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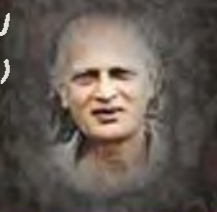
"The Church of Jesus is a **pilgrim church**: a community not of the perfect, but of those who are walking **towards perfection**. The important thing is that we **DO not stop** walking, that we continue to be pulled by **Jesus' dream**."

George Soares-Prabhu SJ
(1929-1995)

HUMANISING SOCIAL LIFE

Enlighten, Enable, Empower

HUMANISING
SOCIAL LIFE

"
Everything
involved in the
articulation of **social**
structures, such as
social, political, economic,
educational, and psychological
aspects should be directed
towards the goal of **human**
dignity, for without individual
dignity, **humanization** cannot be
attained.
"

- Sebastian Vellassery

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Humanising Social Life

Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune

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Editorial:

Humanising Social Life

Ambivalent change – political, social and technological – has been the outstanding feature of the 20th century affecting Indian societies and peoples like it has affected throughout the globe. Whereas the first half of the century witnessed elaborate campaigns of political and economic unification and assimilation culminating in totalitarian systems of suppression, in India it has paved the way for the political independence of this country from the British Empire. The latter half of this century has been emerging, not without its own contradictions, as a movement toward human freedom buttressed by a newly found sense of the dignity of the human person that has found expression in movements like the implementation of Mandal commission report and the political movements of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes demanding greater respect and greater role in the social life of Indian societies. Within this context, the present seminar raises the question of how the humanization of social life is to be understood. One can possibly think that there are two principal dynamics in the idea of humanization of social life: these two dynamics are based on (a) the idea of what a person is and (b) the idea of how a society is. We are often told that a society is the setting in which the person exists and acts, so that person and society seem closely interrelated and hence not very problematic.

However, there are two goals at which both person and society are supposed to strive for and aim at. These two goals are: (1) one becomes more humanized by humanizing one's social

relations (2) humanizing oneself by taking recourse to spiritual path. Though each of the two tasks initially begins with what seems indifferent, in practice, there appears to be different ways for Oriental and Occidental cultures.

What is humanization is a difficult theoretical question. Some may suggest that community is an essential aspect in the idea of humanization; others may suggest that the deliverance of individual ego is the source of every kind of humanization. But, having postulated such an ideal does not mean that one is humanized as a person as well as a member of a given society. The significant question is: Would that all human beings agreed on a common concept of what it is to be the basis of the idea of humanization? Plato in his Republic attempted to give us a view as to how social life can be constructed by basing it on a concept of a humanized individual as one who is just. By justice he meant the interdependent and harmonious relationship of the three parts of the human soul, namely, the rational part, the spirited part and the appetitive part. Aristotle followed Plato and provided his own view of the humanized man as the pursuit of happiness by the fulfillment of all his potentialities, but especially of his rational faculties. The ideal man for him was the contemplative man. In the middle ages, we had Christian humanism, a representative example being that of St. Thomas Aquinas for whom man can only be fully humanized by aspiring toward the supernatural. As a result, the social arrangement was a collaboration of Church and state for the promotion of spiritual life. We have Marxist humanism and democratic capitalism. According to the doctrine of Karl Marx, the inner sense of philosophy consists in being an element of the social praxis. It does not just contemplate the object, but constructs it; it has the form of praxis from the very beginning. Social praxis, in turn, is philosophical; philosophical in the sense that it has to show the path towards humanization. When Marx speaks about changing the world, he means that the social, political and economic resurrection is possible only by a philosophy which is praxis and based on the universal benefit for the humanity. Thus for him, social praxis is the embodiment of

philosophy, making philosophy real; it fuses together the ethical and the ontological, the earthly and the divine.

One shall argue that true humanism is based on unity, harmony and integration. To be humanized is to be in harmony with nature, with fellowmen and with the idea of Transcendent. To be in harmony means to be in an I-Thou relation with nature, with fellowmen and with the Transcendent-God- so as to constitute a "we" relation as opposed to an "us-and-them" relation. Hence, to be humanized is to develop a cosmic sense, a sense of belonging with the cosmic community. Social life includes social life with nature and with the Transcendent and not only with one's fellowmen. The question is centred on the idea of humanization which we use in determining our social structures? The social and philosophical dilemma is then what is true humanization? Is an affluent country more humanized than a poor starving country? Is an industrialized economy more humanized than an agricultural economy where people are able to feed themselves, though quite poor in modern amenities? The questions are more existential and practical too.

Generally speaking, with regard to the Oriental cultural model, we may say that it is the personality, but not the social life, that is being humanized. In the case of Western cultural model, it is the social relations but not the individual human life that is being humanized. Thus, the issue of humanization of social life appears to be rather problematic and unsolvable. The components, which seemed complementary to one another theoretically, become incompatible in the practical level which can suggest certain pessimistic overtones. The Eastern traditions in general and Indian tradition, in particular, bestow a sense of unity in the human person so as to find out ways of healing the divisive conflicts of egoism. The theme "humanization of social life" requires an effort at clarification to which the Indian (Hindu) approach may both make its own distinctive contribution and at the same time constitute an alternative perspective, enabling others to reassess and approach their own positions anew. Person and action, choice and situation, person and experience are closely

bound to each other not only in their implications but also in their fundamental structure. Thus, the transcendent subjectivity of the self is described differently by Indian philosophical systems, depending upon the metaphysical framework of each system and thus elaborating different perspectives on humanization debate.

But in the case of oriental thought, it is the person who is humanized and revolutionizes the history of social changes and the results of which are very much visible in the social life of India and are still continuing in the form of many kinds of assertions that have been made by the affected, so to say, the marginalized and Dalits. It questions the logic of oppression that goes in the name of 'tradition', or 'religious order'. This means that everything involved in the articulation of social structures, such as the social, political, economic, educational, and psychological aspects should be directed towards the goal of human perfection, for without individual perfection the meaning of humanization cannot be exercised. What we ought to bear in mind is that true humanization cannot be exercised by man merely in terms of law, politics, etc., but by keeping personal perfection as a goal for all aspects of life which is true freedom in life.

With a view to revisit such a unique concept as humanization in social life and make it meaningful and purposive in the context of fast socio-economic, political and cultural changes brought about by spectacular advancements in modern science and technology and the consequent lifestyle of today, a seminar on the topic, "Humanising Social Life: Philosophical Issues and Practical Concerns," was organised by Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeeth on the following related themes:

1. Humanization of Social Life: Cultural Responses
2. Indian Cultural Traditions and Humanization
3. Democratic Traditions and Humanization
4. Humanization of Social Life: Ontological and Axiological Foundations
5. Indian Spiritualism: Role of Humanization
6. Humanization of Social Life: Christian responses

7. Globalization and Challenges to Humanization
8. Ethnic and Caste Conflicts: Value Context of Humanization
9. Social Identity and Conflicts: Practical Concerns of Humanization
10. Liberalism, Democracy and Humanisation
11. Enlightenment, Individuals and Human Rights
12. Humanisation and Western Culture
13. Humanisation, Marxism and Socialism
14. Kant, Marx and Nietzsche on the Human Person
15. Death of God as Death of Man, Etc

The two-day international seminar, conducted in collaboration with Christ College, Pune and St Xavier's University, Kolkata began on January 17 and ended on January 18, 2020. Of the 20 papers presented for this International Seminar in Honour of Richard De Smet SJ and Jean de Marneffe SJ, only seven are included in this volume. Two papers related to our contemporary Covid-19 are also included in this issue of our journal.

We are happy to preent before you a review article connected with **Prof George Soares-Prabhu, SJ,** one of the most emineent faculty members and Biblical scholars of JDV. He left us unexpectedly 25 years ago, on July 22, 1995. We are grateful for his pioneering spirit, prophetic vision and committed scholarship, which have radically changed Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, India.

With this issue, we are happy that *Jnanadeepa* is entering into its silver jubilee. We welcome your suggestions to make the journal respond to your needs. Meanwhile, we thank our readers who have consistently supported us and provided us with ideas, critiques and comments. While thanking you for your accompaniment, we remember fondly **Fr Kurien Kunnumpram, SJ,** the founder-editor of the journal for 12 years (1998-2010) bringing out 26 issues!

Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ

Editor

Humanisation of Social Life and Human Dignity: Philosophical Concerns and Practical Issues

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Abstract: The theme "humanization of social life" immediately directs our attention to the notion of person and extends to the theme "the place of the person in society and his/her inalienable dignity." As society is the setting in which the person exists and acts, person, society and human dignity seem closely interrelated. When we reflect upon the idea of humanization, India, with its caste-based society, becomes a more appropriate instance as the laboratory for the consideration of a "theory on humanization." As the basic constituent of any society, the person is essential but ambiguous, for one can turn inward in a self-centred manner as happened for centuries in this country. Hence it is important to add that any resolution of the social problem requires that the individual be endowed with dignity, which includes one's emotional life as well as intellect and will. It regards the possibility and necessity of speaking meaningfully of a social, cultural or generic consciousness at the corresponding levels. Whatever the possibility of an answer by philosophy, it is necessary to point out the consequences and the implications,

which are directed to the life of individuals in the community, their realities and possibilities.

The theme "humanization of social life" immediately directs our attention to the notion of person and extends to the theme "the place of the person in society and his/her inalienable dignity." As society is the setting in which the person exists and acts, person, society and human dignity seem closely interrelated. When we reflect upon the idea of humanization, India, with its caste-based society, becomes a more appropriate instance as the laboratory for the consideration of a "theory on humanization." It consists of traditional realities such as caste, legacies of Islam and British Institutions and practices. The topic also directs our attention to two implications which are more appropriate in our times. The humanization of Indian societies cannot be discussed and understood without taking its moral element into account. The moral force is a motivating force for solidarity and associational values that entice citizens to achieve social goals together. It gives people to an ideal to strive for and a sense of belonging. But in the post-independence India, majority of people are not endorsed to be human because of caste, colour, ethnicity and the like so that humanizing aspect loses its importance as a basic value that any society nourishes and fulfils in its search for values. The second dynamics which I would like to point out is the need for a human dignity initiative by the civil society which can deal with some of the most profound dilemmas of present Indian social life. What is at stake is the practice of liberal democracy in India which is not committed to treating all citizens as equal and dignified. Human dignity and equality of individuals are made rather than found. They are produced through the influence of a special kind of political and social culture. In fact, in the village community in Indian social and political life, a certain group of people does not have cultural intimacy with their selves. Somehow, they do not belong anywhere.

What it means to be humanized is a difficult theoretical question. Some may suggest that community is an essential aspect while considering the concept of humanization and others may suggest the unity of individual egos in a transcendental Consciousness. Would that all human beings agreed on a common basis for humanization? Plato in his Republic attempted to give us a view as to how social life can be constructed by basing it on a concept of a humanized individual as one who is just. By justice he meant the interdependent and harmonious relationships of the three parts of the human soul, namely, the rational part, the spirited part and the appetitive part. Society is the individual writ large; hence, society must have three classes of individuals, the rulers, the auxiliaries and the producers. But this utopian view of humanization and social life has never been realized; in fact, it has been severely criticized as elitist. Aristotle followed Plato and provided his own view of the humanized man as the pursuit of happiness by the fulfillment of all his potentialities, but especially of his rational faculties. The ideal man for him was the contemplative man. In the middle ages, we had Christian humanism, a representative example being that of Thomas Aquinas for whom man can only be fully humanized by aspiring toward the supernatural. As a result, the social arrangement was a collaboration of Church and state for the promotion of spiritual life. We do not need to go further in our review of some significant theories of humanism. In recent times we have Marxist humanism and democratic capitalism. The question is, what are the bases of humanized individuals or community upon which Indian society should pattern itself.

Humanization of Life: The Occidental and the Oriental

The Western world was successful in developing and perfecting social structures. In a number of Western countries, social relations are sufficiently humanized to ensure a high standard of life as well as social justice. It may be said that given such conditions, a genuine humanization of social life was made possible in the West or at least, an attempt has been made. In

practice, however, we witness a prevalent consumerist mode of life according to which the self-realization of a person is primarily the possibility for a comfortable life, luxury being the ideal. Indeed, individual persons and small groups or communities can follow a really humanized way of life.

With regard to the Oriental cultural model, we may say that it is the personality, but not the social life, that is being humanized. In the case of the Western cultural model, it is the social relations but not the individual human life that is being humanized. Thus, the issue of humanization of social life appears to be rather problematic and unsolvable. The components, which seemed complementary to one another theoretically, become incompatible in the practical level which can suggest certain pessimistic overtones. The significant question is whether human dignity can be harmonized with social cohesion. If not, how can we talk about a meaningful understanding of human dignity and thus humanization of social life? In fact, this paper is purported to inquire into the specificities of these issues.

Looking from the perspective of Indian tradition, true humanization is based on unity, harmony and integration. To be humanized is to be in harmony with nature, with fellowmen and with the idea of Transcendent. To be in harmony means to be in an I-Thou relation with nature, with fellowmen and with the Transcendent-God- so as to constitute a "we" relation as opposed to an "us-and-them" relation. The sense of community as a "we" consciousness which was developed by some people[1] should be extended to the whole universe. Hence, to be humanized is to develop a cosmic sense, a sense of belonging with the cosmic community. Social life includes social life with nature and with the Transcendent and not only with one's fellowmen. One cannot have a truly humanized social life if it is confined merely to one's own family and country while millions in the world are poor and starving, and when such a social life is obtained at the expense of the exploitation of others and the pollution of the earth. This view of humanization is in the realm of the "soft" cultural field, as opposed to the hard system of socio-economic and political

structures.[2] The problem is what sort of cultural concept of humanization are we to use in determining how to humanize social structures. Only answer that I can suggest is recognizing and cherishing human dignity.

Given the practical problem of diversity of social life in India and the theoretical problems of determining how to be humanized, it is impossible to arrive at a concept of humanization in the fullest sense of the term which would respect the values of the various cultures and subcultures in the Indian societies. What we need is to derive common elements of humanization from various cultural fields which will serve as criteria for determining the shape and form of social structures and judging the degree of humanization in various societies. The common denominator we will propose is human dignity. Thus a society is humanized when human dignity is recognized and appreciated by all members of society. The ontological foundation of human dignity, as George McLean has suggested, is subsistent individuality.[3] Of course, this minimalist definition of humanization is subject to criticism precisely for being minimalist. But this is also its strength in allowing dignity for each individual to pursue what he believes to be the ideal man. It allows freedom for both secular humanists and religious humanists to pursue their own brand of humanism.

Human Dignity

Theologically speaking, the human subject can get nowhere in the understanding of himself before he recognizes that he is a creature; however, when he has become humbled by this overwhelming fact, he may very likely be already on the way to the understanding of other important and positive aspects of his being.[4] Yet man is more than a creature among creatures, he is also as a responsible self a special creation. He is free to make decisions regarding his total attitudes and actions within the limits of his inherited and environment conditions.

Responsible selfhood then uses reason as the Enlightenment of purpose[5] to set some ideal for itself. According to the Holy

Bible, God created humans in his image; in the divine image he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth".[6] The essential biblical source for this principle is found in the book of Genesis[7] , noting that human beings were made in the image and likeness of God. St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in drawing on the Genesis account further refined the understanding of the human person being created in God's image by interpreting Genesis to instruct that the human person is an "intelligent being endowed with free will and self-movement." [8]

Origin of the Discourse on Human Dignity

"Human" is etymologically related to the Latin for earth, *humus*, so that "human" means what is "earthly" or an "earthling'. Generally speaking, it means what is proper to the kind that "we" are, or to the species of rational animals, referring in particular to their kindness (humanity) and their fallibility.[9] "Dignity" comes from the Latin noun *decus*, meaning ornament, distinction, honour, glory etc. And dignity means, generally speaking, the standing of one entitled to respect, i.e. his or her status, and it refers to that which in a being (in particular a personal being) induces or ought to induce such respect: its excellence or incomparability of value.[10] When "human" and "dignity" are used in conjunction, they form the expression "human dignity', which means the status of human beings entitling them to respect, a status which is first and to be taken for granted. It refers to their highest value or to the fact that they are a presupposition for value, as they are those to whom value makes sense. Human beings are endowed with intrinsic values which are inalienable to exist with the true sense of living as social beings; this is to suggest that the concept of dignity is always being part and parcel of being human.

As an image of God, and as the chosen people of God, human beings are called to live up to this divine image. They are called

to fulfil the sacred mission assigned by God to them. Or more precisely, they are assigned the responsibility to build a *regnum Dei* (the reign of God), or a *civitas Dei,* i.e., a perfect society (the city of Jerusalem which St. Augustine explicitly named) after the model of the world which reveals the nature of God. According to St. Augustine, the very order, disposition, beauty, change and motion of the world and of all visible things silently proclaimed that it could have been made by God, the ineffably and invisibly great and the ineffably and invisibly beautiful.

Development of the Idea of Human Dignity

The principle of human dignity, as a universal affirmation that human beings have the highest value, does not itself have a history, because a universal statement is meant to have limits neither in space nor in time. But the idea of human dignity does have a history in so far as it has been thought to rely on various things and consequently been accounted for in various ways. The expression "human dignity" seems to emerge rather slowly from a context where the term "dignity" is used in appreciation of the importance of human subjects. The 1948 *Declaration of Human Rights* testifies to the currency of both terms, but a systematic usage of the term "human dignity" was not the object of philosophic investigation before then, however, surprising this may seem.[11] But then, within the Human Rights tradition flowing from this document, the term of "human dignity" is constantly used to express the basic intuition from which human rights proceed. It is meant as the basic principle upon which human rights are understood to rest. It is said to be inherent in each and every person, and also to be inalienable.

We may talk about four stages in the development of the idea of human dignity. Each depends on a time-typical framework and exemplifies a logical possibility. Cicero may represent the Cosmo-centric framework of Antiquity, which explains human dignity on the basis of nature (2). Thomas Aquinas represents the Middle Ages" Christo-centric framework, which explains

human dignity in relation to Jesus Christ (3). Immanuel Kant can represent the Logo-centric framework of Modernity, explaining human dignity as a tribute to reason (4). Mary Wollstonecraft, finally, represents the Polis-centre framework of Post-Modernity, which explains human dignity in relation to social acceptability. Each of these ways of accounting for human dignity can be understood as a source of the idea as it appears in the *Declaration of Human Rights*.

The Cosmo-Centric Account

In the Roman Republic as well as in the succeeding Empire, *Dignitas* was the standing of the one who commanded respect, whether because of his political, military or administrative achievements. The Greeks had another term for reality: αξια, meaning the worth whereby someone or something counts for more or less. Aristotle, in fact, defines αξια (*axia*) in the *Nichomachean Ethics* as "a term of relation. It denotes having a claim to goods external to oneself."[12] *Axia, in turn,* depends both on character and on evaluation by society; and it, therefore, tends towards equalization within the relationship of friendship, as it both educates character and appreciates the equal worth of the other. But Aristotle does not seem to entertain the idea that all human beings, simply because they are human, possess *axia*. Indeed, *axia* is precisely what distinguishes among them: they are not equal or entitled to the same status, and justice consists in making distribution according to their different *axia*.

Cicero, on the other hand, probably due to the influence of Stoicism, refers to the idea of *dignitas humana*, even though only once. This special status is due to the superior mind of humans, which obliges them to stay superior to the beasts. To Cicero dignity is, as it was for any Roman, a fundamental concept. He defines it as what merits respect,[13] whether mediated by an office or by the sheer excellence of virtue. This is so because there is nothing more divine than reason; in fact, human beings share with the gods this marvelous power. As a consequence Gods and

humans also share justice and law,[14] and thus live in and share the same commonwealth, which is the Universe, the Cosmos. The human dignity referred to by Cicero implied equality before the gods and the brutes, however, and obliged humans to self-respect and proper behaviour; and it ought to be the basis for the laws of the Republic, as Cicero saw it.

In the Cosmo-centric framework, dignity refers to the prerogative of governing, i.e. to the status of the one who is in command, either of himself, or of his household, or of some office within the State. The corresponding virtue in women is beauty, and thus Cicero seems, in accordance with the Cosmo-centric framework, not to have made up his mind as to the human dignity of women.[15] It is possible that his understanding would not differ much in intension from the one current in the Human Rights tradition, but that it would indeed differ in extension, considering this tradition's emphasis on the eradication of racism and sexism.

The Logo-Centric Account

The experience of the Reformation and the religious wars following it made a lasting impact on all modern thinkers. They could afford to take very few things indeed for granted, as tradition and authority were widely questioned, and it was discovered that even the new institutions (such as the nation-state), put in the place of the old, had also to withstand the wind of criticism. The new world-view – the Enlightenment – attempted to explain anything and everything though some supposed relation to reason.

It was against this background that Kant developed his idea of dignity, usually taken to be the main theme of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. He, however, like Cicero and Aquinas, used the concept of human dignity only relatively and rarely, four times in all in *The Metaphysics of Morals.*[16] Sometimes the logo-centric framework is called "anthropocentric." This designation is fitting because of the association of modernity and anthropocentrism, and also because Kant regards humanity itself as a dignity. It is also, however, misplaced, because Kant explains

the importance of Man in relation to reason, exemplifying hereby the rationalism of the Enlightenment. The identification of Man with the Citizen and of reason with the justification of republicanism has inherent problems, which in turn (and in due time) provoke the rise of the post-modern framework. As a source of human rights, however, the logo-centric account, with its accentuation of autonomy as the principle of humanity, is still commonly relied upon. But as autonomy is either an invisible (moral) or a negotiated (political) reality, the extension of human dignity is left without an objective criterion, unless it is attached to human nature; in which case the problems of vagueness of extension are the same as those associated with the Cosmo-centric account.

The Christo-Centric Account

This understanding of personal dignity, or the understanding that the person has *a dignity*, is related to the use of the term *dignitas* in medieval logic. Thomas, like other Scholastics before and after him, used *dignitas* as the translation of the Greek αξιομα. Human dignity may be termed as a fundamental or self-evident principle upon which science (whether of mathematics or of ethics) relies. The term "principle" in modern-day English has in fact similar connotations: something (or someone) of basic importance, as in a "School Principal'.

The Christo-centric framework could explain fundamental things, such as the importance of being human, in terms of the shared belief in a God made man in Christ. This shared belief also made it acceptable that human dignity to some extent was understood as destructible: it was after all given twice, first in Creation and again, but now even better, in Redemption, after it was marred by sin. This belief, perhaps, entailed that the status of non-Christians was uncertain. Christianity was so important for the social structure that not adhering to it was regarded an offence against the order of the day, much as statelessness would be today. But the Christian message of love of neighbour

contributed decisively to reinforcing the recognition of the person-hood and human dignity of everyone, and indeed it still continues to do so. Without this present-day reminder of the absoluteness of love and of its absolute availability, it is doubtful whether faith in human rights would be sustainable.

II

Humanization and Human Dignity

Having narrowed the concept of humanization to the pursuit of human dignity, we can now interpret the recent historical changes in the eastern European countries and in the third World countries as a process of humanization. In the case of India, the important and urgent problem of humanization is the pursuit of not only economic and social rights but providing dignity to all individuals devoid of his/her caste and ethnicity. After nearly seventy-five years of independence, Indian people continue to be in the grip of caste consciousness. Historically, India has been surviving as a nation for millennia with closed groups divided by caste, creed and language. Although India is said to have a long tradition of pluralistic culture, in terms of religions, philosophies, languages and lifestyles, yet it was a group of people which have been bound down by the authority of Smrti, Achara, Dharma Shastras and Dharma sutras that enabled the Indian societies to develop a philosophy of exclusion and made a section of people as untouchables and deny them dignity as persons and very often their existence as individuals. The traditional social value of Varna dharma, which has been operating the social consciousness of this country, resulted to a segregation of the majority of people in the hierarchic pattern of social arrangement restricted the interaction between individuals belonging to various groups. Since the status and opportunities of the individual were coupled with the Jati (caste) that he/she belongs to by birth and one's birth itself is theologically conditioned by the past karmas that one performed in the previous births, oppression towards these groups were made easy and theologically found correct. The age-old Indian concept

of Dharma which was interpreted in terms of Varnasrama dharma by Manu, Prasasthapada and Kautilya seldom provided a place for the majority group of people, who were called Sudras and later metamorphosed as Dalits. In terms of realization this has been reflected in the various kinds of Hindu literature (Sanskrit). which had denied accessibility to this group of people. The effect was a reduction of *anvikshiki* (philosophy) to the higher castes or the Brahmins who had been able to systematically reject reason that is philosophy including any deeper and authentic sense of human dignity. As a result, the Indian concept of Dharma underwent a series of interpretations and conveniently used as a theological weapon for the suppression of the human spirit. Down the centuries these broken ones (Dalits) were imposed enslavement by the powerful interpretations of the apparently harmless exegesis and footnotes of the doctrines like *Dharma, Karma, Svadharma, Nishkama karma* and *Mahayoga,*

Such an outlook and world-view engineered to look upon women as inferior to man in intelligence. A menstruating woman and a woman who has delivered a child were equated with a corpse and an outcaste by this oppressing philosophy, which has not generated an outlook for equality, dignity and social justice. Even in this modern age, this particular attitude towards women conditions the mental framework of people in some parts of this country. Although women were accorded great esteem in Vedic times, yet were condemned to a most humiliating position in the age of the Smritikars.[17]

One of the major suggestions that I want to make here regarding the "humanization of the social life" is that the course of the evolution of revolutions in the history of social change will not end in itself. While one thinks about the articulation of social structures one ought to keep in mind that the goal should be the dignity of the person. This means that everything involved in the articulation of social structures, such as the social, political, economic, educational, and psychological aspects should be directed towards the goal of human dignity, for without individual dignity humanization cannot be attained. One may argue that

every theory has its own end, i.e., a person's benefit, but this can be questioned. Where do all such political goals end? In fact, they never end, or they may end in total destruction. For instance, one could argue that the prefect articulation of social structure is to attain socialism, but could socialism or any such social goal constitute an end in itself? Next, this also will undergo the dialectical process of evolution of revolutions, which continues till all men are perfected. True humanization cannot be exercised by a person merely in terms of law, politics etc. Therefore, it is very important to recognize human dignity as a goal for all aspects of social life. What I am trying to emphasize is that a social system, which accords human values with the sole criterion of one's caste cannot safeguard and create a social atmosphere of co-existence. The basic requirement, I argue, is based on those complex qualities of self-confidence and self-assurance in each individual which is possible only by according dignity to each person and that alone can ensure both the assertion of human spirit and its harmony with the society.

This involves both persons and groups. As the basic constituent of any society, the person is essential but ambiguous, for one can turn inward in a self-centred manner as happened for centuries in this country. Hence it is important to add that any resolution of the social problem requires that the individual be endowed with dignity, which includes one's emotional life as well as intellect and will. It regards the possibility and necessity of speaking meaningfully of a social, cultural or generic consciousness at the corresponding levels. Whatever the possibility of an answer by philosophy, it is necessary to point out the consequences and the implications, which are directed to the life of individuals in the community, their realities and possibilities. They are not simply theoretical or matters of preference or pre-established interests of certain groups or caste considerations. The point is to make life even more possible at exemplary levels with criteria and standards of quality, that is, with universally desirable values. What is required is multiple relations of solidarity wherein each person ought to perform public responsibilities in order to

develop intermediate spheres of active participation in the social order and, by implication, to correct conditions of excessive authoritarianism or weakness on the part of the state or of the superior castes and of injustice in the economic and social order. Hence, a progressive humanization of life in the third millennium will provide justice towards the marginalized groups in this country, which can pervade, transform and inspire all phases of social life. Let me sum up by enlisting the following points:

1.   Generally speaking, human dignity in India is restricted in its possibilities. What I mean is that the worth of an individual is restricted in terms of his caste, creed and ethnicity. In other words, human dignity and value of being human are associated with the individual's particular caste or his connections with the powers that be. From the standpoint of human dignity, I may say that the history of India has not been centred on a search for making life possible in terms of its individuals as well as its different ethnic, linguistic and religious communities. Hence, in this part of the world, the ethics of human dignity is still an agonizing issue. The challenge, therefore, is to create social space and a national conscience with horizontal and vertical unity of individuals whether they belong to a particular religion, caste or ethnic environment.

2.   In independent India, it is a sad fact that the individual exists only as a representative of another reality. When one is asked on whose behalf one comes and talks and if the answer is "I come in my own name" then the response is cold and sham; but when the answer is: on behalf of an important person or a well-known company, then you are attended to and obliged in a special way. It amounts to saying that one is forced to represent another reality knowing well that he is not that reality. It is indeed a pathological situation and this trauma is commonly exhibited in all spheres of life.

3. Since the declaration of human rights in 1949 by the U.N. where India also was a part, human dignity issues have not been kept its political and social relevance in both its role as a strategy of social reform as well as in its moral quality in this country. Consequently, Indian leaders and especially the intellectuals have not accorded adequate emphasis for human dignity issues as a platform for the moral and social reform of society. The reasons are religious, practical and cultural. They are religious and cultural in the sense that most of our leaders and the intellectuals have come from an aristocratic group wherein they find that the resurgence of a civil society representing human dignity issues will belittle their importance and worth. The concept of human dignity also relates to social reform in the sense of creating spheres of life in which people can regain their self-esteem for their social and physical environment.

4. As a policy issue, the political, social and economic transformation of Indian societies will not yield to their desired results, if there is no simultaneous progress in the moral transformation of a society. This moral transformation is possible only by according one's dignity. Even after 73 years of independence, we are increasingly becoming clearer that these changes have to be pursued together.

5. The social dimension of human dignity issue cannot be discussed and understood without taking its moral element into account. The moral force is a motivating force for solidarity and associational values that entice citizens to achieve social goals together. But in the post-independence India, a majority of people are not permitted to be a part of the decision making not only in the arena of the powers that be but also in the place of their birth. As a result, the moral function of this concept loses its importance of basic values that any society nourishes.

6. A central element in human dignity discourse in the Indian context is the desire to return to the concept of equality and social justice. But unfortunately, even in the post-independence India, Jati is a criterion of making one as the part of a society/ community, where respect for human dignity as a condition for human society is reckoned. It is my contention that the conditions prevailing in this country, despite having attained political freedom, yet to appropriate human dignity as the Indian societies are overshadowed with casteist and its metaphysical trappings. Now the question is: Can the existing normative doctrines, unquestioningly practised in India by all religions provide the liberal political ideas of freedom, dignity and equality devoid of their casteist and metaphysical trappings?

7. As a strategy of moral and social reform, civil societies and religious heads can fill this vacuum. In brief, the concept of human dignity is an idea, which offers both a moral way out of totalitarian rules and an alternative strategy of hope for the future. Human dignity is an important driving force behind any revolution. One can take recourse to human dignity under the age-old concept of Dharma, which can appropriate a useful role in the political, economic, social and moral recovery of present India.

8. Against the vague incommensurability of ethical and social values practised by all religions, one must start from life as experienced by socially related individuals. In other words, against an undifferentiated state, human dignity as an ethical concern is the configuration of open space for deliberation, critique and common action by all religions. The ethical principle of human dignity is grounded upon inter-subjective life experiences, which are the common issues that should be the concern of all religions. In this way, it is possible to unravel the central problem of the logic of human dignity, namely,

combining the universal and the particular: the universal is the absolute and unconditioned value of human life, the particular is the specific way in which life exists in a determined space and time, in accord with the determined tradition and common horizon of that way of living.

Notes

1   See the papers of James A. Loiacono, "The Community of Persons as Foundations of Human Society," and Albertine Tshibilondi Ngoyi, "The Understanding of the Human Person and Society in Traditional and Modern African Culture," in Ronald S. Calinger. Robert P. Badillo, Rose B. Calabretta and Robert Magliola,eds , *Humanization of Social Life*, Washington: RVP, 2004, p. 11-31.

2   See the paper of Gytis Vaitkunas, "Social Structure and Cultural Field: Humanization of Social Life," in Calinger et al., *Humanization of Social Life*, op. cit. p. 31-47.

3   McLean, George, "Person, Creativity and Social Change," in Calinger et al., *Humanization of Social Life*, op. cit. introduction..

4   Ferre Nels F.S. 'The Meaning of Human Dignity from a Theological Perspective' Andover Newton Theological School.

5   Whitehead, Alfred North. *The Function of Reason*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1929. p.29

6   Holy Bible, Book of Genesis, Chapter 2, verse28. (King James Version)

7   Genesis 1: 26-27

8   Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, I—II, 1, Prologue.

9   Lebech Mette, "What is Humanity?" Faculty of Philosophy National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

10 Ibid.

11 The use of the word 'human', to designate what pertains to the human race, apparently also is of relatively recent date. Various etymological dictionaries affirm that the word was in use only from the seventeenth century onwards. Before then the term 'humane' was used with a more normative sense. The expression 'human

dignity' is a prominent theme in the papal encyclicals from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards.

12   Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1123a18.

13   Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De Divinatione*, (On Divination-44 B. C) II, 166

14   Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De Legibus* (On the Laws) I, VII, 22

15   Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De Officiis,* (On Duties-44 B. C) I, 106

16   Kant, Immanuel *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals.* Oxord: OUP, 2019.

17   Velassery, Sebastian. *Casteism and Human Rights: Toward an Ontology of the Social Order*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005. from the introduction

What Makes a Human Being Valuable?

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Abstract: Human beings are dependent on bonding and relationships, which renders them vulnerable and gives them the power to violate others. It is also true that we all value things. For example, we value friendships, careers, prosperity, environment and knowledge. These seem to be good and worthy of pursuit. Many things are valuable, not merely as things worth having for their own sake, but as things worth having for the sake of something else. The question remains, where does the chain of values end.

When it comes to Indian Philosophy, it offers *Puruṣārthas* and human creates value through *Puruṣārthas.* This bestows value on us as providers. That is the unique capability of the human being. Unlike animals whose bodies are consumed by their predators, humans create value that can be consumed by other human beings. Not only can we create value and exchange value, we can also enhance value. We can gather property. By gathering things, we give ourselves value. The more creative we are in adding substance to the list of values, the less likely we will be overcome by Gilgamesh's problem of death, Sisyphus's problem of futility, Boethius's problem of cosmic insignificance, problem of suffering, or any other

problem that undermines our sense of value/purpose or human life and happiness.

In this contribution, an attempt has been made here to show that we keep building and collecting more and more and become valued members in society as someone who possesses a lot of things with reference to the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads* and to some extent the *Purāṇas*. 'Valuable' here means being accountable to word and deed, and having a sense of duty means to fulfil the tasks with reliability, dependability. Because we think that we are not bound to solve all the problems in the world; our duty is only to avoid creating problems. We must not be responsible for evil to others; we must not harm others; if we harm, we must repair the damage. This is called *Ethics of Responsibility* and the answer to the question of what makes human beings valuable and meaningful.

Keywords: Ethics, Chain of Values, Responsibility, *Puruṣārthas*

I

It is indeed true that we all value things. For example, we value friendships, careers, prosperity, environment and knowledge. These seem to be good things and things worthy of pursuit. They seem better and more worthy of pursuit rather than their opposites like enmity, stagnation, poverty, and ignorance. A notable fact about the things we consider valuable is that most of them appear to be valuable, not merely as things worth having for their own sake, but as things worth having for the sake of something else. The question still remains, where does the chain of values end? It seems that the chain of values must end somewhere, though some values can be values by virtue of being means to or constituent parts of further values, not *all* values can be values of this kind. If they were, all values would be values only insofar as they contribute to something further, in a justificatory regress. To get a chain of values off the ground, something will have to be valuable by virtue of itself, not by

virtue of that to which it contributes. Aristotle put forth this point in *Nicomachean Ethics* as follows:

> ... things achievable by action have some end that we wish for because of itself, and because of which we wish for the other things ... we do not choose everything because of something else - for if we do, it will go on without limit, so that desire will prove to be empty and futile.[1]

What is ultimately valuable? There are many proposed answers. Some suggest that ultimate value can be found in developing oneself to the fullest or in cultivating one's character and one's virtues. Others argue that it is ultimately valuable to have one's preferences or desires satisfied, to act in accordance with one's sentiments, or to experience enjoyment or pleasure. Still, others argue that there are several things worth having for their own sake, without any of these being reducible to one supreme value: Perhaps pleasure, knowledge, friendship, and virtue are all ultimately valuable, or perhaps there is hardly any value reduction at all, and many or most values are ultimate values. In *The Objectivist Ethics* Ayn Randwrites:

> What is morality, or ethics? It is a code of values to guide man's choices and actions – the choices and actions that determine the purpose and the course of his life. Ethics, as a science, deals with discovering and defining such a code.

