the laity not to vote for the candidates who represented Communalism and corruption. The Archbishop even referred to a "Crusade against corruption"[46]. Thanks to the efforts of the clergy, the voters of

Cortalim opted for a third alternative and outvoted the National Parties.

The post-liberation Church was instrumental in conscientising, mobilizing and bringing thousands of laity on the street to provide mass support to several issues that were detrimental to the 'development' and 'progress' of the State. The recent agitation against the Regional Plan 2011 witnessed the direct involvement of the Church in this anti developmental issue[47]. The colonial Church tried to be where the rulers were. The post-liberation tried to be where the laity were[48]. The Church particularly after the first two decades after liberation, has been a vigilant and pro active Church as is manifested in its opposition to several anti development movements. It is important to note that Social Action Cells are set up in several Parishes in Goa and these have been instrumental in playing the important role of 'watch dogs' in the Goan villages. Many of them have been active at Gram Sabhas and have raised their voices against the anti development forces. There are sincere efforts being made by Parish Animation Teams, Community Animation Teams, Family Cells, Social Action Cells etc in the Parishes across the State particularly after the Diocesan Synod. The Church has played a predominant role in the struggle for environmental rights, child rights, human rights and the rights of women and other marginalized sections of society. The concept of 'Justice and Peace', 'Campaign against Hunger and Disease' and the 'Preferential Option for the Poor' are among the many projects that were successfully championed by the Church on behalf of the CBCI as an institution. The Church promotes an annual campaign against hunger and disease by raising money for the needy and the poor so as to provide them with the basic human needs.[49] In December, 1984, the Church made it obligatory for the Parishes to start a fund for the relief of the poor[50]. There was an organized effort to "conscientise the people about and to launch a protest against the injustice that was meted out to the marginalized, particularly the Christians of the Schedule Caste origin"[51]. The Church has distributed her land at Baida in

Chinchinim to house nearly thirty families. Several Religious Congregations and Diocesan Parishes have started farms and yet others have started technical institutes. In Ambaji, the Society of St Vincent de Paul runs a night school for the poor and the illiterate. There is an Ozanam Library in Margao and a SVP Library in Verna. In Magao, Navelim and other places the members of the SVP have free Legal Aid Cells. In other villages, they have started Medical Clinics, Rehabilitation Centres for the Alcoholics, ambulances, Old Age Homes, KG and Primary Schools etc[52]. The members of the SVP that are animated by the parish priest champion the cause of the poor, the sick and the needy. The role of the Church as an institution in promoting charity is commendable as it runs 30 homes for the aged and the destitute, 5 hostels and boarding houses, 9 orphanages, 7 rehabilitation centres, hospitals, vocational training institutes (like St Bridget, Fr. Agnel Training Institute, Don Bosco's Crafts Centre etc) homes for the fallen women, creches, centres for the physically and mentally challenged etc. The Religious Congregations have established 6 hospitals and 5 dispensaries apart from health centres, mobile clinics etc. There are 13 primary, 6 Middle, 106 High and 13 Higher Secondary Schools, 5 Colleges and 7 technical institutes that are sponsored by the Church[53]. The Church has also taken up the responsibility of rehabilitating the prisoners in the Goan jails through the Prison Ministry and undertaking Maternal and Child Health Programmes. The Domestic Workers attracted the attention of the Church that later organized the NDWM and took up the issue of Domestic Workers in Goa[54].

It is indeed very surprising that the Church had for some time acquired a very narrow, pro Goan view. The Pastoral letter of 1995, for instance, had clearly stated that "Our proverbial hospitality is being challenged today by ever-growing influx of non-Goans into our State threatening our security and comfort". Now that the number of immigrants has increased manifold, the Church has to officially accommodate and adopt the immigrants on terms of equality into its fold and the Church has undertaken

preliminary steps in this regard. Nevertheless, the Church has extended its full cooperation to the efforts to help those who had been victims of natural calamities. Among the others, the Church has extended generous financial aid to the victims of the Maharashtra earthquake (Rs. 6,20,996), Andhra Pradesh Cyclone Fund (Rs. 3,66,947), Kargil Fund (Rs. 6,56,000), Orissa Cyclone fund (Rs. 3,04,223) etc[55].

