Counter-Cultural Perspectives of an Organic Intellectual: Selected Works of Rudolf C. Heredia

Volume VI

HERMENEUTICS OF DIALOGUE:

DISCOURSES ON THE

SELF AND THE OTHER

Volume VI
HERMENEUTICS OF DIALOGUE: DISCOURSES ON THE SELF AND THE OTHER

written by
Rudolf C. Heredia

compiled and edited with
Priya D'Souza

TABLE OF CONTENTS *(CLICKABLE)*

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO COUNTER-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES OF AN ORGANIC INTELLECTUAL: THE SELECTED WORKS OF RUDOLF C. HEREDIA

This collection brings together essays and presentations that span some five decades of my work. These are in the overall discourse of the social sciences and though I have trained as a sociologist my perspective is more interdisciplinary. This is really the only way contemporary social issues and questions can be approached if they are to have any relevance today.

A continuing thread that runs through this collection. It represents an ongoing venture to bring a critical reflection on social issues that engage activists in the field. Thus, rather than indulge in 'ad hoc' responses, they can create a praxis of action-reflection-action in the tradition of Paulo Freire. Hopefully, this interaction between the 'desk and the field' will enrich both, activists to more effective action on the ground and theorists to a more critical appreciation of the underpinning ideas.

The collection is divided by common overall themes into separate volumes to provide a coherent unifying perspective to each volume. While each essay has its own specific context and topic, yet given the timespan they cover, some overlap and repetition across these volumes is inevitable. However, we have tried to exclude this within the volume itself, unless there is a different nuance in the presentation that justifies its inclusion despite the overlap.

The articles selected for a particular volume follow in the order of the date of their publication (or of writing, if the piece wasn't published). This is to give an idea of how the theme developed in my discourse on it. Hopefully, the discourse itself is open-ended, so the reader can take it forward in various directions, that are only implied in this selection.

The following are the subdivisions of the collection.

I.   Socio-Cultural Perspectives: Pluralism and Multiple Identities

II.   Socio-Political Perspectives: Contradictions and Complementarities

III. The Development Debate: Growth and Equity

IV. Religion and Society: Secularism and Its Discontent

V.   Ecological Concerns: Environmental Sustainability

VI.   Hermeneutics of Dialogue: Discourses on The Self and The Other

VII. Education: The Dual System

VIII. The Tribal Question

IX. Gandhiana: Essays on A Yuga Purush

X.   Globalisation And Its Discontents Globalisation

XI. Jesuitica: For the Jesuit Parivar

XII. Miscellaneous Articles

XIII. Book Reviews

XIV. Poems

XV. Homilies

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME VI HERMENEUTICS OF DIALOGUE: DISCOURSES ON THE SELF AND THE OTHER

Dialogue is essentially about opening oneself to the other so as to find my 'self' in the 'other' and the 'other' in my 'self'. For humans are essentially nodes in a network of conversations with each other. However, to be authentic, dialogue must endeavour to be free from prejudice, i.e.., pre-judgements or at least earnestly strive to be aware of them and struggle to overcome them,

Hence dialogue must be transparent and open, finding, or making equals of dialogic partners, as Aristotle would have done with genuine friendships. Agreement is neither the definitive beginning nor end point of this conversation. Rather it is a search for common ground from which to move together to higher ground. Dialogue, then, is a continuing, never-ending process of discovery of oneself and celebration of the other. The collection of articles in this volume focuses the hermeneutics of dialogue in multiple contexts and complements each other.

1.
OPENING THE DOOR: THE JESUIT MISSIONARY CONTRIBUTION TO DIALOGUE

Abstract:

In their encounter with the cultures and peoples of the mission lands, the Jesuits made their best contribution to a deeper dialogue. This study will try to set the context in which this encounter took place, describe the vision which set the dialogue going, and outline the debate which led to its untimely suppression. The approach here will be sociological rather than historical, in that it will not focus on the 'chronological inter-relationships between particular events with a view to determining their causality', but rather on 'the relationship between the fundamental elements of the social organism existing at the given time'.

I.   Introduction: The Jesuit Question

On the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the founding of the Society of Jesus, John Padberg, the Director of the Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis, responding to 'The Jesuit Question' in London's *Tablet*, wrote: 'To some they have been a suspect band of innovators (in today's version a group of flaming revolutionaries); to others a welcome group of: religious well aware of the world and the Church; to yet others a blind bulwark of a retrograde papacy or, to those with a martial streak, militant soldiers of Christ; to many quite frankly a puzzlement…Those responses and others have persisted through several centuries of Jesuit growth, success, disaster, suppression and revival.'[1]

It seems almost a part of the Jesuit charism to be controversial! Certainly, the early Jesuit missionaries from the 16th and up to the 18th centuries were men of dynamism and daring, pioneers at the cutting edge of change, pushing to the very limits the new frontiers of mission, geographic and theological.

A Protestant clergyman, Peter Mundy, after a visit to the Jesuit College in Macao in 1637, wrote admiringly of them:

'And to speak truly, they neither spare cost nor labour, diligence nor danger to attain their purpose'[2]   .With such single-minded dedication, it is hardly surprising that those who are in agreement or at least empathetic with this 'purpose' would surely be very different in their appreciation of the Jesuits from others who are in disagreement with, or hostile to it. Thus 'the ruin of the Portuguese empire' on the Jesuits who 'were fanatics and like all fanatics did irreparable harm'; their 'religious bigotry and proselytism, fostered by the Inquisition, sapped the vitals of the empire'.[3]

For an insider, like the present writer, it is not possible to sketch the Society of Jesus in black and white. There are far too many areas of colour and light, of shadow and shade—besides grey ones. This paper does not attempt a comprehensive appreciation of the role of these missionaries. Rather it will discuss one particular venture of the Jesuits in dialogue, in the Madurai mission of South India. It is a

---

[1] *The Tablet,* Vol. 244, No. 7836, 22 Sep 1990, p. 1189.

[2] Cited by C.R. Boxer, *Portuguese India in the Mid-Seventeenth Century* (Delhi, 1980), p.15.

[3] Boies Penrose, *Sea fights in the East Indies in the Years 1602-1639* (Cambridge, Mass., 1931) p. 14.

story of heart-warming success and heart-breaking failure, of brilliant achievement and depressing disillusionment.

The contribution of the Jesuits to the mission lands was certainly multifaceted. They introduced the first movable type printing press into India [4] and published 'a variety of grammars and guides to vernacular languages including Tamil, Japanese and Marathi-Konkani'.[5] A Jesuit father, Thomas Stephens, was one of the first to see 'the connection between Indian and European languages.'[6] Jarl Charpentier is somewhat embarrassingly lavish in his praise, when leaving aside the merits and demerits of the Order's missionary methods, he claims that 'it may be safely asserted that the modern knowledge of geography of the then unknown parts of the world and the acquaintance with the history, religions and social customs of Asiatic, African and American peoples and races has been founded by the Jesuit missionaries'[7]. More recent scholarship too reaffirms how 'the Jesuits trained by their admirable education, pursued with avidity the intricacies of the alien cultures which they discovered in both the Far East and South America'.[8]

Indeed, it was in this encounter with the cultures and peoples of the mission lands that the Jesuits made their best contribution to a deeper dialogue—and some would add, made some of their worst mistakes as well. Without doubt, much of the missionary endeavour represented an aggressive inroad into the culture and religion of the indigenous people, which left behind a trail of ruin. But there were at least some among the Jesuits who did attempt a more sympathetic dialogue with, and a more genuine adaptation to these people. If they failed, it was more due to a lack of understanding from inside their own Church than rejection from the people outside it.' [9]

This study will try to avoid making facile judgements about earlier times from the vantage point of our own. Rather it will try to set the context in which this encounter took place, describe the vision which

---

[4] C.R. Boxer, The Portuguese Seaborne Empire: 1415-1825 (London, 1969) p.83.

[5] *ibid*., p. 348.

[6] The *Livro da Seita dos Indios Orientais* (Brit. Mus. Ms Sloane 1820) of Father Jacobo Fenicio, S.J., edited with an introduction by Jarl Charpentier (Uppsala, 1933) p. iv

[7] *ibid*., p. xxxvii.