> The first question that has to be answered, as a precondition of any attempt to define, to judge or to accept any specific system of ethics, is: *Why* does man need a code of values?

> Let me stress this. The first question is not: What particular code of values should man accept? The first question is: Does we need values at all – and why?

Albert Camus felt that human life is absurd, meaningless, and senseless. 'What is the meaning of life?' is the most urgent of questions, holds Albert Camus, because "I see many people die because they judge that life is not worth living. I see others paradoxically getting killed for the ideas or illusions that gave them a reason for living." In absurdist philosophy, the absurdity of life arises out of the fundamental disharmony between needs and aspirations of human beings and the apparent meaninglessness of the universe. Arthur Schopenhauer asked expressly "what is the meaning of life?" struggling with personal misery and a sense of loneliness and isolation, and he tried to find some understanding of himself and the world around him that appeared to him as senseless. He was absolutely alone, with not a single friend; and between one and none there lies infinity. Nietzsche wanted to give an affirmative philosophy of life instead of Schopenhauer's pessimistic, life-denying philosophy. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche speaks of "the creative strength is to create meaning." The meaning of life is to be created, not discovered. The mistake lies in thinking that our meaning and values are present in "things-in-themselves." It is created by us. All meaning is will to power.

In our everyday life we are mostly surrounded with discontent and suffering. Psychological problems are viewed as the result of inhibited ability to make authentic, meaningful, and self-directed choices about how to live. Existential approach can act as a therapy for solving the psychological problems too. This approach is based on client's responsibility and freedom. Existential approach believes that people have the capacity for self-awareness and choice. The existentialist tries to help the client finding meaning in discontent and suffering choosing to think and act authentically. According to the existentialists, creativity, love, authenticity may enable people to live meaningful lives in the face of discontent and suffering.

II

Indian philosophy right from the *Vedas* to the contemporary development is concerned with an enquiry into the nature of the human person, his destiny his place in the world, his personality

as a social being, religious being, ethical being, finite being, infinite being, cultural being, the relation of man to man, human welfare, i.e. humanism. Indian culture has given birth to humanism, and it is still nourishing for civilizational sustenance. Insisting on the supremacy of man, *abhayam*, the basic nature of man i.e. religious and spiritual, human values, goodness and welfare, universality and fraternity, spiritual integrity, moral uprightness, benevolence, unselfishness under all circumstances and condemning the crude technique of civilization i.e. Indian humanist are interested in the self of man. "*Ātmānān Viddhiḥ*"- "know thy self" is their direction. The fundamental aspiration of a man is to realize his best self. According to *Nyāya Darśana* a person's soul according to Vedic scriptures has six characteristics: *Ichchhā, dveṣa, prayatna, sukha-dukha, jñāna-ātmeno, and liṅgamiti*. (*Nyāya Darśana* 1: 1: 10) All the four *Vedas Ṛig, Yajur, Sāma* and *Atharva* investigate the nature of human and his destiny. The aim of human life is the search for perfect bliss along with perfect knowledge. The *Vedas* say: Man is the life Principle, (*Prāṇa*), Man is the Metabolic Fire (*Vaiśvānara Agni*), Man is processed in the mould of Time (*Samvatsara*), Man is the arch model of corporeal modality (*Prathama Paṣu*), Man is concretized Mind (*Murta Marias*), Man is the child of the universal Mothers (*Apamgarbha*), Man is the measure of the Infinite (*Śahaswasya Pratimā*), Man is the scion of the collective progenitor (*Vairāja Manu*), Man is the harmony of the cosmic chant (*Udgitha*), Man is the Divine Mystery and will (*Yajña Kratu*).

Vedic philosophy emphasizes the spiritual nature of man. The four *Mahāvākyas* of the four *Vedas* expresses the spiritual character of the human person. The *Mahāvākyas* are *Prajñanām Brahman* (The intelligence is Divine), *Ayamātmā Brahman* (The soul is Divine), *Aham Brahmāsmi* (I am Divine), and *Tattvammasi*. To make the human person more human the *Vedas* mentioned so many special traits of man. The Vedas also prescribe some religious and moral duties. By the performance of these duties one can live in harmony with the world around Him. Truthfulness, inner purity, honour to parents, kindness to the

animal, love of man, abstinence from theft, murder and adultery - all these are the humanistic approach. The conception of man's duty is very high and noble. Man is said to perform some duties to gods, man and animals. The duties are distinguished into: those to God, those to seers, those to man and those to lower creation. *Vedas* do not consist of the mechanical performance of duties. The *Vedas* suggests that in all acts unselfishness should be practiced. The *Ṛig Veda* recommend the duty of benevolence without reference to God. Thus, in Indian philosophy, human life is validated or socially valuable through *Puruṣārthas, i.e. Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. Dharma* refers to responsibility, *Artha* refers to success, *Kāma* refers to enjoyment and *Mokṣa* to freedom. In Indian philosophy, *Puruṣārthas* needs to be recognized in its standard formulation: success (*artha*), passion (*kāma*), virtue (*dharma*), and self-perfection (*mokṣa*). The famous verse of the *Ramāyaṇa* makes a similar assertion and states that:

kāmārtha guṇa saṃyuktam dharmārtha guṇa vistaram|

Samudram iva ratnāḍhyam sarva śruti manoharam || (Bāla Kāṇḍa- 1-3-8)

means "It deals with the worth of *kāma* and *artha* and treats in extension of *dharma* and *Mokṣa*. The four *puruṣārthas* are often discussed in the context of four stages of life. In the *Mahābhārata*, *Dharma* is defined by Vyasa as:

ऊर्ध्ववाहुर्विरौम्येष न च कश्चिच्छृणोति मे ।
धर्मादर्थश्च कामश्च स कमिर्थं न सेव्यते ।।

(*Mahābhārata, Swargārohanparva, Adhyāya 5, Shloka 46*

With my arms raised, I am lamenting, yet no one listens to me. (O human beings) *Dharma* accomplishes both, earning of wealth and fulfilling of desires. Then, why do you not abide by *Dharma*? Patrick Hanks defines *Dharma* as righteousness and enumerates its other meanings too as: virtue, virtuousness, uprightness, decency, integrity, worthiness, rectitude, probity, morality, ethicalness, high-mindedness, justice, honesty, honour, hounourable-ness, innocence, blamelessness, guiltlessness,

irresponsibility, sinless-ness, saintliness, purity, nobility, noble-mindedness, piety, piousness etc.

<h1 style="text-align:center">III</h1>

To appreciate this concept of *Puruṣārtha* and significance of nothingness, let us narrate a story of Indra, the King of *Swarga*, who one day called upon Vishvakarma to build a palace worthy of his splendour. So Vishvakarma built him a palace, but it didn't satisfy Indra for which Vishvakarma built another bigger and grander palace. But even this was not good enough for Indra, so Vishvakarma built another grand palace. But no matter what Vishvakarman built, Indra remained unsatisfied and felt that his glory was not matched by the luxury of the structures being built. Vishvakarman then went to Vishnu and asked for help. Vishnu appeared in the form of a child in front of Indra. Indra added that none of the palaces actually, matched with his greatness as those are though wonderful but not as wonderful as the palaces of the Indras who lived before him.

This comment worried Indra, and he asks what do you mean by before him: wasn't he unique? The boy laughed and mentioned that there were many Indras in the world, there were many Indras before him and there would be many after him. Right at that very moment, there were as many Indras in different realms, as there were grains of sand on a beach. Each one of them was trying to surpass the other by building a great palace worthy of his glory and none could achieve this. Indras came and went with the time and in the universe which is a canvas of infinity, each Indra is eventually reduced to nothingness. Indra realized that in the denominator of infinity which is the universe, he had no essential value or his existence meaningless.

Thus, the idea of existence/meaning or value bothered the seers or the *Rishis*. They kept asking what it was since nothing matters when placed against the canvas of infinity. They observed the nature (*Pṛkṛiti*) carefully and passed on their learning through the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas*. They observed, on the one hand, that the elements, fire, water and wind do not consume anything for they valued nothing. Plants, on the other hand, value the elements, as

they consume them in order to survive. Plants seek sunlight, they need air, they need water, they need the Earth to survive and seek out valuable nutrients. Thus, value is created when the consumer gives value to the commodity it consumes. Plants give values to elements by consuming them, animals give values to plants by consuming them, and animals give values to other animals by consuming them. Thus, the act of consumption or *bhoga* or eating, creates value.

It is true that as humans, we consume everything; we consume plants, animals, minerals. We find value in everything, and by consuming them, we give values to nature around us and transform them into various commodities. The question, therefore, is

- What gives value to humans?
- Who consumes humans?
- Who eats humans?

It is a fact that humans found an innovative way of creating value without being consumed physically, unlike plants and animals. They create value through goods and services that they exchange in the marketplace. This bestows value on them as givers or providers. That is the unique capability of human beings. Unlike animals whose bodies are consumed by their predators, humans create value that can be consumed by other human beings in the marketplace.

Not only can humans create value and exchange value, but they also accumulate value. They accumulate or gather property. By gathering things, they give themselves value. In most societies, one is valued for the value one gathers, in terms of material prosperity. I am, what I collect or gather. I am, what I possess/ have. Therefore, like Indra, we keep building and collecting more and more and become valued members in society as someone who possesses a lot of things/ properties. In the Vedas, it is said that *Artha* is about generating food, by creating goods and services. While *Kāma*, is satisfying this hunger. In *Dharma*,

we consider the hunger of others and, in *Mokṣa*, we outgrow our hunger. Only when we surpass/outgrow hunger, can we be generous and charitable. The problem with is that Indra has not outgrown his hunger for things and therefore he is seeking value for himself by building grand palaces or possession of material properties.

Therefore, Indra is unable to be generous. Indra seeks value from the things he possesses. But in the Indian philosophical thinking, ultimately all things must be consumed. Possessions do not give us value, but wisdom gives us value. The realization that nothing lasts forever must help us in outgrowing our hunger. Only by satisfying other people's hunger, do we truly bring value to society. Only when we surpass/outgrow our hunger can we be truly generous and valuable. In the *Narasimha Purāṇa* it is said that when Rama and Lakshmana were being educated by Visvamitra at his *Āśrama*, he imparted to them two kinds of knowledge – *Bala* and *Atibala*. These were potent enough to remove hunger and thirst. In this *Purāṇa*, also there is a description of the incarnation of *Kalki* who is said to be the 'portion' of God Vishnu. He would destroy all the *Mlechhas* and would engage in the *Bahukāñchana* sacrifice (where plenty of gold is distributed) and then would go to heaven [4]

IV

As per scientists, the world began thirteen billion years ago with the *Big Bang*. Earth came into being about five billion years ago. And about four billion years ago, life emerged on Earth. What we mean by 'life' is the appearance of sentience, the appearance of organisms, who can 'sense' the world around them in other words, the appearance of a mind. So, from a scientific point of view, matter comes first, then mind; the world comes first, then life; the world of physics precedes the world of biology. In *Purānic* metaphor, mind is male and matter is female. The world begins with Vishnu's wake-up. Thus, creation does not mean the creation of the material world, but the awareness of the material

world by the mind. This story of creation is very different from the Biblical concept of creation, in which God creates the world in six days, with life on the third day. Creation in *Hinduism* is psychological, not physical; it is about awareness of matter not the appearance of matter.

Mere awareness of the material world by the mind makes human beings dependent on bonding and relationships, which renders them vulnerable and gives them the power to violate others. But this essential human vulnerability only leads to victimization and violence under certain circumstances. Societies take precautions: they institutionalize, regulate, civilize or unleash collective or personal violence within institutionalized power relations. They define 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' violence and create institutions in order to enforce the formal or informal rules that apply to the use or prevention of violence. These processes are culturally and historically diverse. The gendered orders of violence are built through institutions such as the state, the military, the bureaucracy, the educational system and the family. They are enshrined in religious beliefs, language and symbolic orders. They are dynamic and they are organized along the lines of gender, class, race and other identities. The point is to seek a solution that best addresses a specific life circumstance or problem.

One may say that we can't criticize the lunatic's valuless/meaningless life if our lives are also meaningless. There is always a religious purpose for life. An Atheist can lead a meaningful life. But a lunatic's only hope for a valuable/meaningful life is to pursue happiness. Ethical Egoists pursue their own interests. Normal lives get happiness in the pursuit of something bigger - a religious as well as ethical life. Immoral acts are not necessarily irrational acts. Humans need to see that their best shot at a meaningful life is achieved by pursuing a religious life. Humans are responsible and it comes from the awareness of the material world created by mind. Here, 'responsible' means being accountable to thought (*mana*) word (*vakya*) and deed (*karma*). Having a sense of duty means to fulfil the tasks with reliability,

dependability and commitment. This sense of responsibility makes a human being valuable/accountable.

For humans, happiness is the ultimate benefit and the ultimate reason for living but depends on a pre-rational move in the sense that it depends on the recognition of the fact that happiness is better than suffering. This move is pre-rational in the sense that one cannot reason anyone into acknowledging it. In spite of the fact that this pre-rational move is required for practical reasons to occur, however, the view is mandatory for the reason that it depends on recognition rather than on choice. Insofar as one is a sentient being for whom happiness is better than suffering, no act of choice can remove an agent from the realm of normative reasons. The view is objective, moreover, since in any given situation, what is valuable and what is disvaluable to an agent is an objective fact. Happiness is neither mind-dependent, nor the fact that emotional reaction threatens objectivity.

According to Radhakrishnan, "Hinduism is more a way of life than a form of thought. While it gives absolute liberty in the world of thought, it enjoins a strict code of practice. The theist and the atheist, the sceptic and the agnostic may all be Hindus if they accept the Hindu system of culture and life. Hinduism insists not on religious conformity but on a spiritual and ethical outlook in life". The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.

It is believed that ethical decision making is not merely the province of philosophers. It is human beings' choices that reveal values to the world. These values are either unreflective and superficial or reflective and deep. Philosophical thought should help us to make our values and choices deep and thoughtful. Maybe this makes it more likely that our choices will be the right ones. Finding an appropriate list of responsibility or obligations may seem like philosophers' game. But the business of making appropriate ethical decisions is not a game. Because we think that we are not bound to solve all the problems in the world; our duty

is only to avoid creating problems. We must not be responsible for evil to others; we must not harm others; if we harm, we must repair the damage. This is called *Ethics of Responsibility* and the answer to the question, What makes human beings valuable and meaningful. Osho, in *The White Lotus* says: One has to be aware; otherwise you can miss the obvious! And *dharma* is the obvious, godliness is the obvious. It is not a complicated, complex thing. It is not far away; it is very close by. It is *dharma* that beats in your heart; it is *dharma* that pulsates in your blood. It is *dharma* that breathes; it is *dharma* that lives in you. It is *dharma* that you are made of – the very stuff that you are made of – and yet you are unaware of it. Let me end with the following lines from the *Rig Veda* which may be significant here:

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः ।
भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।
स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवागँसस्तनूभिः ।
व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ।

Om Bhadram Karnnebhih Shrnnuyaama Devaah |
Bhadram Pashyema-Akssabhir-Yajatraah |
Sthirair-Anggais-Tussttuvaamsas-Tanuubhih |
Vyashema Deva-Hitam Yad-Aayuh |

O Devas, May we Hear with our Ears what is Auspicious,
O (Devas who are) Worthy of Worship, May we See with our Eyes what is Auspicious,
With (Sense) Organs Steady and Body Praying (due to Hearing and Seeing the Auspicious)
... May we Attain (i.e. Spend) the Lifespan allotted by the Devas (thus finding fulfillment in our lives).

Notes

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Small Goodness (*la petite bonté*) as Human Flourishing:
Overcoming Structural Goodness through Ethical Transcendence

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"Only an excess of beatitude will respond to the excess of
evil." -Philippe Nemo

Abstract: The ethical hermeneutics of Emmanuel Levinas is
a provocation to be otherwise where the meaning of being
is to be interrogated in the ethical event of asymmetry of a
self-other 'relationless relation'. Contemporary questions
of human life and its meaning with regard to philosophy
and its significance has to be investigated in the "miracle
of exteriority."[1] The idea of 'small goodness' as interpreted
by Levinas from the insights of the novel *Life and Fate*
remains the crux of the argument of this paper, i.e., the
meaning of human existence – one's relation to the other –
is far beyond being, system and structure. A society that is
completely dehumanised by the decay of all human values,
failure of human relations, in such a social misery life seems
unpredictable and worthless. There is a loss of human dignity

and value, lack of respect for one another, an absolute despair and desolation of all human aspirations for meaning and being. Engendered by the traditional practical and noetic totalisation philosophy remains a point of no consolation.

Keywords: Small Goodness, *La petite bonté*, Life and Fate, Levinas, Ethics, Humanism, Human Flourishing, Ethical Transcendence.

Introduction

The ethical hermeneutics of Emmanuel Levinas is a provocation to be otherwise where the meaning of being is to be interrogated in the ethical event of asymmetry of a self-other 'relationless relation'. Contemporary questions of human life and its meaning with regard to philosophy and its significance has to be investigated in the "miracle of exteriority."[1] Nevertheless, this is not to be done from the stand point of the 'self-sameness' of the Western 'autonomous thinking' of the ontological meaning of being and life; rather, it must be sought after from the shore of the other, a 'heteronomous thinking', where the other remains a radical exteriority. We have found ourselves so conveniently complacent with the contextualised world where we miss the signification of the transcendence of this pure exposure of exteriority solicited through the other in proximity. For, the appeal of exteriority is truth (Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* TI, 291). Overcoming one's deafness to such musings of the excedence of exteriority is the way forward to the meaning of being. "Exteriority," Levinas argues, "is not a negation, but a marvel" (TI, 292). The excellence of exteriority is this dimension of its height; its provocation and signification without submitting to ontological structures of being and power. This has to be attended at every walk of human life with patience and penury in being, where one heeds to the voice of the voiceless coming from the other shore of human existence in a world of cut-throat competition and manipulation transgressing all values and human Goodness and the humanity in the humans. Humanisation of social life, I argue, is made

possible in such an ethical awakening to the other as a 'curvature of the intersubjective space' that expresses the inter-human realm where the other is placed above and higher than the self. 'The curvature of the intersubjective space' is the most telling truth about the irreducibility of the other that permits the pluralism of the society (TI, 291).

This paper is an attempt at reversing the traditional understanding of the question of meaning and being attached to life in reference to the question of the other. In delineating the meaning of being, i.e., we discuss the meaning of subjectivity in re-discovering the ethical meaning of 'meaning' as presented in the ethical transcendence of Levinasian philosophy. In order to attain the scope of this paper I engage Levinas's ethical appeal; he makes a polemical critique of the traditional Western understanding the subject. This is done from a critique of the Western philosophical tradition that assured the clarion call of reason; although Levinas distances from the traditional slumber of dogmatism, he does not do away with the insight of philosophy itself, rather he overcomes it by reinventing and reversing the terms of traditional ontological thinking from a heteronomous thinking over autonomous thinking. Levinas, in reversing the meaning of the traditional ways of philosophy, finds the sense and meaning of human existence beyond the traditional humanism that were not sufficiently human enough. In reconsidering humanism beyond its crisis Levinas comes to argue for an ethical humanism that speaks of a non-violent relation with the other, i.e., the other in proximity "arrests and paralyses my violence by his call, which does not do violence" (TI, 291). Encountering the other without allergy is a way of being beyond being (TI, 301); hence, for Levinas, "transcendence or goodness is produced as pluralism" (TI, 305). The ethical hermeneutics of Levinas explores on the ethical meaning of human sociality from the point of view of small Goodness as kindness towards other human beings encountered in everyday life which does not look for any logical approval. The solicitation of the good

is announced through the ethical encounter of the face to face relation beyond human cognition and comprehension.

The Ethical Provocation

Postmodernity is a complex word having many meanings and layers of meaning and one must turn around to face the difference of the "miracle of exteriority" (FA 48). The turn to the other is quintessential turn of postmodernity itself. It is that turn, above all, that defines the intellectual as well as the ethical meaning of postmodernity.[2] In an age of complacencies one must turn around to face the other and, for Levinas, "transcendence is what turns its face toward us" (Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, EN, 34). The exteriority of the other is "the transcendence in the face of the other" (TI 24). The miracle of exteriority is that always which always solicits me, and draws me toward the other, yet the other doesn't yield to possession, comprehension and assimilation. We have to rethink words such as "*mutuality, reciprocity, equality, inclusivity, one-ness*" to words such as "s*eperatness, asymmetry, difference, otherness, singularity, alterity*" as "words of excess and beyond, of 'excedence' and 'transcendence' of *more than and other than.*"[3]

Levinas ethical appeal to the world does insist on the ethical transcendence of the radical exteriority of the other who comes to me in his/her face. He states it so brilliantly that no one can reduce it to a mere phenomenology of it. "The way in which the other presents himself," writes Levinas, "*exceeding the idea of the other in me*, we here name face" (TI 50). The other always exceeds the self that thinks and the face is far more beyond appearance. No one ever could speak of it as an appearance for it does not give itself in appearance; and he says "that access to the face is straightaway ethical" (EI, 85). Levinas ethical hermeneutics opens vistas for re-thinking the meaning of subjectivity beyond the ontological structures of being and power founded in the idea of infinity (TI, 26).

Overcoming Humanism, Not beyond Humans

Levinas develops a polemical critique of what he regards as the totalising[4] anti-humanistic ontology of Western philosophy, and in this he takes distance from his own masters, Husserl and Heidegger. This totalising move is explained in and through the theoretical structure of the ego that reduces the other to the same by appropriation and assimilation, and so does violence to the otherness of the other person (TI, 43). Levinas writes that "Greek ontology […] expressed the strong sentiment that the last word is unity, the many becoming one, the truth as synthesis. [….] I am trying to work against this identification of the divine with unification or totality. Man's relationship with the other is better as difference than as unity: sociality is better than fusion. The very value of love impossibility of reducing the other to myself, of coinciding in sameness" (FFL 22). This theoretical totalising of the other turns out to be aggressive and violent in practice, as one superimposes oneself over the other and claims to have higher significance by virtue of one's racio-biological, or socio-cultural, or national status. Yet today's avatars of violence on the basis of caste and religion are not so often related to biology alone; rather, they are varied and often in a kind of disguise, whether cultural, political, national, ethnic, or religious. Any such reduction and denial of the other, for Levinas, deprives the other of his or her irreducible transcendence.

In totalising relation to the other, there is no guaranteeing or appreciation of the otherness of the other as his/her difference, rather, it is a relationship in terms of reducing the otherness to his or her visibility. For Levinas "[y]ou turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, a forehead, a chin, and you can describe them" (EI 85). Such an approach to the other in terms of knowledge and perception is unethical, and rather it is reductive. In noticing the color of the eyes and looking at the other in terms of the visibility is straightway a violent relation to the other. The other's difference as his/her whoness cannot be assimilated into the same or of oneself, truly because, the other is different from the same due to the fact of

his/her alterity. What is the difference then: person *qua* persons are who's. In totalising relation, one misrecognises this whoness of someone in terms of what the other is. One can see that there is always an imperialist exclusion and elimination of the other, the outsider, at work in such relation.

Against this, Levinas argues that "the best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the color of his eyes! When one observes the colour of the eyes one is not in social relationship with the Other. The relation with the face can surely be dominated by perception…" (EI 85-86). In social relations, one is not driven by the fact of reducing the other, rather, is motivated by the ethico-social relations. But, Levinas argues that in objectivising relation with the other, namely, taking the "form" for one's "face" do violence to the otherness of the other. The "face" cannot be reduced to the "form" and it bursts opens the form. The first command unspoken from the "face", is "do not kill me" (TI 197), that is, 'do not reduce me to a form', or I am forbidden by the unspoken command not to reduce other's alterity to my own standard and thus mistreat him/her as a thing. The two foldness of this command speaks: do not reduce me to a form and respect me for who I am. I am invested with untransferable responsibility to regard and respect the other as a unique for "he is not under category" (TI, 69).

Ontological thinking, as the failure to appreciate the otherness of the other is the "reduction of the otherness of the other to the non-human-otherness of a totality, of a species in which otherness loses its singularity and is simply treated as one more of a kind" (TS, 180). The otherness of the other is defined here as the sum of the characteristics that render the other Other than me. Its otherness is relative when it is defined in terms of "for me". I take myself as being "this," and the otherness of the other is "not-this" being different from the same. The difference is approached as not of the same. It implies that the other is approached from a non-personal realm where the other person is not approached *qua* face but reduced to his/her visibility its "form", as having such and such characteristics and make them belong to a particular

caste, color, creed, race and the like different from the same and thus less/inferior to it. The other expects me to treat him as someone and as a "who" in her unique otherness. When such a demand from the other is not met or when I do not do this to the other, s/he feels that he is denied of his/her unicity. I am unique but you discriminate me for what I am/my visibility: "form", "context", "visage" etc. You reduce me to my appearance where you do violence to my difference. The face reveals an absolute alterity and when one fails to respond to this signification; one does violence to the otherness by treating the other as a relative other, hence fundamentalism, nationalism, fascism, etc.

The cunning of reason and the manifestation of violence concretises in the fascist identitarian politics as resoluteness of being, expressed from an "I think" to an "I can" and finally a "will-to-power." The ego as sameness monopolises and imperialises everything under its tyrannical power and insists on its exploitation of reality (TI 47). Levinas, with his radical heteronomic philosophy, unravels an ethical metaphysics in order to reverse the terms of Western philosophy. This aim turns out to be the very nerve of his work *Totality and Infinity*, which he states is marked by "a non-allergic relation with alterity" (TI 47; CPP 53).

The other is approached in his or her radical alterity, which remains beyond his or her form. This ethical exigency is not ontological necessity but a moral command and beseeching of the other. Difference is the source of exclusion, but Levinas's account of the ethical bodily subject stands beyond exclusion; for "*alterity makes difference*" (IRB 106). The other has a tribal link with no one. Metaphysical otherness, being a dimension of the other's alterity, demands a radical seperation and asymmetrical relation to the other in proximity, and this remains a true moment of the ethicization of the subject. The ethicization of the subject is not a matter of active affirmation but rather of the subject's passive unconditioning. The subject as *conatus* – being-for-itself, crisis of humanism, in my view – is redefined in *Otherwise than Being* as a being-for-the-other as humanism of the other, which

is the fundamental structure of ethical subjectivity. For Levinas, then humanism is not simply placing human at the centre; it is specifically a focus on the other from a decentered subject. For "the very node of the subjective is knotted in ethics understood as responsibility" (EI, 95).

Humanism of the other would thus imply for Levinas, as one turning away from one's ego toward the needs of the Other being affected by the other and from the other. Humanism of the human is at stake where one fails to heed to the radical transcendence of the other in proximity. Awakened by the proximity of the other, the self is radically altered, de-nucleated and fissured. To be a being-for-the-other is to be, as Levinas puts it, 'me voici' as a 'here I am' in the accusative passive rather than the nominative active; here the subject is fundamentally in its body as 'ME' and it is pre-original, anarchic, and older than every beginning'. Being is put into modes such as hostage, substitution, expiation, and for-the-other (OB 85).

The ethical provocation of Levinas challenges the rationale of any reductive thinking and cries for a new rationale for how to think of the other beyond categories of totalising anti-humanism. Totalising philosophies are uncannily anti-humanistic and ethically blind to the transcendent otherness of the other. Against this violent autonomy, Levinas holds that the ego is radically separated upon the entrance of the other, who resists totalisation and reduction; in this way, he challenges the egoism of the totalising subject; and the Other, as absolute otherness, is affirmed as a non-encompassable transcendence recalcitrant to objectifying thought. The radical exteriority of the other breaches totality (TI, 35). Levinas, here, in his radically heteronomic philosophy, unravels an ethical metaphysics in order to reverse the terms of Western philosophy that paves the way towards his ethical metaphysics as "first philosophy" (TI, 304). Such an ethics is not to be understood as traditional ontological ethics rather Levinas deliberates "to find its meaning" (EI, 90). Levinasian ethical hermeneutics, thus, understood, is a power

above all powers of the structural power of the world of reason and logic.

Ethics of Non-Violence: Power above Power

"Politics left to itself," writes Levinas, "bears tyranny within itself; it deforms the I and the other who have given rise to it, for it judges them according to universal rules, and thus *in absentia*" (TI, 300). When is politics left to itself? What is the dynamics of politics at all? Doesn't the end of politics is turned round upon it's own concerns. Politics is for the sake of its polis which would concern upon its polis. The well being of the citizens of a state is the end of politics. Politics, left to itself, ends up with unrelenting power and tyranny deforming the essence of it to its structural ways of administration, law, and procedures of power. The inherent danger or the potential danger of politics left to itself is turning down the system into a structure of power and governance that spreads through domination and violence. Ontological structure of power is always a force that suppresses the force which is more forceful than itself.[5] "Moral force, however, the proximity of the face-to-face, the height of destitution of the other's face is the ever patient counterbalance to all powers of the world, including nuclear power. Moral force is not stronger than the powers of being and essence, the totalising, synthesising powers, it is better, and this is its ultimate strength" (EI 14).

Moral power as ethical force is a non-violence and that is a condition for the possibility of the other as the radical Other in his or her total vulnerability and ethical nudity before the ontological self of the modern subjectivity. "Radical alterity figures in Levinas's thought not as a flaw, an ignorance, an obscurity, a childishness, a laziness or a deferral, but as the non-thematisable charge through which ethics commands. "What ought to be" – the subject's response to the Other – relates to 'what is' – being, essence, manifestation, phenomenon, identity – not by some subtle or crude conversion into 'what is' but by haunting it, disturbing it, raising it to a moral height of which its is not

capable" (EI 12-13). The non-allergic relation to the other is made possible through an ethical encounter with the other in the face-to-face with "no ontological basis" (EI 13) for the other. In a world of ontological ethics and structural Goodness one cannot run the risk of overcoming oneself through radical alterity of the Other. One remains embedded to the ontological self-sameness as the subject of the same. Overcoming the ontological imperialist self would necessitate the fissuring of such a subject to an ethical incarnate subject as a being-for-the-other. A concrete instance of such an ethics of non-violent self would immediately take us to one of the life incidents of M. K. Gandhi.

When in the late 1930s the British colonial administrators asked Gandhi what he expected from his annoying non-violent agitation, the Mahatma replied that he expected the British would quit India. They quit India on their own because they would come to see they were wrong. Moral force is a scandal for ontological thinking, whether that thinking is gently attuned to being or imposing its subjective will. The power of ethics is entirely different from the power of identities, whether poetic or political, whether knowledge or administration.

.… Ethics is forceful not because it opposes power with more power, on the same plane, with a bigger army, more guns, a finer microscope or a grander space program, but rather because it opposes power with what appears to be weakness and vulnerability but is responsibility and sincerity. To the calculations of power, ethics opposes less than power can conquer. With their lathi sticks the British occupational police struck their opponents, hurt them dreadfully, but at the same time they were hitting their own injustice, their own inhumanity, and with each blow non-violently received were taught a moral lesson. No that they were necessarily taught a lesson: ethics is not ontology, it is not necessary, one can kill (EI, 13-14).

The ethical self-other relation which Levinas argues for is qualified as a relation*less* relation (TI, 192). This would

immediately call for a non-allergic relation with the other from the point of Other's absolute otherness. How can one establish a relation with a radical other who is wholly different and separate from the self? Addressing this challenge of inter-subjectivity at the level of sociality, Levinas argues that "the other is what I am not" arguing for the absolute transcendence of the other. Levinas says:

> As if obedience were already being [*l' être*]"; and, for Levinas, the meaning of sociality consists in the face that "calls out to me, a voice that sises within me before all verbal expression, in the mortality of the I, from the depth of my weakness. That voice is an order. I have the order to answer for the life of the other person. I do not have the right to leave him alone to his death (AT, 101-104).

This absolute inescapability of my being from the responsibility towards the other tears me down; I am innocently culpable for the mistakes that I have not committed. Subjectivity is placed in an inescapable situation of being for the other and this non-interchangeable/non-transferable responsibility is the essence of human existence.

Small Goodness (*la petite bonté*) above Structural Goodness

In refiguring humanism Levinas considers the question of 'ethics as first philosophy', prior to ontology or epistemology; can such insistence contradict ethical relation itself for it precedes being and knowing. How can such a relation with the other human being be possible? Against all traditional ontologies Levinas argues that the essence of human being is not to be found in the genus as a substance rather the essence of human is to be in his/her responsibility and this essence precedes all ontological features. Such a responsibility remains prior to being and consciousness as the hallmark of the human being. This is marked with "goodness of everyday life" (AT 107). "Goodness invests me in my obedience to the hidden Good" (OB 118). This

is a "goodness without witness", "goodness as kindness" and "it could be described as goodness without thought" (AT 108). The idea of the little Goodness or small Goodness is one that stands outside all structural and institutional systems of religion and social organisations. It is feeble and fragile. This survives all horrors of man brought about. "No matter how many horrors, atrocities, abominations, and evils man lets loose upon the world."[6] Levinas considers this innocent Goodness that lies at the essence of man as the most human in man. This is beyond all the structures of being and thinking. It cannot be conceived from the frame of being and epistemology. No matter how clever one is; however, one does not get into the logic of this madness in human being.

All ontological structures can failingly account for such an original goodness. "The small Goodness is the most human thing there is in man. It defines man, despite its powerlessness. It is beautiful and powerless, like the dew" (AT 109). Levinas attempts to see the kernel of the meaning of humanism far beyond the traditional humanisms and contemporary anti-humanisms. Levinas considers the Goodness in human as the underlying construct of the humanity of the humans. Upon which he would argue for a humanism of the other human which does not disqualify the humanism rather he attempts to refigure the humanity of the humans beyond the logic of the traditional humanisms and anit-humanism. He argues that "[t]his saintliness of the human cannot be expressed on the basis of any category" (AT 109). Levinas argues:

Modern antihumanism, which denies the primacy of the human person, free and for itself, would have for the signification of being, is true over and beyond reason it gives itself. It clears the place for subjectivity positing itself in abnegation, in sacrifice, in a substitution which precedes the will. It inspired intuition is to have abandoned the idea of person, goal and origin of itself, in which the ego is still a thing because it is still a being. Strictly speaking, the other is the end; I am a hostage, a

responsibility and a substitution supporting the world in the passivity of assignation, even in accusing persecution which is undeniable. Humanism has to be denounced only because it is not sufficiently human" (OB 127-128).

Vassily Grossman in his *Life and Fate*[7] reads these words through his character:

Most of those beings who inhabit the earth do not take as a goal the definition of the good. In what does the good consist? The good is not in nature, and it is not in the preachings of the prophets, either, or in the great social doctrines, or in the ethics of the philosophers. But simple people bear in their hearts the love of all living thing; they love naturally; they protect life. […] Thus there exists side by side with this so terrible greater good human kindness in everyday life. It is the kindness of the old lady who gives a piece of bread to a convict along the roadside. It is kindness of a soldier who holds his canteen out to a wounded enemy. The kindness of youth taking pity on old age, the kindness of the peasant who hides an old Jew to his barn (AT 108).