A large section of the Christian population has joined the 'Christian' sects that are mushrooming in Goa. The display of the Roman Catholic cult has become difficult as the State no longer favours the Church and funds are hard to come by on account of the post-global crises. Few people volunteer to work in 'Gods vineyard' and even those who are recruited are not up to the mark. The Diocesan Synod 2002 has attempted to empower the lay people and tried to monitor the cult and the flock through Parish Councils, Pastoral Councils, Community Animation Teams, Parish Animation Teams, Small Christian Communities etc. But, the questions are 'Hasn't the Church that had a basis in colonialism been able to assert its liberated status in the post-modern world?'; 'wasn't the Church in a position to maintain a consensus in taking decisions that allegedly alienated the contending, 'Christian' forces that dominate the opposition party in Goa?' and 'hasn't the Church pragmatically accommodated the new challenges and come up with an institutional response to the same?'.

An evaluation of the pastoral effectiveness of the Church in Goa particularly after liberation, has definitely been on the positive side *kudos* to the 'educated' and self-confident clergy and laity of Goa. A regular opposition is voiced both from socially concerned individuals and watch groups that have been keeping an effective check on the 'abuses' by powerful interest groups. Even the religious have grown with experience at all levels and are well conscientised and equipped to continue the task of "building the kingdom of God on Earth without leaving all concerns to life beyond"[56].

This study is a micro-level study that is restricted to the State of Goa. However, the socio- religious dimension of the Church in Goa can be further studied and evaluated within the broader perspectives that are related to 'confrontation', 'governance', 'institutionalization' and 'policing' particularly after the State that was hitherto a 'standard bearer of the Portuguese State' has ceased to remain so in the post-liberation period. There is much being said and written and efforts are under way for re-writing the history of the Church from the perspective of the Third World[57]. It is argued that much that we have by way of Church history is written by the missionaries and from the missionary perspective and this is never delinked from the Eurocentic, Christocentric and Lusocentric perspective. In analyzing the role of the post colonial Church in Goa, we have to undertake a dispassionate analysis so that we are able to understand the Church within a larger historical context.

The Church in Goa started the New Year on a progressive note of renewing its commitment to promote the development of the State. She is "willing to be an active partner in this collaborative effort for regeneration" and has highlighted "her sacred duty towards humanity to help in the integral development of the human person..."[58]. Such a commitment will go a long way in putting the post-liberation Church on the 'right track' vis-à-vis the development process that the State is undergoing.

Notes

1. Pannikar K.M., *Asia and Western Dominance: A survey of the Vasco da Gama Epoch of Asian History (1415-1945)*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1959
2. This statement is attributed to Fernao de Castanheda,
3. After the second Conquest of Goa on 25th November 1510, Goa was limited to the Islands of Goa that included Tisvadi, Chorao, Divar, Jua and Vamsi. These areas were under the political tutelage of the Adil Shah of Bijapur. After 1543, they acquired the adjoining areas of Bardez and Salcette
4. Paulo da Trindade's magnum Opus is called *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*