[8] J.H. Plumb in "Introduction" to C.R. Boxer, *op. cit.* 1969, p. xxiv,

[9] Cf. Malcolm Hay, *Failure in the Far East* (London, 1956).

set the dialogue going, and outline the debate which led to its untimely suppression. Even though much has changed since, there is still much for us to learn from this story. For its significance transcends the narrow boundaries in which the original controversy was defined.

The approach here will be sociological rather than historical, in that it will not focus on the 'chronological inter-relationships between particular events with a view to determining their causality',[10] but rather on 'the relationship between the fundamental elements of the social organism existing at the given time'.[11]This study then does not claim to be the work of a professional historian. Rather it is closer to one of sociological popularizing.

II. The Historical Context

The meteoric rise and decline of the Portuguese empire in Asia is an enigma which poses many awkward questions about the dramatic success of 'this small, rather poor, culturally backward nation'; the sudden collapse 'to a shadow of itself with a span of fifty years'; the failure of the empire 'to act as a catalyst in Portugal'.[12] An exhaustive study of such questions is not within the scope of this paper. Yet in sketching a response to them we are setting the context for the theme treated here.

The Portuguese expansion overseas was very much a continuation of the reconquest of their own country from the Moors (1226-1238) into a crusade for 'the grandeur of Portugal and the destruction of the Arab and Turkish powers".[13] It took them down the coast of Africa until Vasco da Gama in 1498 threw open the sea route to India. It was a state venture, vigorously supported by the royal power of the newly founded monarchy which was now consolidating itself. Thus when Prince Henry the Navigator assumed the monopoly of all trade along the West African coast in 1443, there was already in Portugal 'the propelling force provided by an emergent mercantile middle class whose influence was displacing the dispersed and discredited older nobility for siding with the Castilian invader during the revolutionary

---

[10] François Houtart, *Religion and Ideology in Sri Lanka* (Bangalore, 1974) p.5

[11] Ibid.

[12] J.H. Plumb, "Introduction" to C.R. Boxer, *op. cit.* 1969, p, xxi,

[13] Houtart, *op. cit.* 1974, p. 103.

crisis of 1383-85'.[14] The colonial expansion gave the burgeoning aristocracy too a controlling role to play in this military enterprise and thus increased their prestige and revenue.

But the mass of people also had to be mobilized for so vast a venture for so small a country. And it is here that religion played a crucial role. After all the spirit of the crusades provided a model of Europeans as a chosen people. Portugal was thus a nation chosen, the conquest was God's work against the heathen imprisoned in his evil by the powers of darkness. 'This missionary zeal need not be understood as a pretence, but it provided the required motivation for mobilizing the poor and the naturally pious peasantry of Portugal, without whose sweat and hard collaboration the Portuguese nobility and middle class could never hope to achieve its goal'.[15] How far the poor peasants in Portugal themselves benefited from this crusade remains a moot point, but they did give their lives for it.

The colonial conquest was thus expressed in religious symbols and so it acquired 'an indisputable status sanctioned by the divine will'.[16]Not that this powerful religious legitimation of the enterprise was ever to displace the commercial interests that sponsored it. Indeed Vasco da Gama came to India seeking 'Christians and spices'. And King Manuel, the Fortunate, who was entitled 'Grand Master of the Order of Christ', was also known as the 'Grocer King' and the 'Pepper Potentate'!

The relationship between religion and politics is obviously a complex one, involving deeper passions and conflicting interests. But 'this combination of greed and godliness has always been regarded as the major driving force' of the Iberians. [17]Indeed unlike the other colonial ventures in the seventeenth century, the Portuguese one was initiated by the king who 'organized and to an extent regulated the commercial enterprise.' [18]

---

[14] Boxer, *op. cit.* 1969, p. 17

[15] T.R. de Souza "The Portuguese in Asia and Their Church Patronage" in *Western Colonialism in Asia and Christianity*, ed. M.D. David (Bombay, 1988) p, 13.

[16] Houtart, *op. cit.* 1974, p; 109.

[17] J. H. Plumb, 'Introduction' to Boxer, op. cit. 1969, p. xxii.

[18] Francois Houtart and Genevieve Lemerciner, *Genesis and Institutionalization of Indian Catholicism,* (Louvain-la-neuve, 1981) p. 49

The *Padroado Real,* elaborated in 'the sixty-odd Papal bulls which studded the route of the conquerors'[19], juridically legitimated church-state relationships. Beginning with Pope Calixtus III's *Inter cetera* in 1456, and culminating in 1514 with *Praecelsae devotionis*, these defined 'a combination of rights, privileges and duties granted by the Papacy to the crown of Portugal as patron of the Roman Catholic missions and ecclesiastical establishments in vast regions of Africa, of Asia and in Brazil'. [20]Thus 'With the Portuguese christianization was a state enterprise' [21] as well.

This union of the two 'swords', political and religious, empowered and legitimated 'the ferocity, the savagery, the compulsions that drove these remorseless men.' [22] And when the papal bull *Dum diversas* in 1452 gave the King of Portugal 'the full and entire faculty of invading, conquering and expelling and reigning over all the kingdoms... of the Saracens, the pagans, and of all infidels, wherever they may be found; of reducing their inhabitants to perpetual slavery, . . .' [23]these conquistadors were hardly reluctant to take full advantage of it. 'Few European historians will face up to the consequences of the murderous Western onslaught on India and the East, which broke not only the webs of commerce but of culture, that divided kingdoms, disrupted politics and drove China and Japan into hostile insolation'. [24]And the Portuguese were only the first in a long line of 'blood and carnage that followed in their wake'. [25]

The missionaries followed the merchants. They worked very much in collaboration since they depended on the colonial powers and patronage, and the Church seemed little more than the spiritual appendage of the state. [26]Little wonder then that nationalistic chauvinism carried over into the missionary endeavour as well.

The main lines of missionary policy were laid down by the ecclesiastical synods of Goa. The first in 1567 reflected the first flush of a self-confident, post-Tridentine Church, which later ones—there

---

[19] Ibid.

[20] C. R. Boxer, op. cit. 1964, p. 228

[21] K. M. Pannikar, *Asia and Western Dominance: A survey of the Vasco da Gama epoch of Asian History, 1498-1945* (London, 1953) p. 280

[22] J. H. Plumb, 'Introduction' to Boxer, op. cit. 1969, p. xxii.

[23] Cited by Houtart, op. cit. 1974, p. 116

[24] J. H. Plumb, 'Introduction' to Boxer, op. cit. 1969, p. xxiv.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Cf. George M. Moraes, A History of Christianity in India (Bombay, 1964) p. 140-141.

were five up to 1619—reaffirmed with only slight modifications. C.R. Boxer outlines the three main guiding considerations of these councils:

1. All religions other than the orthodox Roman Catholic faith as defined by the Council of Trent were intrinsically wrong and harmful in themselves.

2. The Crown of Portugal had the inescapable duty of spreading the Roman Catholic faith, and the secular power of the state could be used to support the spiritual power of the Church.

3. Conversion must not be by force, nor threats of force, for nobody comes to Christ by faith unless he is drawn by the Heavenly Father with voluntary love and prevenient grace.'[27]

Good intentions apart, the freedom implied in the last injunction was clearly at odds with the explicit intolerance consequent on the first two, and in effect it was denied by other decrees of the councils, which were given the force of law, e.g., *Inter alia* in 1567 which enacted harsh restrictions including the destruction of temples in Goa.

Religious tolerance was hardly the characteristic of the age, and missionary practice was in reality inspired by a theology as narrowly myopic as it was compelling: *'extra Ecclesiam, nulla salus'* (no salvation outside the Church). In Europe, the political exigencies of the Protestant Reformation forced a concession in practice: *cujus regio, ejus religio* (the religion of the ruler). The *'compelle eos intrare'* (force them to enter) of Luke, 14:23, was used to justify forced conversions. And the Padroado Real gave all this the sanction of the state. [28]

However, 'a distinction must be drawn between Portuguese policy and social attitudes towards adherents of other religions in the first and second halves of the sixteenth century'. [29]The Hindus were at first tolerated as a counterweight to the Muslims. But the religious conflict in Europe precipitated an erosion of this religious tolerance that 'was clearly reflected in the East during the reign of Dom João III (1521-57)'.[30] But the 'Latin arrogance' of the conquistador that inspired the early decades of the Portuguese expansion in the East was soon humbled by the hammer blows of the Dutch navy and by the end of

---

[27] Boxer, op. cit. 1969, p. 67.