The ethical responsibility remains as an imperative to which I can ever say No. Why? One finds oneself woven in this ethical responsibility to and for the other. Levinas "reserve another word: *misericorde*, mercy, when one assumes responsibility for the suffering of another" (IRB, 146). This "responsibility is mercy"[8] as a longing to selflessly dedicate myself to the well being of the other as an 'internal ought' far beyond the structural Goodness as voluntary commitment for the other. This is far beyond, truly, for it is beyond any system and thought. To do more than oneself; i.e., "despite oneself" (OB, 51).

This ethical being of the self for the other becomes an optics that points towards the radical Other who solicits us from beyond as signification in proximity. The idea of mercy is "the phenomenon of love" (IRB, 146). "The little goodness going only from man to man, not crossing distances to get to the places where events

and forces unfold!" (IRB, 207). As Martha Nussbaum notes "the human world is held together by pity and fellow feeling."[9] The little act of Goodness, however insufficient to address the needs of justice, remains imperishable. Though insignificant in the sight of the structural Goodness and social justice, acts of genuine Goodness and kind human acts of small Goodness crowns the humanity of the humans. Tender acts of love, acts of social charity, the politics of love, always supplants social justice. Mercy as responsibility for the other is ethical vocation of human being, the true refuge to the refugee that we are upon earth, a true relief to the overburdened, a soothing song to the afflicted, without which our world remains so impoverished. Humanity, without small Goodness, cannot be humanity. We remain human to each other in the shipwreck experience of life as we turn to be humane to one another. Friendship and fraternity can only be meaningful in this little act of Goodness that we extend to the other human person. As Levinas cites from Philip Nemo "Only the excess of beatitude will respond to the excess of evil" (GCM, 132). This small Goodness in human being is the innocent dew with which s/he flourishes in the human sociality as being-for-the-other.

Conclusion

The idea of 'small goodness' as interpreted by Levinas from the insights of the novel *Life and Fate* remains the crux of the argument of this paper, i.e., the meaning of human existence – one's relation to the other – is far beyond being, system and structure. A society that is completely dehumanised by the decay of all human values, failure of human relations, in such a social misery life seems unpredictable and worthless. There is a loss of human dignity and value, lack of respect for one another, an absolute despair and desolation of all human aspirations for meaning and being. Engendered by the traditional practical and noetic totalisation philosophy remains a point of no consolation. Rationalised behaviours and systems of power remain embedded in the magic of the mighty ones. There remains an impossibility

of Goodness in any system and social institution. No matter how good is the effort to bring about it, the monsterocity of the systemic evil subverts the good. The good has no records! Alas. No matter however the structural evil is, there is still a ray of hope. That's the humanity of humans! Nothing is more sublime and saintly than the humanness as manifested in the little Goodness of the everyday life. It is the Goodness without witness! One's bearing witness to the glory of the good that announces its height from above. The freshness of the human Goodness bears witness to the little one's across the globe who are last, least and the lost! This is the glory of the infinite incarnate in the human flesh as being-there-for-the-other. "The Other is what I am not. [….] The other is, […] the weak and the poor, 'the widow and the orphan" (TO, 83). An excess of small Goodness is the way of being fully human – a path toward human flourishing!

Notes

1. "Being is exteriority:" writes Levinas, "the very exercise of its being consists in exteriority, and no thought could better obey being than by allowing itself to be dominated by this exteriority" (TI, 290). Although Levinas seems to return to the traditional metaphysics that has been already deconstructed by Heidegger, actually he does something more fundamental than what Heidegger has done it; that is what Derrida has described it as a 'semantic transformation' of traditional terms in Levinas's hands. He makes very definitive efforts after *Totality and Infinity* to overcome ontological language of presence that he attempts to over come after Heidegger in a totally different spell, i.e., by way of '*palaeonymic displacements*,' where the ancient terms are repeated with a semantic transformation. Cf. Simon Critchley, "Prolegomena to Any Post-Deconstructive Subjectivity," in *Deconstructive Subjectivities*, ed. Simon Critchley and Peter Dews (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 43.
2. David Tracy, "Theology and the Many faces of Postmodernity," *Theology Today* 51 (1994), 104-114, 108.
3. Terry A. Veling, *For You Alone: Emmaneul Levinas and the Answerable Life* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014), 53-55.

4. There is both a noetic and practical totalization that happens at every level when philosophy that is taken to mean ontology. "Western philosophy has most often been this ontology, a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of the middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being" (TI, 43). In the economy of the self the ego tries to become what it is as a self-sufficient being where the ego strives to draw the world to itself through economic and practical totalization. In the noetic totalization the ego allows nothing to be outside its purview; nothing to be outside its rule, comprehensive knowing is a violence and power as it subdues every alterity into the self-sameness of the ego. "It is the determination of the other by the same" TI, 170).

5. Ontological power is a tyrannical power that totalizes everything under the despotic I who attempts to subjugate the other without killing, so that, in some way the other submits his/her freedom. Tyrannical forces always oppress the other to surrender their freedom by means of persuasion, brain washing, intimidation, bribery, moral violence, threat, physical assault and the like. Fascist forms of violence do remain at the height of such a totalizing I who imperializes the other. There is an enslavement of the other whereby the tyrant crushes the other by violence and hate. This is not only done in the practical level but it is all the more operative within the noetic structure of reducing the other to mere concepts disregarding the difference and alterity of the other. Representationalism is key to such violence of reason that play an important role in reducing the other to mere concepts. Levinas objects this theme of representation that remains central to his master Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. Cf. Naud Van der Ven, *The Shame of Reason in Organizational Change – A Levinasian Perspective*, Issues in Business Ethics, Vol. 32, trans. David Bevan (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 100-110.

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Humanisation of Social Life: Sri Aurobindo's "Integral" Sociology

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Abstract: This paper presents an overview of Sri Aurobindo's 'integral sociology'. An attempt is made to understand how the concept of social evolution along with evolution in an individual from within is required to understand humanity in the world at large. A brief sketch of stages in the evolution in individual and society is given. This is followed by a critical appraisal. Some observations are made regarding Sri Aurobindo's unique and rich contribution to humanity and humanism by way of concluding remarks.

Keywords: Integral Sociology, Humanity's Evolution, Collective Life, Aurobindo.

Introduction

"Long after this turmoil, this agitation ceases, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be

echoed and re-echoed, not only in India, but across distant seas and lands." -Deshbandhu Citta Ranjan Das

Sri Aurobindo puts humans as the middle term between God and nature. Humans are integral to, but may not be supreme, in the Divine scheme of things, yet they are involved in realising the human unity through association and union, and strife and opposition. The concept of social evolution for him, is the development of the integral relation between the three terms__ the individual, the community and the mankind. This is in contrast with Karl Marx's socialist theory where non-economic factors are relatively unimportant. Sri Aurobindo departed from the vedantic idea , which treated or conceived, " the empirical world and finite individuals are illusory."[1] The Indian philosopher J.N.Mohanty points out, " Sri Aurobindo most definitely rejects Shankara's Advaita" and " regards the world as real and incorporates an evolutionary theory of reality into his conception of reality (Brahman manifests himself in progressively evolving forms of reality) and finds a place for history of mankind within the Advaita, and proposes a new kind of yoga adapted not to the goal of an individual's own liberation, but to the (collective) goal of elevating mankind to a higher of consciousness ('supermind')"[2]. Sri Aurobindo advanced an integrated understanding of the material and spiritual transformation in human beings. He asserted that, if human unity is to contribute to individual and collective growth of nations and the people of the world, then it must have spirituality as its foundation. This unique understanding may be contrasted with that of Kant who maintained that "even without any inner, moral improvement, man will improve his outward legal conduct. In the end, a moral attitude will come to prevail."[3]

A Brief Sketch of Sri Aurobindo's Life

To begin with his childhood, he spent fourteen years of his formative life in England and had a very 'anglicised upbringing'. His 'working life' may be divided into three phases: the first phase began as a student in the University of Cambridge in

1889 and ended in 1905. In this phase of his life, he was mainly engaged in study, teaching, experimenting and thinking. His extraordinary contribution to political movement in the history of India comes in his second phase. It was short and stormy and he embraced political extremism, where he criticised the moderate Congress leadership for indulging in "little too much talk about the blessings of the British rule"[4]. He was implicated in Alipore bomb case in 1908, and he came out of the jail as a changed man. In the third phase of his life, he left Calcutta in 1910 and came to Pondicherry, a French settlement, devoting his remaining life to experiment with his integral yoga and writing about his rich spiritual experiences. The journey of his idea of humanism and human unity takes place through his evolutionary philosophy which is showcased in his major works like *The Life Divine, The Human Cycle, The Human Unity, Savitri.*

Integral Sociology, Social Evolution and Human Unity

Philosophers, in general, have been more concerned with the problem of relating to man's individual life than with those to his social or collective existence. Although both the sides of his human existence are inseparable, yet there are distinct issues when we try to understand one aspect in relation to the other. In Aurobindo's philosophy, we find a unique knowledge of not only of basic issues of an individual's existence but of his social existence as well. He perceived these two aspects as fundamentally real and strived to integrate man, spirituality and society.

Consistent with his integral monism, he develops 'integral sociology'. He speaks of the necessity of avoiding two extremes. According to him, we should not ignore the empirical findings in the name of spiritualism and soar to the heights of empty speculation or 'transcendental abstractions' and in the name of empiricism, one should not resort to 'fact-fetishism'. Since a proper understanding of social life requires a shift from the emphasis of external data to internal data. The idea of complete

knowledge is itself vague and still, further an idea of complete knowledge of collective life is still vague. Sociological hypotheses, in general, are advanced to explain specific social problems and so these causal explanations are inadequate. He is looking for the 'teleological or purposive explanation' in his integral sociology. He asserts that, we should know the purpose of man in the world, if we wish to fully understand his thoughts and actions, which are being continuously influenced by it_ either consciously or unconsciously. Generally, the human purpose may be understood in two different ways__ in a secular way and in a larger context of the divine purpose. The human context is said to be an open context, which is open to the larger context of the divine itself. Some sociologists, because of the methodological convenience study the complex nature of human phenomenon within a closed context, as if it can be understood satisfactorily without reference to the distant past and the far-away future and what lies deep into it. But this is bound to fail in its purpose, as it pays attention only to unconnected 'fragments and pieces'.

Sri Aurobindo favours the psychological approach in his integral sociology. But it does not mean the ordinary empirical psychology. This integral psychology is based on introspection, insight and intuition and not on an experiment and observation. It is not just empirically observing and looking at things, but by looking through them that he wants to get to the truth or rationale of the problems to be explained. He is not in favour of an 'objective scientific' approach because the deeper truths escape or elude the inspection of the eyes and lie beyond the reach of the senses. He advocates the 'subjective' method but cautions us against being misled by a false sort of subjectivity which is fed by and based upon sense-data. For him, true subjectivity is spiritual, where at that level mind can work and carry on its search for truth. In 'The Human Cycle' Aurobindo states that,

> …the law for the individual is to perfect his individuality by free development from within but to respect and to aid and be aided by the same free development in others. His law is to harmonise his life with the life of the social

aggregate and to pour himself out as a force for growth and perfection on humanity. The law for the community or nation is equally to perfect its corporate existence by a free development from within, aiding and taking full advantage of that of the individual…The law for humanity is to persuade its upward evolution towards the finding and expression of the Divine in the type of mankind,…to work towards the day when the mankind may be really and not only ideally one divine family.[5]

His concept of of the human being is different from what we know of the person in a limited sense. The principle of evolution and more so of spiritual evolution is the foundational principle of Aurobindo's philosophy and it is the governing principle of his social philosophy too. The theory of evolution of human society is a theory of both individual and collective evolution. He refers to Karl Lemprecht and his luminous idea that every nation or civilisation passes through some kind of definite rhythms of psychological cycle – the symbolic, typal and conventional, individualist and subjective. He admits that it is difficult to rigidly classify the pathways of social evolution and also states that its empirical analysis cannot exhaust all the possible curves, turns and twists which are exhibited in the process. However, he found this theory useful to explain his own theory. The human society assumes the collective forms over the ages, and the individual soul also evolves towards becoming one with the ultimate reality. we may observe that, these two processes of evolution are closely interlinked, as some forms of collective social life may facilitate the growth of the spiritual self while other forms may constrain it. Aurobindo deals with the collective evolution in his works. The Human Cycle and The Ideal of Human Unity and with the individual evolution in his masterwork, The Life Divine.

As far as collective life is concerned, Aurobindo described societies over the ages either through a classification of central psychic features or through the political form they assumed. Aurobindo right in the beginning of his work, The Human Cycle criticises historical and sociological studies in the following

manner: "Modern science is obsessed with the greatness of its physical discoveries…It is not surprising therefore in history and sociology attention should have been concentrated on the external data, laws, …customs economic factors and developments, while the deeper psychological elements so important in the activities a mental, emotional, ideative being like man have been very much neglected."[6]. Aurobindo criticised Marxist ideology as disturbing tendency which tried to, explain everything in history and social development as much as possible by economic necessity.

To state his alternative spiritual approach, he uses the above mentioned stages of evolution in human society. The symbolic stage – "wherever we can seize human society in what to us seems its primitive beginnings – no matter whether the race is comparatively cultured or savage or economically advanced or backward, – we do find a strongly symbolic mentality that governs or at least pervades its thought, customs and institutions."[7]. In this stage, the human being felt, "…present behind himself and his life and his activities, the Divine…"[8]. Next, "the tendency of the conventional age of society is to fix, to arrange firmly, to formalise, to erect a system of rigid grades and hierarchies, to stereotype religion, to bind education and training to a traditional and unchangeable form, to subject thought to infallible authorities, to cast a stamp of finality on what seems to it the finished life of man."[9]. The next age 'individualistic age of human society comes as a result of the corruption and failure of the conventional, as a result of the revolt against the reign of the petrified typal figure."[10]. He mentions that, "when man begins to be predominantly intellectual , sceptical, ratiocinative he is already preparing for an individualist society."[11]. In this stage, there is "an attempt to get back from the conventionalism of belief and practice to some solid bed-rock, no matter what, of real and tangible truth."[12]. This stage in the evolution of society "is necessarily individualistic, because all the old general standards have become bankrupt and can no longer give any inner help; it is therefore the individual who has to become the discoverer, … to search out by his individual reason, intuition, idealism, desire,

claim upon life or whatever other light he finds in himself the true law of the world and of his own being."[13]. Europe was the principal site of this development, where individualism has "exercised its full sway". During this stage individualism faced two problems: how can we arrive at the universal standard of truth? And second, how to get at a satisfactory principle of social order? Aurobindo states that, Europe found the answers to both these questions of individualism in science. On the one hand, it satisfied the critical reason of the individual without living room for the clashes of personal opinions and yet without working as an authority to be blindly submitted to. On the other hand, it started from 'a crude primitive perception of natural right and justice' individualism resulted in 'a rigid economic or governmental socialism'. Thus, science and socialism seem to have provided answers to these two problems. Yet Aurobindo points out at two contributions of this stage: "first, the democratic conception of the right of all individuals to the full development of their capacities; and secondly the realisation, however inadequate, that the individual is not merely a unit of society but is a being with his own destiny, his own truth and law of existence."[14]

It represented both 'the revolt of reason' and the 'triumphal progress of physical science'. Individualism attempted at two aspects of humans – the vital and the rational. During this stage there is the rejection of the society and politics of the old order. This stage is succeeded by the age of 'subjectivism', where an attempt is made to go deeper to catch a glimpse of true nature of individual and to found the principle of social order on that knowledge. In this stage, first, there arises a belief that " it is a spiritual, an inner freedom that can alone create a perfect human order"[15] and second a belief that the Supreme Being " is one in all, expressed in the individual and in the collectivity and only by admitting and realising our unity with others can we entirely fulfil our true self-being."[16]. These statements unfold a dialectic by which we should understand that, it is the spiritual evolution of the individual that must underlie all human unity if it is to be a unity that facilitates the equal and free development of all. This

development may come about slowly in the beginning, but there is no other possible solution.

But Sri Aurobindo cautions us that, "...there is a false and true subjectivism and the errors to which the subjective trend may be liable are as great as its possibilities and may well lead to capital disaster. This distinction must be clearly grasped if the road of this stage of social evolution is to be made safe for the human race."[17]

Sri Aurobindo maintains that the true self is the spiritual individual. Next, for him, the individual, as well as the group, has a body, are living organisms, have minds, have ethical ideals and aesthetic emotions __ not only have all this but is more than all this. He draws a kind of parallelism regarding the stages in human evolution in both, the individual as well as in society. The inner being of humans generally exhibits roughly three strata: the infra-rational, the rational and the supra-rational. The evolution begins with an infra-rational stage where men "act principally out of their instincts, impulses, spontaneous ideas, vital intuitions or else obey a customary response to desire, need and circumstance"[18] and these are the things channelised in their social institutions. Man proceeds further, through various stages of this beginning strata towards a rational age, where his intelligent will which is more or less developed, becomes the judge, arbiter and presiding motive of his thought, feeling and action, the moulder, destroyer and re-creator of his leading ideas, aims and institutions. This rational stage also exhibits the traditional tripartite division into the intellectual, the ethical and the emotional. The third stage, supra-rational, also has a complex structure with its own inner stratifications. Evolution in this stage will move towards a supra-rational age in which man will develop a greater spiritual, supra-intellectual and intuitive, perhaps in the end a gnostic consciousness. To illustrate further a quote from Sri Aurobindo's work titled *Social and Political Thought*: "These stages or periods are much more inevitable in the psychological evolution of mankind...for they depend not on outward means and or accidents but on the very nature of his

being."[19]. These stages are neither naturally exclusive or absolute in their nature. We should understand that a clear conception of the inner relationships involved shall give us a practical direction. Rationalistic thinking sought in the reason the guiding principle of human life, both__ individual and collective. However, reason has proved that it is incapable of controlling, guiding and regulating the infra-rational. Since it is not the original power, but standing and mediating in between two realms, the infra-rational and the supra-rational, it fails to be the guiding principle of life. What is required is the sublimation of the infra-rational, which is possible only with the help of the supra-rational. In this endeavour, reason may play a significant role, but it is not the sole master of the situation.

Sri Aurobindo holds that the "community stands as a midterm and intermediary value between the individual and humanity and it exists not merely for itself, but for the one and the other and to help them to fulfil each other. The individual has to live in humanity as well as humanity in the individual…"[20]. Therefore, the individual cannot only be himself but in solidarity with all of his kind. There has to be a harmonious relationship between the individual, the community and the humanity and ideal order of social development has to recognise a kind of mutual interdependence which does not annul the autonomy of each constituent element. Because each of these has a distinctive mode of self-consciousness, its own law and line of development, each of these has to consider the interest of the other. That is the group self cannot regard the individual as a mere cell of its body. It is true that each society has to follow a line of development according to one's 'soul' and it is also true that humanity is marching ahead with one distant goal. So, it becomes imperative that consistent with this common goal of humanity, consistent with the line of development of the society, the individual has to abide by his own 'dharma'. Aurobindo states that, "… mankind is or has been too large an aggregate to make this mutually a thing intimate and powerfully felt in the ordinary minds of the race."[21]. However, this does not justify the community usurping the place

of humanity, controlling the life of the individual. Because "… the free developments of individuals from within is the best condition for the growth and perfection of the community, so the free development of the community or nation from within is the best condition for the growth and perfection of the mankind"[22]. True subjectivism also ought to recognise another trinity: the individual, the universal and the transcendent reality.

We observe that the present age has not yet completely overcome the ideal of rationalism, which begins with the age of individualism. In the social polity, this kind of thinking led to an overemphasis on individual liberty, which did not work because it conflicted with the other realities of life. The ordinary man, as well as the leader, is not a perfectly rational being, as he is not able to form a perfectly rational judgement. Since the infra-rational in man__ his interests, prejudices, impulses play a determining role in his judgements. Even today, we use reason, not as a principle of harmony between individuals but is used as a weapon for competing with others. This individual democracy gave place to the ideal of democratic socialism, which stressed the need for the ideal of equality, not only political but also economic and social. In such a set up competition was to be replaced by organised order and harmony, and the individual had to sacrifice his interest for the sake of the community. It combined both_ the socialist ideal with the concept of limited freedom but these ideas refused to be combined and ended in 'totalitarian collectivism'. Sri Aurobindo maintains that if this collectivism, in the long run, wishes to make room for free individual development on the basis of unity and a closely harmonised common existence, then in it a radical transformation is required. It cannot be achieved on the basis of reason and a mechanically scientific ordering of life, but the collective must spiritualise itself.

It must be remembered that, man's need for freedom is no less fundamental than his need for unity. The ideal of human unity cannot be realised alone by social and political adjustments. What was required was "inner change".

Variety of religious creeds have influenced the fabric of various nations, and they may be combined with various political ideologies also. Each ideology has a dream of establishing its own international community under the aegis of its own world-view. But they are all imperfect images of the absolute truth. In the end, none can lay a claim to absolute validity. However, at best, they can enjoy a relative measure of validity depending upon the socio-political and cultural conditions prevailing in a given country. Every nation, therefore, must have the freedom to choose its own socio-political system in full consideration of its own basic needs and of its own distinctive national genius. Sri Aurobindo also was of the opinion that the United Nations can hardly succeed in establishing effective human unity and the world peace as long as the political leaders shaping its policies and nations which control its deliberations, are dominated by the concept of primacy of national interest over the collective welfare of mankind.[23]

Sri Aurobindo criticised the idea of a 'nation-state' which was the political form, that human unity assumed in modern times, since according to him the modern state, both bourgeois and socialist, greatly circumscribed the real democracy.

Critical Appraisal

Aurobindo is criticised for his leaving politics and his refusal to actively participate in politics after 1910. According to some critics, religion became for him, a "royal road for an honourable retreat," whereas others look at forty years during which he undertook his spiritual journey as "sterile from the point of view of history." According to B.S.Chimni, although Sri Aurobindo recognised the importance of material developments, he did not perceive that as a major obstacle in transforming the human psyche. Further, Prof. Chimni also feels that there is a lack of detailed attention to mapping appropriate social structures and institutions by Aurobindo, as his emphasis was only on 'living within and from within'. He did not do full justice to his radical

social interpretation and therefore neglected the entire domain of political economy, which Karl Marx so assiduously addressed. Next, Sri Aurobindo is also criticised for not fully appreciating the role of individual and collective struggle for social change for bringing about inner transformation. Regarding this, prof. Chimni remarks that "His subsequent turning away from active politics and his lifelong focus on self-realisation led him to somewhat ignore the role of struggle in bringing about inner change."[24]

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of evolution is essentially concerned with the future. His fundamental aim has always been the perfection not only of the individual but also of the society and ultimately of the whole of humanity. In today's society, humanity is suffering from serious limitations, and these are fundamentally due to limitations of consciousness, which are the causes of our basic troubles. Further, it should be noted that the basic factors behind all the external socio-political events affecting us are always inner because they are the acts of our consciousness. It is a fact we mankind in our contemporary society and culture has devoted much of its energy in improving the external aspects of life, and we have achieved incredible success in this endeavour. But we have failed in improving and upgrading our moral life and the spiritual aspect of our inner being. This proves that our consciousness has not yet received the proper expansion. As a result, the egoistic tendencies of division and disharmony, in our individual as well as social life, are gradually becoming prominent troubles, leading to strife and conflict, rivalry and violence. Aurobindo points out that we possess the power to overcome all these limitations through the expansion of our consciousness. Hence, "according to Sri Aurobindo, the crisis of mankind is neither economic nor social nor political but evolutionary in character. The complexity and the speed of the contemporary life demand of man the development of consciousness, which is so integral and comprehensive that it surpasses the piecemeal and analytical and slow consciousness of the human reason"[25]. The whole transformation should take place in the individual himself first__ that is, he has to rise from the infra-rational level to the

rational and then to the supra-rational level. To rise a little higher level of consciousness than what we are today in our practical life, we can practice a kind of "practical spirituality"[26]. This concept is introduced by Prof. A. K. Giri as a fifth *'purushartha'*. According to him, practical spirituality is a multidimensional struggle for food and bliss through which we can make creative links between practical issues of human development and spiritual issues of our goals for which we live. It may help us to realise a new kind of bonding between our self and society. A. K. Giri is hopeful that this practical spirituality can transform the discourse of human development, happiness and well-being. According to him, there is an integral link between food and bliss as suggested in the Taitreya Upanishad, and practical spirituality strives to realise 'Ananda' in ensuring human security and social quality for us.

But this is not a very easy task as it involves new value formations both at the individual self and society. It pleads for values of 'voluntary poverty, voluntary sharing and voluntary insecurity.' He mentions that, today the structural interventions are not enough unless the middle and the upper class undertake voluntary poverty. In the same way the transformation of the contemporary situations and conditions will not happen unless we undertake voluntary insecurity. This will lead to a kind of voluntarily sharing of whatever is happening in society [27]. This concept also goes beyond gendered fixations as it is to be practised as being creative mothers. He urges for a kind of feminisation of spirituality, where spiritual realisation lies in our capacity to be mothers to ourselves, each other and society. However, this is very much consistent with Sri Aurobindo's concept of spiritualisation or transformation of inner being, which would automatically bring about changes in our inner structure, which will facilitate the progress towards uplifting of humanity.

Conclusion

Sri Aurobindo contributed immensely towards developing an integral sociological perspective, which he developed on his basic original concept of integral yoga. For him, social evolution is the development and realisation of the integral relation between the three terms__ the individual, the community and mankind. At the individual level, it is a struggle between various inner strata of levels of morality, which leads to self-development on the one hand and on the other should facilitate the social evolution also. By doing so, he attempts to resolve the dichotomies of this plural world, which otherwise are seen to be conflicting. Unlike Marx's social philosophy, it is not lopsided. It takes care of the destiny of individual, society and humanity at large and is futuristic and teleological in nature. He is the lover of humanity. He also assures about a stage of supramental consciousness in human beings, where humans will become gnostic beings. According to him, it is our prime duty to evolve or carve out the god or divinity, which is hidden in us, and by doing so, we will contribute towards the progress of our society.

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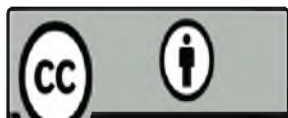
Integral Humanism of the Nyaya: Prof. Dr. John Vattanky's Philosophical Understanding of the Human Being in the Society

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Abstract: Prof. John Vattanky is one of the few scholars in Indian philosophy who integrated the Western scientific method of research with the traditional Indian method of interpreting the *Nyaya* texts. He threw himself whole heartedly into the study of *Navyanyaya* and soon came to be recognized as one of the leading authorities in *Navyanyaya.*

Vattanky firmly believed that it is only in the absolute that human being is able to explain himself and the *Nyaya* thinkers do so when they discuss nature, the dimension and the properties of human knowledge. In fact, according to *Nyaya* a proper self-understanding of human being is not possible without the absolute. In other words, human being cannot understand himself properly except in the absolute; and so it follows inevitably that he is able to develop himself and realize his full destiny only in a relationship with the

personal God, leading to a more humane social life and integral humanism.

Keywords: John Vattanky, Integral Humanism, Nyaya, Navyanyaya, Nyaa Theism, *Karikavali.*

Introduction

Prof. Dr. John Vattanky is one of the few scholars in Indian philosophy who integrated the Western scientific method of research with the traditional Indian method of interpreting the *Nyaya* texts.[1] He threw himself whole heartedly into the study of *Navyanyaya* and soon came to be recognized as one of the leading authorities in *Navyanyaya*. He travelled far and wide participating in seminars, presenting papers, and teaching courses in *Navyanyaya* in both Christian and non-Christian institutions. His wide contact in the academic world by means of lectures and paper presentations, membership in national and international organizations and the books and articles on *Navyanyaya* show his deep erudition in the field of *Nyaya* philosophy. The purpose of this paper is to briefly summarize his understanding of human being and society revealed in his major writings. His basic contention is that the *Naiyayikas* gave scope for the human intelligence to transcend the empirical limitations to reach the Ultimate Reality.

1. Major Scholarly Contributions of Vattanky

Vattanky's scholarly contributions in the field of *Navyanyaya* are immense.[2] Following is only an attempt to introduce his major books, so that we may have an idea of his major philosophical concerns.

a. Gangesa's Philosophy of God

Vattanky's contribution to the *Nyaya* philosophy begins with the publication of *Gangesa's Philosophy of God* in 1984.[3] This book is a product of his persistent scholarship and genuine hard

work where he discusses the proofs for the existence of God. It is not only a translation but also a thorough critical interpretation and evaluation of *Isvaravada* in Gangesa's monumental work, *Tattvacintamani*, an epoch making work of Indian logic.

Here in this book Vattanky presents an account of the history of the *Nyaya* system from the point of view of the problem of the existence of God. It covers from Gotama's *Nyaya Sutras* down to Gangesa. Regarding the contribution of this book, Prof. Gopikamohan Bhattacharya, one of the foremost scholars in *Nyaya* system says in a fine Foreword:[5]

> I have gone through the translation carefully; it is done with accuracy. The commentary brings out the meaning of the text clearly and the study is exhaustive and in some respects original. He has also studied carefully the *purvapaksa* arguments in Dharmakirti, . …….. Dr Vattanky has shown conclusively that Gangesa has made original contribution on important topics. He has also shown that even for Gangesa the Buddhist position of the school of *Dharmakirti* forms an important *purvapaksa.* All these – the exactitude of his translation, the faithfulness of his commentaries, and the rigour of his studies – show that Dr Vattanky is carrying on the traditions of the eminent scholars under whom he had the good fortune to study.

When there exists no complete translation of Gangesa's *Tattvacintamani and scholarly* analysis in Western languages has been published piecemeal, Vattanky has provided us a translation of *Isvaravada* in Gangesa's *Tattvacintamani*. Indeed it is a unique contribution to Indology in general and *Navyanyaya* in particular. Karl Potter in his review in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy,* wrote:[6]

> Vattanky is a thoroughly knowledgeable historian and commentator, giving us extended accounts of the arguments of Gautama, Vatsyayana, Uddyotakara, Dharmakirti, Santaraksita, Kamalasila, Vscaspati Misra, Jnanasrimitra, Ratnakirti, Udayana, Vallabha and Sasadhara among

Gangesa's predecessors, as well as a glimpse of the commentarial literature on the *Isvaravada* afterwards especially of Jayadeva and Pragalbha both of whom are almost entirely unknown today.

As Vattanky himself noted in his preface, this is "probably the longest single section of *Tauvacintamani* so far worked out".[7] Phyllis Granoff in her review in Indo-Iranian Journal wrote: "His summaries of texts are on the whole accurate and clear, and his first chapter in its detail and precision far supersedes anything we have to date on the subject. It alone would have been sufficient to draw attention and praise to this work, but perhaps the finest accomplishment of the whole is the translation and commentary on the *Isvaravada*."[8]

Here, therefore, is a book which takes one to the heart of the philosophical thinking of one of the geniuses which India has produced, for it could plausibly be argued that the intrinsic worth of *Navyanyava* can be seen at its best in the I*svaravada* section. Vattanky develops his theistic argument in a three-fold manner. In the first part he gives an accurate and detailed historical outline of the progression of Nyaya thought on the question of *Isvara* up to the time of Gangesa. In the second part, he gives both the Sanskrit text and an English translation of Gangesa's own major contribution to the issue. And in the third part, he gives a detailed commentary of his own on Gangesa's text. Paul Griffiths in his review in *Theological Studies* wrote:[9]

Vattanky's work is the most significant English-language resource available to date for the study of the *Nyaya* position on God's nature and attributes, and, more especially, for the analysis of the standard *Naiyayika* arguments for God's existence. It is not, of course, without predecessors, but much of the earlier work is not in English and is available only in scholarly journals which are not likely to form part of the Christian theologian's regular intellectual diet.

All these reviews show that this book, because of its inherent worth, was received well among the students and scholars of

Indology and it challenges the Christian theologians to take it seriously as an alternative way of *Sermo de Deo.*

b. Development of *Nyaya* Theism

Vattanky's second book, *Development of Nyaya Theism,*[10] is an journey into *Nyaya* logic and epistemology. C. R Agera in his review in *Indian Missiological Review* wrote:[11]

> The author has eminently succeeded in tracing the development of *Nyaya* theism and also substantiating the general belief that it is based on sound philosophical and logical arguments. In doing this he highlights not only the contribution of such luminaries as Gautama, Vatsyayana, Udyotakara, Vacaspati Misra, Udayana and Gangesa but also of lesser known Naiyayikas as Sankara, Vittoka, Narasirnha, Vallahha, Tricolocana and Sasadhara. … The work for its entire modest claim to be historical far surpasses its historical objectives; it is a first- rate exercise in conceptual issues, too.

While the problem of the existence of God is central to a number of philosophies in the East and West *Nyaya* exhibits a rigorously rational approach to theism. Vattanky explicates this in *Development of Nyaya Theism.* A distinctive contribution of this book lies in establishing in a masterly manner the uniqueness of Gangesa's role on the subject. A key feature of this polemics is the manner in which the force of logic is made to bear upon the argument for the existence of God. While discussing the issue of the existence of God, Vattanky has also raised a well-connected chain of issues in respect of theism, some of which have far-reaching implications of logic, epistemology metaphysics, and ethics/religion. In short, this study is Vattanky's unique contribution to present the development of *Nyaya* theism in a comprehensive manner.

c. *Nyaya Philosophy* of *Language*

Nyaya Philosophy of Language is yet another milestone in his contribution to the *Nyaya* Philopsophy.[12] In the traditional way of studying *Navyanyaya,* a mastery of *Karikavali Muktavali, Dinakari and Ramarudri is* considered essential. And yet no systematic translation and interpretation of these books are available in any modern language. In this context with a view to making available the richness of thought contained in these works to all those who are interested in Indian Philosophy in general and in *Navyanyaya* in particular, Vattanky decided to translate the whole of *Karikavali, Muktavali* and *Dinakai,* and interpreted them in the light of *Ramarudri* and *Subodhini.* This is the volume containing the translation of the *upamana* and *sabda* sections of *Karikavali, Muktavali* and *Dinakari.*

This is a pioneering and a landmark work in *Nyaya* Studies, primarily for two reasons. First, though there have been various attempts to translate the *Muktavali,* this is the first time that *Dinakari* is translated into any modern Indian or Western language. Secondly, there is a detailed and systematic commentary on each significant expression of *Muktavali* and *Dinakari while* taking into account all the important points and subtleties to be found in *Ramarudri.*

Vattanky presents this book in a comprehensive manner as he covered topics like: the nature of comparison, nature of verbal knowledge, means of knowing denotative function: grammar, other means of knowing denotative function, implication, compounds, causes of verbal knowledge: contiguity, semantic competency, syntactic expectancy, intention of the speaker, and as appendix comparison and verbal testimony as separate means of valid knowledge. Though this book shows a high degree of abstraction and a rigorously exact terminology anyone who carefully studies it will acquire a first-hand knowledge of all the salient features of Indian Philosophy of Language in general and *Nyaya* Philosophy of Language in particular.