5. For the conversion policies of the Portuguese refer to Kamat Pratima, *Farar Far: Local Resistance to the colonial hegemony in Goa (1510-1912)*, Institute Menezes Braganza, Panaji, 1999 and Mendonca Delio, *Conversions and Citizenry in Goa* , Concept, New Delhi, 2002 and P.P Shirodkar, 'Evangelisation and its harsh realities in Portuguese India' in T.R. de Souza (ed), *Discoveries, Missionary Expansion and Asian cultures*, Concept Publishers, New Delhi, 1994, p.33, pp. 80-82.
6. Ifeka Caroline, 'The image of Goa' in T.R de Souza (ed.), *Indo Portuguese History: Old Issues, New Questions*, Concept Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1985, pp. 182-183.
7. *bid* pp. 190-191.
8. Cunha T.B., *Denationalization of the Goans*, 1940, Monograph.
9. These included the remaining 8 talukas of Goa that were acquired by the Portuguese only in the late 18th century.
10. Sinha Arun, *Goa Indica: A critical potrait of Post colonial Goa,* Bibliophile South Asia, 2002
11. Even more shocking are the Statistics that are provided by the Official Census of 1891. Even after the Portuguese acquired the *Novas Conquistas* , the number of Christians in Goa was 232189 or 64.5% of the population. Sinha Arun, *Op. Cit.,* p. 27.
12. Coutinho Verresimo, *Education and Development in Goa*, ICSS, Rome, 1987.
13. Sinha Arun, *Op.Cit.,* pp.28-28. The issues on Goan identity are taken up by de Souza T.R., 'Goan culture and Identity:Historically speaking' in *Boletim do Instituto de Vasco da Gama*, Vol. 162, 1991, p.57.
14. de Souza Teotónio R., 'The Portuguese in the Goan folklore: *Some preliminary comments*' , goacom_ culture.
15. de Souza T.R, 'The Christian Mission in the aftermath of discoveries: Tools for shaping the colonial other' in T.R. de Souza (ed), *Op.Cit.,* 1994, p.33.
16. Anthony da Silva, 'The Discoverers versus the Discovered: Psychological Perspectievs on Portuguese Goan prejudices in the 16th –18th centuries' in T.R. de Souza (ed), *Op.Cit.,* 1994, pp. 45-49.
17. These issues formed the content of the *Congresso Internacional de Historia: Missionacao Portuguesa e Encontro de Culturas* , Braga, 1993. For a base for the study of such an aspect in Goa T.R de Souza, 'Christianisation of Goa and cultural conflicts' in T.R de Souza (ed), *Goa to me*, Concept Publishers, 2000, pp. 86-97
18. The records in the Historical Archives of Goa like the *Rois de Christandade* and those in the Patriarchical Archives like the *Visita*

Pastoral etc as well as the State and Parish records will give us a better understanding of the Colonial Church. For details one may refer to de Sousa T.R., 'Voiceless in Goan History..'

19. Roberto Bruto da Costa, *A Hidra do Nativismo*, Tipografia Braganca e cia, 1920.
20. This statement is attributed to Salazar in T.B Cunha, *Goa's Freedom Struggle*, T.B. Cunha Memorial Committee, Bombay, 1961, p.455.
21. Bulletin of the Goa Archdiocese, December 1961.
22. de Souza Teotonio R. 'The Church in Goa:*Giving to Caesar What is Caesar's?*' in goacom_history.
23. Sinha Arun, *Op.Cit.*
24. de Souza Teotonio R., *Op.Cit.* in goacom-history.
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27. de Souza Teotonio R. *Op.Cit.*, in goacom-history.
28. de Souza T.R, 'Struggle for Sainthood' in *Goa Today.*
29. CP- Cr No. 2/78, 30th January 1978 and CR. No. 94/80 dated 27th May 1980.
30. Braz Faleiro, ' Ramponkars sttruggle for justice and its relationship to faith' *Religion and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 1980, pp. 51-80. Anita haladi and Reggie Gomes also raise such issues in a paper presented at the Xavier Center for Historical Research.
31. Carlos da Gama, *Hacia una Evangelizacion Liberadora en Goa* , unpublished thesis , University of Salamanca, Madrid.
32. CP-Cr No. 123/76, 28th December 1976.
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34. *Renovação.*
35. *Renovação,* March 1, 1987. 'Fight for *Mai Bhas' Herald*, 13 March.
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37. Sinha Arun, *Op. Cit.*, , p. 116.
38. CP- Cr No. No. 55/93, 1st April 1993. Alexandre Barbosa 'Konkan Railway on a Trying Track' in *Goa Today*, November 2000 and in 'Off the track' in *Op.Cit*, August 1996.