[28] Cf. S. Rajamanickam, 'Robert De Nobili: Christianity in the Indian Version', *Jeevadhara*, 17 (1987) p.304·321.

[29] C.R. Boxer, op. cit. 1969, p. 72.

[30] ibid., p. 73.

the 16th century 'they were primarily concerned with peaceful trade and keeping what they had already got'.[31]

Unlike the colonial officials of the government or the Church, who treated the subject peoples more as objects under their jurisdiction, rather than subjects with their own distinctiveness and contribution in the commonwealth, a serious understanding of the colonial enterprise, missionary and mercantile, cannot ignore the social context of these people and its effect on the colonial encounter. Thus, in India religious Hinduism and the all-pervasiveness of caste can only be ignored at the risk of seriously misunderstanding or even falsifying some of the most fundamental elements in this situation. Given the limited scope of this paper, these will not be explicitly enumerated, though they must be consciously kept in mind.

For this is not meant to be a complete sketch of the political and religious dimensions of the colonial situation in which the missionary endeavour took place, but only to give one a sense of the unresolved ambiguities and underlying tensions in which the Jesuits found themselves. On the one hand, they needed Portuguese power to protect and promote their work and their newly founded Christian communities, and yet they could hardly condone the corruption and exploitation of the colonial power. Already St. Francis Xavier's letters inveigh against this. They depended on Portuguese Church patronage for the support and the jurisdictional monopoly it gave them, but felt constrained by the regulations this imposed, and hampered by the internal ecclesiastical politics, especially in the Padroado-Propaganda conflict. However, 'even a cursory survey of Portuguese Asia at the end of the sixteenth century reveals an impressive and a continuing achievement by the missionaries of the Padroado and in general and by the Jesuits in particular.[32]

---

[31] Ibid., p. 78

[32] Boxer, op. cit. 1969.

III. The Madurai Mission

The achievement of the Jesuits in successfully initiating an 'inculturated' church was a bold and farsighted venture in religious adaptation and cultural dialogue. It was far ahead of its times and did not survive the cultural myopia or the church politics of that age. Indeed, the ecclesiastical injunctions against the Malabar and Chinese rites, which dealt a death blow to this remarkable endeavour in the eighteenth century, have been revoked only in the middle of our own one.

Arnold Toynbee perceptively remarks that 'Our discussion of the Asian people's encounter with the West would be incomplete if we did not take into consideration the line which the Jesuits in China and India opened out... The Jesuits tried to disengage Christianity from non-Christian ingredients in the Western Civilization and to present Christianity to the Hindu and to the Chinese, not as the local religion of the West, but as a universal religion with a message for all mankind.'[33]

Indeed, there was every indication of an indigenous church, establishing itself in harmony and dialogue with the local people, enriched by them and hopefully enriching them too. With the condemnation of the Malabar rites in 1704 and the Chinese ones in 1707, and later with the suppression of the Society of Jesus itself in 1773, the promise of an indigenous Christianity in Asia was abandoned in favour of a colonial one, which is even now still struggling to find itself in a post-colonial age.

This paper deals with Robert de Nobili (1577-1656) and the Jesuit mission in Madurai. In many ways, his adaptation of Christianity to Hinduism in India cut deeper than the earlier efforts of his fellow Jesuit, Matteo Ricci, in China, of which he was no doubt aware.[34] For, whereas they both distinguished social from religious custom, cautiously accepting what was sociocultural, and carefully reinterpreting what was religiously ambiguous, De Nobili went beyond external rite and symbol, 'to uphold Christian doctrines in terms of Upanishadic thought'[35] much as the early Church had done with Greek philosophy. K.M. Panikkar, certainly not a particular

---

[33] Arnold Toynbee, *The World and the West* (London, 1953) p. 63.

[34] Vincent Cronin, *A Pearl to India* (New York, 1959) p, 9.

[35] K.M. Panikkar, op. cit., p. 281.

friend of Christian missionaries regarded him as 'a man of remarkable insight' [36] 'who 'argued with Brahman scholars with all the trained ability of a Christian priest who had mastered Hindu metaphysics'.[37]

The Malabar rites like the Chinese ones have been studied in great historical detail. Unfortunately, these studies have been generally based almost exclusively on ecclesiastical and Western sources. A subaltern review of this subject would surely carry the discussion beyond the immediate issues of jurisdiction and doctrine and enlighten a more relevant and comprehensive discourse. But such sources are as yet too scarce to underpin this task. However, without them a sociological reflection can still be sensitive to a point of view even if not adequately articulated. This will be our concern here.

The historical details of the Madurai mission will not be the focus of this paper: Not much can be added to the extensive documentation and studies already done:' [38]the new beginnings with De Nobili's-arrival in 1606 after the failure of Fr. Gonçalo Fernandes to make a break-through; the struggle to gain official ecclesiastical approval for the Malabar rites, from the provincial superior, Fr. Pero Francisco's censure in 1610, to Pope Gregory XV's decision in 1623, *Romanae Sedis Antistites,* granting final approval; the establishing of the *pandarasamis* and the progress of the mission; the revival of the controversy with the Jansenists in Europe and the *Société des Missions Étrangères* de Paris in the field; the condemnation by the Papal legate Maillard de Tournon in 1704, the fateful oath demanded by the Clement Xl's papal constitution, *Ex quo singulari* of 1742, and the withdrawal of the Jesuits from the mission after their suppression in 1773. Rather the attempt here will be to sketch in bold outline the 'discourse' within which the controversy over the rites is set.

Adaptation of the Christian faith to local expression and understanding is as old as the faith itself. Form criticism demonstrates how the Gospel stories themselves are articulations of the communities by whom they were first collected and handed down. John the Evangelist's use of the term 'logos' is a striking example of the adaptation of the faith to Greek thought. Paul of Tarsus wanted to be 'all things to all men' (I Cor. 9.22) and vigorously opposed the

---

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., p. 288

[38] e.g., D. Ferroli, The Jesuits in Malabar, 2 vols, (Bangalore, 1951); Joseph Thekkedath, A History of Christianity in India, vol. II (Bangalore, 1982).

Judaizers in the primitive Church. The early missionaries within the West were largely successful, not because of force of arms, but because of their sensitive 'reaching down' to the peoples they evangelized. St. Clement of Alexandria called it 'Synkatabasis' and St. Augustine of Hippo, '*condescensio*'. But in the colonial period, this was clearly not in evidence.

However, the Jesuits began to break new ground in their missionary endeavour. Already Francis Xavier adopted the silk clothes of a Japanese sage in 1551 to make his message more acceptable there. In 1583 Ricci entered China 'as a Buddhist bonze and in 1594 he adopted the dress and life-style of a mandarin. Soon deeper encounters began with the serious study of the local people, their language and religion. One of the earliest Jesuit scholars in India was Fr. Jacob Fenicio, who with his *Livro da Seita dos Indios Orientais* completed in 1608, 'well deserves a place amongst the many eminent forerunners of the present European knowledge of India'. [39] At first such works were carry-overs from a context of controversy and debate rather than dialogue and exchange. Their purpose was largely 'to furnish readers with an adequate knowledge of Hindu mythology as a necessary basis for its refutation'. [40]But later, in spite of their limitations, these missionaries 'or at least their outstanding exponents, embody a desire to understand, whose singular power and problematic nature arise from their deep and uncompromising *desire to be understood*'[41]

Robert de Nobili certainly belonged to such a genre. His upbringing in 'the most cosmopolitan city in the world', as Montaigne wrote of Rome in the 16th century, must have sensitized him to cross-cultural encounters, and soon after his arrival in Madurai in November 1606, he realized that a new approach had to be found. He distanced himself from the *'parangis'*, became a sanyasi, mastered Tamil and Sanskrit, discovered the Vedas. He wanted to present Christianity 'as the crown of all that was best in India'[42]And if, 'on

---

[39] . Jarl Charpentier, 'Preliminary Report on the 'Livre de Seita dos Indios Orientals' (Brit. Mus. Ms. Sloane, 1820)', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, London, 2 (1921-23) p. 748.