In short, this work is a comprehensive presentation of various aspects of actual philosophy of language from original sources and anyone who reads this book carefully will wonder at the precision and depth of the *Naiyayaikas* treatment of philosophy of language.

d. Karikavali

Karikavali[13] is the Sanskrit text of *Upamana* and *sabda* sections of *Karikavali*, *Muktavali*, and *Dinakari*. This is edited primarily with a view to helping the scholars who may like to study his previous work *Nyaya Philosophy of Language* systematically. The whole text has been divided into various sections corresponding to the text, translated and commented in his *Nyaya Philosophy of Language* for the sake of easy reference. Though the book is based on the existing printed editions, it has been vastly improved by corrections. In preparing the new edition of these texts, he is immensely indebted to *Subodhini* a brilliant commentary by Sri Pariksit Thampuran who was the Maharaja of Cochin. Another significant contribution of this work is that the punctuations which do not normally exist in Sanskrit texts have been introduced in the present edition to help the readers follow the argument more easily.

e. A System of Indian Logic: The Nyaya theory of Inference

This book, *A System of Indian Logic: The Nyaya Theory of Inference*[14] is a translation and interpretation of the section on inference of *Karikavali, Muktavali and Dinakari.* As Vattanky states in the preface, the intention of the book is "to present the actual contents of logic as developed in the *Navyanyaya* tradition."[15]

The remarkable achievements of the book are twofold: First, the complete translation of the section of "Inference" in the *Dinakari* is the first translation into English in the world. No

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one can overlook this achievement to the *Navyanyaya* study. Second, the merit of this work is in its ability to make the readers proceed in understanding the *Nyaya* theory of *inference* step by step. In chapter I, basic conceptions of *inference* such as nature of inferential knowledge, knowledge of the reason is not the instrumental cause", consideration, the provisional definition of invariable concomitance, final definition of invariable concomitance, subjectness, general definition of fallacy, individual fallacies. means of grasping invariable concomitance, additional condition, kinds of inference, and presumption included in negative invariable concomitance are explained as much as possible in modern language without using technical terms. In chapter II, an analysis of the above categories from the *Karikavali,* the *Muktavali* and the *Dinakari* is given. In chapter III and IV, *Anumanakhanda* in the *Karikavali,* the *Muktavali* and the *Dinakari* are translated into English with printed Sanskrit texts. Finally, Vattanky offers explanations of the significant lines and expressions in the *Muktavali* and the *Dinakari* in consideration of the *Ramarudri* and the *Subodhini* which is the commentary on the *Karikavali,* the *Muktavali*, the *Dinakari,* and the *Ramarudri* by Pariksit Thampuran.

In his review in "Nagoya Studies in Indian culture and Buddhism," Katsuroni Hirano notes: "there is without a doubt that the author has done a very appreciable job and that the book will be acknowledged as an asset to the study of *inference* of the *Navyanyaya* and will allow the reader to proceed to an advanced level of *Navyanyaya* study."[16]

The basic idea developed in this book is that the logic of *Nyaya* can be served as the paradigm for all the systems of Logic developed in India. Since the Nyaya system is predominantly epistemological and logical the Indian logic as it is enumerated in this book can be applied in all spheres of knowledge as well as practical situations in day to day life.

In short, as we have seen above, his books reflect his long term interests and profound scholarship as well as his remarkable dedication to his subject.

Integral Humanism of the Nyaya: Vattanky's Philosophical Understanding of God, World and Human being

Vattanky's researches deal with the fundamental problems that engage the mind of man. He contends that although *Nyaya* deals with the problems of human knowledge, it also mediates to us a self-understanding of man and God.[17] According to him, "the God of *Nyaya* is to be considered as the God who enters into a profound relationship with human beings. And this relationship is not merely to be seen in a personal relationship of popular language, but at the transcendental level. This again is not a relationship in terms of knowledge of creation, but in terms of knowledge in consciousness."[18] He argues that Nyaya is a system of the knowledge of reality, and for this, the knowledge of teaching on the various elements constituting the universe and of the means of valid knowledge are integral. But what is to be noted especially is the real relationship of human beings to God. He says:[19]

"A God who is only real but who enters into the fabric of human existence intimately and profoundly is the starting point as well as the culmination of one of the major systems of Indian thought, namely *Nyaya*. The absolute of the *Naiyayikas* is a personal God to whom we owe allegiance and adoration. The best philosophical traditions of India, therefore, speak about a God who is real and who permeates the whole fabric of human existence."

Nyaya deals with the dimensions and conditions of human knowledge. Vattanky with rare insights examines the problem connected with human knowledge in *Nyaya* and in particular, *Navyanyaya* and sets forth in detail the exact conditions in which valid knowledge is possible. In and through the analysis of hu-

man knowledge, he shows that *Nyāya* presents us also with a self-understanding of the human person.[20] For he argues:[21]

> The epistemological presupposition of the *Nyaya* theory of inference involves by implication, first of all, the capacity of the human intelligence to rise above what is of immediate experience; we could further draw the important conclusion that this *Nyaya* theory implies that man cannot think except in the context of an absolute. No theory of knowledge is possible without implying at the same time the existence of an absolute and the inherent capacity of the human intellect somehow to grasp this absolute.

He substantiates this explanation on the basis of *Nyaya* theory of knowledge, particularly with reference to the concept of invariable concomitance (*vyapti*).[22] In simple terms, invariable concomitance is the invariable relationship of the reason with that which is to be established by the syllogism. For example, when we establish fire by means of smoke we presuppose an invariable relation of smoke with fire. Thus, according to him, *Nyaya*'s definition of *vyapti* is not a sterile definition of the concept but involves also a profound description of an aspect of human knowledge itself and its true significance comes out when the *Naiyayikas* raise the question of the existence of a creator God and try to answer it positively based on their analysis of human knowledge.

It is the philosophical and logical concerns of the *Naiyayikas* to establish the existence of God against all the possible attack of the opponents, especially the Buddhists.[23] Vattanky has taken this task of *Naiyayikas* to investigate its philosophical and logical implication. He highlighted the philosophical and logical issues in this inference to establish the existence of God and showed a deep appreciation of the *Naiyayikas* defense and evaluated the objections of their opponents.[24] For Vatanky as for *Navyanyaya*, human intellect and theory of knowledge are with a purpose. The purpose is to search for the ultimate cause which gives meaning and existence to everything i.e, God. Even a cursory acquain-

tance with the primary literature of the *Nyayavaisesika* School should convince anyone about the truth of this interpretation of the spirit of *Nyaya*.[25]

Vattanky holds that through an in-depth study of *Nyaya* it is possible for us to know the Unknown from what we have known because the epistemological presupposition of *Nyaya* theory of inference involves the capacity of the human intelligence to rise above what is of immediate experience. He says, "with rare insight *Navyanyaya* examines the problems connected with human knowledge and sets forth in detail the exact conditions in which valid knowledge is possible."[26]

His philosophical search began with comparative knowledge of logical systems of *Nyaya* and Budhism. He was confronted with the question: why and how is it possible to establish the existence of God in *Nyaya* while not in the Buddhist logical system? His research gave him an adequate explanation: the concept of knowledge of the different systems leading to different kinds or understanding of God and human beings. He dwelt upon the *Nyaya* theory of knowledge which renders the discourse about God and in the process, he found that the absolute becomes the horizon of all knowledge and consequently of all human activities. A human being can be fully understood only if his metaphysical relation with the absolute is accepted as a constitutive principle or his very being. Thus his search for the proofs for the transcendence called for an integral humanism.[27]

What does he mean by *Nyaya*'s integral humanism? It is nothing other than the way in which some of the most important representatives of *Nyaya* system like Udayana and Gangesa view the human being. Obviously none of these authors except perhaps Udayana in his *Atmatattvaviveka* has taken up the question what exactly is constitutive of the human being. And even Udayana does not provide us with an integrated view of the human being. However, Vattanky shows the humanism of *Nyaya* through accurate analysis and interpretation of the basic texts of

Nyaya. In a way he makes use of here the hermeneutical principle of Heidegger according to whom an interpreter should explain not only what an author explicitly stated but also what he has not said. He arrives at the broad outlines of *Nyaya* humanism by putting together the texts themselves and their implications. Vattanky calls this as the integral humanism of *Nyaya* because *Nyaya* not only allows space for transcendence but it also firmly embedded in the openness to transcendence as opposed to those of the Buddhist philosophy and most of the positivistic analytic philosophy of the West.

He believes that "no theory of knowledge is possible without implying at the same time the existence of an Absolute and the inherent capacity of human intellect somehow to grasp this Absolute."[28] And such an explanation of the basis of *Nyaya* theory of knowledge particularly with reference to the concept of invariable concomitance is quite legitimate. An interpretation of this kind is based on sound philosophical and philological analysis of the texts concerned. This implies therefore that the *Nyaya* theory of knowledge can be explained and validated only against the background of the basic and inherent capacity of the human intellect to rise above the mere phenomena which are directly perceived by it. In fact Vattanky contends that, in and through the analysis of human knowledge, *Nyaya* presents us with a self-understanding of the human person which deserves attentive study and appreciation.

Similarly, the *Nyaya* treatment of word and its meaning has a very long history and development often in conflict with other schools, notably the system of Grammar, and is therefore unique in the philosophical literature. Here, however, he is interested in unravelling the metaphysical principles that lie behind some of these argumentations in inference and philosophy of language. But the arguments themselves developed not so much by the speculations of individual *Naiyayikas* in isolation but in intense dialogue and sometimes even in vigorous confrontations with thinkers of other schools notably the Buddhist.

Vattanky thinks that the dynamism of knowledge that is implicitly affirmed in the *Nyaya* theory of inference cannot simply stop at an anthropomorphic God who is immanent to the system itself. If the God of the *Naiyayikas* is just one of the categories admitted by the system then there would not be much point in elaborating the theory of inference which tries to establish objects beyond sense experience. According to him the dynamic nature of the *Nyaya* theory of knowledge and inference can be fully understood only in the context of the infinite capacity of the human intellect to reach out to the ultimate.

Vattanky believes that the foundational principles of *Nyaya* logic that a human being can be understood fully only if the aspect of transcendence is taken into account. In other words, the integral humanism of *Nyaya* calls for transcendence. Such a view naturally rejects a purely empirical understanding of human being. This means that the fullness of being human can be achieved only in and through the transcendent. This is because the transcendent remains not at the theoretic level but at the actual existential plane and hence it invests human life with enormous value and significance confined not merely to the world that is experienced by the senses. However, this world is not denied; it has its value. It is in and through this world that transcendence operates. Therefore being human is fully immersed in this world and fully in the transcendent. Such is the integral humanism of *Nyaya*.

According to *Nyaya* logic and metaphysics, the universe depends on God since he has brought it into existence. Vattanky shows that, however, in doing so, God has also invested human being with certain characteristics. One such most obvious characteristic is intelligence by which human beings are distinguished from the rest of creation. A mysterious aspect of this ability is the linguistic capacity of human beings. In fact, human beings could be defined as living beings whose nature is constituted by linguistic capacity. Aristotle's *ton zown logikon* could be correctly translated as "linguistic animal". This implies that linguistic power enters into the very constitution of the

human being. In other words, human beings can be understood integrally only when the inherent linguistic power is fully taken into account. And such linguistic power can be explained only in relation to an Absolute, to God to *iśvara* who is transcendent. Vattanky explains this with the help of *śakti* (the denotative function) which is understood as the will of God.[29]

According to Vattanky, *Nyaya* also points out the moral and social dimension of the understanding of the human being. For he states: "*Nyaya* inculcates that we must constantly strive for true knowledge. Such a knowledge is not a sterile play of concepts, but a knowledge which realizes in one's life the truth about all the objects of experience. It is very much like the Upanisadic *sravana, manana* and *nididhyasana*, hearing, reflection and meditation, or the Christian hearing and reading of Scriptures, reflection and prayer."[30] He further states:[31]

"The *tattvajnana,* i.e., the true knowledge which is the only way to arrive at the stage of real liberation, is not the knowledge of every object in the world, but it is ultimately a rational analysis of the human situation. Experiencing the truth of this situation is considered practically as transcendence. Therefore, it is also an experience of the boundary of human existence where the Absolute which invests human existence with a true meaning is experienced. The moral preparation for such an experience consists in the removal of every form of false knowledge and the positive cultivation of consistent meditation. It also involves avoiding every form of *adharma* and sustained effort to practise *dharma.*"

In short, Vattanky believes that *Nyaya* Philosophy does not merely consist in a series of abstruse discussions on a variety of topics, especially on logic and philosophy of language. True, *Nyaya* is concerned and concerned deeply with these themes. But in and through them the system mediates also a concept of human beings who are not closed on themselves but who are open to transcendence. The reality of a creator God is not an abstract concept but invests human beings with their ultimate truth and meaning. Even in the philosophy of language, this transcendence

operates and creates the linguistic power of human beings. Such an integral humanism is according to him the direct consequence of the principles which the various topics treated in the system presupposes.

Conclusion

As we have seen above a glance through Vattanky's books and articles gives us a sound basis for the development of *Nyaya* theory of interpretation. As the case with the *Naiyayikas Vattanky* raised the questions of the existence of a creator God and tried to answer it positively based on the analysis of human knowledge. With unparalleled rigour and exactitude, Vattanky studied the nature, the dimensions and conditions of human knowledge enumerated in the *Nyaya system*. With rare insights, he examined the problem connected with human knowledge and sets forth in detail the exact conditions in which valid knowledge is possible. In and through the analysis of human knowledge, he presented us with an integral self-understanding of the human person and world. His scholarship did not confine to a particular system alone, but he transcended it to the deeper levels of philosophy and theology.

Vattanky's approach on *Nyaya* studies must take each philosopher as worthy of respect for his arguments directly pertain to the human mind. It is generally acknowledged that the Indian philosophical thought can hardly be understood without proper knowledge of *Navyanyaya*. The merit of Vattanky is that not only he mastered it but also popularized it. He grasped the high degree of abstraction and rigorous exact terminologies of *Navyanyaya*. He transformed the abstruse discussions on *Nyaya* logic and philosophy of language to the concept of human beings who are not closed on themselves but who are open to transcendence. He showed lucidly that God is not an abstract concept but invests human beings with their ultimate truth and meaning.

Vattanky firmly believed that it is only in the absolute that human being is able to explain himself and the *Nyaya* thinkers

do so when they discuss nature, the dimension and the properties of human knowledge. In fact, according to *Nyaya* a proper self-understanding of human being is not possible without the absolute. In other words, human being cannot understand himself properly except in the absolute; and so it follows inevitably that he is able to develop himself and realize his full destiny only in a relationship with the personal God. I wish that the readers of Vattanky's writings come to an ever-deepening knowledge of truth and may that knowledge be a source of spiritual growth and integral humanism.

Notes

1. John Vattanky was fortunate to have his M A in Oriental Studies with Sanskrit and Pali as optionals from Oxford University, England under Prof. Burow and Ph D in *Nyaya* from Vienna University under Prof. G. Oberhammer. He continued his reading of the *Navyanyaya* text with Panditaraja Sri Damodara Pisharody a distinguished traditional scholar and a close disciple of late Ramavarma Parikshit Thampuran.
2. For an extensive bibliography of his works, see *An Indian Ending: Rediscovering the Grandeur of Indian Heritage for a Sustainable Future. Essays in Honour of Prof Dr John Vattanky SJ on Completing Eighty Years*, ed. by K. Pandikattu and B. Pichalakattu, New Delhi 2013, 287-289.
3. Following treatment on his major works is taken from my article, "Re-Discovering the Grandeur of Indian Traditions: Life and Work of Prof. John Vattanky, SJ," in: *An Indian Ending. Rediscovering the Grandeur of Indian Heritage for a Sustainable Future. Essays in Honour of Prof Dr John Vattanky SJ on Completing Eighty Years*, ed. by K. Pandikattu – B. Pichalakattu, New Delhi 2013, 261-278.
4. J. Vattanky, *Gangesa's Philosophy of* God, The Adayar Library and Research Centre, Adayar, Madras, 1984.
5. Ibid., vi
6. K. Potter, review of J. Vattanky, *Gangesa's Philosophy of God*, The Adayar Library and Research Centre, Adayar, Madras, 1984, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 14 (1986), 310.
7. Vattanky, *Gangesa's Philosophy of God*, p.x

8. P. Granoff, review of J. Vattanky, *Gangesa's Philosophy of God*, The Adayar Library and Research Centre, Adayar, Madras, 1984, *Indo- Iranian Journal,* 30 (1987), 120.

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10. J.Vattanky, *Development of Nyaya Theism,* Intercultural Publications, New Delhi, 1993.

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13. J.Vattanky, *Karikavali*, Indian Book Centre, Delhi, 1997.

14. J. Vattanky, *A System of Indian Logic: The Nyaya theory of Inference*, Routledge Curzon, London, 2003.

15. Ibid.,xiii.

16. K. Hirano, review of J. Vattanky, *A System of Indian Logic: The Nyaya theory of Inference*, Routledge Curzon, London, 2003, *Nagoya Studies in Indian culture and Buddhism*, 24 (2004), 166.

17. For the theological implications of *Nyaya* philosophy, see J. Vattanky, "Theological Implications of the *Nyaya* System," VJTR, August (1983), 334-341.

18. J. Vattanky, "Current Nyaya Studies and Contemporary Indian Theology," VJTR, August (1991), 468

19. J. Vattanky, "Theological Implications of the Nyaya System," VJTR, August (1983), 340.

20. Cf. J. Vattanky, "Current *Nyaya* Studies and Contemporary Indian Theology," 466.

21. J. Vattanky, "Theological Implications of the *Nyaya* System,"VJTR, August (1983), 339.

22. For a detailed discussion of invariable concomitance (vyapti), see J. Vattanky, *System of Indian Logic*, 114-200.

23. For an understanding of God in *Nyaya* against all the possible attack of the opponents especially the Buddhists, see J. Vattanky,*Development of Nyaya Theism*, Intercultural Publications, New Delhi, 1993. For an overview of *Nyaya* theism, see idem, *Development of Nyaya Theism*, 182-189.

24. Cf. J. Vattanky, "A New Interpretation of the Prooffor the Existence of God in Classical Indian Philosophy," *Indian Theological Studies* 37/1 March (2000), 23-45; idem., "Is Theism Central to Nyaya?," *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* 27/3, October (2000), 411-419.

25. Cf. J. Vattanky, "Theological Implications of the Nyaya system," 336-337.

26. J. Vattanky, Gaṅgeśa's Philosophy of God,x

27. Cf. J. Vattanky, "A New Interpretation of the Proofforthe Existence of God in Classical Indian Philosophy," 23-45; idem., "Is Theism Central to Nyaya?," 411-419.

28. J. Vattanky, "Theological Implications of the Nyaya System,"VJTR. August (1983), 339.

29. For an excellent treatment of śakti (the denotative function), see J. Vattanky, *Nyaya Philosophy of Language*, 134-260.

30. J. Vattanky, "Current Nyaya Studies and Contemporary Indian Theology," 469.

31. Ibid.

From A-Signifying Semiologies to Living Sympoiesis: Quest for a Humanised Ethics and Social Life

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Abstract: The author maintains that we are still enslaved by language, by the logocentrism of language. Derrida did raise the question of logocentrism, but it seems that he also did not fully plunge out of it. Reduction of all meaning and semiologies to semantic content is a kind of logocentrism that is blinding us to the a-signifying semiologies that are being used today to enslave us. We have a mix of signifying, symbolic and a-signifying semiotics. We have reduced semiotics to only signifying and symbolic signs. This is logocentric. Opening us to the domains of a-signifying semiologies, we open ourselves to the understanding of the machinic.   The attention to the a-signifying aspects assists us to overcome the imperialism of language and opens us to other non-linguistic, non-representational semiologies and their impact on us. This study attempts to move from semiotic logic that produces meaning to pragmatics that provides existence and forms of life in our society. Hence, the question 'what is it?' becomes 'what it does'. This brings us to the un-nameable territory, the dark matter of our social life

which all the same has a great impact on the way we become what we make of ourselves, our world and the other. The attention to this un-nameable territory opens closed worlds and open new creative ways of being in the world.

To move away from the tyranny unleashed by a-signifying semiologies that have taken control over signifying, symbolic semiologies in our society and reduced us to dividuals that can be manipulated by the affects, emotions and perception, the author proposes tentacular thinking that can lead to the formation of counter-assemblages that flowers into sympoiesis. That leads to more humanised ethics and humanising social life.

Keywords: Tentacular Thinking, Semiologies, Sympoiesis, A-signifying Semiotics, Logocentrism.

The linguistic turn in philosophy may have opened us new vistas on the self, the world and the other. Structuralism may have dissolved into post-structuralism, but we are still enslaved by language. We are still held captive by the logocentrism[1] of language. Derrida did raise the question of logocentrism, but it seems that he also did not fully plunge out of it. Reduction of all meaning and semiologies to semantic content is a kind of logocentrism that is blinding us to the a-signifying semiologies that are being used today to enslave us. We have a mix of signifying, symbolic and a-signifying semiotics. We have reduced semiotics to only signifying and symbolic signs. This is logocentric. Opening us to the domains of a-signifying semiologies, we open ourselves to the understanding of the machinic.   The attention to the a-signifying aspects assists us to overcome the imperialism of language and opens us to other non-linguistic, non-representational semiologies and their impact on us. This study attempts to move from semiotic logic that produces meaning to pragmatics that produces existence and forms of life in our society. Hence, the question 'what is it?' becomes 'what it does'. This brings us to the un-nameable territory, the dark

matter of our social life which all the same has a great impact on the way we become what we make of ourselves, our world and the other. The attention to this un-nameable territory opens closed worlds and open new creative ways of being in the world.

We turn our attention a-signification because power is exercised today through machines that directly organise the brain[2] (in communication systems, information network, etc.,) and bodies (in surveillance systems and welfare activities). Machinist mechanisms have stepped into our daily life. They assist our speaking, hearing, seeing, feeling and writing, etc. The human and the non-human are being aligned in machinic assemblages. Deleuze and Guattari indicate that we have entered societies of control.[3] The genetic revolution also opens ways of manipulating our DNA. Nanotechnology, cloning, synthetic biology, etc., spring benefits as well as raise questions as new forms of power get monopolised in few hands. The power/knowledge[4] equations have become radicalised and the power elite is steadily becoming invincible. These and other transformations have introduced new subjectivations and have radically transformed our ways of being in the world. We cannot make a foreclosure on these developments and Oedipalize letting them continue their reign and become the law of the father for our society.

This paper attempts to open us ways of understanding the changed and changing condition of humanity by moving beyond the logocentrisms of language and semiotics. By opening us to the a-signifying semiologies, it tries to go beyond the logic of semiotics that produces meaning to pragmatics that produces existence and forms of life. It is by following the pragmatics that produces existence and forms of life in our society, we might be enabled to produce politics of emancipation and embrace new salubrious ways of being in the world that will be a liberating mode of humanisation. Hence, in the first part, we shall study a-signifying, non-representational semiotics and expose the machinic[5] enslavements of contemporary humans and explore how individuals have become dividuals[6] under the weight of new knowledge and power equations that are generated in our

society. The dividual does not stand against machines but has become contiguous with them. To explore the plight of humans under the regime of machinic enslavements, we have to give up our logocentrisms of language and semiotics as well as our attachment to anthropocentrisms of all shades and colour. In the second and the third sections of this study, we try to understand how mechanic enslavement activates pre-personal pre-cognitive, pre-verbal forces (desire, affect, sense) and entangles them with supra-personal forces (machinic, economic, political, linguistic) and multiply possibilities of enslavement. Finally, we try to seek new emancipative modes of being human in the world that will enable us to break the shackles of the chains of machinic enslavements that afflict our society.

Understanding A-Signifying Semiologies

Sign machines like money, economics, science, technology, nationalism, nation, caste, art, etc., functions to produce a-signifying semiolgies. A-signifying semiologies work through sign-assemblages and resist the name and forms of language and hence can be decoded through its pragmatics. Music or DNA for instance, are A-signifying semiologies. The combinations and permutations of their signs or basic units cannot be put into language but produce tremendous impacts on us both individually and collectively. These impacts become gate ways to open us to understand a-signifying semiologies.

A-Signifying Semiologies and the Economy of the Possible

A-signifying semiotics operates beyond subject/ object, sign/thing production/ representation divide. It is not chained to significations and the subject. They rather slip past them but do not produce significations or representations. They are more abstract modes of signification than language. A-signifying semiolgies can be traced in stock listings, currencies, corporate budgets, computer languages, scientific functions and equations

as well as the a-signifying semiotics of art, music, etc. In a profoundly significant way, a-signifying regimes are assemblages where Humans, consciousness and language do not have priority. Strictly speaking there is no sign and we do not have the distinction between sign and the referent. The semiotic triangle has not place in it.[8] Theoretical physics has touched a-signifying semiotics. Sub-atomic particles like quarks are more tendencies rather than particles. What they do become more significant than what they are.   May be the sub-atomic world of quantum physics might illumine why Guatarri refers to the basic units of a-signifying systems as power signs and sign-points.[9] May be a consideration of the manner in which money operate in a capitalist society can further bring light on power-signs. Money from its very inception has been a medium of exchange. But in a capitalist society money functions as capital, as credit. It does not simply become an exchange value of goods. Hence, it does not represent anything but anticipate it, create it and mould it. This means power signs constitute an economy of the possible. To understand the operation of the sign-points we may have to take the example of a micro-chip. The polarities of the iron oxide particles are converted when a magnetic strip is passed a reader equipped with appropriate computer program. The signs in this context functions as an input and output of a machine giving orders and producing change in condition. Thus, monetary signs or computer language act on things outside representational system and act directly on production flows which when understood may open an economy of possibilities.

The Diagrammatics of A-signifying Semiologies

A diagram is a semiotic system and a mode of writing that fulfils the conditions of a power-signs. Guattari derives Diagrammatics from Pierce 's 'Icons of relations'. Diagram is a category whose function is operational rather than representational. Diagrams can break through what Guattari calls 'ontological curtain' separating words and things, subject and object.[10] Unlike language diagram operates in a machinic manner. By modelling a situation, it opens

for an imagination of new scenarios that expand possibilities of creation and action. Michel Foucault has also used diagram to capture Panoptican[11] which automatises and dis-individualises power. Thus, it is through a-signifying semiotics diagrams or machines speak to human. The architecture of the prison that Foucault calls Panopticon communicates the sense of being perpetually under the watch. Panopticon is a deterritorialising force. The prisoners cannot territorialise but are kept in a constant deterritorial mode. The power signs do not just communicates to humans but they speak to rest of the world as well and can be viewed as agents of partial discursivity. Without a-signifying systems, human life will become aphasic and incapable of apprehending the deterritorialising flows. Diagrams (like equations, designs, apparatuses, graphs, machines) come to accelerate or slow down, deconstruct or stabilise deterritorialising processes that cannot be captured by language. These a-signifying semiologies produce deterritorialising process and without understanding a-signifying process our understanding of the deterritorialising process would be extremely myopic and limited. This is why understanding of diagrammatics or a-signifying semiologies is fundamental to opt for emancipative ways of being human in the world. Even, if we cannot recognise these a-signifying semiologies, they work on us. Just like driving a car after sometime becomes instinctual and we become one with the machinic assemblage of the car and drive it through what Guattari calls 'a state of wakeful dream'.[12] The a-signifying semiologies act on us in a machinic mode and we become one with the machinic assemblage wherein we are de-individualised/ dividualised. These modes of smooth sailing on to the machinic assemblage returns to thought and consciousness of the individuated subject only when there is disturbance or obstacle. Thus, our instinctual driving of a car is disturbed by a threat of accident or disturbance that brings the conscious individuated subject only to modify the feedback relation with the machinic assemblage of the car and return to the molecularising driving mode described as a 'state of wakeful awareness'.

Understanding the Operations of Mixed Semiotic Assemblages

Although we have drawn our attention to the A-signifying semiotics, we live with mixed semiotics which is constituted by signs which are at times signifying, symbolic and a-signifying. The signifying and symbolic signs are logocentric and as such can be reduced to language while a-signifying significations are non-logocentric but are machinic and stay beyond language. The molecularising modes of machinic semiosis of a-signifying systems overpower the symbolic and signifying semiotics.

Understanding Machinic Subjectivities

We have molecularising modes of machinic semiosis at work in the aesthetic drive that does not demand cognition. A prayer presided by Indian priest is molecualrising and machanical as the devotees merge with the assemblage of the ritual without any demand for cognition. This shows that linguistic, communicational and cognitive models are suspended or deterritorialised. We can also find it in the way mana circulates in animistic societies. Circulation of mana is demonstrated by Emile Durkheim.[13] Mimetic desire taught by Rene Girard also works on contagion and not on linguistic, communicational or cognitive model.[14] In all these cases the molecularising force of machinic semiotics dominates over the signifying and symbolic semiotics. Under these conditions human choice, decision and exercise of freedom act in contagion with the machinic assemblages. Humans under these conditions live machinic subjectivity which in parts escapes human awareness. It takes us beyond cognitive semiotics produced by signifying and symbolic signs. In this context the signifying semiologies hide and mask the fact that individuated subject is dividualised. This means signifying semiologies and their discourses has the force of ideology that Karl Marx taught us. They suspend and deterritorialise thinking and induce mutations in human subjectivities. A-signifying semiologies alongside affective and existential components contribute to the

production of subjectivity. Subjective mutation is not produced by the linguistic and cognitive but by existential, pathic and affective aspects.[15] This means non-discursively is at the core of subjectivity. This is why it is also taught by some scholars that only from the a-signifying, un-nameable and incommunicable core that there can be language, narrative and signification.

Development of the Self and A-signifying and Symbolic Semiotics

Linguistic theory and analytic philosophy forget pre-individual subjectivity. We have seen that pre-individual subjectivity is at the root of all modes of subjectivations. The infant has a world before acquiring mastery over language. It manifests modes of perception, communication, and experience of the self and the world through a rich and differentiated semiosis. Daniel Sterns, in his book, Interpersonal World of the Infant, presents three stages of the growing sense of self in a child. He enumerates, the emerging self, the sense of a core self and the sense of subjective self that precedes the sense of verbal self.[16] The semiosis that operates at the pre-linguistic levels also operate in a parallel manner throughout the life of the individual alongside language and consciousness. The three first senses of self are shaped by mixed a-signifying and symbolic semiotics. Between birth and first two months, Stern teaches that an infant experiences an emergent inter-personal link. He teaches that the infant experiences an emergent self in three principal ways: amodal perception, categorical affects and vitality affects. The abstract and amodal features of what happens to the infant are apprehended two different affective processes: categorical affects and vitality affects. Categorical affects express anger, sadness, and joy, while the vitality affects changes in mental states and intensity thresholds in its way of feeling. Dance, music, cinematic videos capture these intensities and ways of feeling. These experiences form the core from which all leaning and creative acts in the life of a person. At the level of the emergent self, the infant is still not able to distinguish between

the self and its other. It is with the development of the core self it develops this ability   to experience self and its other. At this level, although the infant exhibits numerous abilities, it does not reach a cognitive integration of self and its other.   It is rather an integration of experience and memory without words. Sterns identifies the period between two to six months as the period of development of the core self. It is the manifestation of abilities to smile, vocalisations directed to others, mutual gaze etc. The subjective self emerges steadily when the infant realises that it has 'a mind' and that experiences, affects and emotions are shareable (or un-shareable) and can be communicated without words because language is still not available. The infant already is tuned through the first and the second stage and it can shares its experience with gestures, postures, non-verbal actions. We may view it as symbolic semiotics.   It is necessary to the acquisition of language to become a verbal self and enter the semiotics of signification.

Self and the Signifying, Symbolic and A-Signifying Semiotics

The acquisition of langue is an important stage in the life of humanity. It leads to the emergence of the verbal self. The emergence of language is a gap between experienced as 'lived' and experienced as represented. Language chiefly enables us to represent our experience. Linguistic significations render our experiences more shareable. The verbal, as well as the non-verbal symbolic and a-signifying semiotics, can co-exist and expand our lived experience. But lived experience may also be fractured and deterritorialised by language and pushed underground or repressed. At the same time langue and evoke and provoke that may transcend words. This occurs when words function in poetic modes. Most of the time word in our everyday life fracture a modal experience and send it underground. The three preverbal levels of self are not linear steps in the formation of verbal self but they remain independent centres of semiotics and subjective productions in parallel with their own autonomy and semiotics.[17]

Psychoanalysis, though remains open to a-signifying semiologies, puts them in conflict with signifying semiotics. Thus, desire, animality, instincts, drives, and spontaneity is placed against the social order, symbolic law, prohibitions expressed by language. This is why these models are profoundly political. Guattari keeps them, not in opposition but in rhizomatic parallelism where presents a machinic model of their operations. This machinic model can illumine pre-signifying semiotics operate in a post signifying world. The post-signifying world that we inhabit has brought back the semiosis of the primitive society in new modes of intensity. Like the primitive societies the images, sounds, words, spoken and written, movements, colours, rhythms are set in parallel and are subjected to machinic assemblages. Signifying, symbolic and the A-signifying semiotics operating in a post-signifying world introduce ambiguity, instability into denotation and signification. The expression has become polyvocal, multi-dimensional and multi-referential.

Understanding the Post-Signifying World

Our world has changed and our habitual ways of thinking our inadequate to cope with it. The signifying subject is attacked by a-signifying semiologies. These regimes of a-signifying semiologies are creating our world in a significant way. This world as irrupted at the intersection of pre-verbal primitive, presignifying and the signifying regimes . Deleuze and Gauttari call it faciality machine. It is not reducible to significance and subjectification but is alongside and operates as their condition of possibility. Indeed, faciality machine delimit the condition of human experience (Thousand plateaus, p. 180) but unleashing polysimiosis into our society.

Politics of A-Signifying Semiolgies

Signifying semiotics is just a fraction of much broader a-signifying semiologies. We have already disobeyed Wittgenstein that commanded silence where we cannot speak.[18]

We reached a post-signifying stage, where signification resists meaning articulate-able through language. We require us to undertake the Spinozist practice of ethology[19] that studies the capacity to affect and be affected to understand what post-signifying world is doing rather than what it is. This is a turn to immanence in all its radical form. Here are we have to avoid objectivism and subjectivism. The former believes that sense can be found in the object that secretes or emits the sign while the later thinks that it is in the subject. The immanence that we are turning to is autopoietic[20] haecceity that stays beyond the subject/ object binary of epistemology. In other words, a-signifying semiosis has its own autonomy. Instead of referring to other signs, a-signifying signs work directly on real. Signs both signifying and a-signifying order the world into being. They lead the immanent becoming(s) of the world. This turn to the a-signifying semiotics alongside signifying semiotics (mixed semiotics) reveal how signifying semiotics aims to construct a subject, individual or I while the a-signifying semiotics aims at pr-subjective, pre-individual elements (affects, emotions , perception) and render them function like the cog in the semiotic machine of capital, nationalism or even religion. The signifying and symbolic semiologies allocate humans roles and functions in society . It shapes our subjectivity. The post-signification society has along with signifying systems, has unleashed symbolic and a-signifying semiologies in our society. These semiologies are driven by affect and produce relations that cannot simply assign to an individual. In fact the individual becomes fragmented into a dividual and buddle into a machinic assemblage. The a-signifying semiologies directly operate on our brains/ bodies producing affects, desires, emotion and perceptions. This is why there is not bridge of reason and reflection. They operate directly on humans and trigger action, reaction, behaviour, attitude and posture. Thus, somehow a-signifying semiologies not only alienate the human individual and ividualise him/her , but chain to machinic enslavements aroused by the affects and the emotion those semiologies trigger in him and her. A-signifying semiotics is profoundly political. The machinic enslavements that they

trigger chain us to deeper social enslavements introduced by signifying and symbolic semiologies. We become mindless social assemblage enjoying our machinic modes of being in the world.