39. Saturnino Dias, ' Issues behind the contraversial Meta strips plant in Goa', *Renovação,* 29 (15), 2000, pp.342-44 and Diocesan Centre for Social Action, 'A statement on Metastrips' 1-15 August 1999; Claude Alvares (ed), *Fish, Curry and Rice*, Goa Foundation, Mapusa, pp.65-68.
40. The *Renovação* was virtually turned into a journal of the 'People's Movement' against Metastrips. Sinha Arun, *Op.Cit.*, , pp. 132-33.
41. Refer to the press statement dated 25th January 1995.
42. Wilson David, 'Paradoxes of Tourism in the State' in Norman Dantas (ed.) *Transforming of Goa*, Other India PressMapusa, 1999.
43. Press statement issued by the Diocesan Pastoral Council, 27th July 1997.
44. *Diocesan Center for Social Action*, ' A Free Port for Goa' in *Renovação,* 1-15 August 1996.
45. *Renovação,* January 1-15 2000.
46. *Renovação,* August 1-15 2000.
47. A press report in that regard was even issued by the Diocesan Center for Media and Social Communication in the local newspapers. The Director of the Diocesan Center for Social Apostolate was in the fore-front of the anti Regional Plan agitation.
48. Sinha Arun, *Op.Cit.,*, p. 116.
49. CP- Cr No. 3/75 dated 12th February 1975. The Church collected Rs. 46,874 in 2000.
50. *Renovação,*August 15 1984, p. 306.
51. CP- Cr No. 129/87 dated 4th August 1987.
52. *Vincentian Bulletin* , 1996 .
53. *Directory of the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman* , Patriarchical Curia, Panjim, 2000, pp. 243-260.
54. *Domestic Workers Link*, Vol. 5, No. 3, Dec 1996.
55. Walter de Sa, 'The Church in Goa and Social Ministry', *Gyana*, Vol. I, No. 1, 2005-2006, p.3.
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Revisiting the Conversion Debate

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Book Review: *Changing Gods: Rethinking Conversion in India*, Rudolf C. Heredia, (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-0-14310-190-1; ISBN-10: 0-14310-190-0; pp. xii–386, Rs 350.)

Preliminary Remarks

There has been an on-going debate on conversion for many years in India. Before India's independence, the discourse on conversion became very intense and complex between Gandhi and the Christian missionaries. Recently there have been quite a few significant contributions to this issue from various disciplines. Now Rudolf C. Heredia has made fresh contributions to this debate with the objective of stimulating a total rethinking of the issue in this volume, published by Penguin Books.

Religious Conversion is a complex and emotionally charged issue in contemporary India. Already a lot of tears and blood have been shed, and many a life has been sacrificed on its altar. Heredia has taken up this explosive issue for a scholarly, inter-disciplinary analysis in this book. This many-sided, multi-disciplinary research on conversion is presented without any sectarian leanings, with a strong commitment to secular humanism. Incidentally, the author is a devoted Catholic, a Jesuit priest, a concerned sociologist and a committed social activist. He believes that no one can start an inquiry into a burning social issue without personal perspectives and commitments, or personal prejudices and presuppositions. Hence, to be honest and authentic, he promises neither to bury nor to betray his personal beliefs and commitments, but to bracket them for the time being. He hopes to revalue and reshape them with critical and constructive insights gained through this study.

Methodology

This is explicitly a sociological work and not a theological one. But it has a lot of theological and spiritual implications. The author does not build his arguments in a linear, one-dimensional way. He has consciously opted for the methodology of circular or spiral reiteration: "Points first made are elaborated later to bring a deeper and more comprehensive understanding

to the subject, and hopefully some incisive insight and decisive determination to the reader" (p. xiii). Desiring "to understand in order to be understood, to interpret creatively in order to change constructively", he tries to bring reflection and action closer together, moving towards praxis, in an action-reflection-action process.

The author illustrates that in times of rapid social and political changes, as well as during cataclysmic natural disasters, ordinary people unable to find solace and security in their own traditional religio-cultural sources, turn to other traditions. In such times there arise aggressive promoters of religious conversion, who want to fish as much as possible in troubled waters, and also the fierce resisters who oppose conversion tooth and nail. But both tend to silence the voices of the converts and suppress even their fundamental freedom and human dignity. In this conflictual situation, Heredia makes an epistemological option to approach the whole issue of conversion from the perspective of those converts, or would-be converts, who see conversion as one of the weapons of the weak.

Structure and Content

There is a meticulousness about the chapterization of this book. Each chapter contains a wealth of well-researched information leading to deeper insights into the issues discussed. After an introductory **first chapter**, which registers the cacophony of many voices regarding the issue of conversion, **the second chapter** presents very engaging historical information about conversion in Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. This helps to explode the popular myths that create stereotyped prejudices about these religions.