[40] John Correia-Afonso, *Jesuit Letters and Indian History*. 1542-1773 (Bombay, 1969) p. 21.

[41] Wilhelm Halbfass, India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding (New York. 111110) p. 53.

[42] Cronin, op. cit., p. 118.

issues of dogma he was firm', [43] he was no less genuine in his appreciation and love for his people. He is regarded as 'the father of Tamil prose'[44] and Max Müller spoke of him as 'the first European Sanskrit scholar'.[45]

In spite of adversity and calumny, he never abandoned his flock. When towards the end of his life, he was sent to Sri Lanka for reasons of health, he longed to come back to those to whom he belonged. They gave him the title of 'Tattwa Podhakar'; Teacher of Reality, by which he is still known today. He died in 1656 and lies buried in an unmarked grave, still one with his people. 'No Tamil town or village can claim his remains; he belongs to all.[46]

De Nobili's justification of his work was from within the Christian discourse. He very ably set out his defence at the Conference of Goa in 1619, convened by the Pope and presided over by the Archbishop of Goa.[47] He sums up his own argument in four basic principles: 'The evangelical preacher, following the precept of our Lord Jesus Christ and the example of the Apostles is to make himself all to all, and take up that mode of life which will make him acceptable to the people among whom he works. We have explained how this mode of life requires holiness of life, solidity of doctrine, and the adoption of the way of living of the people This was the first Foundation on which stands the Madurai Mission. Secondly, we find that the Church never prohibited the diverse customs and practices observed by different nations. This is the second Foundation. Thirdly, we have seen how innumerable partially social and partially superstitious practices were allowed by the Church to continue after they had been rid of their superstitious elements. This is the third Foundation. Finally, we have shown how the Church allowed innumerable ceremonies and rites, which were wholly religious in character, but which she rid of all

---

[43] Panikkar, op. cit., p. 288.

[44] Halbfass, op. cit., p. 38.

[45] Lectures on the Science of Language, London, 1866-67, cited by A. Sauliere, 'Fr. Roberto de Nobili, S.J., The First European Orientalist', Indica, Indian Historical Research Institute, Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume (Bombay, 1953) p. 373.

[46] A. Saulière., op. cit. p. 276.

[47] S. Rajamanickam, 'The Goa Conferenee of 1619: A Letter of Fr. Robert de Nobill to Pope Paul V', Indian Church History Review (1968) pp, 81-96.

superstition and turned into practices of Christian piety'.[48] And so he argues that the thread, the tuft of hair, the sandal paste, baths, etc … are social customs that should be allowed his neophytes. Basically, then De Nobili's adaptation touched not only the lifestyle of the missionary 'as a Hindu religious agent' [49]among his people, but their social identity and position in society as well.

De Nobili's argument sounds surprisingly contemporary and seems to anticipate the discussion in *An Esssay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*,[50] where Newman accepts 'that great portion of what is generally received as Christian truth is, in its rudiments or in its separate parts, to be found in heathen philosophies and religions'. However, he dismisses Mr Milman's argument against adaptation: 'These things are in heathenism, therefore they are not Christian': We, on the contrary, prefer to say 'these things are in Christianity, therefore they are not heathen' …. from the beginning, the Moral Governor of the world has scattered the seed of truth far and wide over its extent',[51] and the Church draws in and gathers them, 'correcting their errors, supplying their defects, completing their beginnings, expanding their surmises and thus gradually by means of them enlarging the range and refining the sense of her own teaching.'[52]

For a while De Nobili's argument prevailed and his work was allowed to continue. Later as a further concession to caste he introduced in 1640 the *pandarasamis* who ministered to the low castes while the *sanyasis* like de Nobili did to the higher castes. [53] And so the Madurai mission began to flourish, in spite of adversities and persecutions. Where there was not a single convert before De Nobili's arrival, there was a community of 30,000 in 1661. 'The number rose

---

[48] Roberto de Nobili, Adaptation, edited by S. Rajamanickam (Palayam-kottai, 1971) p. 83.

[49] Houtart, op. cit. 1981, p. 176.

[50] John Henry Newman, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine

(New York, 1914) p. 380.

[51] Ibid.,

[52] Ibid. p. 381

[53] A. Francis, 'Soclo-Historical Study of the Pandarasamy' in Jesuit Presence in Indian History, editor Anand Amaladas (Anand, 1988) p. 318-333.

to 75,000 in 1688,90,000 in 1705 and over two lakhs in 1760.'[54] Indeed the community was blessed with Tamil scholars like Constance Beschi, who wrote the first Tamil grammar, and James de Rossi; martyrs, like John de Britto; and a vigorous, inculturated Christian membership. Other missions in Andhra and Karnataka too began to follow this approach.'[55] 'But the Church in India was not prepared to accept such bold steps'.[56]

When the controversy was raked up again the situation was more complex. Dissatisfied with Padroado's performance in the missions, their jurisdiction was being contested by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. The Jesuits too were under attack, inside and outside the Church. And after a long and tortuous struggle, the Malabar rites were condemned even before the Chinese ones.

IV. The Dual Discourse

The decision in favour of the adaptation initiated by the Jesuits in the Madurai mission was as precarious as its condemnation was tragic. Even though there was an inevitable overlap. the verbal discussion was largely located in the religious discourse while the decisive conclusion was made in the political one. This is not surprising, for most often, though not necessarily, it is the political, where power and interests are operative, that dominates the religious, where values and commitments are, in Parsonian terms, the generalized media of exchange.

Basically there were two arguments adduced against these rites; they were superstitious, and the concessions to caste were unchristian. Yet within the prevalent religious discourse such arguments could have been effectively countered.

For one thing, all folk-religions, and the popular religiosity that goes with it, are a socio-cultural-religious mixture, in which faith and superstition can hardly be separated even when they can be distinguished. The decadence of the Church in Europe itself had provoked a Reformation, and the reaction in the Inquisition, was a cure worse than the disease. It certainly intimidated people and helped keep them in line, but such fear hardly ever displaces

---

[54] S. Rajamanickam, The First Oriental Scholar (Palayamkottai, 1972) p, 77

[55] Ibid.

[56] A. Mathias Mundadan, Indian Christians: Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy (Bangalore, 1984) p. 136.

superstition with genuine 'faith'. Actually, there were numerous examples of such 'accommodation' to local customs among the neophytes even in Goa, in spite of the Inquisition there.[57]

The argument against caste was even less convincing. In fact, it seemed quite hypocritical, coming as it did from a Church which had made no official condemnation of slavery nor ever made the freeing of slaves a condition for being received into the Church or the keeping of them a matter for being rejected by it. From Onesimus, for whom St. Paul pleaded in his letter to Philemon, to the horrors of the slave ships, among whom St. Peter Claver laboured in colonial Cartagena, the accommodation of the Church with slavery was surely not less unchristian a concession than the Madurai mission's adjustment to caste. Azu Naik, a local Hindu administrator, complained to the Portuguese king that only the slaves of non-Christians who converted, were entitled to be freed, but not so if their masters were Christians![58]

Nor was this 'adjustment to the caste system' completely acceptable to the local people, but for very different reasons. As long as the Christians were restricted to the low castes there was little opposition. But as it spread to higher castes, the Brahmins were alarmed. For them 'the sharing of the same religion by both high castes and pariahs signified the social degradation of the dominant castes and their voluntary assimilation to the pariahs'.[59] The universalism of Christianity was at odds with the particularism of caste. But in this society 'the void of castelessness' was an even less viable alternative than the ostracism of the outcaste. A feudal culture could have understood this need for social identity in a closed society, outside of which 'an isolated individual had no social existence at all'.[60] except as a sanyasi, a 'renouncer, an individual outside this world'.[61]

Rather the condemnation of these rites was a decision that is intelligible; not so much within the religious discourse of the Catholicism of the time, even though it was articulated in, these terms, but within the political one of secular and sacred power, within which

---

[57] Cf. Anthony D'Costa, The Christianisation of the Goa Islands: 1510-1567 (Bombay,1965).

[58] . ibid. p. 44.

[59] Houtart, op, cit, 1981, p. 182.

[60] Houtart, op, cit, 1981, p. 177.