Operations of Machinic Enslavements

A-Signification semiotics synchronises and modulates the pre-individual and pre-verbal elements of subjectivity by causing the affects, emotion and perception like elements in a machine. The post-signification world has led us to function like an input/output in semiotic machine like a television or internet that facilitates or block the transmission of information, communication or affects. A-signifying semiotics does *not* recognise the individual or molar identities. These semiologies directly operate on the infrapersonal, infrasocial elements[21] thanks to the manipulation of the molecular economy of desire. The strength of these semiologies is that they can penetrate into the system of representations and significations by which the individuated subject recognise each other or are alienated from each other. Thus, machinic enslavement is not the same thing as social subjection. If the latter appeals to the molar identities, the later manipulate molecular or the larvae selves. The molecular has the pre-individual and the trans-individual dimensions. The individual under the molecularising regime becomes a dividual. The a-signifying semiolgies do not speak; they set things into motion by directly connecting our brain and memories and activate the affective, the transitivist and transindividual relation. Thus both signifying, symbolic semiologies that form subjectivities, identities are put under the control of the a-signifying semiologies that control the mind, meaning and life in our society. The machinic enslavements redraw and reconfigure our public space and its modes expression where the dividuals are bundled into assemblages that serve the molar politics of identity that seem to be afflicting in an era of globalisation. The politics today is not organised polis of the word and debate but has become a theatre of mindless crowds on the rampage. We have stepped into the societies of control. Foucaultian disciplinary societies

have transformed into societies of control. Disciplinary societies employed moulding apparatus[22] and required signifying and symbolic semiologies. The society of control colonises the signifying and symbolic semiologies by placing us under the control of a-signifying semiologies. Societies of control work on modulation and not on techniques of moulding. Modulation is the manner in which a-signifying systems work. Just like the television modulates the electric waves, with its amplitudes and frequencies (signs without signification) to images, sounds, and words that carry meaning, a-signifying semiologies modulate and produce affects, emotions and perceptions that take control of our minds and bodies.

Towards an Ethics of Response to Societies of Control

The technologies that control our minds employ a-signification semiologies. We have stepped into a society of control. An individuated subject is subjected to a new mode of subjectivation that dividualize an individual and buddle him/her as a cog of a semiotic assemblage. The exchange of signs in a-signifying semiotics takes place at the speed of light, and hence there is no time to assess their impacts, since they work on the dividualized individual, we cannot depend on ethics that is build on isolated triumphant subject. We need a new mode of thinking that would enable us to evolve an emancipative response to the despotic society of control.

Living Sympoiesis

We need a new way of thinking to develop a response-ability that is emancipative. We are challenged the entangled nature of the subject seriously while developing an ethics to face a society of controlled ruled by a-signifying semiologies. Sympoiesis is the way open for us to generate our emancipative and salubrious ways of being human. It can inaugurate new symbiogenesis that can sow new ecological ways of being human in the world.[23] This means the Cartesian subject has no place in our world. We

require thinking in attunement with our ecologies and atmosphere along with other humans as well as non-humans. We need to commit ourselves to nurture capacities that will enable us to cultivate ways that would make each other capable of responding to the society of control that is ruling us today. To resist this society of control, we need a new mode of thinking. It is thinking with. The dividual individual has to assemble into a community with humans and the non-human. We have to adopt ecological thinking. The imperial thinking of the isolated individual has led to the dividualization of the individual. The dying individual can only be saved through an adoption of new salubrious ways of being humans with the world and not just by being in conflict with the world. Sympoiesis is a harmonious and natural way of living on our planet earth. We cannot just live in the cocoon of culture, language and symbolic semiologies. This bubble can burst under the weight of the rampaging a-signifying semiologies. By launching ourselves in the web of the worlding of the world, we can resist the dividualizing forces of the society of control. It is only by living sympoiesis that we can resist getting machinic assemblages of the a-signfied semiologies. We cannot resist these dividualising forces individually. We also require a counter-assemblage. The assemblage that we consciously choose as resistance to a-signifying semiologies being counter-assemblage has to adopt what is called tenatcular thinking that will also stay alert to the generation of affects, emotion and perception that a-signifying semiotics in us as individual or communities.

Tentacular Thinking

Tentacular thinking has arrived from the biological sciences. It transcends the binary and monarchical logic of the fading epistemology. The term tentacle comes from Latin, *tentaculum* which means feeler. The verb *tentare* means to feel and to try. Tentacles immediately bring to our mind leggy organisms like spiders. It has armed allies by which it process and gives feedback to its surroundings. Tentacular thinking can weave our path in a world controlled by a-signifying semiologies. The

tentacular arms of organism like spider pick us signals from the surrounding and designs its own response to them. The tentacles has equipped it response-ability to meet the challenges of survival. The tentacular thinking is thinking akin to the spider. It is thinking that moves beyond the subject /object, knower and the Known dichotomies and embraces webbed thinking. The tentacles of an organism like spider provide us the best analogy of complex thinking that we wish to adopt to respond to society of control that has evolved on the wings of a-signifying semiologies. Tentacular thinking is open and always a work in progress.[24] It is thinking with that takes a partnership with human and non-human ecologies seriously. It is not disembodies thinking but thinks with the body. This is why affects and emotions also become central coordinates of thought. It moves between and beyond the aesthetic modes of thinking. It gives up autopoietic thinking that we may derive from Descartes and embraces sympoietic thinking. Tentacularity also moves beyond linearity and hierarchy. It is akin to what Deleuze and Guattari call rhizomatic thinking. It is not just thinking-with; it is becoming-with. It is thus ecology of practices. The societies of control employ modulation and not moulding as a means of excitation and thoughtless action. This is why tentacular thinking with its tentacular antennas is important as it can attune us to the material signals that carry the a-signifying semiologies and assist us in developing response-abilities that are quick and salubrious. We need these response-abilities to live with the trouble injected by the affects, and emotions that are stirred into us by a-signifying semiologies that use signifying and symbolic semiologies as meta-assemblages to serve the vested interest. Tentacular thinking promises to equip us to evolve counter-assemblages that would emancipate us from the tyranny of signifying, symbolic as well as a-signifying signs.

Conclusion

In a scenario where we do not have ready to hand fix to the tyranny unleashed by a-signifying semiologies that have taken control over signifying, symbolic semiologies in our society and

reduced us to dividuals that can be manipulated by the affects, emotions and perception, we have proposed tentacular thinking that can lead to the formation of counter-assemblages that flowers into sympoiesis. That leads to more humanised ethics and humanising social life.

Notes

1. Nial Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) 16.
2. Books are recommended on Amazon, personalised radio stations like Pandora on i-phone are ways in which a-signifying systems organize our brains to act within limited options that are offered to us. Besides, predictive analytics analyses big data and proposes how individual are likely to behave to specific stimuli opening us to manipulation and control without our knowledge. Future is said belong to what is described as algorithmic Governmentality. This does not mean that there are no benefits of big data analytics. Most benefits are said to be in the field of medicine can personalize and reduce costs of treatment. But all this depends how intimate data is accessed and used. Big data conglomerates seem to be set to become new power/knowledge storehouse of power in our world. Big data is about surveillance over individuals and is chiefly serving the Governments and Business.
3. Deleuze " Postscript on society of control", https://cidadeinseguranca.files. wordpress.com/2012/02/deleuze_control.pdf accessed on 25/11/2019.
4. Michael Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge*: *Selected Interviews and Other Writings*:1972-1977, Ed. Collin Gordon, Trans. Collin Gordan, Leo Marshal et al (New York; Pantheon Books 1980).
5. Guattari teaches that our unconscious is machinic. It stresses that the unconscious is not merely populated with images and words. It is populated with all kinds of mechanisms that lead it to produce and reproduce images and words. Felix Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious*, Trans. Taylor Adkins (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e),2011) 10
6. Deleuze "Postscript on society of control", https://cidadeinseguranca.files. wordpress.com/2012/02/deleuze_control.pdf accessed on 25/11/2019. Gerald Raunig develops the genealogy of the concept of dividuum and develops a philosophy of dividuality to respond to contemporary modes of production and life forms. It has led to new modes of self division. Fortunately, within dividuality, Raunig locates a new kind of resistance or con/division. It refers to the movement of con-forming in the most diverse single things but also affirms their separation at the same time. https://ijoc. org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/7030/1951 accessed on 30/11/2019.
7. Today the biosphere is merging with the mechanosphere. Machinic ecology is embedded with technomateriality and is transforming our subjectivity and social practices. Signs have begun to work like machines

producing a-signifying semiologies. Felix Gauttari presents three ecologies: the social ecology. Metal ecology and environmental ecology which are relational and transversal whose eco-logic provides possibilities of resistance that opens us to the other, the strange and the foreigner.

8. Signifier, signified and referent forms the semiotic triangle.
9. Maurizio Lazzarato , *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, Trans., Joshua David Jordan (Los Angeles: Semiotictext(e), 2014), 84.
10. Maurizio Lazzarato , *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, 87.
11. Today the internet of things is amplifying the surveillance capacities leading to the creation of vast data of our life. Google's Brillo AND Apple's Home Kit can connect washishing machine to television or air conditioner. From Smart watches to GPS footwear, human bodies have come under the gaze of digital power. https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jul/23/panopticon-digital-surveillance-jeremy-bentham accessed on 27/12/2019.
12. Maurizio Lazzarato , *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, 89.
13. http://culturalstudiesnow.blogspot.com/2012/03/emile-durkheim-genesis-of-notion-of.html accessed on 27/12/2019.
14. https://violenceandreligion.com/mimetic-theory/ accessed on 27/12/2019.
15. Maurizio Lazzarato , *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, 101.
16. Daniel. N. Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: a View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology* (Londan: Karnak Books, 1998), 3-138.
17. Ibid., 106.
18. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wittgenstein/ accessed on 27/12/2019.
19. Maurizio Lazzarato , *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, 200.
20. Ibid., 206.
21. Ibid., 77.
22. Deleuze "Postscript on society of control", https://cidadeinseguranca.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/deleuze_control.pdf accessed on 25/11/2019.
23. Donna J. Haraway, Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene (Durham: Duke University Press, 1916), 58-98.
24. Ibid, 30-57.

The Human Approach of Pope Francis to Enable a Humane Society

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Abstract: In this article, which explores the human and compassionate approach of Pope Francis in order to create a humane society, the author focus first on four of his prophetic actions followed by four of his challenging messages. Then he analyses his life and message as a meaningful and even controversial way of making ourselves more human and humane. . In the messages and actions of Pope Francis, we discern somone who is passionately in love with the society and deeply and intimately care for others by building bridges and walking together. His inspiration for this is listening to the presence of God in everyone and everything (discernment). This enables him to welcome everyone both individually and as a society.

Keywords: Pope Francis, Compassion, Humane Society, Human Approach to Life.

Introduction

How can we make social life more human and humane? How can we make our common life more communitarian, fulfilling and caring? One example of a person who has changed the social life of the world is Pope Francis in the last eight years. In this article, we shall first focus on four of his prophetic action followed by four of his challenging messages. Then we shall analyse his life and message as a meaningful and even controversial way of making ourselves more human and humane.

Pope Francis' Prophetic Actions

It is in this context of the Church's openness to the world and the willingness to share its joys and joys, that we look at the work and words of Pope Francis. We limit ourselves only to three encounters.

a. Mingling with Migrants at Lampedusa

On July 8, 2013 just three months after his Papacy, Pope Francis celebrated mass on the tiny Sicilian island of Lampedusa on Monday to commemorate thousands of migrants who have died crossing the sea from North Africa, underlining his drive to put the poor at the heart of his papacy.[1]

The choice of Lampedusa for his first official trip outside Rome was highly symbolic for the pontiff, who said news reports of the deaths of desperate people trying to reach a better life that had been like "a thorn in the heart".

Thousands of islanders waving caps and banners in the Vatican's yellow colors welcomed Francis at the fishing port

where he arrived aboard a coastguard vessel accompanied by a flotilla of fishing boats and cast a wreath into the water.

He spoke to young African migrants before celebrating mass in a sports field that served as a reception center for tens of thousands of mainly Muslim migrants who fled Arab Spring unrest in North Africa in 2011, greatly increasing an exodus that has gone on for years.

His trip came at the start of the summer months when the island, one of the main points of entry into the European Union and just 113 km from Tunisia, sees a steady flow of rickety and unsafe boats arriving on its shores. He saluted the migrants, many of whom are preparing to fast during Ramadan, and thanked the people of Lampedusa for taking them in and setting an example of solidarity to a selfish society sliding into "the globalisation of indifference".

"We have become used to other people's suffering, it doesn't concern us, it doesn't interest us, it's none of our business!" he said during his homily from an altar built from an old fishing boat painted in Italy's red, green and white colors.

He had harsh words for people smugglers who he said profited from the misery of others as well and asked pardon for "those, whose decisions at a global level have created the conditions which have led us to this drama".[2] During the mass he used a wooden chalice carved from the wood of a migrant vessel by a local carpenter.

b. Embracing Man with Neurofibromatosis

Pope Francis embraced several people with severe skin disorders in Vatican City on November 7, 2013,

and photos of him kissing the head of a disfigured man with neurofibromatosis have gone viral.

Many say the present Pope is a pope of the people and truly manifests Christian ideology of treating people with equality, taking to the streets to help the poor, and reaching out to stigmatised members of society. *The Washington Post* called his embrace of the neurofibromatosis victim as "the image worth a thousand words."

Neurofibromatosis is a rare genetic disorder that causes tumours — usually benign — to grow from the ends of nerves, and can cause severe disfiguration. Sometimes, the tumours can become cancerous, according to the National Institutes of Health. It can be both a physically and emotionally devastating disease.[3]

Some people said that Pope Francis is living up to the ideals of his namesake, Francis of Assisi, a preeminent figure who considered himself a servant to the poor and destitute.[4]

c. Meeting with World Leaders and Scientists

In this spirit of humility and dialogue, the Pope has been meeting many world leaders, including Obama, Trump, Trudeau, Merkel and Putin. Some of the eminent scientists he met are Stephen Hawking and Mark Zuckerberg. Here I shall be focussing on two meetings the Pope had with scientists.[5]

On May 27, 2019 the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and United Nations Initiative, SDSN, hosted a meeting between Pope Francis, Climate Scientists, and more than twenty Finance Ministers to discuss the Sustainable

Development Goals and climate change. In line with Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si': Care for our Common Home*, the objective of the meeting was for climate experts and finance ministers to discuss new data and enhance awareness on climate change and sustainable development. The meeting specifically focused on the role of innovative climate financing as a critical next step to realise the Paris Agreement.[6]

In the context of the launch of the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action, co-chaired by Chile and Finland, discussions which took place during this meeting provided additional perspectives for Finance Ministers to consider in their efforts to strengthen collective action on the matter. More specifically, the Coalition recently endorsed the Helsinki Principles, a set of six common principles that foster climate action, especially through the use of fiscal policy. Leading up to COP25 that will take place in Chile this December, discussions supported work geared towards the Santiago Action Plan, a set of concrete actions that will be taken to make tangible progress to tackle climate change.

In an earlier address to Pontifical Academy of Science, Pope Francis acknowledged that the scientific world is more aware of how complex the world and human beings are. He noted that this has led science to be less isolated and more open to spiritual and religious values. "Commonly shared opinions" and the "desire for happiness" often influence scientific research, the Pope added. Therefore, the relationship between values and people, society and science "demands a rethinking" that promotes the "integral advancement" of each person and the common good. As a part of society, the scientific community is called to serve humanity and its integral development, the Pope said.[7]

Some areas Pope Francis named as "possible fruits" of that service of sciences are: climate change, nuclear arms, fossil fuels, and deforestation. Science has identified the risks in these areas, the Pope said, so they can also propose convincing solutions to the world's leaders.

d. Apologising Genuinely

Outside St. Peter's Basilica on New Year's Eve, 2020, we can see how the woman who held Pope's hands forgot herself and why the Pope reacted so strongly. He was walking down the rope line, stopping to shake hands with the cheering throng. Then the woman crosses herself and folds her hands, as if in prayer, as the Pope draws closer. She stares intently, but he turned away. She reaches out and grabs him, with one hand, then another. She yanks him backward and will not let go. The Pope slaps her hand — twice He turns away, angry and sullen.

"Love makes us patient," the Pope said the next day, moving away from his scripted homily. "So many times we lose our patience. Me too, and I apologise for yesterday's bad example."[8] At the dawn of a new decade, we live in a world on edge, understandably so. Every politician, every monarch, every pontiff who ventures onto a rope line understands that risks lurk — crazy people intent on doing harm, but also overzealous, overexcited fans. And those are just the uncertainties we can imagine.

There have been other moments when overexuberant fans tested papal composure. On a trip to Mexico in 2016, a fan grabbed the Pope's robe, causing him to stumble onto a child in a wheelchair. "No seas egoista," the Pope shouted at the fan. "Don't be selfish."

The Pope's apology came quickly and without condition. Rather than explaining himself or suggesting that responsibility was shared, which it surely was, his statement was powerful in its simplicity: "I apologise for yesterday's bad example." It is tempting to fantasise about such words emanating from the mouth of a spouse, a sibling, maybe a colleague or a companion.

He further made up for this act by kissing an elderly nun.[9] He had a light-hearted reaction more typical of his papacy on Wednesday, January 8, 2020, when a nun asked him for a kiss. He said yes, although only after she promised not to bite him. The good-natured exchange took place at the start of Francis' weekly general audience. As he was walking into the large hall where thousands of people were waiting, an excited nun asked if he would kiss her, shouting in Italian "Bacio, Papa!" (A kiss, Pope!)

Francis responded: "Oh, (but) you bite!", prompting laughter from the people near them. Then Francis joked: "Stay calm! I will give you a kiss but you stay calm. Don't bite!" The diminutive nun promised, saying "Si" (Yes). He then kissed her on the right cheek, leaving her even more ecstatic than before. She jumped up and down shouted "Grazie, Papa". (Thank you, Pope).

His Challenging Messages

After having seen some of his inspiring actions, we look at some of his messages. We limit to four due to paucity of time.

a. Amazon Synod: Concluding Speech: Four-fold Dimensions

At the end of Amazon Synod (Oct 6-27, 2019), Pope speaks of the four dimensions of Christian life.[10]

Firstly, the cultural dimension: we worked on it; we spoke about inculturation, about the promotion of culture, and all this very animatedly, that it is within the Church's tradition. Inculturation: the Puebla Conference to name the nearest one, had opened that door.

Secondly, the ecological dimension. Here he pays tribute to one of the pioneers of this awareness within the Church, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. He was one of the first to pave the way to create this conscience. And many followed him, and with that concern, and always with the exponential acceleration of the Paris team; and then other encounters followed. This is how *Laudato Si'* was conceived; as an inspiration on which many people worked, on which many scientists, theologians and pastoral workers worked. Thus this ecological awareness advances and today denounces a path of compulsive exploitation, destruction, of which the Amazon is one of the most important aspects. For Pope Fancis it is a symbol. This ecological dimension on which our future depends is very crucial for us. In the demonstrations by young people, in Greta's movement and that of others, several people held up a placard that read: "The future is ours", that is, "you do not decide our future". "It is ours!". In this, there is already the awareness of ecological peril, obviously not only in the Amazon but also in other places: the Congo is another one, other sectors; in my country, in the Chaco, there is the "Impenetrable" zone which is small, but in some way, we too know the problem.

Alongside the ecological dimension, there is the social dimension, which is no longer just all creation, Creation that is savagely exploited, but also people. And in the Amazon all kinds of injustices appear: the destruction of people, the exploitation of people at every level and the destruction of cultural identity. He recalls arriving in Puerto Maldonado at the airport there was a poster with the image of a very beautiful girl with the words: "Defend yourself and beware of trafficking. That is, this is the warning to the arriving tourist. Trafficking listens and trafficking at the highest level of corruption of people at every level. And this, together with the destruction of cultural identity, which is another phenomenon that you have singled out very well in the Document.

It is the fourth dimension which includes them all the pastoral dimension, the Announcement of the Gospel is urgent; it is urgent. But that it be heard, that it be assimilated, that it be understood by those cultures. There have already been discussions about the laity, priests, permanent deacons, men and women religious, on whom to rely in this field. And there has been talk of what they do and how to strengthen this. There has been talk of new ministries inspired by Paul VI's *Ministeria Quaedam*, of creativity in this. Creativity in the new ministries and seeing how far one can go. There was talk of indigenous seminarians, and with great intensity.

One issue of the pastoral dimension was women. Obviously, women: what the Document says is "not enough"; what is woman, right? In transmitting the faith, in preserving culture. Pope Francis underscore this: that we have not yet understood what the woman signifies in the Church and we limit ourselves only to the functional aspect which is important and must be in the councils ... or in all that was

said. But the role of women in the Church goes well beyond functionality. And more work must continue on this. Well beyond.

He concludes the messages rather prophetically.

> There is always an "elite" group of Christians which likes to interfere in this type of diagnosis, as if it were universal; in the smaller ones or in that type of resolution that is more intra-ecclesiastic discipline, I am not saying inter-ecclesial, intra-ecclesiastic, and to say that this section has won over that section. No, we have all won with the diagnoses that we have made and how far we have come in the pastoral and intra-ecclesiastic issues. But one does not close oneself in on this. Thinking today about these Catholics and at times Christian "elites", but above all Catholics who want to go to "the small" [picture] and forget the "big" [picture], a verse from Péguy came to mind and I went to look for it. I will try to translate it well. I think it can help us, when it describes these groups who want the "small thing" and forget the "thing": Because they do not belong to someone else, they think they belong to God. Because they love no one else, they think that they love God. I am very pleased that we did not fall prey to these selective groups that, concerning the Synod, just want to see what was decided on this or that intra-ecclesiastic point and they deny the *corpus* of the Synod which consists in the diagnoses that we have carried out in the four dimensions.[11]

b. To the Seminarians: Four-Fold Closeness

What is a seminary? Pope Francis sums up his answer on December 9, 2019: "It is a *house of prayer*, a *house of study*, a *house of communion*."

The Holy Father's remarks came when he received in audience the Community of the Pontifical Benedict XV Flaminian Regional Seminary of Bologna, on the occasion of the centenary of its founding.

"You are called to be evangelizers in your Region, which is also marked by de-Christianization," Pope Francis said. "Those who are more exposed to the cold wind of uncertainty or religious indifference need to find in the person of the priest that strong faith which is like a torch in the night and like a rock to which they can attach themselves."

In addition to prayer, study, and communion, the Pope presented what he called four "neighborhood" or "attitudes of closeness" of diocesan priests:

1. To be close to God in prayer, which begins with the seminary.

2. To be close to the bishop, always close to the bishop: without the bishop, the Church does not work, without the bishop the priest can be a leader but he will not be a priest.

3. The third form of closeness: being close to the presbytery, among yourselves. This is something that makes the Pope suffer when he sees fragmented presbyteries, where they are against one another, or all courteous but then they speak badly of each other.

4. And the fourth closeness: closeness to the people of God. This is to remember where the seminarians came from.

In his concluding remarks, Francs calls on Mary. "Mary shines in the Church for her singular vocation, lived following her Son, in humble and courageous obedience to God's plan. May she who was always united to Jesus form conception up to His death on the cross, help you discover every day the 'treasure' the precious pearl' that is Christ

and His Kingdom, and to become joyful proclaimers of His Gospel."

To elaborate on the third dimension: the seminary as a *house of communion*. This aspect too is "transversal", like the other two. It starts from a human basis of openness to others, of a capacity for listening and dialogue, and is called to take the form of priestly communion around the bishop and under his guidance. The priest's pastoral charity cannot be credible unless it is preceded and accompanied by fraternity, first among seminarians and then among priests. A fraternity increasingly imbued with the apostolic form and enriched by the characteristics proper to the diocese, that is, by those particular characteristics of the people of God and of the saints, especially the holy priests, of a particular Church.

In this context, the seminary is qualified as a path that educates candidates to evaluate all their actions with reference to Christ and to consider belonging to the one presbytery as a prior dimension of pastoral activity and a witness of communion, indispensable for effectively serving the mystery of the Church and her mission in the world.

Here I would like to stop for a moment to summarise the four "neighborhoods", the four attitudes of closeness of diocesan priests. To be close to God in prayer, I said, begins with the seminary. To be close to the bishop, always close to the bishop: without the bishop, the Church does not work, without the bishop the priest can be a leader but he will not be a priest. The third form of closeness: being close to the presbytery, among yourselves. This is something that makes me suffer when I see fragmented presbyteries, where they are against one another, or all courteous but then they speak badly of each other. If there is not a united

presbytery… That does not mean that we cannot discuss, no, we discuss, we exchange ideas, but charity is the one that unites. And the fourth closeness: closeness to the people of God. Please do not forget where you came from. Paul said to Timothy: "Remember your mother and grandmother", that is, your roots; remember that you were taken from the flock and you came because the Lord chose you. You did not come to make an ecclesiastical career, as once was said, in a literary style of other centuries. Proximity to God, closeness to the bishop, closeness to the presbytery, among you, and closeness to the people of God. If one of these is missing, the priest will not work and will slowly slip into the perversion of clericalism or attitudes of rigidity. Where there is clericalism there is corruption, and where there is rigidity, under rigidity, there are serious problems.

c. Pope stresses on human, spiritual formation in the life of seminarians, priests

During a relaxed and informal meeting with seminarians and student priests on May 16, 2018 Pope Francis answered questions on priestly life and formation.

Pope Francis on Friday told seminarians and priests studying in Rome to care for their ongoing human and spiritual formation while being always open to the Holy Spirit. The seminarians and student priests who come from around the world for ecclesiastical studies reside in the pontifical colleges or ecclesiastical seminaries.

The relaxed question and answer session in which the Pope responded to 5 questions from the audience, was punctuated with jokes, laughter and cheer.

On the move together with others: Responding to a French seminarian who wanted to know about how a priest

could be a humble disciple and missionary at the same time, the Pope said that a priest must be a man who is on the move, who listens and who is never alone. He must be humble enough to be accompanied.

Importance of discernment: To a question from a Sudanese seminarian about how to keep discerning one's vocation even after ordination, the Pope underscored the importance of discernment saying it helps us to go ahead by making us understand what is right and what is not.

For an effective discernment, the Holy Father said one needs to do it before God in prayer, and secondly one needs a spiritual guide who will offer him guidelines. Without discernment, the Pope said, a priest's life stalls, becoming rigid and legalistic. One closes oneself to the Holy Spirit, who actually should be our companion on our journey. It's no use being good and live as if the Holy Spirit did not exist.

Human formation: To a question from a Latin American on how to maintain a healthy balance, the Pope underscored the importance of human formation. One needs to be a normal human person, capable of enjoying others' company, laughing and listening to a sick person or consoling him with a caress. A priest has to be a father and be fruitful, giving life to others. A priest, he warned is not an official of the sacred or an employee of God.

The diocesan priest: A US deacon asked the Pope about the spiritual traits of a diocesan priest and how they are practised in daily pastoral work. In answer, the Pope used the expression "dioceseness", which he explained as caring to maintain a healthy relationship with the bishop, even if he were a difficult person, and also maintaining one's relationship with brother priests and parishioners.

Maintaining these three fronts, he said, will make you saints.[12]

d. Priestly Formation: Four Pillars

In an earlier meeting with seminarians on, May 12 2014 at the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican, Pope Francis gave a special audience for seminarians and priests studying in Rome. There he elaborates on the four pillars in priestly formation: spiritual formation, academic formation, community formation and apostolic formation. He reminds the seminarians that in Rome emphasis is placed on intellectual formation; however, the other three pillars must be cultivated, and all four interact among themselves. He cannot understand a priest who comes to get a degree in Rome and does not have a community life. This is not all right. Either he is not taking care of his spiritual life — daily Mass, daily prayer, *lectio divina*, personal prayer with the Lord — or his apostolic life: on the weekend doing something, for a change of air, but also the apostolic air, doing something there…. It's true that study is an apostolic dimension; but it is important that the other three pillars are also looked after! Academic purism is not beneficial, definitely not! The Lord has called you to be priests, to be presbyters: this is the fundamental rule.[13]

Once, an old bishop from Latin America said: "The worst seminary is better than no seminary". If one prepares for the priesthood alone, without a community, this is harmful. The life of the seminary, that is, community life, is very important. It is very important because there is sharing among brothers who are journeying towards the priesthood

He acknowledges that there are also problems, "there are battles: battles for power, battles over ideas, even hidden

struggles; and the capital vices arise: envy, jealousy…. And good things also arise: friendships, the exchange of ideas, and this is what is important for community life. Community life isn't paradise, it's at least purgatory – no, it's not that …, but it's not paradise!" A Jesuit saint said that the greatest penance for him was community life. It's true, he admits. Therefore, he urges the seminarians go forward in community life.

There are two activities that helps the community life great deal. One: Never, never speak ill of others. "If I have something against another, or if I don't agree with him: I have to tell him to his face! But we clerics are tempted not to speak to another to his face, to be too diplomatic, that clerical language." However, it harms us, it harms us! He remembered, 22 years ago, when he had just been appointed bishop and in that vicariate he had as secretary, a young recently ordained priest. And in the first months, Francis did something, I took a somewhat diplomatic decision with the consequences that come from such decisions that are not taken in the Lord. And in the end, I said to the secretary: "See what a problem this is, I don't know how to put it in order…". And he looked at me in the face — a young man! — and he said to me: "Because you acted wrongly, you did not make a fatherly decision." He was very respectful, but he did say them to me. And then, when he left, he thought: "I will never remove him from the post of secretary: he is a true brother!" Instead, those who tell you lovely things to your face and then say not so lovely things behind your back… This is important… Gossip is the plague of the community; one must speak face to face, always. And if you do not have the courage to speak to someone's face, speak to the Superior or to the Director. And he will help you, but don't go to your companion's rooms and speak ill

of other. We, both men and women, gossip enough! And this destroys the community.

Regarding the second activity, Francis recalls another experience. When he was a student of philosophy; he met his spiritual father, who was a philosopher and a metaphysician. Francis went to him and the problem emerged that he was angry with someone: "But I'm angry with him because of this, this and this …" He told the spiritual Father everything he felt. . And he asked me only one question: "Tell me, have you prayed for him?". Nothing more. And Francis said: "No". He was silent. "We're done", the spiritual father said to young Francis. To pray, to pray for all the members of the community, but to pray primarily for those with whom we have a problem, or for those whom we don't love, because sometimes not loving a person is something natural, instinctive. Pray, and the Lord will do the rest. But always pray. Community prayer. With these two things, the community will move forward, you can live well, speak well, discuss well, pray well together. Two small things: do not speak ill of others and pray for those with whom you have a problem.

Humanising Social Life

Based on the inspiring actions and messages, we can cull out four ways Pope Francis is attempting to humanise our society, radically and prophetically.

a. Experiencing God's Compassion and Mercy

Speaking to nearly 600 Missionaries of Mercy on Tuesday, Pope Francis said that to be "collaborators of mercy" with the Lord, they must remember that they have been recipients of that mercy first.[14]

"We must always start from this fixed point: God treated me with mercy," the Pope said. "This is the key to becoming God's collaborators. One experiences mercy and turns into [a] minister of mercy." "In short, the ministers do not place themselves above the others as if they were judges of the sinful brothers," he continued.

"A true missionary of mercy is reflected in the experience of the Apostle: God has chosen me; God trusts me; God has put his trust in me by calling me, despite being a sinner, to be his collaborator to make it real, effective and let his mercy touch."

In his message Pope Francis referred to the parable of the prodigal son in the Gospel of Luke, in particular, the part that reads, "While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him." He added:"God is not idle to wait for the sinner: he runs towards him, because the joy of seeing him come back is too great."

"When we welcome the penitent, we need to look at him in the eye and listen to him to allow him to perceive the love of God who forgives in spite of everything, dresses him in the festive dress and the ring, a sign of belonging to his family."

We know that to sin is to turn away from, or abandon God, he said. But there can also be moments that one might feel the opposite: the silence and abandonment of God.

If these moments are not viewed in a lens of love, "abandonment becomes meaningless and tragic, because it does not find hope." That is why we must understand them

in the light of Golgotha and of Jesus' cry upon the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

"The God who loved the world to the point of giving his Son, to the point of abandoning him on the cross, he will never abandon anyone: his love will always be there, closer, bigger and more faithful than any abandonment." Once we experience God's mercy, we become humble and share it with others.

b. Building Bridges and Not Walls

In a related talk, Pope Francis urges young Catholics "to build bridges, not walls." In an apparent reference to Trump's border plans, the Pope said those who build walls are trying to "divide people and box them in."[15]

He made it clear that he wants young members of his flock to be the kind of people who build bridges.

"These builders of walls that sow fear are looking to divide people and box them in," the Pope said during the opening ceremony of World Youth Day in Panama City. "What do you want to be?" Francis asked the estimated 250,000 young people assembled for the rally.

"Builders of bridges," his audience replied. Francis also praised the youth for joining together for the rally, even though they come from diverse cultures and speak many different languages. During his flight to Central America, Francis responded to a reporter's question about the border wall by stating that the irrational fear of migration drives people "crazy."

He urged Central American church leaders, dioceses and parishes to help the rest of society overcome its fears about migration by welcoming migrants.

"The Church, by virtue of her universality, can provide the fraternal hospitality and acceptance that can enable the communities of origin and of destination to dialogue and to help overcome fears and suspicions, and thus to consolidate the very bonds that migrations — in the collective imagination — threaten to break," Francis said.

Francis has made the plight of migrants and refugees one of the key issues of his papacy. In the past, he's made many pronouncements on the morality of a border wall. "In the social and civil context as well, I appeal not to create walls but to build bridges." Building bridges foster collaboration, acceptance and affirmation of the other, who are different from us!

c. Caring for the Poor and Marginalised, Periphery

Quite frequently, Pope Francis speaks of the need for all of us go to the peripheries, the margins. Take the Church (we are the Church) and be there among the people who are marginalised.[16] Why is Francis putting so much emphasis on our going out to the periphery?

If we listen to the Christmas Gospel, we find that's exactly what God does, working through the angels at the birth of Jesus. Those shepherds were what we would call people on the margin; they were on the periphery.

Shepherds were almost like outcasts in the society where Jesus was born. They lived a rough and difficult life, spending their time in the countryside, sleeping outdoors,

but protecting their sheep. They were not well-educated; they were not wealthy and important people of any kind.

But those were the ones who received the first message that the Son of God had entered into human history, had become part of our human family. They were the first ones to receive that news. God sent the message about Jesus first of all to people on the margins, to the poor, the rejected.

So Francis is merely following up on the way God acted at the birth of Jesus. He sent out and found 12 homeless people to bring to the small hotel where he lives, and he shared breakfast with them, meeting each one, introducing himself, finding out who the person was, reaching out to those that are on edge, are marginalised — the poor who are so numerous in our world, even in our country, even in our city — everywhere we see them. Francis is simply following the direction that God gave when Jesus was born.

The Son of God entered into human history as helpless, homeless, poor — poorest of the poor. We hear in the Gospel that the angels told the shepherds, "You'll find Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger," and we make it look something like our crib scene over there. It was a cave, and in the front of that cave a small shelter was built so homeless people could stay in that shelter, but it was crowded. In the back of the shelter, in the cave, was where their animals stayed. So Mary and Joseph, when Mary was ready to give birth, went into the cave part among the animals.

The Son of God was born with nothing, totally poor. That's almost impossible to believe that God would enter into our history in this way. But God, in Jesus, wanted to identify with those who are the poorest in our society so he could lift them up, proclaim good news to the poor.

If we are going to find Jesus in our world today, we must do what Pope Francis does. We must go to the periphery. We must take time to be with the poor. That's where we'll discover Jesus most of all. Among the poor and the most desperate poor in our world today are those who are refugees.

Thus Pope Francis wants to create an inclusive society where the poor, marginalised and disadvantaged are respected and cared for and thus treated as human beings.

d. The Synodal Church: Walking and Discerning Together

Marking the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis outlined his vision for a church that is "synodal" at every level, with everyone listening to each other, learning from each other and taking responsibility for proclaiming the Gospel.[17]

"The journey of synodality is the journey that God wants from his church in the third millennium," the Pope said on October 17. "A synodal church is a listening church, aware that listening is more than hearing. It is a reciprocal listening in which each one has something to learn."

Francis, members of the Synod of Bishops on the family, theologians and other guests dedicated a morning to marking the anniversary of Blessed Paul VI's institution in 1965 of the synod as a forum for sharing the faith and concerns of the world's Catholics, reflecting together and offering counsel to the Pope.