The **third chapter** presents a multi-disciplinary analysis of the complex issue of conversion. Religious 'conversion' etymologically means 'to turn around' or to 'change completely' in the spiritual realm. 'Conversion' is equivalent to the Greek *metanoia*, frequently used in the Bible, calling for a return to covenantal fidelity in the First Testament, and a commitment to God's Reign in the Second Testament. Following this trajectory, Christianity had stressed in the past the interior aspect of conversion, almost to the neglect of its socio-political aspects. Whereas the Indic traditions speak of an *atmaparivartan*, equivalent to the western notion of interior conversion, and a *dharmantar* to refer to the change of religion, or *dharma*. The Indian thinkers who oppose religious conversion often describe it as a betrayal of *dharma*.

Toward the end of the book, Heredia shows how the Sanskrit word *dharma* is not an exact equivalent of the English word *religion*. The confusion comes because of the many *dharmas* the Indic traditions have in mind.

Though Hinduism is called *sanatana dharma*, each ethnic group (varna/caste) has its own *samaj dharma*, binding social obligations. Besides, each individual also can have his/her own *sadhana dharma*, personal spiritual practices, and *svadharma*, the obligations of personal conscience. Those who emphasize the *sanatana dharma* and *samaj dharma* cannot be tolerant to *dharmantar*, conversion to another religion. But those who stress *sadhana dharma* and *svadharma* will emphasize *atmaparivartan*, the interior transformation, and be open to *dharmantar*, if it becomes a necessary expression of *atmaparivartan*. The scholarly use of these Indic concepts and terms shows how the writer is deeply rooted in the religious and linguistic traditions of India.

The **fourth chapter** introduces the readers to a holistic approach to the discourse on conversion. Conversion is studied from **psycho-social, socio-cultural, political-economic** and **religious-spiritual angles**.

As conversion is a multi-faceted phenomenon, it involves a long process. It does not necessarily imply a sudden uprooting of old worldviews and values, replacing them with radically new ones. The author agrees with Lonergan that "conversion is not so much the denial and destruction of value systems and root paradigms as their restatement and transvaluation" (p. 144). This explains how the converts, especially the downtrodden people, generally tend to be at home with multiple belonging and multiple identities. The author proceeds with a clear ethical stand that the concern for the legitimate aspirations of the converting people should take precedence over the concern for preserving the purity of religious doctrines, traditions and socio-political institutions, that is, concern for preserving the *status quo*. He advocates the same ethical option both for the passionate converters and the opponents, that they might tame their fundamentalist and fanatic tendencies.

In the **fifth chapter** we have narrations of four personal journeys, those of Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandita Ramabhai, and Nivedita. Among them Dr. Ambedkar, Ramabhai and Nivedita have struggled with both *atmaparivartan* and *dharmantar*. By their conversion they have created a crisis in their former religion as well as in their new religion, while initiating a social transformation. Gandhi's struggle was at the level of *atmaparivartan* leading to the reform of Hindu religion and Hindu society on the basis of the critique of the Dalits and others who left Hinduism to enter other religions. In these portrayals of four personal journeys, we realize that many of the issues touched on in this book assume academic interest only because they touch the real life of real people.

The **sixth chapter,** titled "Connecting Contested Issues", tries to assemble together the many issues on conversion emerging from the perspectives of the Dalits, the Tribals, Christians, Muslims and Hindus, taking the reader

into a deeper reflection. The Dalits and the Tribals emerge, through their conversion, as the 'other' who critique and interrogate Hinduism which some leave, and Islam and Christianity that they embrace. For Dalits conversion is a way of protesting against caste hierarchy, in which they have an ascribed *status and identity* that destroy their true humanity. Conversion is also an affirmation of their *human dignity* with an innate entitlement for equality. For the Tribals, conversion expresses their resistance to the cultural hegemony of the Hinduizing forces, as well as a way of affirming their unique cultural identity, different from the saffron culture. Through conversion the Dalits reject social dominance, and the Tribals cultural dominance. When they enter a new religion with these emancipatory agenda, they also interrogate the new religions and initiate a transformatory process there. Therefore, they are not to be seen as passive objects by the converters and the opposers. The Dalits and Tribals are acting as sovereign subjects in their conversion, calling all religions to be humanised by being faithful to authentic spiritual values.