[61] Louis Dumont, Homo Hierachicus : The Caste System and its Implications (London, 1972) p. 231.

it was really made. If such were not the case, then a proselytizing church could have been expected to bend over to excuse, rather than condemn such practices as increased their numbers, and to wait till later for a fuller integration, as indeed was done for most, especially for forced conversions. But in the final analysis, neither the Portuguese Padroado, nor the Roman Propaganda was really empathetic to the creation of an authentically indigenous Church. And clearly this eventually was where these rites were leading.

The Portuguese with Padroado were determined to 'Lusitanize' the local Christians, which was an implicit extension of Portuguese cultural influence, to where their political power did not reach. Certainly Padroado was protective of the national interest. They kept 'a meticulous watch, to see that no undesirable foreigners were admitted into the royal mission'.[62] Spaniards especially, their national rivals, who had their own *Patronato* and whose friars had reached the Philippines in 1565, were excluded. Moreover, all missionaries of whatever nationality 'sailed in Portuguese ships and were directly subordinated to Portuguese Government control through their provincials and superiors'.[63]

But already with its decline in the seventeenth century, Portugal was unable to meet the political, economic or man-power needs of the missions and so the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith was founded in 1622 in Rome. Its acclaimed means to make the missions 'independent of colonial patronage was to promote indigenous vocations'.[64]But there was resistance to an indigenous clergy from the foreign missionaries.[65]The Jesuits too had ordained only one Indian before 1773.[66]However, for Propaganda, independence from Padroado did not mean less dependence on Rome. 'The impractical idea of centralizing all missionary work throughout the Church under their direct departmental control'[67]only replaced Lisbon by Rome and neither was really much closer to the local Church, or very encouraging of an inculturated one.

The lack of empathy of both Padroado and Propaganda to the local Christian communities is well illustrated by their encounter with the Syrian Christians they found in Kerala. Here was an old and well-

---

[62] Felix Plattner, Jesuits Go East (Westminster, Maryland, 1962) p. 20.

[63] Boxer, op. cit., 1969, p. 234.

[64] Mundan, op. cit., p. 137.

[65] Cf. George M. Moraes op. cit., p. 236-38.

[66] Boxer, op. cit., 1969, p. 252.

[67] Hay, op. cit., p. 99.

settled community eager to strengthen its tenuous links with the universal Church after its period of isolation. [68] But the keenness of the Portuguese Padroado to Latinize them under their jurisdiction, condoned until too late by Rome, precipitated a schism that is still to be completely healed today. With a greater tolerance of the Syrian rite and their Church structures, 'things would have proceeded more peacefully' [69]to a happier outcome.

For the St Thomas Christians, their Latinization would have identified them with the more recent lower-caste converts who were regarded by others as outcastes, 'parangis'. Their religious culture, and their local ecclesial structures supported their communal identity. These in turn were imbedded in the wider society and its caste hierarchy. A denial of their rite would destroy their cultural identity and undermine their social position something neither the colonial state nor church could grasp. [70] Here again, there is a dual discourse: the narrower ecclesial one in which the Portuguese argue to extend their jurisdiction, and the broader socio-cultural one in which the Syrians see themselves compromised. Only in 1934 was there a papal pronouncement by Pius XI against the Latinization of the Orientals. [71]

And only in 1939 and 1940, respectively, were the oaths required of missionaries against the Chinese and Malabar rites withdrawn.[72] The interpretations given by De Nobili and Ricci were accepted, almost two hundred years too late! For only now secularization in the West and the looming end of the colonial era in the East had altered the terms of the political discourse and the discussion could return to the more appropriate religious one.

V. Conclusion: A New Challenge

The Jesuit contribution to the religious and cultural dialogue between Europe and Asia in the 16th to the 18th centuries was as remarkable an achievement as it was a precarious one. Certainly, it

---

[68] . Cf. Placid J. Podipara, The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians (Kottayam, 1979).

[69] ibid., p. 25.

[70] Cf. Houtart and Lemerciner, op. cit, p. 82.

[71] Podipara, op. cit, p. 43.

[72] V. Cronin, Malabar Rites Controversy', in The New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York, 1967) vol. ix, p. 98.

was not without its ambiguities and tensions, but it did open the door to an indigenous and inculturated Christianity which surely had the promise of a deep and enriching encounter between East and West.

The venture was legitimated by the Jesuits largely in terms of a religious discourse, which tried to sift the essentials from the accidentals and present their teaching in the local religious forms and cultural idiom. But this was eventually over-ridden by the ecclesiastical conflicts within and without the Church, the exigencies and limitations of a declining colonial power, the resistance of the local elites supporting the status quo. Hence it was the political discourse that implicitly subsumed the more explicit religious one, and closed the door, which the Jesuits had opened with so much dedication and sacrifice.

Today the door is open once again, and the religious context has dramatically changed with Vatican II, as the political one has in a post-imperialist world. The encounter with the West has precipitated a modernization of Asian societies which has drastically affected their political structures and religious culture. A new dialogue with a new focus is called for today, for the actors in the drama, and the stage-setting itself, have changed. But there is still something to be learnt from Robert de Nobili and the Madurai mission.

For 'like few others, he exemplifies the idea and the problematic nature of the encounter between Christianity and Hinduism and, more generally, the hermeneutic ambivalence and dialectic of missionary teaching and scholarship'.[73] Moreover, the sacred and the secular cannot be separated even when they must be distinguished. There is the ever-present possibility of an overlap between the two in such a discourse and the consequent confusion and obfuscation of the issues under discussion. And even as a certain autonomy for each is demanded, the interaction between the two must be seriously considered. The Malabar and Chinese rites point to the need for a greater sensitivity to the political in the religious, and vice versa.

The institution of caste in India illustrates this complex interaction well. It is so deeply imbedded in the religious ideology and so much part of the political reality here, that any religious or political change must come to terms with it. Even as this institution weakens it still leaves its mark on this society. De Nobili and the mission in Madurai have been criticized today for perpetuating caste among the Christians. But this is a judgement based on hindsight. For the Jesuits of those times may well have expected the hierarchy of caste to be

---

[73] Halbfass, op. cit., p. 38

overtaken and displaced 'by the egalitarianism of the Christian faith, in the same way as the master-slave relationship was in the ancient world.

Popular religiosity too in this sub-continent, underscores most emphatically the sensitive inter-penetration of the sacred and the secular, and the violent potential of exploiting one for the other. Mahatma Gandhi was only too conscious of this. Now in our day religion and politics have made such an explosive mix, we seem to be incapable of separating the issues of one from the other for any kind of inter-religious exchange among people.

Today the inter-religious dialogue poses a new challenge—discovering 'its unfulfilled potential, its deeper, though still hidden aspirations'[74] —and demands a new approach— 'unlearning the inherent dominative mode'[75] to validate inter-cultural exchange. Vatican II, in ways radically different from the post-Tridentine Church, opens up the theological horizons to the possibility of a new hermeneutic for this dialogue. The post-imperialist world too has a different agenda from the colonial one, and focuses on a new content for encounter between the sacred and the secular.

And though the Jesuits began somewhat cautiously after their restoration in 1814,[76] they are once more at the cutting edge of this exchange, and as might be expected, they have become controversial yet again with their Mission Today inspired by their 32nd General Congregation in 1974: 'for the service of faith and the promotion of justice.' Whether their contribution will be as significant in this century as it was in earlier ones, will be a judgment for history to make, but the evidence is already coming in. And it already suggests, that the Jesuits are still controversial, still at the cutting edge of change, still pioneers at the frontiers of a new mission today!

----

[74] Halbfass, op. cit. p. 402.
[75] Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, 1780-1950 (London, 1958) p. 376.
[76] William Bangert, A History of the Society of Jesus (St. Louis, 1986) p.433.

2.
BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS: DIALOGUE AND DIALECTICS

Abstract:

Book review article of *Between Marx and Christ: The Dialogue in German-Speaking Europe.*

The encounter between Marxist political parties and established religious institutions has generally been one of contradiction and conflict. Even when practical compromises had to be made, there was seldom any meeting of minds. However, on both sides of the controversy, there have been a few creative thinkers, not always accepted by their own, who have been open to a creative and enriching dialogue. In this country where religion and even superstition is as deeply ingrained as the endemic injustice and inequity of its social system, such a dialogue would be a much-needed dimension of any serious attempt to address the socio-religious anomalies and dilemmas arising out of this situation.