Referring to the Greek roots of the word "synod," Francis said, "walking together – laity, pastors, the bishop of Rome

– is an easy concept to express in words, but is not so easy to put into practice."

Using the synod on the family as an example, the Pope said it would have been impossible for the 270 bishops and priests who are voting members of the assembly to speak to real needs and concerns without listening to and trying to learn from Catholic families.

"It was that conviction that led me when I asked that the people of God be consulted" before the synod, the Pope said. "How would it have been possible to speak of the family without calling upon families, listening to their joys and their hopes, their pains and their suffering?"

The need for everyone in the Church -- from the Pope on down -- to listen and to learn from others is based on the conviction, clearly explained by the Second Vatican Council, that through baptism and confirmation all members of the Church have been anointed by the Holy Spirit and that the entire Christian community is infallible when its members discern together and speak with one voice on matters of faith and morals, Francis said.

"The '*sensus fidei*' (sense of faith) makes it impossible to rigidly separate the '*ecclesia docens*' (teaching Church) and the '*ecclesia discens*' (learning Church) because even the flock has a 'nose' for discerning the new paths that the Lord is opening up to the Church," the Pope said.

But ensuring the synodality of the whole Church will be impossible, he said, if people misunderstand the Church's hierarchy and see it as a structure in which some people are placed above others.

During his General Audience, the Pope reflected on an episode from the Acts of the Apostles. He recalled how, "In

the midst of the Sanhedrin, which feels threatened by the Apostolic preaching, a different voice is heard. The highly regarded doctor of the Law, Gamaliel, demonstrates the "art of discernment." Filled with prophetic wisdom, he invites the leaders of the people not to give in to haste, but to wait for developments over time."

The Pope said that this discernment is valuable for the Church, because "it invites us to be farsighted, to contemplate events and not to make hasty judgments. Discernment is an art that does not provide standardised solutions." Further, he adds "Discernment is a choice of courage," said the Pope. Discernment helps us to perceive God's will in all our actions and helps us to accomplish it. It is for the good of all concerned.

Conclusion

In the person of Pope Francis, we see someone who has been humanising the Church and society by reaching out to the periphery, embracing the marginalised and reaching out to the others in compassion. In his message and actions we see somone who is passionately in love with the society and deeply and intimately cares for others by building bridges and walking together. His inspiration for this is listening to the presence of God in everyone and everything (discernment). This enables him to welcome everyone both individually and as a society.

Notes

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Eco-Spirituality within an Inclusive Creation: A Nature-Based Spiritual Paradigm Shift

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Abstract: The serious ecological crisis is creating concerns among thinkers and theologians, pushing them to address the issues from their own perspectives. The world today is in the grip of terrorising Covid-19 pandemic with the reality and anguish of death. Beyond the present pandemic there are more deaths on our planet for a thousand other reasons than the Coronavirus. The prospect of a probable slower but a more certain end of humanity at some distant time is not denied. The danger associated with the environmental destruction and deterioration has aroused a deep collective fear the world over. This perspective provokes no lesser impact on the collective psyche. Yet, modernity has systematically denied the constant imminence of death and destruction of the world. We can only reasonably hope for a collective awareness of the changes needed and decisive action taken by all stakeholders. It calls for a profound conversion of the 'ways of life'. Christianity has to play a crucial role in translating into the concrete life those decisive actions.

The author argues that we need to live more consciously and impact the nature that has a slap on human greed. A nature-based eco-spirituality as a progressive spiritual science of the

future, will certainly make right the wrong that human race has committed with its respective affiliated religious biases and socio-scientific blunders.

Introduction

The planet is in crisis. The serious ecological crisis is creating concerns among thinkers and theologians, pushing them to address the issues from their own perspectives. The world today is in the grip of terrorising Covid-19 pandemic with the reality and anguish of death. Beyond the present feared development there are more deaths on our planet for a thousand other reasons than the Coronavirus. The prospect of a probable slower but a more certain end of humanity at some distant time is not denied. The danger associated with the environmental destruction and deterioration has aroused a deep collective fear the world over. This perspective provokes no lesser impact on the collective psyche. Yet, modernity has systematically denied the constant imminence of death and destruction of the world. We can only reasonably hope for a collective awareness of the changes needed and decisive action taken by all stakeholders. It calls for a profound conversion of the 'ways of life'.[1] Christianity has to play a crucial role in translating into the concrete life those decisive actions.

As psychosomatic creatures of both body and soul (physical and spiritual), human beings within the daily 'ways of life' are part of one and the same substance.[2] One, therefore, cannot be separated from the other. We are always both physical and spiritual. Consequently physical things are felt spiritually, and spiritual things are experienced through physical senses. If humanness includes a sense of humility (from Latin root, *humus,* soil, ground, and earth) then human being has to be 'earthy' (grounded) person with one's feet firm on the ground, carrying

the smell and the sense of the earth. A person is a piece of the earth and connected with it. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, mystic and a paleontologist, identified his voice with that of the earth, wherein the physical creation itself speaks to God.[3]

We are commissioned by God to "go in the whole world and proclaim the Good News to every creature." (Mk 16:15). This mandate is universal in its scope. The whole world today needs new spirituality that speaks new languages of love and mercy, of care and concern, of shared responsibility. All creation comes from the creator and it must be all communed to lead all back to its Source, the Creator, that is as Pope Francis referring to St. Francis of Assisi states, "drawing all other creatures into his praise" (*Laudato Si/* LS 11).[4]

This paper is an attempt to reasonably call all to develop an inclusive, prophetic and challenging spiritual attitude based on nature – a relational cosmic anthropology – of forming humanity as an integral part of life on earth. It is an invitation for personal transformation in one's spiritual life that leads to a changed social behavioral pattern. Eco-spirituality is proved here to be a 'common' spirituality that will bring economics, ecology, ecosystems, eco-politics and eco-spirituality together, where faith and reason, people and planet, creature and creator will remain connected.

Spiritual Lessons from Covid-19 Pandemic

Keeping with the nature is the best cure against Corona virus and all eco-crisis: this is the lesson we learn from the COVID-19 pandemic outcome. We are called to be more human by becoming more responsible for our physical, mental, spiritual and emotional living. It teaches us more directly to move from religion that shifts human responsibility to the Other (God), through prayers, rituals and succour, to humanity itself through responsible participation in building the universal 'kingdom'. Bill Gates in his reflection has emphatically reiterated the spiritual purpose behind each event however grave or simple,

that occurs in life. Bill Gates says, there is "a spiritual purpose behind everything that happens."[5] Despite the chaos there is a spiritual purpose behind the recent pandemic in order to remind of the important lessons we have forgotten to learn.

This pandemic has made human more humble and it needs to be so. Self-isolation has become the best safety measure: to teach that we need to turn to nature, to our very self, to introspect and realise the higher spiritual nature of our being. This is the responsibility for each one. Today we need to be realistic and not live in a 'make up' dream world of religious superstitious belief system for easy cure and personal satisfaction, shirking responsibility. The Urbi et Orbi blessing of Pope Francis at the empty St. Peter's Square on 27th March proved the universal crisis of the world and of the futility of religious practices of all religions. The world is at risk of grave material, physical, mental and religious sicknesses. No Church-Mosque-Temple-Gurdwara has saved the humanity from these grave sicknesses. This grim situation is the reason for a substantial socio-religious systemic changes and a move towards a holistic cosmic spirituality within the most basic day-to-day routine affairs – the spirituality of the next-door.

Life is changing dramatically. But this dramatic situation can be changed for better with an integral eco-spirituality. We need to 'immune' ourselves against all that has made us 'worldly'. It is time to take care of our nature, our physical and spiritual health. A spiritual compassion is a medicine. It gives opportunity to live as one humanity without distinction. As humanity retreated in their inner homes, the nature reclaimed its space, with birds and animals reclaiming their way to live without fear and threat of humanity. Spiritual solace and "spiritual balm" at this moment of distress and clemency are superstitiously sought after by helpless persons who have no other solutions to their human problems. (e.g. Ramayana being telecast twice a day during the pandemic period for this reason!; lots of online stuff and live streaming, for the Christian liturgical rituals and prayers for domestic and personal use, etc.).

The global pandemic teaches that all are equal regardless of one's culture, religion, occupation, financial situation; no one is greater than the rest, that we share the sources equally. We all live loving and serving each other without boundary and discrimination. The universe is one, so is the humanity. We are connected and linked with the rest of the nature. Referring to Tom Hanks, Gates holds that "something that affects one person has an effect on another." That is the only way to live healthy and well in this world.

According to Bill Gates, we have put false borders in order to suppress and oppress others; in fact, such thing does not exist in nature. Health (physical, mental and spiritual) is as important as the natural wealth that we enjoy outside of us. These God-given sources are to be part and parcel of our life and responsibility. In this materialistic society we need to retreat back to live by our basic needs, our family and home life, and not the luxurious wants that we "give unnecessary value to". Our call in this world is to look after each other, look after the nature, take care of our common home; to protect, to share and support each other. It is time to start anew with a nature-spirituality. Pandemic has happened in the past, is happening and will happen. The cycle will go on but humanity learns a lesson from it to have a new beginning and heal the man-made sick earth. The global Coronavirus plague has been a "great corrector" of the course of human life that is divine in nature too.

The Ecological Problems

The Earth Day in lockdown, 22 April 2020, in support of environmental protection, is a message to reimagine the future of the earth and all life in it. Humanity is meant to be united with in spirit and body. It is to worship its Creator, the Supreme Power behind everything that is created, in spirit and truth.

The climate change is for the worst, as the earth grows hotter and the oceans warmer. It causes evaporation, forms typhoons, super cyclone (Umphun) and rainstorms. Consequently, there is

flood and tsunami in certain areas, and droughts, fires, smoke and smog killers elsewhere. Plants and animals are perishing. People are perishing due to the plague. All together this, according to experts, is "ecocide". Yet there is always a hope that the destructive lifestyles can be changed with having renewable sources of energy such as geothermal, solar and wind power.[6]

Pope Francis states, "The space of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes [...] the imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now." (LS 161). Due to such imbalance in nature, the human immune system too has weakened, and consequently we fall prey to the existing Corona pandemic that is haunting the whole humanity with fear and death.

The Point of No Return Approaches

We are living in a time of environmental degradation and social unrest, with mass demographical shifts, religious conflicts, migrants, refugees, inequality and other challenges connected with the nature. These social and ecological issues are inter-connected.[7] According to some climate advocates we are at the brink of 'no return'. As the climate gets so hot it is not possible to reverse it. The fast ice-melting phenomenon will lead to a disastrous drought globally, leading to mass starvation. The years 2014 to 2023 is marked as the hottest years in 150 years[8] and by 2100 this will reach a disastrous level of 3.2 degrees increase.

The world order has changed drastically within last seven months since December 2019, with the coming of Covid-19. The world is united more as never before. The world should never be the same. There has to be totally new concepts, new attitudes and new life style. Universal unity is noticed more with conviction that WE are one, that we cannot survive just as a single nation or individual. Adaptation is the key to the new situations as it comes on, through cooperation than competition. We need total attitudinal changes and live life differently through big thinking,

short-long term planning and quick decision making capacity. This is the post-pandemic time to learn always something new in the new reality, be self-dependent, be an entrepreneur, be self-employed. Above all we have to be spiritual and live in cohesion and in harmony with the rest of creation. Threat-prone species that have tried to destroy other species have disappeared in the past, and will disappear in future including human species that are endangering the rest of the nature. As human being, we cannot be threat to other beings through our materialistic and consumeristic life style. All these things we will have to do consciously with hopeful conviction and eco-activities, protecting the nature and all within it.

According to Jürgen Moltmann, Christian hope is a result of life itself and its personal capacity to overcome troubles and tribulations. It consists not in utopia of faith,[9] or wishful hope or false optimism, but in actual change of life, its customs and practices. In short, it is a call for transformation through active personal approach and responsibility by abhorring all structural evils. Therefore, in order to meet the climate justice first there must be economic and environmental justice for all. It calls for changes in existing social, economic and juridical structures. For example, the rising ocean and radioactive waste that contaminate the water and atmosphere are great threat to humanity. A global action is needed to curb global warming, for mankind to survive. There is no return from disinvestment by Churches and religious institutes from fossil fuels, the attitudinal changes towards nature and climate justice. There is no return from positive function for climate justice. We cannot walk back from an ecological spirituality in order to save the earth. This *is* the moment, here and now, for a new, deeper and inter-connected eco-consciousness. Now is the time to promote basic ethical and moral values for care of creation. It is the core element of living today.

Green Vegetation for Survival of Humanity

During the Climate Action Summit, a high-level meeting at the United Nations, September 23, 2019, Cardinal Pietro Parolin,[10] Vatican secretary of state, said, "We all recognise how important forests are for the whole world and indeed for the very future of humanity: they are the world's most reliable renewable resource and are essential for integral human development."[11] The "irreplaceable importance" of forests is underestimated.

In the same Climate summit it was stated that education about forest conservation is crucial in considering it "not merely as resources to be harnessed, but also as a sanctuary to be cultivated and constantly replenished." Destruction of vegetation and rainforests that cause a great human suffering "risks the loss of species and vital relationships that could end up altering the entire ecosystem." Several ecosystems and vast biomes also face serious threats. Excessive deforestation and the deterioration of that biodiversity compromise the future of the earth, our common home. It is not just environmental crisis but also social and ethical. Its impact is strongly felt by those who depend on forests for living, livelihood, cultural heritage, rights, values and social structures. Cardinal Parolin states: "Care for our common home, and care for our brothers and sisters in that home, must go together." It calls for "integral ecology and integral development, balancing the responsible use of forests for economic and social development." We must take "an integrated, multilateral approach that combats poverty and restores dignity to the excluded, at the same time as it protects this precious, indispensable and endangered gift."[12] The recent CBCI Plenary Assembly's final document states, "[A]ll people of good will have an obligation to protect the ecological equilibrium of the earth, intended by the creator [...] and start treating all of creation with respect and concern."[13]

An Inclusive Integral Ecology

The recent Amazon Synod put the environment at the heart of the church's concerns. The Church that is turning green and being in a season of creation, has been even offering courses (degrees) on integral ecology.[14] We are not "masters of creation" but stewards who are concerned with moral voice about the environmental issues. Through many new initiatives, the Church is reaching out to a maximum number of people with *Laudato Si'* and is giving importance to ecologically sensitive people. The Caritas International and many other organisations have made the care of the common home one of its strategic orientations for the years to come.[15]

The notion of "human ecology" in the 'green' encyclical 'Laudato Si' has a broader socio-economic interest and is inclusive of socio-economic concerns, bioethics as well as anthropology.[16] It is not something merely "grafted" onto Church activities, but it calls to completely revisit her spiritual and pastoral projects with a paradigm shift.

In keeping with the spirit of the times, ecological concerns become an opportunity for the Church to be more credible in world.[17] The process of secularisation push people to live their faith more concretely "in the midst of the world." Ecology constitutes "a path for the future", a spiritual ideal with radical frugality and with supportive lifestyles irrespective of colour and creed.

Eco-Theology

Creation is the context for humanity, which is biblically the climax of the creation process (cf. Lk 3:23-38). In this context of creation, humanity's nature consists in relating closely with the world around it, and as created in God's image, it functions as counterpart and co-workers within the created order. From a layperson's point of view, this creation narrative is "geocentric'" based firmly on a "theocentric" assumption.[18] All persons by

virtue of creation are God's people (Ps 24; Acts 17:26). The shared life that the Creator has given is to live in God's big picture - God's life that became visible in the world. We live so, by allowing the 'free wireless' connection.

The causative agent of creation is God, and the created universe is the expression of the love of God (Gen 2:27), who is still at work (John 5:17) through the cosmic Christ (Col 1:15-20) – the archetype (*prototokos*) of creation;   "image of the invisible God"; the agent "in whom" and "through" whom all things visible and invisible were created (Tim: 1:17); the *sustainer* of all things; the reconciler-redeemer of all things in heaven and on earth (Col 1:20; Eph. 1:9-10).This is clearly the fundamental meaning of creation by the Word of God when viewed from the contextual and hermeneutical perspective of the New Testament.[19]

Every space and species is sacred and the Creator is the owner of the entire creation. The Creator-Spirit God moves on earth from the beginning (cf. Gen 1:2; Ps 19L:1-4). It is only through creation that the Creator can be experienced. Therefore, there is the need to recognise the intrinsic value of all beings in the universe (cf. LS 84) and see the Creator in the natural world. Ecology has to "recover a serene harmony with creation" (LS 225). Christian theology always exalted the human being above material creation thus permitting people to abuse and exploit the material world, forgetting its integrity and sacredness. Today, in the eco-theological perspectives, eco-spirituality is considered to be more essential than eco-theology.

There is a need to include all theological disciplines in eco-theology with clearer strategies that contribute to the UN sustainable Development Goals. It is a call to transform the individual and the world in the light of the Spirit and perspective of creation inclusive of technologies, economy, ideologies, religions and cultures. There is no eco-spirituality without peace and social justice, and this spirituality will unveil the energy driven by biblical visions of Creation (God's Kingdom) and life.[20]

The Cosmic Christ

The cosmic Christ, in human flesh, through his incarnation divinises the whole humanity by giving the Spirit in it that makes ALL "into one body […] and individually members of it" (l Cor 12:13, 27). This mystery, that extends to the whole of creation, is the foundation of everything that the universe holds. Nature is everything. The animate and the inanimate with its independent action have its roots in the single wholeness of the universe. God is there precisely "to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10). This integral coherence of creation is clear when Paul writes of Jesus Christ: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible [...] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven" (Col 1:15-20). So that "God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).

Human life is grounded on a "closely intertwined relationship" with God, neighbour and with the earth itself (LS 66). Christ, in doing so, came to save the whole creation (cf Rom 8:23). According to Amaladoss, the God who enters human history is also the creator of everything. This inseparable handiwork of God continues to exist and evolve. According to the Darwin theory of evolution, from matter life emerges through a progressive complex process. If so, the incarnate 'Cosmic Christ' leads the whole of creation to its consummation bringing all things together.[21] Therefore, humanity has the right to live on this earth, because the Christ's "incarnation is already redemption." The cosmic Risen Christ is part of that evolution process, the 'free wireless', that we all have to connect to. Understanding Jesus ecologically, his redemptive mission extends to the entire universe and not just humanity alone.

Life in Cosmic Context

We acknowledge nature for what it is by our attitudinal change towards the earthly matters. The cosmic dust that we are made of (in God's image) is the source of the cosmic drama in which we all act and participate. The sacred knowledge, agreeing with the Greek wisdom confirms that cosmos – the earth and stars – is alive with soul and intelligence.[22] Life lived within a cosmic context and the daily cosmic experiences can evoke greater sacred significance in depth. There exists a balanced and dynamic harmony in the nature. During catastrophes, in turmoil, panic and human suffering as in the case of the COVID-19, in the midst of the cruel course of history, we can still see the sacred cosmic character of life. Going beyond the mundane follies of the 'foolish'[23] that forge human destiny, there are endless possibilities for correcting the course, through the very continuity between thought, speech and action. The untouched intelligible order is perfect beyond the calculated man-made chaos.[24]

It is a test for everything and everyone with a resilience of economy, religious faith and life. A time to get back to mother earth and enjoy the fruit of human labour. The pandemic is likely to impact 2.7 billion workers (81%) of the world. In India about 400 million workers (90%), the informal economy are at risk of falling deeper into poverty. There will be an explosion of poverty and deaths. We cannot claim to be the sole proprietors of properties and economy, instead, make the financial administration participatory, with greater transparency, accountability, and responsible use. In short, we have to become "Creator's faithful caretakers".

Post pandemic Christians have to practice a spirituality that makes sense and not continue with liturgical, noisy, ritualistic prayers, based on demonstrative, collective popular devotions. It is necessary and urgent to have a spiritual paradigm shift in the Church and re-imagine the sacramental, pastoral, and liturgical theologies and communal practices.[25]This too applies to the familial, social, political, and international relations realms too.

The clergy has to stop preaching and start listening! They should search together with the people the meaning of ´praying in spirit and truth´, for the worshippers must "worship in the Spirit and in truth." (John 4,24). This search is for innovative ways to keep the people optimistic, hope-filled and trusting in the Divine Providence.

Theology of Creation

Demanding respect for the cultures and faith system of all people, the Church urges respect for a worldview that sees God in all things[26] and she does not promote pantheism. The synod on Amazon, enlarged its view "to include the theology of creation, where the Word of God resides." The natural world is sacred and binds people in close relationship with it. Christianity seeks and finds God in all things (cf. St. Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*), which according to St. Bonaventure, is called "panentheism," - a theological concept meaning "recognition that all of creation is an expression of the love of God." St. Francis' renunciation of a life of luxury was a reawakening of his senses to the natural world. He realised that all things – animate and inanimate - have one single Source of life which is present in every being created by God. Even today, the indigenous people all over the world, relate to the cosmos as part of it, and that makes them part of the whole. Everything is the manifestation of the sacred, and is sacred. God, therefore, is not distant.

Is it necessary, therefore, to have a building in which to worship? The sacred dimension does not have a wall around it. If God is in everything, how does one build a place for God? Every element of creation has a spirit, (in Spanish or Portuguese the word 'spirit' signify "mother", e.g. homeopathy term, *mother* = basic spirit, root *mater* meaning *matter*). It reflects on the belief that the sacred is present in the world. Recognising the sacred, means "loving the presence of the Creator in everything."[27] Every person and species is sacred. Because of the divine presence in creation, a person cannot own things, neither can s/he misuse and

destroy them. One cannot destroy the environment and all within it, for economic gain through deforestation, extractive industries, logging and mining, infrastructure projects, hydroelectric dams etc. Neither can one destroy humanity by artificially creating virus in the lab for a selfish motive to kill other human 'enemies'. This is unethical and a sin against humanity and the Creator.

The ancestral wisdom passed down the generations "inspires care and respect for creation" and prohibits abuse of the environment. Their cosmovisions, involve greater care for and preservation and protection of nature. Christians, will have to perceive the world as creation, where humanity contemplates the 'face of God'. The theology of creation, of God's presence in everything, runs through all of Church history and its documents. According to St. Augustine the first book written was creation. Therefore, there is no contradiction between the Christian faith and eco-spirituality.

Our Common Home

Our understanding of grief and grace is limited by anthropocentrism. But, "[t]he Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures" (Laudato Si', LS 68). To meet our reckless 'hunger' for more, we have turned to be "gods of convenience, ownership and mastery." In all humility we have to admit that the loss of vegetation and water bodies are not just loss of resources or that of the 'common home'. It is a "loss of an integral part of myself, as a creature who participates in the glory of being alive on Earth."[28]

The *Catholic Catechism,* inclusively declares: "Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection [...] Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness." (CCC 339; LS 69)

Human beings are not the only centres of the universe, instead with Darwinist understanding of four billion years of evolution, they are parts of a wide infinite "web of ecological diversity that includes all life." Genetically we share a part of us with trees and animals. "We are not the apex of creation but a mere strand." The ecology is not a resource, but our kin.[29] We are interdependent. Life beyond *homo sapiens,* all living and non-living are a part of the universal wider narrative. Trees, shrubs, bushes, seeds and flowers 'talk' to each other. They care for and heal each other, through nutrients, medicine, air and water. They make the air, and grow with it, and water and soil. They, regenerate, communicate, grow in diverse directions. A hundred thousand "species of love" survive, adapt and keep on making things. We are integrally dependent on these complex, resilient and quite mysterious 'systems' of creation that created us.

Service with all humility by doctors, nurses, police, priests, nun, volunteers and other social workers, is the great lesson that the present pandemic teaches humanity. A host of people who bear the brunt of the pandemic, even death with total dedication to the victims of Covid-19, both in body and spirit. They have put their lives at risk with a sense of duty driven by love. During such terrible catastrophes, there always have been movements of selfless solidarity through hardships and risk. There arises love in people, being spent readily with sacrifice. Therefore, there is a mysterious link between love and pain, where suffering is transformed into sacrificing but contagious love. Here spirituality of love becomes a cry of salvation for the suffering for all with all *humility* (the word originates from humus = soil, earth).[30]

As once, the late 88 year old Baba Amte said, we should not delegate our job to God. Missionary charity has to turn into parity with equality, dignity and rights.[31] Ours has to be a responsible living where each one earns his/her living by work. We need action here and now to serve each other in the midst of the pandemic which has taught us to do away with offering many rituals and saying lot of prayers. In fact, Covid-19 has

shut down all places of worships of all religions. Hunger for religious rituals sometimes can be unhealthy and self-centred practices with a sense of privilege and contentment, and dependence too, prioritising personal spiritual, better still, religious sentiments. Instead, we need a prayerful sentiment, as in the words of Pope Francis in the closing prayer in Laudato Si: "Awaken our praise and thankfulness for every being that you have made. Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is."

Religion and Eco-Theology

World religions that have "served various expressions of spirit of the world"[32] to such a degree that they have been considered to be suppressive and destructive structures with authoritarian attitudes and actions. On the other hand, as Pope Francis has attested too in Laudato Si, many religions have contributed to an alternative way of life with ethical living in relation to other human being and the natural environment.

The idea of religion as the result of human attempts to preserve and manage one's own existence, and not just a human-cultural product, stems from the existential depths of the person, - his finality as encounter with himself. (e.g. cult of reason promoted by the Enlightenment). This understanding has considerable consequences, bringing forth necessary changes, out of such "religious" experiences. Progressive evolution of humanity takes place along the development of the religious self-awareness. Contrary to this notion of religion as self-realisation of man, the Judeo-Christian religion is a way of answering to the call of the Creator, though there is a concern to replace religion as man's answer to the call of its Creator by ritualistic expressions, by a pantheistic natural religion. Christianity, through its doctrines, morals, traditions and cults, and despite of its many ritualistic tendencies and superstitious practices, responds to a supernatural and supra-worldly reality. It is a dialogical event of the Creator's self-communication-revelation to His creation itself.

Ecological Sin

There has been an ongoing debate on the Internet over Pope Francis' announcement in 2019 on including the "ecological sin" in the Catechism of the Catholic Church along with a proper definition of it. The Church is taking seriously the obligation to care for creation. For some, this is considered to be a highly politicised issue, and for others 'harming the common home' is not a sin (if that was so, killing animals for consumption is sin too !). We cannot ignore the fact that the death and destruction brought about during the Covid-19 pandemic has a close relation to moral integrity, corruption and religious bigotry.

Ecological sin was discussed at Amazonian Synod in October 2019 and the Church was asked to deepen its theology in the context of ecological sins. In fact in the final document on the Amazon Synod, ecological sin is defined as "an act of commission or omission against God, against one's neighbor, the community and the environment" (Synod on Amazon, n.82).[33]

According to theologian Celia Deane-Drummond, director of the U.K.-based Laudato Si' Research Institute, ecological sins "are in one sense simple to understand, but in another sense complex, since they are in between the category of natural evil and moral evil". Ecological sins "join together human suffering and those of other creatures," based theologically "on a doctrine of creation."[34] The ecological sin of destruction and disrespect is a break with Creator, and with living and non-living kin. And the cause of Covid-19, starting at Wuhan in China and spreading to 186 countries, killing over 5 lakhs of persons is one such sin against nature. Society with its belief systems and un-ethical living has contributed to this ecological sin. In this precarious situation, humanity has to seek the foundation of natural living through a spirituality that is apt for our time.

An Authentic Inclusive Spirituality

How do we understand spirituality to be? The subjective experiential approach to seeking the truth is a spiritual search. Spirituality seeks to appropriate this truth through a vision and way of life, thus seeking fulfilment or self-realisation. Such vision gives meaning and motivation for life. Both reason and faith-based spirituality, based on a world view gives purpose and value in life. It serves as practical *Sadhana*, a way of life, than a belief system that is more ritualised through a structure and institution.[35]

Spirituality is the inner symbolic, conceptual and non-conceptual way to realise the ultimate transcendental realities beyond reason and interpretation, which is, in turn transformative. It is beyond being meaningful, but a natural way of being one's self in its fullness and is open to varied worldviews to chose from. It is an endeavour to constantly seek the truth, *Satya*, reality. It is beyond faith and reason, above all rituals and dogmas. Beyond all fundamentalism and fanaticism, there is always an open discernment and discretion in a spiritual search for truth according to place, people and time.

The experiential approach to spirituality is one of extrinsic testimony, that is the witness to truth with self-authority and not something that is based on rational experiment that can be verified. It is "self-reflective rationality" that makes one more human. It is an act of faith, non-compulsive but freely sought after, in ones search for truth that is humanising. Spirituality is a constitutive element of human living with the nature in the most natural way. It is the way to self-understanding and ordering of life in the natural order.

Spiritual charisma of individual is often distorted when such charisma is institutionalised. Spirituality is a charismatic experience within the nature. It loses its true charism when stereotyped into some routine religious practices wherein the natural experiences loses its vigour and authenticity. Spirituality is in the realm of consciousness of the true reality of self, world

and others. Such conscious experience of reality affects our being and lifts one to super-consciousness with superior moral goodness. It fulfils our deepest hopes and desires, and engages one with meaning and motivation within the nature and its existential realities.

There are common elements within diverse spiritual practices in so far as it is naturally human, across cultures and nations. A basic spirituality based on the nature bridges the divide across geographical distances. A spirituality that recognises oneself in the other and vice versa, and every one is connected with the other and the cosmos. We all breathe the same air – the breath of life for all. An inclusive spirituality holds the nature at the centre of humanism globally for persons to love each other instead of hate. It is beyond borders and boundaries, beyond all religious differences and parameters which are due to perspectives and ideologies. Beyond faith and reason spirituality has to be grounded on nature and engage itself with it. This spirituality helps to internalise the truth with a balance between self-realisation and detachment without becoming exclusivist.

The present ecological crisis caused by consumerist culture, socio-religious bigotry and a globalised market economy, and the Covid-19 as a consequence, has to find a new spirituality with a concern for human values, new world views and supernatural realities. We need to reverence the universe, in a special way our only planet to care for and thus change our attitude and behaviour. This would be a spirituality that can appropriate such values and express it in a way of life.[36] In this present moment of global plague and crisis of different kind, putting away all religious divides, a universal eco-spirituality can give meaning and show the united path to overcome human misery with united motivation and hope for a holistic universe. That would be an enriching experience for all in this cosmic journey, of which we are all participating pilgrims. We are a part of it. With its transcendental nature eco-spirituality is consciously concerned about humanity as a whole, and is stretched to the divine reality beyond the material to pure

consciousness where each is connected with the rest. Spirituality brings the human and divine together.

Spirituality must "penetrate" the ecological ethos through prayerful connectedness. The ecological crisis is a spiritual problem (cf. LS 119) where the relationship between humanity and the earth has been broken. Today it calls for ecological asceticism (LS 9). In order to protect our planet with all existing within it, an eco-spirituality harmonises the material with the human and divine consciousness through "cosmostheandric solidarity". According to Pope Francis' "On care for our common home" (*Laudato Si'*), only an integral eco-spirituality can transcend this material realities with all its crisis and lift the human to the divine (cf. Laudato Si, 11). In the midst of the present degrading world order caused by human greed and creed, we need to get our act together and live unitedly an eco-spirituality with a common transcendental vision without losing sight of what looms within the nature.

Ecological Spirituality

The laws of nature are immutable, neglecting which may result in the destruction of the nations and extinction of its civilisation. Soft spirituality in search for temporary solutions and satisfaction will only aggravate the situation. Rather than looking towards institutionalised religious cults and rituals, superstitious belief systems, *sadhus* and god-men for mental satisfaction, world governance has to listen more attentively to hydrologists, geologists, urban planners, World Health Organization and ecological economists. It is socially unjust to neglect the natural water system, land and the forestry, zoological balance and bio-ethics, and it is ecologically imprudent to keep people distant from the origin of the resources for sustainable use.Today, the inevitability of total respect and sustenance of the natural world through eco-spirituality as a way of life, is obvious.

Characteristics of Ecological Spirituality

Presently, spirituality at the popular level has become managerial, a set of techniques rather than a search for holism and wholeness. Sadly, it has turned to be a caricature of conformity, (e.g. International Yoga Day) rather than a spiritual exercise against spiritualism. A cultural renaissance is needed through a strong eco-spirituality. A bio-ethical spirituality would be a response to the denial of alternatives, plurality, or the sense of the complexity of the natural world.

Pseudo-spiritualism has taken over the pseudo-secularism of the past.[37] The real challenge today is the search for alternative spiritual and plural worlds. The economic models and policies show little sense of ecology. The bio-diversity both at global and regional levels need to play with a sense of pluralism. This will allow a range of possibilities to combine the ecological and spiritual worlds.

A planetary spirituality, challenging the limits of the existing global paradigm, makes nature a part of the preoccupation with the political and ethical living. Consequently, ecology, ethics and culture together will create resistance to the destructive models and policies, by even making science more ethical. Going beyond the passive fixity, an eco-spirituality becomes open to new ideas, new possibilities with alternatives through an act of trusteeship.

Practical Approaches and Proposals

Eco-spirituality needs creative practical approaches for its consolidation. A new movement of the Eco-Spirit will denounce the plundering of the natural resources of the world. It invites to a "true integral conversion" from "ecological sin" which is a "sin against creation" (*Laudato Si'*, 8), through disrespect and violence to nature. People's survival depends directly on the ecological balance. The capitalist exploitation of the environment by multinationals is a sin of selfish interests. They offend creation - our common home-, they offend the creator.

One has to recognise and denounce "ecological sin", including social sin, since society is an integral part of creation, and make people conscious of the grave consequences of the violation of nature. It is possible to save the ecosystem through new paths of ecological, pastoral, cultural conversion at the personal, communitarian and societal level.

One of the four priorities (Universal Apostolic Preferences) that the Jesuits, following the fellow Jesuit Pope Francis has proposed, is *to care for this earth*, God's creation, in the face of the present environmental disaster and climate change.[38] It is never too late to be on the reversals of human behaviour in order to correct the extreme weather patterns and natural phenomenon which are affecting gravely the world. Besides, more sharing of material and intellectual resources on eco-spirituality in order to deepen and be aware of such spirituality. Eco-community, Green Churches, Eco-diaconia, Creation day activities, Eco-meditations, Eco-activities, Care of the earth programmes, are some of the effective ways to promote eco-spirituality within indigenous and inculturated perspectives.

Conclusion

Within an unprecedented pandemic situation of helplessness, we look towards a new pattern of living in harmony with all the rest – animate and inanimate – while discerning a true way of living. While knowing what factors that led to such an alarming defenseless reality of unwanted death – a universal possibility - we need to decide upon what and how we deal with the rest of the nature. In the present condition of defenselessness, that essentially relates to human life in its relationship with nature, we need to put things and life in order, based on an eco-spirituality, where the creative manifestation of the creator is respected and lived with, fully in unison, keeping everything connected as eternally planned. Humanity cannot put asunder the balances put between things and living beings. Selfishness, greed and exploitation of nature have to be shown the door. We have to

take care of our common home overcoming the harm that we have done to nature. We need to reconcile with the Creator, other human, the nature and the society at large. Through a total conversion, an eco-spirituality that speaks the voice of nature and its signs, here and now, has to be a part and parcel of our life. This will be the only saving paradigm shift in the world ahead.

Being in the world has to be understood as being-with-the-Other. We may or may not find any psychological comfort from the faith practices, from the pastoral actions of the institutional Church. We have to be conscious that we are not our own stuff, but invisible gifts of grace to each other. As Christians we have the possibility of giving form to life of each one, irrespective of creed and colour with the universal outpouring of prophetic spirit.