In the **seventh chapter,** titled "Rethinking Conversion" the book reaches its climax. With an ambitious project of rethinking conversion the author revisits all the issues already stated. He shows that conversion is an unending process. It is always a point of departure, rather than the point of arrival. If conversion is treated as a completed event or finished product, there will be no space for humanizing tolerance and dialogue.

Herdia uses Raimundo Panikkar's insights in order to elaborate the four levels of tolerance, leading finally to a genuine celebration of differences, celebrating not only unity in diversity, but also diversity in unity:

i. The **pragmatic/political level of tolerance** in which the acceptance of the other is a fundamental practical necessity for survival;

ii. **The philosophic/rational level of tolerance** affirms that no single human being or human tradition can be absolute. All have only partial grasp of being and truth. I need others for complementing and completing the possession of truth I have;

iii. **The ethical/moral/religious level of tolerance** where the love of the other, and therefore the recognition of the lovability of the other, is an essential ethical imperative.

iv. **The mystical/spiritual level of tolerance** sees the other in one's ultimate depth. The other is a partial expression of the same Mystery of which I am one in a limited way. And therefore, this level of tolerance

recognizes that *the other is part of me*, if not that *the other is me*. This leads to a joyful way of **existing in/with/for the others**, collectively shaping the common human destiny. Such mystical tolerance is able to transcend all differences and conflicts in a journey towards a greater unity and higher communion.

The richer and broader the mystical *mythos* (imaginative, and intuitive collective dreams) of a tradition is, it can take us to higher levels of tolerance whereas the narrower and restricting the *logos* (dogmas and ideologies) of a tradition is, it will force people to be exclusive and intolerant, while boasting of its uniqueness and superiority. To attain the highest level of tolerance that celebrates difference, Heredia suggests that we need to convert ourselves from *paranoia* to *metanoia*, by enlarging our *mythos*. Happily, not only the Indian Religions, but also Islam and Christianity are full of such rich *mythos*, before being constricted by doctrinal *logos* tainted by political ideologies. We need an effective pedagogy to recapture the liberating spirit of the original *mythos* in order to grow in constructive tolerance. The conversion debate needs to be premised on this foundation. This will enable conversion to become primarily an *atmaparivartan*, without being averse to *dharmantar*.

Further, Heredia shows how to nurture the **culture of dialogue** to help everybody to practise, and to grow in, tolerance. Tolerance is the necessary condition for dialogue, a two-sided reciprocal engagement in our search for truth and life, justice and peace. To dialogue is to go beyond the dialectic of debates and discussions. Dialectics is the optimism of the mind, whereas dialogue is the optimism of the heart. Therefore, we need to go constantly beyond the pragmatic/political, philosophical/ideological levels of dialogue, and even beyond the ethical/moral level of dialogue, to the mystical/spiritual level in which the differences are accepted, valued and celebrated. Such a dialogue will have four moments: i. Dialogue of life; ii. dialogue of action; iii. dialogue of religious experience; iv. dialogue of theological exchange (Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, 1991). This will help us, according to the author, to go beyond Nehru's rationalist secularism of keeping equal distance from every religion, *dharma nirapekshata*, to Gandhi's dialogical secularism of giving equal respect to all religions, *sarvadharma sambhava*.

In this chapter on rethinking conversion, Heredia also makes another important point. If the conversion debate helps us to grow in the art of healthy tolerance and genuine dialogue, then it will also help us to accept and celebrate **multiple belonging with multiple identities**. He illustrates the need for this by using the linguistic paradigm of having a mother tongue while learning and mastering many other languages, without giving up or impoverishing the mother tongue. People who have experienced how

language can become a passionate issue like religion leading to spontaneous eruption of violence and vandalism, even self-martyrdom, will agree with the legitimacy of this analogy. The same conclusions can also be drawn from the paradigm of medical practitioners who have specialised in one school of medicine and consider it very sacred, yet have become familiar with other medical traditions and develop a facility to use all of them according to the need of patients. Today to be human is to be inter-human; to be cultured is to be inter-cultural. So also, to be religious is to be inter-religious, which would imply multiple belonging and multiple identities without losing one's rootedness.