For while there are some kinds of religion and politics that do not mix, there is another more authentic kind that can engage in constructive dialogue, rather than in dialectical opposition. Unfortunately, it seems that the 'correct party line' still treats religion in reductionist terms, and religious establishments address the social question only tangentially.

Between Marx and Christ traces the dialectical encounter between one major religion—Christianity; in one key context—the

German-speaking Europe. The dialogue is not without its difficulties, though, and there is much to be learnt here by those who would enter into such a venture. This precisely is its relevance for us.

James Bentley, who in a varied career has been 'teacher academic, historian and Anglican clergyman', traces for us the Christian-Marxist dialogue among the German-speaking people over the past hundred years. Beginning in 1870 with considerable hostility and suspicion, but eventually breaking through to a search for alternative forms of socialism and new interpretations of Christianity, he explores in commendable detail the debates and controversies of a period that goes back to Marx himself and culminates with the Prague Spring in 1968. Six German-speaking intellectuals are examined, three Christian and three Marxist. Though only two of these were ever practising politicians—Kautsky and the young Barth—the political consequences of their collective effort was not inconsiderable then and still points to new directions even now. Indeed, two of the six, Barth and Bloch, must by any account be rated amongst the most creative thinkers of the twentieth century' (p. x).

Since 1870, the 'German question' has loomed centre-stage in European history, and the 'social question' was among the most crucial issues of that time in Germany itself. For 'in the early decades of this period it contained the largest urban proletariat in the world'. Clergymen and politicians had to grapple with this to retain any kind of credibility. Christian theologians set out on a critical examination of the life of Jesus and the social and political implications of his teaching. Marxist ideologues too began 'to describe the founder of Christianity as a quasi-mythical primitive communist' (p 4). The discovery of the 'Ur Marx' of *the Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*, in the 1930s made him an effective ally against the monolithic Stalinism of the party, and allowed for more creative responses.

In going back to their origins both sides discovered the potential for a constructive dialogue, even though dialectical contradictions still remained. However, it was in their resistance to Hitler that their mutual suspicions were finally dissolved and the need to cooperate in building a socialist humanism was strongly felt. After the war, radical Christians criticised the Church's co-optation by the ruling classes even as open-minded party members came to realise how repressive some Marxist regimes could be. But just as the dialogue was gaining momentum the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia set it back drastically.

Now the end of the cold war has established a new and unprecedented context for dialogue. This is the historical background in which the discourse takes place.

The first major figure here is Christoph Blumhardt (1842-1919). He was not a systematic theologian and it is difficult to summarise his thought. But the general thrust of teaching was that Jesus had been a socialist and his disciples proletarians, while 'the rich church creates the problem, namely, the misery of mankind' (p 30). He made the connection between the kingdom of God and socialist hope, a theme that was to be a vitalising focus all through this discourse. However, established academic theology was not sympathetic to such themes as yet.

Kaul Kautsky, born in Prague in1854, founded and edited for 34 years a leading Marxist journal, *Die Neue Zeit*. His *Foundations of Christianity,* written in the midst of hectic political activity, 'was the first systematic presentation of primitive Christianity based on Marxist methodology, written in a spirit of strict determinism' (p 43). But his conclusion, that 'from the beginning early Christianity was essentially a petty-bourgeois movement. (p 50), did not stand up to later historical criticism. For ultimately, 'Kautsky was in truth not so much a historian as a journalist, with a case to prove and a journalist's ability to put resources to this end' (p 51).

Karl Barth is certainly a colossus in German theology. Already as a young pastor, he took his Christianity as seriously as he did his socialism, affirming in his 1918, perhaps a little precipitously: 'Jesus is the social movement and the social movement today is Jesus' (p. 62). Bentley rightly insists against contrary opinion, that 'Barth never retreated from his early commitment to socialism' (p. 63), though his active political involvement declined after he accepted a professional chair in 1921. He thought that Christians in politics should stand 'on the extreme left'. His opposition to German imperialism in 1914 and the Nazism later was uncompromising. He refused to equate Stalin with Hitler, even though his commitment was to left-wing socialism not communism. In fact, he considered 'anti-Communism as a matter of principle an evil greater than Communism itself' (p. 74), much to the consternation of, in the cold war, crusaders in the West.

But Barth was even more uncompromising about the 'utterly otherness' of his god, whose kingdom went further than any human revolution, democratic socialist or otherwise. He found that 'it is impossible to mix relative political judgments with the unconditional demands of the gospel (p 73) and he refused to confuse the 'works of man' with the 'grace of god'. He used Marxism 'as a necessary weapon

and an indispensable apologetic and polemical ally' (p 67) to critique a church which has always stood on the side of the 'ruling classes''.

Yet he insisted that all our endeavour here was but to prepare the way for the 'city of god'; that is established by his gratuity. Thus, Barth's theology of revolution was unyieldingly eschatological and he was criticised for being a 'revisionist socialist'. Though he better describes himself as a 'social democratic, but not a religious socialist' (p 67).

The religious eschatology of Barth was carried over into a secular hope by Ernst Bloch's *The Spirit of Utopia,* later his *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. Here he reinstated the messianic elements of Marxism, which he found had much in common with the bible. Was not the central biblical message from Exodus to Jesus one of liberation? And was not Marxism, as Karl Lowith described it 'the story of salvation in the language of economics' (p 80)?

Born in 1885, Bloch emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1933 and returned after the war to the chair of philosophy at Leipzig in East Germany. Here he 'developed an independent and humanist Marxism, preferring to be a heterodox sympathiser rather than an enlisted militant' (p 81).

Bloch's principle of 'creative expectation' leads him to hope beyond socialism to 'utopia' as the essential condition of the human 'to be a human being means in effect to possess a utopia (p 87). Not the detached abstract ones, so thoroughly criticized since Marx but one whose function 'is to rescue human culture from the dream of mere contemplation on the summits that have already been attained, it opens up a view of the true content of human hope, unobstructed by ideology (p 86). However, 'god is dead' for Bloch meant that in his locus there remains a hollow space which reveals 'the blueprint for a future kingdom of freedom' (p 90).

Bloch has been accused of providing left-wing Christians with a woolly encounter with Marxism. But his influence is really far-reaching in radical theology, especially the theology of hope and liberation. And yet in all his interests in the manifestations of religion, his atheism remains uncompromising and a sticking point with his Christian counterparts in dialogue. For as Jürgen *Moltmann*, a theologian who openly acknowledges his debt to Bloch concludes, Bloch sought in vain for 'a concept of history without a concept of transcendence, an eschatology of the world without the resurrection' (p 96). Only the Christian's leap of faith can bridge that gap.

The militant optimism of Bloch finds no place in the political theology of Dorothee Sölle, (b. 1929), who takes her inspiration from

the 'death of god' theologians. She rejects Rudolf Bultmann's demythologisation of the gospels, which reduces them to a proclamation (kerygma) that is individualised and depoliticised; 'suffering as punishment' too is unacceptable. Rather with Bertolt Brecht she would grant that:

'the compassion of the oppressed for the oppressed is indispensable. It is the world's one hope' (.... *Poems,* part III, 1938-1958, J Willet and T Manheim (eds.) translated, 1978, p. 328)

Sölle's political theology would demand forgiveness to be politically mediated, and .... not. Individually negotiated with god, 'behind the backs of those they had wronged' (p 130). Her political concerns soon reached beyond Europe to the unequal exchange and the oppressive exploitation between the powerful and the dependent.

In Eastern Europe, the Christian-Marxist dialogue was promoted by several forerunners until it reached a high point in the first-ever public meeting between the protagonists in 1967 at Marienbad, organised by a philosophy professor of the University of Prague, Milan Machovec. Earlier in 1962 he had published an appraisal of three Christians, Barth, Bonhoeffer and Niemöller—in which he 'aligned himself with the central tradition of the Christian—Marxist dialogue in German-speaking Europe (p. 147)'.

Given the new and dynamic presentations of god, he argued that, the Marxist critique needs to be reformulated. He found 'earlier Marxist attempts to grapple with Christianity seriously outdated'. To dismiss Christianity as beginning with a dreamer and ending with a well-fed clergy as Kautsky had done, was quite inadequate. Rather he found the dynamic basis for Marxism already presaged in the Old Testament by the prophets and concertised in the new by Jesus. Though he was not near converting to Christianity in spite of his fascination for the personality of Jesus, yet he felt that Marxists themselves who had suffered so much unjust violence should 'now think far more in terms of the 'violence' of the Sermon on the Mount and of Gandhi' (p. 150).