The environment issue, post pandemic, is going to stay. It is time to live more consciously and impact the nature that has a slap on human greed. A nature-based eco-spirituality as a progressive spiritual science of the future, will certainly make right the wrong that human race has committed with its respective affiliated religious biases and socio-scientific blunders. Many such man-made structures have been demolished with just one virus spread world over. It is time to invent a more adaptable life, satisfied just with the very basics in life with a conscious and natural spiritual foundation. As a creative community we need to live as co-responsible for the unity and perseverance of the world, our common home.

Notes

1. Cf. Marc Rastoin, *Live Your Faith from The Perspective of the End,* https://www.laciviltacattolica.com/live-your-faith-from-the-perspective-of-the-end/, 20.12.2019
2. Cf. Norman Kraus, *God Our Savior: Theology in a Christological Mode*, Wipf and Stock, Eugene, Oregon 2006, p.111
3. Teihard de Chardin writes: "Lord, God, I stand before you as a microcosm of the earth itself, to give it voice: See in my openness, the world's openness, in my infidelity, the world's infidelity; in my sincerity, the

world's sincerity, in my hypocrisy, the world's hypocrisy; in my generosity, the world's generosity in my attentiveness, the world's attentiveness, in my distraction, the world's distraction; in my desire to praise you, the world's desire to praise you, and in my self-preoccupation, the world's forgetfulness of you. For I am of the earth, a piece of earth, and the earth opens or closes to you through my body, my soul, and my voice." As cited in, Ron Rolheiser, *The Scent of Humility*, September 9, 2019, https://ronrolheiser.com/the-scent-of-humility/#.XgSm5kczaM8, 26.12.2019

4. Pope Francis writes: "Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever he (St. Francis of Assisi) would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise."

5. Bill Gates, *What is the Corona/Covid-19 virus really teaching us?*, an open letter allegedly a fake message ascribed to Bill Gates as appeared in the English Paper – The Sun, 24th March, 2020 which was later withdrawn. cf. also, www.theartquotation.wordpress.com, 29.3.2020.

6. The change to renewable sources of electricity needs to be accelerated in order to hold the rise in temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius and reach carbon neutrality by 2050, using carbon capture technology and having zero tolerance for greenhouse gases.

7. Cf. David G. Horrell, "Ecological Hermeneutics: Reflections on Methods and Prospects for the Future," *Colloquium*, 46(2014)2, p.139.

8. Cf. Shay Cullen, "Saving the Planet and Ourselves," https://www.ucanews.org/news/saving-the-planet-and-ourselves/86760, 26.12.2019

9. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope,* Harper & Row, New York 1965, p. 333.

10. The high-level meeting was themed "Multilateral Action in Favour of the Protection of Rainforests" and held as part of the Climate Action Summit. Cardinal Parolin as the head of the Vatican delegation to the 74th session of the U.N. General Assembly addressed a high-level U.N. meeting on universal health care the same day.

11. Cardinal Parolin. "We Must Protect Forests for the Future of Humanity," *Catholic News Service*, September 25, 2019, https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2019/09/25/cardinal-parolin-we-must-protect-forests-future-humanity, 6.1.2020.

12. Cardinal Parolin. "We Must Protect Forests for the Future of Humanity," op.cit., accessed 6.1.2020.

13. CBCI, XXXIV Plenary Assembly, Bengaluru, 13-19 February

2019, Final Statement, 84(*VJTR*)5, May 2020, p.61.

14. Many pontifical universities are offering a common degree in integral ecology. Laudato Si' Chairs or Institutes are now flourishing all over the world, in Budapest as well as in Oxford and Panama, summer University in France, The Taizé Community on environmental issues with a Laudato Si' course, Courses at Interdisciplinary Center for Ethics and Integral Ecology at the Catholic University of Lyon.

15. Cf. Nicolas Sénèze (Rome) and Mélinée Le Priol, *Ecology, A New Horizon for the Church Laudato si', Pope Francis' Second Encyclical, Now Reflects the Mood of a Generation*, Vatican City, December 27, 2019, https://international.la-croix.com/news/ecology-a-new-horizon-for-the-church/10858?utm_source= Newsletter&utm_medium=e-mail&utm_content=27-12-2019&utm_campaign=newsletter_crx_lci&PMID= e0bf16242f5244d5ecc2158ed0e57693, 28.12.2019.

16. "Laudato si' is a social encyclical," the pope repeated in June 2019, to the Centesimus Annus Foundation, a group of entrepreneurs and economists who reflect on the Church's social doctrine.

17. 4th October 2019, Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, marked the end of the Season of Creation month and the 40 years since St John Paul II proclaimed St Francis Patron Saint "of those who promote ecology". The Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM), The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Franciscan Friars (JPIC-PFM), and Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM) organized events to show how "everything is connected" (Laudato Si'). https://catholicnewstt.com/index.php/2019/10/11/season-of-creation-ends-synod-on-amazon-begins/, 28.12.2019

18. Cf. Norman Kraus, *God Our Savior: Theology in a Christological Mode*, Wipf and Stock, Eugene, Oregon 2006, p.107.

19. Cf. Norman Kraus, *God Our Savior: Theology in a Christological Mode*, op.cit., p.109.

20. Cf. Christoph Stuckelberger. "Eco-theology Strategy," in Dietrich Werner & Elisabeth Jeglitzka (eds), *Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security,* Theological Education and Christian Leadership Development, Globethics.net Global No.14, Geneva 2016, pp.141-144. (soft copy from www.globethics.net, 8.5.2020.)

21. Cf. Michael Amaladoss, "The Cosmic Christ," in *The New Leader,* December 16-31, 2019, p.11

22. Cf. *Timaeus* Plato, 30 B.C., *The Collected Dialogues of Plato,* (ed.

Edith Hamilton and Hougton Cairns), Pantheon Books, New York 1963, p. 1163.

23. Cf. Saint Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey unto God*, (trans. E. Cousins), Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis 1945, p. 67.

24. Cf. Justin O'brien, *"Eastern Spirituality and the Religious Educator,"* Eastern Spirituality and the Religious Educator, pp. 171-189.

25. Cf. George Mutholil (Head the South Asian section at the Jesuit headquarters in Rome), *Re-Imagining Religious Life In Post-Covid-19 World*, Jamshedpur, May 3, 2020,www.mattersindia.org, 3.5.2020.

26. Cf. Barbara J. Fraser, *God in all things - Synod looks at indigenous 'theology of creation*, Vatican City, 10ᵗʰ October, https://www. catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2019/god-in-all-things-synod-looks-at-indigenous-theology-of-creation.cfm, 10.10.2019

27. Barbara J. Fraser, *God in all things - Synod looks at indigenous 'theology of creation'*, op.cit.

28. Brianne Jacobs, *Review: A novel for the age of 'Laudato Si"*, January 02, 2020, https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2020/01/02/review-novel-age-laudato-si?utm_source=Newsletters&utm_campaign=4f715fc409-DAILY_CAMPAIGN_2020_01_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0fe8ed70be-4f715fc409-58840629, 3.1.2020

29. Richard Powers's novel *The Overstory*, which won the 2019 Pulitzer Prize, is a story about people challenging us to feel that kinship with that web.

30. Federico Lombardi, Giving Life, CNUA, Vol Xiii, Issue 166, 7ᵗʰ May, 2020, www.catholicnewsasia.org., 8ᵗʰ May, 2020.

31. Cf. Varghese Alengaden, *Christians, stop delegating your job to God*, Matters India, Indore, 20 April 2020, www.mattersindia.org., 4.5.2020.

32. Nikolaos Asproulis, "Creation, History and the Church," in Dietrich Werner & Elisabeth Jeglitzka (eds), *Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security*, op.cit, p.189.

33. *Final Document of the Synod on the Amazon: Full Text, 26 October 2019*, vaticannew.va, 3.5.2020.

34. *The 'ecological sin' debate, Pope Francis announced in 2019 that the Catechism of the Catholic Church would be updated to include a definition of 'ecological sin'*, La Croix International staff (with Catholic News Service), Vatican City, January 3, 2020, https://international.la-croix.com/news/the-ecological-

sin-debate/11565?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=e-mail&utm_content=03-01-2020&utm_campaign=newsletter_crx_lci&PMID=e0bf16242f5244d5ecc2158ed0e57693, 5.1.2020

35. Cf. R.C. Heredia, *Science, Religion and Spirituality*, in VJTR, 84(2020)2, pp 7-8.

36. Cf. R.C. Heredia, *Science, Religion and Spirituality*, in VJTR, 84(2020)2, p.105.

37. Cf. Shiv Visvanathan, *Thinking differently, democracy is exciting when it celebrates difference*, in The Telegraph, 19 Jul 2019, p. 13.

38. Cf. Mario Pereira, *What will the Jesuits do next?* https://www.ucanews.org/news/what-will-the-jesuits-do-next/85845, 26.12.2019.

Post-Corona Facelift of the World

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Abstract: Corona virus is literally engulfing the world, making all the man-made frontiers porous. The death toll from it runs into hundreds of thousands, dwarfing all crises mankind withstood in the recent decades. When corona looms up ahead in apocalyptic proportions, billions of people worldwide can seldom entertain the luxury of hope, I think. In a season of social distancing, how effective is the sense of species among us? How would the world look like at the tail end of this crisis? The author hopes that this crisis would have so sweeping an effect on the socio-cultural scenario that it would, perhaps, turn the anthropocentric world view upside down. Certain 'control measures' introduced overnight by the legitimate authorities would possibly evolve into the norms of the post-corona world. However, instead of relapsing into social humanism from the lofty liberalism, one has to incorporate certain values of social humanism into the liberal *Weltanschauung*.

Keywords: Coronavirus, Liberal Humanism, Black Death, Surveillance Capitalism, Shoshana Zuboff, Benedict Anderson, Yuval Noah Harari, Jared Diamond, Mass Extinction Event.

Overture

The news about a common pheasant ambling at the Swindon magic roundabout in England or that of a monitor Lizard majestically crossing a busy traffic junction in Kerala, and that even unharmed, would, today, hardly make anyone's eyes glued to the newspaper with stupefaction as it would have had a couple of months ago. Metropolitan cities, otherwise awakened with the screeching of tyres and the honks of horns, are slithering into a catnap despite the thrilling swells of birdsongs. If it was the eternal silence of the infinite spaces that frightened Blaise Pascal,[1] contemporary cosmopolitans are frightened by the sphinxlike silence of their cities. An otherwise clamorous spring has shut its mouth up. Indeed, the 'hitherto unheard of' becomes routine and blue moon comes fortnightly, thanks to a negligibly tiny virus.

"A spectre is haunting Europe", Marx and Engels exclaimed in *The Communist Manifesto* which was published in 1848. And "All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcize this spectre...", they added. The spectre that haunted Europe back then was Communism; but now the world as a whole is trying its best to exorcize a much stronger spectre: covid 19. Doctors and medical practitioners armed with nothing but a few essentials have been working on war footing to exorcize this demon.

It was the Irish thinker Benedict Anderson who popularly defined Nations as "imagined communities".[2] The corona virus is on a killing spree as though his words are literally true in its case and that man-made boundaries and fortifications of any kind are of no use at all. And the world, as a result, has literally come to a standstill. Though a perilous pandemic of this sort is unprecedented, we should not forget that life, since its origin in this planet some 4.28 billion years ago, has witnessed several mass extinction events,[3] among which some might have wiped out at least 95% of all life forms.[4] And we have overcome all of them, even the notorious Black Death that resulted in the extermination of the one third of whole Europe's population in the

14th century. So humanity does not have any reason whatsoever to not to keep its fingers crossed and tell itself consolingly, "we shall overcome."

Therefore what is crucial at the moment are two things namely, the fortitude that we exhibit to overcome this pandemic and the concrete steps we have to take in order to prevent the situation from worsening.

I am well aware of the inappropriateness of discussing the possibilities and challenges the post-corona world might set before us as the pandemic shows no sign of slowing down. Nevertheless the disappointment at my journey being thwarted by the pandemic halfway through Europe and the suffering of thousands of people that I witnessed firsthand is prompting me to be reflective and to be vocal about it.

The Visibility Made 'Inside Out'

The pandemic which has its origin in the Wuhan province of China within no time has caused considerable damage to the whole world, particularly the Western Europe and the U S. We have seen how the four highly industrialized and research-oriented regions of Europe namely, Rhone-Alpes of France, Baden-Württemberg of Germany, Catalonia of Spain and Lombardy of Italy, known as the 'four motors of Europe' crumbling down like a pack of cards under the corona effect.

It is highly likely that the global economy is going to be damaged beyond repair if the situation worsens in these parts of Europe and the U S.

The predicament of uncertainty that we find ourselves in is dooming. However, it is to be noted that it was when faced with staggering difficulties that human beings showed extraordinary ingenuity, courage and sense of unity.

As the world nations set out to battle this global crisis with drastic measures such as emergencies and curfews, we should be aware of the changes that these steps are going to bring about

in the very fabric of society. Even the people who have been fiercely holding on, till a few weeks ago, to the great principles of liberty and democracy are seen mutely transformed into herds of hapless Guinea pigs at the dawn of this crisis. Most people, without any resistance whatsoever, are seen submitting themselves as subjects of surveillance and isolation when asked by the State or various centers of power.

Yet, none of these steps taken by various governments are deemed as dictatorial or authoritarian. And people who normally would have vehemently protested against a law or a rule which has the slightest scent of being oppressive had the situation been different, choose to keep their mouths shut. Why?

Restraints and regulations of this kind on the fundamental rights of citizens which were unthinkable to be realized in a democracy even in the recent past are welcomed with open arms by most of the citizens. This is due to a sudden shift occurred in the Weltanschauung of the people.

In 2018, Shoshana Zuboff, professor at Harvard Business School, published the book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism.* The book explicates the way big corporations operate stealthily in democracies and how by stealing the data of citizens without their explicit consent use it to keep them under 'subcutaneous surveillance'.[5] She calls this process a 'coup from above'.[6]

In the course of the last ten chapters I have argued that surveillance capitalism represents an unprecedented logic of accumulation defined by new economic imperatives whose mechanisms and effects cannot be grasped with existing models and assumptions… Surveillance capitalism's new story begins with behavioral surplus discovered more or less readymade in the online environment, when it was realized that the "data exhaust" clogging Google's servers could be combined with its powerful analytic capabilities to produce predictions of user behavior. Those prediction products became the basis for a preternaturally lucrative sales process that ignited new markets in future behavior.[7]

But what the world is witnessing at the moment might leave even Shoshana Zuboff a bit perplexed. The whole world, having set aside all heated debates and discussions on human rights, especially on the right to privacy, is meekly cooperating with the mass surveillance and forced isolation. It is indeed a wonder that an invisible virus is able to subvert all elevated notions of liberal humanism in the first world countries, and that too in such a rapid manner.

After the collapse of Nationalism, Colonialism, Fascism, Socialism and so on, the modern world- especially since the 1990s- is mostly shaped by the values of democracy, humanism and globalized open market. It was in the name of protecting these liberal humanist ideals that most of the wars and military occupations of the last three decades took place. Even the war on terrorism was fought under the label of protecting these ideals.

One question carries much weight in this context, that is, what is humanism? Humanism is never understood in the same way across different societies. Yuval Noah Harari who has been in the spotlight for the past few years, as perhaps the best known contemporary historian and thinker, divides Humanism into three types namely liberal humanism, social humanism and evolutionary humanism.

Liberal humanism exists in European and American societies where the rights of the individual are considered indispensable. Social humanism has taken root in countries where certain principles of socialism such as common good and social equality prevail. Here society is more important than the individual. Evolutionary humanism is popular among scientists and philosophers who dream of us, vulnerable Homo sapiens, metamorphosing into mighty 'Homo deus'.

But the pandemic has brought about drastic changes to this vision of the world. What we are witnessing at present is, how, amidst emergencies like this, liberal humanism is losing ground to social humanism. The pandemic has given people an opportunity to choose between privacy and survival. And people

across the globe irrespective of caste, class and race are prudently choosing survival at the cost of losing their privacy. Since we are in a battle that seems to be endless, it is highly likely that the conditioning that we are going through within the four walls of our rooms persist in us even in the post-corona world.

Some of the habits that we pick up or forced to acquire during the period of lockdown, quarantine and so on under the careful surveillance by the state can turn us into docile subjects. This docility or submissiveness can become the 'new- normal' in the post-corona era.

Doomed Boomers and Defiant Millennials

The uncontrollable spreading of the pandemic in the Western Europe is mainly because of its reluctance to change its perspective from liberal humanism to social humanism. The lapse in doing so has been suicidal for them. What happened in Italy, for instance, will show us why. As Italy was struggling to contain the outbreak of the virus, Nicola Zingraretti, the leader of Italy's Democratic party, irresponsibly moved around the Northern regions of Italy exhorting people to not to get tensed about the outbreak and to carry on with their day to day activities.[8] Be it *Campari* or *Aperol*, his choice and enjoyment of an *aperitivo* with the youth turned his stomach indeed open to covid-19! As a result, he got ill and was the cause of further spreading of the pandemic.

People who were born soon after the beginning of the Second World War that is from the early 1940s to the mid-1960s are called the Baby boomers. Those who were born between 1965 and 1980 are called the MTV generation (or generation X). And those who were born between the early 1980s and the beginning of the third millennium are called as the millennials.

The outbreak of the pandemic has resulted in a cultural war of some sort between the boomers and the millennials. The millennials, being quite frustrated with the way the boomers had been handling the crisis, were, until quite recently, out on the

streets, savoring the 'magic of malt' gushing out of the bottle of Mexican Corona beer and partying hard with their friends. The millennials, by doing so, are getting infected by the virus and are silently transmitting the disease to the boomers in whose case the infection can be fatal. But the millennials do not seem to care. Younger generations are even using catchphrases such as "boomer remover" to refer to the pandemic. The failure of the political leadership in Europe to make the millennials realize that there are times when one has to uphold Social Humanism over Liberal Humanism has to take the blame for making the situation worse.

Panta Rhei

'Everything changes' (*panta rhei*), is a phenomenally influential proverb associated with the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. The pandemic has brought about drastic changes in the way people have been perceiving religion. People have learned in the hard way that "Holy water is not a sanitizer and Prayer is not a vaccine "as Mattia Ferraresi opined in his article titled "God vs. Corona Virus" in the *New York Times*.[9]

Rituals were developed by human beings so that they could serve as vehicles to transport us from the ordinary mundane concerns of day-to-day life to the realm of the transcendental. It is unfortunate that over the years, some of the rituals and practices, particularly those which are concerning religions, have become an end in themselves. The outbreak of the pandemic and the lockdown that followed it gave most people an opportunity to rethink the relevance of religious rituals that they had been blindly following for many years.

Some religious leaders who had been steadfast in preserving the purity of their religions' rituals and practices before the outbreak were seen bowing down to the invisible virus and were seen giving more space for the individual to practice the religion or faith in whichever manner that suited him/her. This 'wind of change' that the pandemic has brought in is likely to stay here.

The Onus

Life in the time of corona, according to Harari,[10] urges us to make two choices. One is between totalitarian surveillance and citizen empowerment. When humankind shows enough maturity to give priority for social humanism over liberal humanism at necessary situations one can say that citizen empowerment has attained its goal.

The other choice is between National isolation and Global solidarity. Till 2016, leaders across the globe had been, at least, paying lip service to the dream of global solidarity.[11] However, two major events the world witnessed in 2016 were absolutely unprecedented and busted the dream of global unity, namely, the election of Donald Trump as the president of the U. S. A and the referendum which resulted in Brexit. In both the cases fabricated truths took precedence over objective truths; and this prompted the Oxford dictionary to select the word 'Post- truth' as the word of 2016 which is defined as 'Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'. The strong waves of extreme- nationalism have been visiting the shores of many a nation since then. And Xenophobia was spreading faster than even the corona virus.

The outbreak of corona is a global crisis. Until and unless all world nations come together and work for the eradication of the pandemic nothing significant can be achieved. Global cooperation in terms of sharing of financial, scientific, and technological resources is a must to save humankind from this crisis.

So it is likely that the countries that championed the cause of global solidarity and acted responsibly towards achieving it during this global crisis are going to play major leadership roles in the post-corona world.

Epilogue

Contagion (2011), directed by Steven Soderbergh, has become a must watch movie during these days. The movie at a gripping pace narrates the outbreak of a dangerous virus and the effort from a few individuals to curb its spread. The movie ends on a positive note as they are successful in containing the outbreak. Let's hope that as we overcame the crisis on the 'reel' we might overcome the crisis 'in real ' as well.

The word quarantine has its origin from the practice of isolating ships that were suspected of carrying contagious disease for a period of forty (*quaranta*) days at the ports of Europe in the 14th century. The word is related to an instance of the Bible as well. Jesus spent forty days in a desert fasting and being tempted by the devil only to come back to the world much stronger. Let the period of quarantine inspire us to become better versions of ourselves and to work wholeheartedly for the betterment of humanity.

Jared Diamond, in his popular book *Guns, Germs and Steel*, published in 1997, explains how Eurasian and North African civilizations over the centuries took control of the whole world. He observes that it was possible because of superior weapons (guns); diseases, that Eurasians carried around but were immune to, which wiped out at times a large number of local population (germs); and better transportation facilities (steel).[12] But now we are confronted with a pandemic which knows no boundaries and does not distinguish between different races or ethnic groups. It has cast its shadow on everyone. We simply can not afford to have blame games anymore.

We need not look *For whom the bell tolls*, as Hemingway's novel's title suggests or as John Donne urged his readers in the 17th century. It is not for America. Nor it is for Europe, Asia or Africa. The bell tolls for the entire humankind. Not as a harbinger of doom but as a herald of rebirth.

Notes

1. "The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me." Blaise Pascal, *Pensèes*, 206.
2. Anderson defines nation as an imagined political community that is limited and sovereign in nature. Cfr. Benedict R. Anderson*, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (Revised and extended. ed.),* Verso. London, 1991, pp. 6–7.
3. Within the 4.28 billion years' total span, life on earth has endured at least five mass extinction events. These mass extinction events or biotic crises, starting with the Ordovician–Silurian extinction events that took place 450–440 million years ago and ending up with the K-T Extinction event happened 66 million years ago, have swept away zillions of life forms from this planet forever. Scientists opine that we are currently undergoing the 7th mass extinction event (known as Holocene extinction) that is still more menacing than its forerunners because of its accelerated rate due to human activity.
4. In a 13.8 billion years old universe and a 4.5 billion years old earth, Homo Sapiens- the modern Man-literally meaning wise man- can claim only an age of 300,000 to 200,000 years.
5. Zuboff warns us of how information about us could be used for data analysis and prediction that could be, in turn, utilized for market interests.
6. The term surveillance capitalism is defined by Zuboff in various ways at the very outset of the text. "A new economic order that claims human experience as free raw material for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction and sales; 2. A parasitic economic logic in which the production of goods and services is subordinated to a new global architecture of behavioral modification; 3. A rogue mutation of capitalism marked by concentrations of wealth, knowledge, and power unprecedented in human history; 4. The foundational framework of a surveillance economy, 5. As significant a threat to human nature in the twenty-first century as industrial capitalism was to the natural world in the nineteenth and twentieth; 6. The origin of a new instrumentarian power that asserts dominance over society and presents startling challenges to market democracy; 7. A movement that aims to impose a new collective order based on total certainty; 8. An expropriation of critical human rights that is best understood as a coup from above: an overthrow of the people's sovereignty." Cfr Shoshana ZUBOFF, The Age of Surveillance Capitalism, The Fight for a Human Future at the new Frontier of Power, Public Affairs, NY, 2019, p. 3.
7. Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, p. 214.
8. Cfr. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/23/a-warning-to-europe-italy-struggle-to-convince-citizens-of-coronavirus-crisis

& https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2020/02/27/news/coronavirus_zingaretti_contro_il_panico-249718891/

9. Ferraresi, Mattia. "Opinion | God vs. Coronavirus." *The New York Times*, March 10, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/10/opinion/coronavirus-church-religion.html.

10. On 20th March 2020, Harari published an article on the threats of corona virus and the possibilities of a new world order. https://www.ft.com/content/19d90308-6858-11ea-a3c9-1fe6fedcca75

11. One of the most evident examples of America's global commitment is seen in former president John F. Kennedy. On 20th January 1961, in his inaugural speech, Kennedy exhorted thus; "Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?... And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man. Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you." The global concern that America entertained throughout the second half of the 20th century, from the cold war period down to the expensive peace-keeping missions across the entire globe is self-evident in another speech of Kennedy, made on 26th June 1963, too. "Two thousand years ago, the proudest boast was *civis romanus sum* ["I am a Roman citizen"]. Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is "*Ich bin ein Berliner*"... All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words "*Ich bin ein Berliner*"""

12. Cfr. Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, Vintage, London, 2000.

Emancipation for the Wretched of the Earth: The Liberative Biblical Interpretation of Soares-Prabhu

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Abstract: Postcolonialism is a philosophical discipline where everything is contested from the standpoint of the oppressed and the colonized. Gargi Mukherjee, research analyses the Biblical interpretations from postcolonial perspectives in her book *Emancipation for the Wretched of the Earth: A Postcolonial Interpretation of the Bible*. She makes a critical study of Biblical interpretations from a postcolonial perspective, from which both theologians and biblical scholars can profit. Through her philosophical acumen, she has managed to open new horizons to theological commitment, especially to the poor and the marginalised (the nativists of subalterns of postcolonialism). She projects George Soares-Prabhu, an eminent Indian Biblical hermeneut, as a valuable postcolonial Biblical scholar, drawing from his deep concerns for liberation of the poor and dialogue with the other religions.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Interpretation of Bible, Emancipation, Wretched of the Earth, Soares-Prabhu

Postcolonialism is a philosophical discipline where everything is contested from the standpoint of the oppressed and the colonized. Having begun in 1960's after the demise of formal European colonialism, it denotes a condition of no longer being what one was, in a colony, as a colonized. Post-Colonial (with hyphen) means the particular historical period after colonial period. But Postcolonial (without hyphen) does not mean historical periodisation but it refers to different forms of representation, reading practices and values that characterise the style of enquiry. This book authored by Gargi Mukherjee, research scholar from the prestigious Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, analyses the Biblical interpretations from postcolonial perspectives. Based on her book this article highlights the main features of postcolonialism and how George Soares-Prabhu, an eminent Indian Biblical hermeneut, may be regarded as a postcolonial Biblical scholar, though he himself has never used this term in his study.

Modernity and PostColonialism

When Europe entered into modernity, Asia or Third World countries entered into the phase of European colonialism. When the Europe was enjoying the fruits of modernity with the colonial exploits, Asia and Africa were the exploited. However, during the same time, a group of philosophers emerged as critics of modernism in Europe; Nietzsche, Freud and Sartre were discussing the problem of modernity that due to high modernism all those aspects of emotions, feelings, passions and intuition have been side-lined as non-rational or irrational.

In 20th century these criticisms became stronger. Intellectuals began to promote the notion of pluralism; that there are many ways of knowing, and many truths to a fact. According to this intellectual positioning, knowledge is articulated from/with local perspectives, with all its uncertainties, complexities and paradoxes. Thus, they came to an understanding that knowledge

is relational and all realities are woven and interspersed in the localised linguistic web.

So, during the late 20th century scholars of the once-colonized countries began to trace their history of literature, culture and philosophy which went submerged under the modern colonial rubric. Due to the influence of Western rationalism, these scholars were rationalizing their culture and philosophy, using western theoretical tools. In postcolonial context we are fused with colonial ideas, so we are within that hegemony of power and domination. For example, Dr Radhakrishnan was representing the Indian nationalist elite but he had also taken the British title 'Sir'. The problem now is how to explain this fusion or hybridity. In the same way, we use the word 'Indian philosophy,' an English word presented to us by the colonizers, to denote the *darshan/ smriti, thathuvam* of the Indian subcontinent. The word Hindu was not there in ancient history but when the modern colonialists came, they called the people of India as Hindus to mean non-Christians.

So, in third phase of this problem, the scholars of the Third World were confronted with the question as to how to understand Christianity in Indian context. How to decolonize the colonial continuities in native Christianity to aim for the postcolonial understanding of Christianity? What could be the differences between colonial and postcolonial biblical reading practices? Because postcolonial study tries to trace the elements of indigenous culture, which lie submerged within the colonial fabric, in order to understand the diversities within the postcolonial knowledge productions.

Highlighting the Main Findings

In this way, this book has been designed to understand the postcolonial interventions in biblical reading practices. Below we highlight some of the basic findings of our search.

The *General Introduction*, discusses the scope, methodology, objectives, research issues, sources of study, contents of the study, and the limitations of the present research work, as a general introduction to the whole work of research on postcolonial hermeneutics of the Bible.

a. Orientalism and Colonialism: Theory and Practice

The first chapter, *Orientalism and Colonialism: Theory and Practice*, discussed how Orientalism and Colonialism mutually contributed to each other. Towards this end, this chapter discusses the conceptual elaborations of the theory of Orientalism as explained by Edward Said and the conceptual understanding of colonialism as explained variously by different scholars.

Orientalism is traced back by Edward Said to the European literatures on the non-Europe even in the times of antiquity. Orientalism as an intellectual exercise starts, according to Said, from the medieval period. Especially, he traces it back to the Christian Council of Vienne in 1312 C.E. "In the Christian West, Orientalism is considered to have commenced its formal existence with the decision of the Church Council of Vienne in 1312 to establish a series of chairs in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac at Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Avignon, and Salamanca." In such an exercise of Orientalism, Said finds the Foucauldian notion of the relation between knowledge and power.

Drawing a parallel from Marx's explication of Bourgeois' representation of the proletariat in Marx's book, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, that "They (the proletariat) cannot represent themselves; they must be represented (by the bourgeois)," Said tries to explain the representational character of European modern Orientalism. The problem of representation is not a politically naïve exercise, but to have the control over the Other, through manipulative knowledge discourse. Having a clue from Marx's statement, Said says, "The Orient was almost a European invention."

Using the Gramscian notion of hegemony, he explains further how Orientalism is an offshoot of power relations between the West and the East. Antonio Gramsci makes a distinction between the civil and political society. The civil society, according to him, consists of voluntary affiliations like school, family and unions, while political society consists of army, police and central bureaucracy which use the methods of direct domination and coercion. Culture operates within the civil society. In any civil society which is not totalitarian, certain cultural forms predominate over the other forms through the consent, not through domination of the predominant group over the other. This is identified by Gramsci as hegemony. According to Said, Orientalism has got its durability and strength through the cultural hegemony of the West, obtaining its validity through the consent of the masses by repeating, teaching and authorising the representations. As a cultural hegemonic discourse, "Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand."

This form of cultural hegemony was epistemologically aided with the institution of museum and archive, where the past glories of the West were put on display along with the exotic exhibitions of the Orient.

Here one gets a complex picture of the representational character of Orientalism. It is not merely the cultural hegemony alone, but shaped in exchange with different realms of power: political power, intellectual power, cultural power and moral power. These power structures were aided in reality with a whole series of dubitable interests on geopolitical awareness distributed into aesthetic, sociological, historical, philological, psychological, economic, military interests on distinctly knowable intellectual lines.

In this sense, Orientalism is a style of enquiry; it is a field of learned study, of the Biblical, Islamic and other Asian lands geographically, culturally, ethnically, linguistically and so on;

it expresses the strength of the West and the weakness of the East through the eyes of the modern scientific rationality which studies the real world as external to the observer-scholar, which does not yield to the dynamics of the subject but it objectifies the subject of study as something unchanging; it represents a 'complex series of knowledgeable manipulations' by which the Orient was identified by the West as something exotic, irrational, mysterious, subjective, religious, spiritual and so on; it helped in the rationalisation of the colonial rule of the Oriental lands; it is an 'ism' through which the West identified itself as different from the Orient, by way of defining the other, the Orient; it exhibits a system by which the knowledge and power came together to establish cultural imperialism.

Under the sub-title, ***Representation: Familiarising the Non-Familiar***, Mukherjee discusses how the model of representation is used to explain the non-familiar and unusual aspects of reality through the familiar lens. The representations of the Orient in the Western texts are part of the process of familiarisation of the non-familiar about the Orient. Both the West and the East were unfamiliar to each other. But due to the relative power over the East, the West could familiarise the Orient, by penetrating it into the Asiatic mysteries to familiarise them, opines Said. "Something patently foreign and distant acquires, for one reason or another, a status more rather than less familiar. One tends to stop judging things either as completely novel or as completely well known; a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing. In essence such a category is not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things. If the mind must suddenly deal with what it takes to be a radically new form of life—as Islam appeared to Europe in the early Middle Ages—the response on the whole is conservative and defensive. Islam is judged to be a fraudulent new version of some previous experience, in this case Christianity. The threat is muted, familiar values impose themselves, and in the end the

mind reduces the pressure upon it by accommodating things to itself as either "original" or "repetitious." Islam thereafter is "handled": its novelty and its suggestiveness are brought under control so that relatively nuanced discriminations are now made that would have been impossible had the raw novelty of Islam been left unattended. The Orient at large, therefore, vacillates between the West's contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in – or fear of – novelty."[1]

However, moderating the politically charged tone of this statement, still using it to explain the politics of Orientalism, Said says, "There is nothing especially controversial or reprehensible about such domestications of the exotic; they take place between all cultures, certainly, and between all men. My point, however, is to emphasize the truth that the Orientalist, as much as anyone in the European West who thought about or experienced the Orient, performed this kind of mental operation. But what is more important still is the limited vocabulary and imagery that impose themselves as a consequence."[2]

Under the next sub-title, ***Orientalizing the Orient***, how the Orient was orientalised by the Orientalist, our author explores the Saidian framework. "The Orient was Orientalised not only because it was discovered to be "Oriental" in all those ways considered common-place by an average nineteenth century European, but also because it *could be*: that is, submitted to being: *made* Oriental."[3] As the relation between the Orient and the Occident is a relationship of power, domination and hegemony, the Orientalisation of the Orient became possible for the Orientalist.

Till early nineteenth century, the imaginative representations of the Orient were obtained through the Orientalist scholar's textual relationship with the Orient. So it was a kind of second-order knowledge about the Orient. Through such textual relationship with the Orient, the Orientalist scholar created the 'science of the concrete', in the terminology of Levi-Strauss. While elaborating upon the origin of fictional elements in the description and the

definition of the Orient, Said says, "Yet often the sense in which someone feels himself to be not-foreign is based on a very unrigorous idea of what is "out there," beyond one's own territory. All kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions appear to crowd the unfamiliar space outside one's own."[4]

Thus Orientalisation of the Orient is a three way process where the Orient is theatrically managed through the grid of knowledge; it is theatrically represented by the Orientalist and it is due to his representation that the Orient is understood to owe its existence: as the once-glorious civilization has been brought to life again by the Orientalist; and more importantly, it has become the consumerist product for the consumption of the European reader, close on the heels of modern capitalism.

In the next part of this chapter, under the sub-title, *Colonialism*, the different conceptual understandings of the term are explained. A simple definition of colonialism is that it is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one group of people by that of another. The difficulty is to distinguish it from imperialism.

Colonialism is one of the practices of imperial ideologies. Imperialism is a strategic form from where it is associated with capitalism. In that sense, we may safely say that imperialism provides the conceptual basis for the exploitation of the resources of the lands other than their own, whereas colonialism is a practical aspect of it. As they are the offshoot of capitalist ideology and strategy, imperialist ventures aim for profitable trade and enrichment of one's country by exploiting the natural resources and the low-cost labour power of a foreign land. But colonialism is one of the ways in which imperialism operates. It is about capturing the foreign land for market for Western goods.

Colonialism is classified into different ways according to its characteristics and nature. Accordingly, it is elaborated as 1) Settler Colonialism and 2) Exploitative Colonialism. In the sense of administration, it is explained as 1) Economic Company Rule 2) Settler Rule, 3) Direct Rule and 4) Indirect Rule.