The **final chapter's** title "Religious Disarmament" echoes the current discourse on 'nuclear disarmament' for ensuring lasting peace and prosperity in the world. In this chapter the author looks with creative hope at the way ahead. After having scanned the '**model of**' the existing conflict-ridden society, especially in the context of religious conversion, he tries to propose a '**model for**' an ideal society, built on religious tolerance and dialogue, reaping the fruits of social harmony, freedom and justice, enjoyed by all, especially the least and the last of the earth.

All the past efforts aimed at addressing the problem of conversion through aggressive conversion by the converters, violent opposition by the resisters, and legal prohibitions by the State have not truly helped us to find a constructive solution acceptable to all. Rather the situation is steadily worsening, threatening with more blood baths. It is in this context Heredia proposes the project of '**religious disarmament**' as a viable alternative. It is to let go of the existing conflicts and competition, prejudice and antagonism between the religions, in order to evolve a new utopian vision acceptable to all, eliciting the commitment of all for its realisation.

For this, Heredia begins with a fresh project for a constructive dialectic between **faith and reason**. Reason should be made faithful, and faith should be made reasonable (critical) and responsible to human and cosmic wholeness. Proposing an effective pedagogy for this, he formulates and explains eleven *sutras* (pp. 339-341):

1. Faith and reason are complementary, not contradictory.
2. *What we believe depends on whom / what we trust.*
3. *A rational methodology transgressing its inherent limitations can never yield rightly reasoned knowledge.*
4. *Where we position ourselves influences how we think.*
5. *Whether or not we believe depends on our self-understanding.*

6. *If to believe is human, then what we believe must make us more human, not less.*
7. Faith that is 'blind' is never truly humanizing; faith that is not humanizing is to that extent 'bad faith'.
8. A self-reflexive, experiential methodology is meaningful to the discourse of faith; a rationalist-empirical one is alien to it.
9. As the act of faith is constitutively human it necessarily has a common religious basis across varying cultures and traditions.
10. An inclusive humanism must embrace both 'meaningful faith', as well as 'sensitised reason'.
11. The dialectic between faith and reason should be pursued in the context of *tolerance and dialogue, or it will degenerate into a hostile debate across an unbridgeable divide.*

Once our reason is made faithful and our faith is made critical, and both made responsible to authentic humanity, then the task is to move from the **'moral monism'** of individual religions towards a **global ethic** founded on faith and reason, as well as on the basic goodness of the common *humanum*, and therefore acceptable to all parties irrespective of their religio-cultural differences. Today's world citizens require multiple frames of references and multiple identities for self and group. Only then will they be able to believe with certainty, as the World Social Forum's slogan goes, that *another world is possible.*

The time has come for us to situate our discourse on religious conversion within the context of individual rights and dignity, freedom of conscience to make religious choices, as well as a community's freedom for equality of opportunity and partnership in economic and political spheres, religio-cultural identity, etc. Therefore, **a constructive agenda for the future**, as far as religious conversion is concerned, should have the following thrusts:

Conversion as a process should be oriented more in terms of continuity and harmony than discontinuity and contention.

Conversion as change should be more an affirmation than a negation.

Conversion as tolerance must be more ethical and religious, mystical and spiritual, than just pragmatic and political, or intellectual and philosophical.

> Conversion as dialogue should be engaged in at all the four levels of life, action, experience and articulation, in free and equal, not coercive and alienating, partnership (pp. 348-349).

The UN's Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948 proclaimed the universal right of every individual to 'change' and to 'manifest' one's religion or belief in 'teaching, practice and observance'. But during the 1960s protection against proselytization was recognised as the right of a community to its own tradition, similar to its right to its language and culture. Under this new orientation the 1966 UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights emphasized the individual's freedom to change or maintain one's faith, while being silent on the right to convert others. In 1977, the Supreme Court of India reflected this view in its judgement on the Freedom of Religion Act of Madhya Pradesh.

In this context the author emphasises that a delicate balance should be maintained between the rights of the individual and those of the community. They are complementary, not contrary to each other. Therefore, cultural collective rights cannot override fundamental individual rights, or vice versa. A community's cultural and religious rights should be seen as an extension, not as a curtailment, of the individual's fundamental human rights. Caste inequality, gender discrimination, and similar practices that infringe upon the individual's rights and dignity, cannot be perpetuated in the name of a community's cultural rights. Reconciliation is possible in this dilemma if we concede a priority to the universally human over the culturally specific, without allowing homogenizing universalism to override and negate the cultural and religious diversities, to privilege some hegemonic forces.