The 'Prague Spring' of 1968 was followed by a 'winter' with the Soviet invasion of August that year. But Machovec refused to believe that the dialogue had ended, but rather that only its forms would change. It would have to be less 'show dialogue' and get down to the nitty-gritty, less institutionalised, more de-professionalised too. But most of all 'the Western world could no longer contain the dialogue' (p 157). It would now have to include other words as well, and assimilate the treasures of the east, especially India and China.

In spite of the setback at the end of this period under review, the dialogue has now reached a new threshold. Both sides do not have to be on the defensive with each other any longer, even as Marxists discover the egalitarian and socialist elements of Christianity, and Christians in turn come to appreciate the prophetic and messianic dimensions of Marxism. But differences do remain, best summed up under the conflict of 'Prometheus versus Christ' (Ch. 6).

Marx, who read the works of Aeschylus in Greek each year, was deeply inspired by the myth and regarded the Promethean stance as decidedly anti-Christian. But mythology has come a long way since 19th century rationalism and later and more incisive interpretation of Prometheus, pointed beyond rebellion against, and independence from a punishing and jealous god, to a more complex and richer connection between Prometheus and Christ.

Arnold Toynbee and Erich Fromm dwell on this theme. Bloch made 'a supremely Promethean figure out of Jesus Christ himself' (p. 103). But the crucial issue posed by Lochman demands a response: Is Christ the opposite of Prometheus? That is the question at the heart of every Christian-Marxist dialogue' (p. 109)

Clearly, any resolution of this issue must be premised on a conceptualisation of the divine that does not alienate but liberates the human, and vice versa, an understanding of the human that is open to a transcendence which is precisely its in-depth dimension not just a spiritualised escape. In other words, the divine as essentially immanent and the human as potentially self-transcendent.

Bentley's presentation is lucid and scholarly. He allows the author to speak to us, without imposing on his thought. Besides the six, he explains at some length, we are also introduced to other seminal and creative thinkers, like Paul Tillich and Erich Fromm, Jürgen Moltmann and Josef *Hromádka.*

If the dialogue initiated already is now to be extended beyond Christians, Marxists and German-speaking Europeans then what we can learn from what has gone before needs must be articulated. Though Bentley leaves this implicit in his expose some points are worth underscoring.

For one, we discover that the real openness to dialogue is created not in the intellectual world of concepts, but in the existential encounter of action. For it is in working together to liberate the oppressed masses through critical social intervention, and to opposite tyrannical oppression like Nazism that mutual, trust and appreciation is engendered, and a common ground founded on our basic humanness opened.

Moreover, authoritarian institutions, whether religious or political do not really promote far-reaching dialogue. They are rather threatened by it eventually, even if they encourage it initially. The context of an authentic dialogue must be democratic and egalitarian, not hierarchical and authoritarian. Only then can it be constructive and creative. Finally, it becomes apparent that a mutual critique of very different perspectives, can be equally mutually enriching. For in being open to the other one becomes open to oneself, and in empathetically understanding the other one becomes less dogmatic about oneself.

There are two paradoxical statements about the encounter of Christianity and Marxism that illustrate the underlying dialectic that has made this dialogue fruitful. Barth, the Christian, proclaimed: 'A real Christian must become a socialist (if he is to be in earnest about the reforms of Christianity). A real socialist must be a Christian, if he is in earnest about the reformation of socialism' (p. 62). Bloch, the old Marxist, exclaimed: 'Only an atheist can be a good Christian; only a Christian can be a good atheist' (p. 90). Without an open dialogue such self-criticism would not be possible. And if this dialogue is extended the same could happen to other religious institutions and political parties as well, once again resulting in a constructive dialogue rather than a dialectical opposition between religion and politics.

3.
TOLERANCE AND DIALOGUE AS RESPONSES TO PLURALISM AND ETHNICITY: THE RELEVANCE OF A GANDHIAN DISCOURSE

Abstract:

This study attempts to outline an area of concern and is a beginning rather than a conclusive statement. The inspiration for this venture has come from Gandhi, who by acting locally has challenged us to think globally, even when we think differently from him. This is not merely an intellectual 'search', but a spiritual 'quest' as well. The attempt here is to orient and focus our response to the increasing ethnification in our plural society.

•

I. Introducing the Problem

An Interrogating Critique

Romanticising our own traditions and isolating ourselves in them is an inadequate and defensive response. Gandhi's aspiration can provide us with our best starting point here:

'I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them.' (Young India, June 1921, 170)

This will demand a double-edged response. For, just as a critical modernity must interrogate tradition to construct the present, so too must a renewed tradition challenge modern pathologies with an alternative understanding of normality and not just to glorify our past. What we need to do now is to creatively interrogate and constructively critique Gandhi, just as he did with our traditions and our colonised minds. This is the perspective in which this study is problematised.

Beginning, then, with the two dominant discourses of our freedom movement and after, we shall take a critical look at the multi-dimensional plurality of our present situation, in order to arrive at a more insightful understanding of tolerance, and dialogue. We shall conclude with some comments on ethnicity and class in the South Asian context, and their implications, politico-economic and socio-cultural, for our polity and society.

II. The Dominant Discourses

Gandhian Relevance

The relevance of Gandhi for any discourse on tolerance whether in this country or abroad, cannot be gainsaid. His concern with tolerance was primarily focused on the religious dimension, sarva-dharma-samabhava, but exclusively so. In the context of his understanding of ahimsa and satya, and his strategy of satyagraha, Gandhi has important political and social consequences for any understanding of tolerance.

To begin, Gandhi rejected an elite-mass dichotomy. He 'alone understood the meaning of religiosity of the masses as an attachment to the moral order, to moral economy, moral society and moral polity,' [Joshi 1987:226] in other words, of dharma over adharma. The 'old religious symbolism harnessed to a new secular purpose had an electrifying effect in releasing mass energy and removing fear and generating fearlessness.'[*ibid.*] In Gandhi's swaraj (*Young India*, 29 Jan, 1925) through ahimsa (*Harijan*, 5 Sep. 1936) and satyagraha, (*ibid.*, 27 July 1940) there was no separation of religion and politics. Rather he attempted to make religion more tolerant and politics more moral.

However, Gandhi's reformist Hinduism has its own inherent limitations, particularly on the issue of caste. Here his attempt to establish a basic social equality within the varnashrama-dharma was doomed to be rejected by the more radical and militant movements on the right and on the left. More recently his rediscovery by counter-cultural groups has called for a critical rethinking, not just an undiscerning repetition of his reformist programme. For we believe that there is still a radical relevance to his message today for our destructive and violent age.

Gandhi's sarva-dharma-samabhav, equality to all religions and the essential tolerance and openness it implies is much closer to the reality of the deep and multi-faceted religiosity of our people. It is also more in tune with our Constitutional protection of the rights of minorities, which has been reaffirmed in numerous judgments interpreting and applying legal principles to concrete cases. The present review of minorities by an eleven-judge bench of the Supreme Court is evidence of how seriously such rights are taken, to protect them from abuse by curtailment or misuse.

Nehruvian Rationalism

Nehru's understanding of tolerance, whether this be religious, social or political, derived less from a reform or revival of the Indian tradition, than it was inspired by the modernist Enlightenment. Hence Nehruvian rationalism remained an imposition from the outside even though it claimed Constitutional legitimation for itself.

However, while political institutionalisation may be legally constituted, it requires the appropriate social conditions to survive. And so while our Constitution itself draws on the Enlightenment, it could not inspire mass support for many of its most basic principles. Hence such 'statuary tolerance' became particularly vulnerable to the attack of religious nationalists and fundamentalists, and others who would homogenise communities and people, in the interests of some narrow chauvinism.

An activation of a national consensus cannot be done in abstraction from the social processes in which it must be grounded. It cannot be imposed as part of a dominant hegemony, as middle-class rationalists are wont to urge if it is to be liberating for the masses. Thus grounding tolerance in middle-class sensibilities truncates it by excluding the mass of our people. This was the decisive difference between the Gandhian discourse and the Nehruvian one.