Neo-colonialism is a continuity of colonialism, though in a veiled process, after World War II. According to Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, the essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. But not in fact.

For example, the colonial administration in India did not have more than 5000 British people on the soil of India at any particular point of time. By the 1930s, colonies and ex-colonies covered 84.6 percent of the land surface of the globe.[5] In this context, how the colonial administration was able to rule over the mass of Indian population is the amazing question. The people of the colonized countries were not subjugated with the military power alone; but with the intellectual power of the colonialist, the moral power and the cultural power of the colonial missionaries, apart from the scientifically managed military power of the West over the colonized people, it is understood.

b. Postcolonialism: Some Theoretical Considerations

In the second chapter Mukherjee discusses the historical emergence of postcolonial studies. Postcolonialism refers to the forms of representations, reading practices, interventionist approaches, critical elaborations and values of the study of literatures and practices. It suggests the resistance discourses that emerge from the former colonies. In such a way, it is a method with which to analyse the diverse strategies through which the colonized was represented by the colonizers; and, the way in which the colonized inverted and/or subverted the spectrum of strategies to empower themselves and to construct their identities in a discursive practice with colonial representations.

First of all, postcolonialism is a multi-disciplinary study, following the patterns of cultural studies, in the sense that postcolonialism derives its strength from variety of resources for understanding the social, cultural, political and historical legitimisations in which colonization took place. For studying these

varying aspects, it draws upon the poststructuralism, Marxism, literary studies, linguistics, feminism, critical theories and so on.

The sub-title, *Colonial Universalism to Diverse Postcolonial Discourses*, discusses the variety of reading practices and divergent interventionist strategies of postcolonial criticism. Postcolonialism, as a critique of colonialism, is an attempt at sharing the intellectual endeavour with the political commitment. As a counter-discourse to colonization, it aims at counter-politics, contesting the politics of colonialism. Politics here needs to be understood in the Foucauldian sense of discursive practice, not in the Marxist sense of revolutionary practice.

"Readings of postcolonial literatures sometimes are resourced by concepts taken from many other critical practices, such as poststructuralism, feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis and linguistics. Such variety creates both discord and conflict within the field, to the extent that there seems no one critical procedure that we might identify as typically 'postcolonial.'"[6] Hence, there are varieties of postcolonial concerns and critical practices, not only because of geographical diversity of colonized lands but also because of the varieties of resources that postcolonialism relies upon for its critical practices.

Another reason for the diversity of postcolonial discourses is attributed to the cultural specificity of the authors and readers of postcolonial discourses on colonial experiences and contingencies. The understanding of the text has undergone wide-ranging implications since the emergence of the discipline of hermeneutics, especially after Roland Barthes in literary field and Paul Ricoeur in radical hermeneutics.

Under the sub-title *Frantz Fanon: From Colonialism to Colonial Discourse*, how Frantz Fanon, an Algerian, approached colonialism as an existential phenomenological way as well as a socio-cultural aspect has been discussed. Fanon deviates slightly from the fundamental Marxist understanding of classes based on the socio-economic categories of basis and superstructure, and says that "In the colonies, the economic substructure is also a su-

perstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem."[7] The colonial class division of humanity is not merely on the basis of socio-economic criteria, but it is of socio-cultural at the same time.

According to Fanon, the colonial life-world is based on an unequal relation between the colonized and the colonizer, based on the Manichean neurosis. In relation to the civilising colonial mission of the West, the Blackness is imposed upon the black with no hope for ontological resistance. His/her being is sealed into objecthood. The black becomes a non-being. This non-existence is not due to his feeling inferior to the white, but the black body encounters difficulty in the development of bodily schema.

The rediscovery of the black self, in their past glory, is only a term in the dialectic which needs transcendence in the colonial life-world of the black, a driving out of my-self from myself, a flight into the colonizing self. While we discuss the self in the cultural terms, it should not be understood that culture is static and absolute in itself; with due recognition to the fact that culture is ever-changing, dynamic, fluid and plural-in-itself that Fanon writes this. It is an existential account of the encounter of the white colonizing self by the coloured and colonized self.

Fanon's description of the colonized self in the colonial life-world basically tries to avoid, as Sartre says,[8] the conformity of the self to the existing colonial social power and its past solidified culture-historical self as well as it resists the colonizer's attempt to object-ify the self of the oppressed.

Further, the rise of the South Asian variety of Postcolonialism has been discussed under the subtitle, ***Subaltern Studies: A South Asian Variety of Postcolonial Discourse***. In the writings of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), an Italian-Marxist, the word 'subaltern' acquired a different meaning; he used this word in the context of 'class struggle', substituting the Marxian phrase 'Proletariat.' He used this phrase to mean non-hegemonic

groups or classes. The change of terminology is attributed to the censorship in prison among other reasons.

The Subaltern Historiography got explained in the much-quoted article of Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India." In it, he describes the historiography of Indian nationalism as the one dominated by elitism of two types, namely colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism. By this, he meant to say that there is an in-built prejudice within the historiography of Indian nationalism which considers the making of the Indian nation and the consciousness of the nationalism as the exclusive and predominant achievement of the elites. By the word 'elites', he meant the British colonial rulers, administrators, policies, institutions and culture as the colonialist elites and the Indian elite personalities, institutions, activities and ideas as the bourgeois-nationalist elites.

Again, he questioned this sort of historiography and he opined that this kind of historical writing cannot explain Indian nationalism. Instead he tried to bring forth the submerged histories of the common people and opted to write the history of Indian nationalism from 'the contribution made by the people *on their own*, that is, *independently of the elite* to the making and development of this nationalism'. That the elite historiography conceives mobilization of people as achieved vertically through elite politics whereas the subaltern historiography conceives the mobilization of people as achieved horizontally through subaltern politics which is independent of the domain of the elite politics. Thus, it paved the way for the paradigm shift in writing history.

c. Decolonizing Colonial Exegesis: Postcolonial Biblical Readings

The third chapter discusses about the variety of reading practices that postcolonial studies apply as an intervention in colonial practices. Decolonization here does not mean what Fanon understood in the context of Algerian freedom movement. In the words of Sugirtharajah, "Postcolonialism has

enabled those of us who were part of the former empires to see ourselves differently. It has helped us to go beyond thinking in contrastive pairs "us" and "them," "East" and "West." Such a duality reduces everyone to an undifferentiated entity. What postcolonialism does is to help us to free ourselves from such neatly drawn confines. At least it seems possible to throw off the victim syndrome. Positively, what postcolonial criticism does is to prevent interpretation from becoming too nativistic or nationalistic… It also enables Western countries to recognize the extent to which European culture and knowledge were involved in and contributed to older and continuing forms of deprivation, exploitation, and colonization… Its specific usefulness lies in its capacity to detect oppression, expose misrepresentation, and to promote a fairer world rather than in its sophistry, precision, and its erudite qualities as a critical tool."[9]

But Fernando F. Segovia understands the ends of postcolonial studies as a transformative politics. He says, "the goal is not merely one of analysis and description but rather one of transformation: the struggle for "liberation" and "decolonization.""[10] Whatever the differences may be, towards the goal of decolonization, postcolonialism uses different theories at its disposal for the critical intervention in colonial practices.

Within this chapter, under the subtitle ***Postcolonialism as Cultural Contestation***, Mukherjee studies postcolonialism as a field of contesting cultural practice, builds its momentum on the fact that colonial residues remain even after the end of formal colonialism; so, that needs to be decolonized. Earlier postcolonialism was considered as a literary genre and as a collective name for the creative literatures emerging from the third World; but now it is understood as a method or instrument for analysing the social and cultural aspects of reality.

Under the next subtitle, ***Postcolonialism as an Enabling Concept***, the author studies how Postcolonial criticism, as a style of enquiry, provides a platform for the widest possible convergence of critical forces, of multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-

cultural, in order to assert the denied rights of the colonized, has been discussed. The convergence of different theoretical tools such as the analytics of power, help it for rereading the colonial texts and strategies. Foucault's understanding of power is radically different from the previous notions of power. He refuses to offer a 'theory of power'; his alternative is to offer an 'analytics of power' which refuses the 'rhetoric of theory.' According to his understanding of power, the 'theory of power' would make the operation of power as context-free and ahistorical. Hence, he rejects the attempts at theorising power politics but analyses it as a discursive practice that is contextual.

The question regarding the use of theoretical tools for postcolonial studies is that "whether they have diagnostic capabilities to promote the cause of the marginalised."[11] In this sense, postcolonialism is not obsessed with theory; but they use the theoretical models which question the authority, power, dominance and hegemony. In this way, "people of color have developed their own theorizing, using their experiences of the struggle of everyday life, distinct from the abstract theoretical fashion practiced in the West," says Sugirtharajah.

Under the subtitle ***Postcolonialism as Decolonization***, it is discussed that postcolonialism as a decolonizing project means 'rereading' the texts which were produced with the Orientalist gaze and during the colonialist exegesis. "The act of reading in postcolonial contexts is by no means a neutral activity. *How* we read is just as important as *what* we read… the ideas we encounter within postcolonialism and the issues they raise demand that conventional reading methods and models of interpretation need to be rethought if our reading practices are to contribute to the contestation of colonial discourses to which postcolonialism aspires. Rethinking conventional modes of reading is fundamental to postcolonialism."[12]

This rereading approach is explained by Edward Said as *contrapuntal reading*. He defines contrapuntal method of reading as a reading practice which is simultaneously aware of

"both metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts."[13]

Postcolonial readings and textual analysis have three different forms. The first variety of the reading practice is about the rereading of the colonial texts which talks about colonial practices directly as well as latently, in order to know the colonizing strategies and representations. Influenced by the post-structuralists such as Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, the second form of analysis reread the colonial texts that were not merely literary in nature. In the third of reading we find the application of critical theories to the situation of postcoloniality. Here we find the emergence of postcolonialists like Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, Bill Ashcraft and others.

The next part of this chapter, ***Postcolonial Dialogue with Cognate Disciplines***, discusses that postcolonial criticism overlaps with many other areas, such as race, gender, language, nation, colour, caste and so on. This engagement of postcolonial criticism with other areas gives its wider scope to explore plurality, hybridity, forms of power relations, forms of knowledge discourses etc. One such engagement between postcolonial criticism and feminism has been emerging with wider ramifications in the field of postcolonial studies.

"What unites feminism and postcolonial critique is their mutual resistance to any form of oppression: be it patriarchy or colonialism."[14] Quoting Rana Kabbani, McLeod holds that there is a mutually supportive process of colonialism and patriarchy which produce Eastern women in eroticised terms.[15] This is the case of the colonized women, whereas the Western women's relationship with colonialism is different and complicated. They seem to be empowered as members of the 'civilised' colonizing nation, whereas they seem to be disempowered in relation to the Western patriarchal rubric.[16] Quoting Hazel Carby, McLeod also argues how British colonialism interrupted native familial structures and imposed its own models to the detriment of

women. "Colonialism attempted to destroy kinship patterns that were not modelled on nuclear family structures, disrupting, in the process, female organisations that were based upon kinship systems which allowed more power and autonomy to women than those of the colonizing nation."[17]

In the next part, the author studies aspects of postcolonial biblical criticism under the title ***Postcolonial Biblical Criticism***. In postcolonial theology, the theology is a place for contestation rather than a sphere of passive ecclesiastic orientation. As it is contestation, the contestation happens in the cultural, political, socio-economic and intellectual realms through the mediation of scriptural sources. It differs from the earlier attempts to understand the scripture as a mere scholarly attempt to understand it historically and theologically, but it attempts to understand it as a liberative paradigm for contesting the powers associated with such understandings. "What postcolonial biblical criticism does is to focus on the whole issue of expansion, domination, and imperialism as central forces in defining both the biblical narratives and biblical interpretation," says Sugirtharajah.[18]

While describing the emergence of postcolonial Biblical criticism, Fernando F. Segovia identifies four paradigms: 1) the historical criticism of the early 19th century to the third quarter of 20th century, 2) the rise and development of literary criticism from the mid-1970s, 3) the volcanic eruption of cultural studies in 1980s and 1990s, and 4) the result of competing discourses within the discipline of cultural studies which defined itself as crossing the rigid boundaries of academic disciplines. Within the last paradigm, there was fundamental transformation of the reading strategies which yielded to the 'real reader' who is a localised, contextualised and interested reader, opposite of the 'universal reader' who claim to be objective, scientific, impartial and de-contextualised.

In the next section, Mukherjee analyses the empowering and liberative interpretations of the Bible as advocated by the Indian Christian thinker, Prof George Soares-Prabhu, a

revolutionary scholar who has stood by the poor for their holistic liberation. She has elaborately followed his biblical theology of liberation, Christology and the theological methodology. For Soares-Prabhu, the central experience of the Old Testament of the Bible is the liberation of the slaves from Egypt and the primary experience of the New Testament is the resurrection of Jesus after he was crucified by the colonisers of those days, the Romans. In a way the naked Jesus that hangs on the cross fits the category of the poor and the wretched of the earth. In this wretched (Jesus), the natives find hope, solace and comfort. Thus, the prophetic Biblical interpretations of Soares-Prabhu is a powerful postcolonial response (and critique) to the colonial assimilation of the Biblical message. For his interpretation he draws from the liberation theologians of South America and the Asian theologians of inter-religious dialogue.

Contribution of Soares-Prabhu

Prof Dr George Soares-Prabhu, SJ, a versatile biblical scholar, who has successfully tried to interpret the bible for the living context of India. Though he has not been using the term "postcolonial," his emphasis and orientation has been very much close to it. When he interprets the bible for the poor and for their liberation, he has been indeed proposing a postcolonial interpretation of the sacred text of the Christians, without using the term, but from the perspectives of the poor, marginalise and subalterns.

"Concern for the poor and fascination for the person of Jesus" is the Sutra that ties together the personal as well as the scholarly threads of George Soares-Prabhu's life.[19] It is not surprising then that liberation themes constitute the bulk of his writing. Today liberation has come to be associated in (though not limited to) theological and postcolonial circles from the perspective of the theologies of liberation emanating from the Latin American sub-continent.[20] In Soares-Prabhu's case, liberation had two specific characteristics: one biblical and the other Indian. His is quite

distinctly a biblical theology of liberation seen through Indian eyes. And because it is biblical and Indian it culminates in a new reading and hermeneutics of the New Testament. There is hardly any piece of writing of his that does not witness to this specific outlook, which is basically postcolonial exegesis.

Speaking generally, liberation and liberation theology have rightly come to be associated with Latin America; for it is from that continent that the light of liberation has been spreading hope to 'the poor of the earth' as also to 'the poor of theology,' remarks Francis X. D'Sa, a close colleague of Prof Soares-Prabhu.[21] For liberation is, among other things, also liberation of theology and of the theologians of the Third World from Eurocentrism. Such were also the thoughts of Soares-Prabhu who was influenced in no small measure by the writings of the Latin American liberation theologians.[22]

On the other hand, Soares-Prabhu whose resourcefulness is very much in evidence in his writings and classes was not one to reproduce someone else's ideas, as those who knew him readily aknowledge.. Though open to new ways of thinking and theologizing, he was never easy to convince; in this he was a strict follower of the Scriptures in that he consistently tested the spirits as this volume will testify. In all his writings he refers to a wide variety of shades and schools of thought but what he himself proposed stands out clearly as his specific contribution. Invigorated as he was by the fresh winds of liberation theology, he was not blind to the wide differences between the Latin American situation and the Indian context. He was convinced that any theology of liberation that India produces will have to recognize the fact that there is no substitute for fidelity to the Indian context. We find repeated statements to this effect in his writings.

Conclusion

By and large this book by Mukherjee makes a critical study of Biblical interpretations from a postcolonial perspective, from

which both theologians and biblical scholars can profit. Through her philosophical acumen, she has managed to open new horizons to theological commitment, especially to the poor and the marginalised (the nativists of subalterns of postcolonialism). This has led her to draw from Soares-Prabhu's concerns for liberation of the poor and dialogue with the other.

> **Gargi Mukherjee.** *Emancipation for the Wretched of the Earth: A Postcolonial Interpretation of the Bible.* JDV Philosophy Series-16. New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2020. pp. 126+xviii. ₹ 500/- include Glossary and Index.

Notes

1. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and Henley, 1978, pp. 58-59.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

5. Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, p. 3.

6. John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, Viva Books, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 2-3.

7. Frantz Fanon, (*Tr.*) Constance Farrington, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, New York, 1963, p. 40.

8. John-Paul Sartre, "Marxism and Subjectivity – The Rome Lecture, 1961," *New Left Review*, 88, July/August 2014, pp. 89-111.

9. R.S. Sugirtharajah (*Ed.*), *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, Blackwell Publishing, Maiden and Oxford, 2006, p. 27.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

11. R.S. Sugirtharajah (*Ed.*), *Op. Cit.*, p. 10.

12. John McLeod, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 33-34.

13. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage, New York, 1994, p. 59.

14. R.S. Sugirtharajah (*Ed.*), *Op. Cit.*, p. 19.

15. John McLeod, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 175-176.

16. Ibid., pp. 176-177.

17. Ibid., p. 177.

18. R.S. Sugirtharajah (*Ed.*), *Op. Cit.*, p. 17.

19. This article is adapted from Francis X D'Sa, "The Concerns of George M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J.," in: Francis X. D'Sa, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective, Collected Writings of George M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J., Vol. IV*, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Theology Series (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2001), xi-xxx-ix."

20. Cf. The influence of liberation theology is not limited to Indian theologians alone. See, for example, how a secular historian, Sumit Sarkar, looks at it in his, "Conversions and Politics of Hindu Right," in *Economic and Political Weekly* (June 26, 1999) 1691-1700, esp. 1698.

21. "The Concerns of George M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J.," in: Francis X. D'Sa, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective, Collected Writings of George M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J., Vol. IV*, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Theology Series (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2001), xi.

22. See his "Inculturation – Liberation – Dialogue. Challenges to Christian Theology in Asia Today," in *Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today* where he speaks of Latin America's 'Liberation Theology' as a 'brilliant exception' which is not 'Western' in colour and texture (p. 53).

Book Reviews

Enlightenment and Tantra

Lobo, Bryan SJ. (ed), Maria De Giogi mmx and Rolphy Pinto, SJ (subeds). *Enlightenment and Tantra: Hindus and Christians in Dialogue.* Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2019. Documenta Missionalia 39; ISBN: 9788878393868. pp.263. Price: 24.00 Euros.

This book is a collection of the papers presented at the Conference, "Enlightenment and Tantra: Hindus and Christians in Dialogue" held at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome on 17 October 2017. Despite the prevalent suspicious and cautious approach towards Tantra it was a bold and openminded venture to explore the riches of Tantra and discover its resonances with Christianity. It is a laudable effort and my sincere wish that it would initiate many more such unexplored vistas in dialogical and inter-religious hermeneutics. The papers in the book bear ample evidence to the impetus given by the documents: *Nostra Aetate, Fides et Ratio,* and *Evangelii Gaudium.*

The book contains ten papers along with an erudite introduction by the editor, Dr. Bryan Lobo, SJ. John Dupuche in his paper: Tantric Aspects of the Mass, basing on the Tantraloka (chapter 29) of Abhinavagupta (Kashmir Shaivism) focusses on the six sacrifices of the Kula ritual and compares it with the sacrifice of Jesus in the Eucharist. The purpose of the author is to see how they enlighten each other. As both the traditions aim at divinization by the glory and power of the spirit, there are many similarities. The author could have highlighted the unique features of each tradition for mutual enrichment.

Maria Cristina Kaveri Cantoni, in "Warp and weft: Role and destiny of human beings in the cosmic texture", brings out the possibility of realizing in this life, oneness with the divine without separating the cosmic dimension. The author describes the spiritual sadhana to awaken and direct shakti to

get united with the divine. This is illustrated with the aspects of *nyasas*, and the *mantras* like the Gayatri. Though there are a few comparisons with Christianity, I think it needs more nuancing from the Christian perspective.

In the third paper, "Deification in the Non-dual Saiva Agamas of Kashmir and in the Fathers of the Church", Bettina Sharada Baumer, does a commendable job of exploring the correspondences between scriptures of non-dualist Kasmir Shaivism (Vijnana Bhairava and the Netra Tantra) and two Fathers of Eastern Christianity (Maximus the Confessor and Gregory Palamas). The author points out correpondences in deification process without claiming sameness. Surely this paves the way towards spiritual dialogue. I find the treatment quite enlightening.

Ramaraghaviah Satyanarayana, in the fourth paper, "Achieving Liberation (*moksa*) based on Saivasiddhanta Doctrine and Practices" brings the aspects of self liberation in Saiva siddhanta by treating the triad (*pasu, pati, pasa*).Though there is oneness with the divine(Siva), yet the soul does not lose its distinction. The views are substantiated by quoting the original Sanskrit sources. Since the paper is part of the dialogical process, some areas of comparison could have been dealt with.

Paolo Trianni, in "Tantrism in the Hindu Christian dialogical writings of Jules Monchanin, Henri Le Saux and Bede Griffiths" brings out the bold venture of the pioneers in the preferred background of advaita Vedanta. The author highlights the influence of Teilhard de Chardin on these thinkers regarding the reality of the cosmos in their theological writings. The author ably demonstrates the synthesis achieved by the three thinkers between realism and idealism, matter and spirit, person and impersonalism, monism and dualism, transcendence and immanence, unity and multiplicity, identity and difference. Though the possibility of Christianizing Tantrism remains unfinished, the author hopes that in the future it may have unexpected results benefitting both traditions.

In the article, "Hindu -Christian Dialogue as Mutual enrichment: The male-Female embodiment in the Tantric traditions and in 20th Century Christian Spirituality", Thomas Matus highlights the contribution of Kriya-yoga of Yogananda Paramahamsa in this direction. In this tradition, there is a possibility of remaining in one's tradition and entering into the other. The author makes a bold assertion that when two persons of two different faiths engage in dialogue, both will be enriched and grow in their faith and understanding.

Colette Poggi, in her "word(vac), creative impulse and the power of reabsorption according to Abhinavagupta, and its parallels in Meister Eckhart and Henri Le Saux -Abhisiktananda", reflects on the word in the

tantras and Eckhart and explores their parallels. The author asserts that the word at different levels can give the "taste for God" to a Watchful Heart. The method of "inter-reading of the texts" can enhance mutual understanding as lived out by the Masters. I find this insight quite useful in inter-religious dialogical praxis of reading the texts together.

John Dupuche, in his second article, eighth paper in the collection, "Paths to freedom and the fulness of joy: Contributions from Tantra and Christianity", looks at the possibility of absolute freedom and joy here and now by harnessing sakti (feminine divine principle) and comparing it with the Holy Spirit of Christianity. The author sees the implications of this comparative exercise on the aspects of morality and role of women in both the traditions. The article opens up many possibilities for the feminist theologies.

The paper: "Tantrism and Corporeality" by Virgilio Agostinelli, looks at the possibility of the body as flowering principle of the spirit rather than as a stifling one. Since tantra stresses the role of the body, it can rectify the negative and dualistic perceptions and promote liberation in a holistic way.

Gioia Lussana in the last paper, "Tantra: The way to wisdom in non-dual experience of being, Some comparative remarks about non-dual Kashmiri Saivism and Christian Mysticism", describes the similarities in these traditions bringing about integration of body and soul and knowledge and love.

I find the articles in the book challenging, enlightening. These exercises are rich in confluence of ideas and traditions. They invite us to a rich and creative future where traditions are not perceived as discretely unique but rather partners with harmonious differences committed to a common project of promoting unity in diversity. I congratulate the authors the editors and the organizers of the Conference for implementing the timely dialogical imperative. This volume is a covetable possession for the libraries and the individuals and groups who are serious and passionate about dialogue.

Henry D'Almeida, SJ

Jnanadeepa Vidyapeeth, Pune

The Otherness of the Other

Anand, Subhash. *Postmodern Sage, Premodern Wisdom,* New Delhi: Media House, 2019, pp. 314; ISBN: 978-93-8898-919-0; Rs: 450/- or US $35

The book *Postmodern Sage Premodern Wisdom: Some Gandhian Insights* by Subhash Anand is written in the post-postmodern times, specially marked by the sesquicentennial birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Contrastingly, this year marks the shocking upsurge of anti-democratic, anti-constitutional and anti-secular laws, amendments, proceedings and activities of the present ruling government in our country. Be it the sweeping victory of Boris Johnson in Britain or the present rule of Donald Trump in America or any prominent political wave in the West, and it's all indicative of the alarming rise of the right-wings all over the globe. These political markers are in fact suggestive of the voters' growing trend of individualism, majoritarianism, fundamentalism and subsequent separatism. This substantial u-turn is what suggested by the term 'post-postmodern' which is a significant back-turn towards some of modernity's values and upholdings. Surprisingly, the post-postmodern philosophical movement too corroborates this u-turn – a return towards modernity against which postmodernity arose. One such example is Alain Badiou, a living French philosopher who writes prominently on concepts such as being, Truth, subject etc. His thought is even commented upon as a contemporary reinterpretation of Platonism. Though he professes to be neither a postmodernist nor a repetition of modernity, much of his thought process is suggestive of modernity's universalism and foundationalism. Thus, be it philosophical or political approach, a negation of postmodernity's approach and values is on the increase.

It is at this juncture, that the importance of this book is significantly noteworthy – viewing a person hailing from the age of modernity and who is usually branded as upholding values of foundationalism and universalism, through the postmodernity's lens of highlighting the critique of his own age (modernity) with the foundation of values and wisdom that may be ascribed to pre-modernity. Gandhi professes his strong adherence to ancient wisdom by *advaita, satya* and *ahimsa* with their various implications on the *mahā-vratas* derived from the ancient scriptures and tradition. Yet, his strong critique of modernity with its various implications such as industrialisation, mechanisation, urbanisation, individualism, consumerism etc. leads him to insist upon the postmodern values of appreciating differences, otherness of the other, communitarianism and harmonious co-existence. Gandhian critique of modernity and the explication of it by the author, in fact, validate the significance of postmodernity in the wake of the u-turn of the present post-postmodern era.

I understand this book under two symbiotic themes viz. the authenticity of the Self and the otherness of the Other.

The Authenticity of the Self

No building without foundation, no tree without roots and no bridge without deep footing can be strong and useful. Any engagement with the Other demands a strong foundation, a deep rootedness and a solid footing in the Self. This is what enunciated in Chapter I – 'Satyagraha: Journeying towards Authenticity.' Satyagraha is a journey towards being fully human and being humane – *Satya* to actualise the Truth what we are (authentic presence); *Swaraj* for freedom attained through the authentic presence; Ashram vows for freedom with others and freedom for others.

This insistence on the authenticity of the Self is not only restricted to the first chapter of the book. As above-said, it is in symbiotic relation with the second theme about which the rest of the book is all about. Accordingly, the first theme interpenetrates every chapter and every section, emphasising the importance the Mahatma had given to it. This 'Self'-rootedness is what he insisted upon in *swadeshi* – the necessary rootedness in one's own. This flowers into *swaraj* – the necessary self-rule of goodness. This is the necessary rootedness in one's own religion while engaging with other religions, consequently to respect them. Hence, *satyagraha* is an invitation to be in communion with humans, with all life, with creation, with the Truth.

The Otherness of the Other

Adherence to the Truth is not merely connected with the authenticity of the Self, for Gandhi. Truth is God, according to him. This formulation is very basic for his whole philosophy of respecting the otherness of the Other. How? It is through another premodern value, i.e., *Ahimsa. Satya* and *Ahimsa* are so intrinsically connected in his philosophy that forms the foundation for his critique of modernity and his theory cum praxis.

God as Truth, Gandhi names as 'Absolute Truth,' the *Sat*. All approaches in search of or towards the Absolute Truth, he names them as 'Relative Truths.' Any relative truth is valid in its adherence to the Absolute Truth and in its genuine search towards the Absolute Truth. Thus, all relative truths are valid, yet incomplete and partial. The incompleteness of each relative Truth necessitates *Ahimsa* or non-violence. For, a truth which is relative, cannot force or coerce one's approach towards Absolute Truth on another relative truth which is equally a valid approach towards the same Absolute Truth. This non-coercive nature of each relative Truth is what his doctrine of *Ahimsa* is. It is thus *Satya* and *Ahimsa* are two sides of the same coin. Though this ontological connection between *Satya* and *Ahimsa* is not explicated in the book, the ongoing discussion in the book enunciates the

necessary connection between them.

Based on this doctrine of *Ahimsa*, the non-coercive nature of each relative Truth, his practical philosophy emanates as it is discussed variedly in the last four chapters of the book respectively as ecological, social, inter-religious and thus harmonious co-existence. Chapter 2 discusses on Ecophilia, through the *advaitic* interconnectedness of the whole reality, the service-orientedness of *yajna* and the *ashram* experience-expression of interconnectedness. Chapter 3 on *Sarvodaya* i.e. justice for all, discusses the *advaitic* unity based on which well-being of all needs to flourish, non-violence towards individuals, villages, cities, environment etc., *swadeshi* as resources for development primarily from the local level and finally *swaraj* as freedom for the development of over-all humanity by reduction of wants, and by the love of the vulnerable and the weak. Chapter 4 on *Samabhava*, the inter-religious part of Gandhian philosophy is explained rather radically and self-critical of the Christian missionary approach, especially the ways of inauthentic conversion and throwing some Gandhian light on authentic conversion. The final chapter on *Kshama*, journeying towards reconciliation, discusses mainly on the Gandhian intervention on Hindu-Muslim harmony. The IV and V chapters are pretty particularistic in character focusing respectively on the Gandhian Christian critique and on the Gandhian commitment towards Muslim-Hindu issue. Their particular nature is valid generally too, making it viable for application to any religion, any conflicting positions and thus for harmonious co-existence of humans. The doctrine of *Ahimsa* is the basis for Gandhian appreciation of the otherness of the Other implied with the responsibility of the Self towards the environment, the country, other religious traditions, and the least and the most vulnerable. In short, *Ahimsa* is love.

Appraisal

This book is a brilliant work of synthesis done by a seasoned philosopher in the person of Subhash Anand, done on a profound foundational visionary philosopher of our land in the person of Mahatma Gandhi. The five chapters are intrinsically connected, and each chapter has interpolating/overlapping contents with other chapters, enumerating the synthetic approach of the work. Gandhian themes are discussed vividly and exhaustively. To cite a few examples: ashram vows in their own depth and nuances, especially *asteya* as academic stealing, consumerism, corporate manipulation, corruption etc., *aparigraha*'s ecological implications too, *swadeshi* as not merely economic but one's own rootedness, *sarvodaya*'s connection with *satya, advaita, swadeshi and swaraj* etc. While Gandhian critique of modernisation and development abounds the book, the author's critique

of the present-day situation flows parallel to it. The author's Christian background empowers him to find Biblical parallels to Gandhian themes and further to self-criticise the Christian approaches towards mission, conversion, service and love of the helpless people. Chapter IV is such a daring attempt by the author, overcoming the fear of scrutiny from the conservatives and the hierarchy.

The appraising outlook of the author did not overlook Gandhi either, especially Gandhi's negative approach towards human sexuality. Nevertheless, the author is brilliant enough to surpass the Gandhian narrow understanding of *Brahmacharya* with Gandhian approach towards life as a journey from evil to good, applying it perfectly to *Brahmacharya* as a journey – a journey towards God, an openness to life, Truth, goodness and beauty. *Brahmacharya* is thus a journey to the Other through the others. Such over-reading on Gandhi is perhaps valid, thanks to the synthesising effort by the author.

There were double a dozen of printing errors in the whole book (which I shall notify to the publisher and author privately) and the missing of the phrase 'Some Gandhian Insights' in both front and back title page, and in the inner front page too. Had every page header been titled according to the chapter's title, a more comfortable reading of the book would have been likely. Chapter V's first sub-section has a few inappropriate sub-titles as 'A1. Accepting Others' and 'A2. Gifting ourselves', while the contents of the sub-sections have narrations not fitting into it. Rather the whole of the fifth chapter is mere biographical unlike other chapters. Discussion of Gandhian ideas about *Kshama* would have been suitable.

There are four types of explanations which can be attributed to the author's attempt in the course of the book. They are: forceful, scanty, missing and repetitive.

- Forceful explanations were noticed in some parts of the book. Especially in Chapter III, Gandhian themes were forcefully made to fit into the categories of oneself, others and the environment. For example, Chapter III, 'B1. Non-violence towards Oneself' is more of a discussion on industrialisation than on non-violence towards oneself.

- Scanty explanations too were noticed. In Chapter III, the sub-section 'B3. Non-violence towards Environment' would have been richer if more explanations on the ecological damage due to in-dustrialisation had been made. Though it is slightly touched upon, a major discussion is on sanitation.

- Missing explanations were another issue of concern. As earlier

mentioned, the author fails to explain the ontological connection between *Satya* and *Ahimsa*. Further, the author does not discuss sufficiently Gandhian views on caste. Chapter I, 'B. Swaraj: Authentic Presence as Independence' would have been better-off if 'Freedom from Caste' too had been added. In Chapter III, while discussing *Swadeshi*, Gandhian views on supporting local products is considerably dealt with, although Gandhi's readiness to accept foreign products too especially medicines, equipment etc. if necessary, which are not locally available, is not taken into consideration.

- Repetitive explanations are a major concern in the course of the book. Though the author acknowledges it in the Preface, considerable editing to reduce it would have helped an exciting reading of the book. Sometimes, Gandhian quotes are exactly repeated within the chapter as within Chapter IV, pages 233 & 229 or in between two chapters as in Chapters I & IV, where Gandhi's experience at the Trappist monastery is mentioned in pages 41 and 221. Chapter III has a lot of repetitions on village development within itself. Chapter II which is on Ecophilia over-reaches on other chapters especially on I and III. Between Chapters I & III, the discussions on equal wages for men and women, for tailor and scavenger is repeated (Chapter I, C4 and Chapter III, A3).

As Gandhian model of equality between men and women is touched upon, the author could have used inclusive pronouns than referring either to masculine or feminine exclusively. For instance, pp. 24-26 abound with masculine usage while referring to a satyagrahi, p. 228 about other religious person, p.302 to every Indian. Contrastingly, the reference to acceptance of the other person on p.55 is made feminine. It is tolerable and understandable that Gandhi uses masculine pronouns as found in the quotations. Such awareness about inclusiveness was not the attitude of his times, but it is not so of the present.

The foregoing remarks are not of major concerns when compared with the effort of the author which is to be celebrated on the whole. Especially placing Gandhi within postmodern limits is a super-reading of Gandhi, which the critiques of Gandhi may not be much comfortable with. The author is never preoccupied with such critiques at all. It is really surprising to notice the total absence of any polemic reference/arguments in the entire book. Rather, the author is true to his mission of comfortably placing Gandhi within the horizon of postmodernity, when he refers to Gandhi regarding the growth/formation of the conscience in p.39, or reference to Gandhi's approach as situation ethics/euthanasia in p.71, or the end of the

Preface. In fact, the very attempt of the author to situate Gandhian ideals as celebration of the 'otherness of the Other' is a praiseworthy endeavor to re-read Gandhi.

It is a best work of synthesis on Gandhian thought which calls for a change of attitude to Gandhi and also a change of life for the reader. As the author articulates in the Preface, this effort of integrating his life more is perhaps effected in the reader too. The notes at the end of each section on personal reflection and growth from Gandhi's thought or action, makes the reading more fruitful and effective, demanding a self-scrutiny. What else could be a great reward for a book than the change of life/attitude of the reader!

Varan Vardhan

Jnana-Deepa-Vidyapeeth, Pune

Jnanadeepa congratulates **Rev Fr Francis Gonsalves, SJ** (Guj), who is appointed the new President of Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune. We wish him all success to lead JDV in these challenging times! We also thank **Rev Fr Selva Rathinam, SJ** (Kar), the outgoing President.

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