Heredia concludes this book by reproducing the **10 point recommendations** of an inter-religious meeting held in Larino (Italy) in May 2006 on the theme *Conversion: Assessing Reality*, jointly organized by the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, the Vatican, and the Office of Inter-religious Relations and Dialogue of the World Council of Churches, Geneva. This document will stand as a remarkable milestone in the development of inter-religious consciousness.

In the final analysis, according to Heredia, the merit or demerit of conversion should be adjudged not on the basis of scriptural passages and doctrinal pronouncements or ideological assertions, but on the basis of what it does to the poor and the oppressed people here and now. Not the 'harvest of souls', but the harvest of authentic humanity should be the aim of religious conversion. There should be a *crusade*, a *jehad*, a *satyagraha* not for the souls of Indians, but for the authentic soul of India. It will not sow the poisonous seeds of conflict leading to a harvest of hatred and violence.

Rather, it will sow only the seeds of peace and harmony, yielding a hundredfold harvest in tolerance and dialogue, peace and justice, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Personal Comments

I find this book quite profound in its content, systematic in its methodology, extensive in its research, convincing in its arguments and lucid in its language. It is a timely contribution as the spectre of conversion is whipping up irrational passion and phobia, not only in India, but all over the world. I am sure that this book will generate further debates on conversion reaching further depths.

In this book, Heredia shatters many popular and popularized myths that are currently doing their rounds:

> Some religions, especially Christianity and Islam, are demonised as proselytizing religions while others are glorified as non-proselytizing religions. With convincing empirical data he proves that every religion, at different times in history, has been busy with conversion, either overtly or covertly, by aggressive methods or by hidden and gradual absorptions or assimilation.
>
> On the basis of the continuous migration to this subcontinent, the author effectively debunks the popular myth, which glorifies some religions as native and indigenous, while excluding others as foreign.
>
> He also establishes clearly that no religion is entirely homogeneous, either in doctrines or in socio-political interests. He agrees with Antonio Gramsci that "Every religion ... is in reality a multiplicity of distinct and contradictory religions."
>
> He also effectively contests, with adequate historical data, the popular myth that Islam was spread by the swords of Sultans, and Christianity by the guns of colonial powers. Traders, Sufi saints, and selfless missionaries, social movements and so on have played a greater role as converting agents than the sword or guns.
>
> The author breaks another myth that glorifies some religions for their tolerance. He shows, with sufficient evidence both from the distant and the recent past,

how intolerant and violent Hinduism and Buddhism also could become.

With official demographic data he demolishes another myth that presents conversion as a dangerous anti-national act supported by foreign powers for increasing the population of Muslims and Christians, threatening the very existence of Hinduism.

The relevance of the book comes also from its specific perspective. Rejecting the downward perspective of the aggressive proselytisers or the violent opponents, Heredia has deliberately employed for this study the upward perspective of the converts, especially the poor and the powerless. This has helped us to see the issue of conversion in greater depth and breadth. Going beyond the purely spiritual and dogmatic dimensions, the social, cultural, political, economic and psychological dimensions are treated as essential for the study of conversion.

Abstaining from the temptation of being aggressive either in promoting or opposing conversion, or advocating an idle indifference, this book invites and challenges the readers to be actively engaged in the urgent task of building a harmonious multi-religious and multi-cultural society on the firm foundations of healthy tolerance and genuine dialogue, realizing the *sarvadharma smbhabva* of Gandhi.

The way the issue of multiple belonging is handled in this book seems to be rather weak. This issue needs further probing. The book has an extensive bibliography on conversion and a very useful thematic index.

I think that this book has contributed a fresh thinking on conversion that can radically change the discourse on and practice of conversion. I recommend this book to everyone who is committed to the protection and promotion of our secular democracy in the context of religio-cultural pluralism. This can become a basic source book for designing an effective course on conversion to train Seminarians, men and women Religious, Lay leaders, and inter-religious youth groups. *Changing Gods* is not a book to be hurriedly read through. It is a book meant for serious study and reflection, because it is meant to convert the competing religions and come to a consensus regarding everybody's common mission to humanity.

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