Unfortunately, the Gandhian discourse, which had dominated our freedom struggle, was eventually decisively upstaged by the Nehruvian one in the post-independence period. The intrinsic weakness of this project in the Indian context has gradually led to its collapse from within. For in the cascade of crises overtaking our society, it has become increasingly apparent that an adequate response now needs must go beyond the conceptual constraints of that discourse.

Pre- and Post- Modern Responses

For some the Nehruvian framework was as much, if not more, a cause of, than a cure for our ills. Such post-modernist responses, however, still remain largely an exogenous discourse, rooted in concerns that are not crucial but rather alien to us, except when we 'ventriloquise' for the West. Unfortunately, the more traditionally rooted responses have not been of much help either. Some of these are really obscurantist and pre-modern, such as religious fundamentalism, which denies the rationality of the modern

Enlightenment in a futile attempt to recapture a supposedly lost innocence; while others would press into the future with a 'cultural nationalism' that selectively misinterprets our history from ethnocentric and chauvinist perspectives.

But these responses have only deepened our crises, and divided our peoples; they have precipitated a violence and cynicism that can only add up to a negation of whatever has been left of the Gandhian legacy. Yet Gandhi, I believe, today represents a counter-cultural response for alternative community building in our society. To my mind Gandhi provides us not just with a utopian critique, rather he opens out constructive possibilities for us to work with. For Gandhi creatively re-interpreted our tradition just as incisively as he critiqued the West. His struggle for our freedom, implied a de-colonisation of our mind, an exorcising of the intimate enemy, internalised from own our past, as well as from our encounter with the West.

III. The Context of Pluralism

'Self' and 'Other'

All pluralism in society is eventually founded on the polarity between the 'self' and the 'other' among different persons and diverse groups. The 'other' cannot simply be wished away, but always poses a question to the 'self', one that will not just go away. One can ignore the question only for a while, but the questioning cannot be so easily negated, unless one destroys the questioner. History bears witness to how dominant persons and groups have eliminated subordinate ones in massacres and genocides, or forcibly assimilated them in miscegenation or ethnocide.

But where such brutal solutions cannot be attempted, either because of the realities on the ground or the ethical ideals of a people, then, tolerance can be our only viable human response. Obviously an understanding of tolerance, especially in a pluralist society, must elaborate its many dimensions and distinct levels. Hence the need for a dialogue between the 'self' and the 'other', one that moves through these dimensions and across these levels of tolerance to a fulfilling and enriching encounter of the 'self' and the 'other'.

Moreover, it is important that this encounter between groups, between the self and the other, ego and alter, be mediated by a third. Hence the need to extend the dyad to a triad. Whether this third party be a more specific agency, like 'the nation-state, or simply the government, [Gupta 1996:11] or a more general frame of reference,

like 'Chomsky's grammar, Levi-Strauss's 'structure', Marx's 'mode of production', and Lacan's 'Other' (the big 'O'),' [*ibid* 183] it is this triadic approach that makes for 'contextualising human agency and culture in a dynamic holistic framework.' [*ibid*.139]

For us, in the Indian scenario, the most significant third in the triad is of course the state for the Constitution of India recognises 'the principle of equality between groups <u>qua</u> group.' [Sheth 1989:8] This is the foundation for collective rights with special consideration for the more vulnerable sections of our society, such as linguistic and religious minorities and socially and economically backward classes. And yet today there are powerful movements for homogenisation within the same body politic.

Individual and Collective Rights

Now an individual's identity is never formed in a walled-in consciousness. Such solipsism can only be dangerously pathological and asocial. So too a group's identity is never constructed entirely from within the group but always in an engagement/relationship with its environment, both natural and social. Thus the importance of dialogue with other groups and communities makes group identity a dynamic rather than a static process. Indeed, because group identity is always in process, it can be reinvented, reshaped, reconstructed anew by each generation. [Fischer 1990:195]

Yet there is always the danger, the possibility, and, depending on the power relationship involved, the probability of a group being engulfed and assimilated into its social environment to the point that it loses its distinctiveness, its identity. Only when difference becomes a positive value in a society is there a defence against such encompassment especially for the weaker, more vulnerable groups, such as tribals and Dalits, various minorities and other marginalised groups are in our society. Only a sustained commitment to tolerance guarantees equal treatment and dignity for such groups, very much as it does for similarly vulnerable individuals/persons.

This is the Gandhian insight and he effectively based his praxis of ahimsa and satyagraha on such an ethics. Indeed. for him: 'If we want to cultivate a true spirit of democracy, we cannot afford to be intolerant. Intolerance betrays want of faith in one's own cause.' (Young India 2 Feb 1921)

And as individual rights protect individuals so too must cultural rights protect and promote group identity and dignity. 'Cultural

rights', argues Veena Das, 'express the concern of groups to be given a sign of their radical acceptance in the world.' [Das 1994:156] This is why they are contested with such political passion. However, conceding these de jure is not as yet affirming them de facto. Affirmative action is often needed but negated in the name of a formal justice that has lost its substance.

The basic foundation for all this must be a radical acceptance of plurality in all the multi-faceted dimensions of a plural society's religious culture and of its political economy. This can then become the point of departure for a committed response. For acceptance cannot be creative or constructive if it is merely uncritical and passive. In the final analysis, the trajectory of our response of pluralism must begin with accepting differences and respecting other identities, and reaching out to live and celebrate diversity as parts of a larger organic whole.

The Limits of Repression

However, we cannot avoid the grim reality of the divisions that mark our societies and our neighbourhoods. For if common human concerns bring us together differing social interests set us apart. We cannot of course wish away such differences, nor can we impose a uniformity over them, or enforce a consensus on them. In an earlier less pluri-form world, most unfortunately, the accepted way of settling such differences was by confrontation and controversy, wherein each party tried not only to establish its own position, but at the same time to demolish the one of the other.

However, this age of controversy settled nothing and neither did the religious wars it precipitated. For particularly in matters of conscience, human beings cannot be forced, or imposed upon for an indefinite length of time. Yet there remains the temptation to fall back on such inhuman and 'final solutions'! History witnesses to numerous such instances even into our own era. Vested interests are being sorted out through ethnic cleansing regardless of the human cost; communal violence is used as strategy to mobilise support and redraw the political map in blood. Today in a globalising world, conflicting economic interests are being interpreted as the 'clash of civilisations' with irreconcilable religious worldviews. In a unipolar world, such an understanding only invites the dominant cultures to suppress or assimilate the subaltern ones.

But repression and force only make for unstable and potentially violent situations. In our world today pluralism is an inescapable necessity, whether ideological, religious, or otherwise. We have, moreover, evolved a whole doctrine of human freedom and the dignity of the human person. But we have still a long way to go in making these a reality in the lives of our people.

Diversity and Difference

But differences are not only between the individual and the group, they are also between groups and peoples. Such differences at the level of the group can be even more intractable and uncompromising than those at the individual level. Religion is certainly one of the most primordial of these and fraught with a huge potential for explosive conflict. We are still coming to terms with the implications of religious freedom and cultural rights for different groups within a single society. We are beginning to realise that uniformity is not the only or the most creative response to difference. It often forces differences underground and when divisions disappear at one level they reappear at another, often in even more divisive and volatile expressions. Nor is mere co-existence a viable answer in an ever-shrinking world.

Hence we are coming to value diversity as something potentially enriching and even uniting at a higher level of union. This is certainly true of the rich religious traditions of this land, when they are not manipulated for narrow political gain or subversive communal interests. It is such an enriching union which must inspire us as neighbours to reach out to each other in a common concern and in a shared faith, a union that brings us together with our differences into a unity in diversity, one that does not negate our peculiarities, but rather one that accepts and respects, yes, even celebrates them.

In other words the necessity of pluralism today is not to be isolated as an unnecessary evil to be repressed, before it engulfs us further; or tolerated as a necessary one to be distanced, since it cannot be dismissed. Rather it is a challenge which will not go away. It must be constructively and creatively met or it will exhaust, if not destroy us.

For we cannot any more settle conflicting differences between groups and peoples through violence. Too much blood and tears have been shed on this already. The only way open for us now is that of tolerance and dialogue. Indeed, even with the intolerant and the violent we must still exercise tolerance and attempt dialogue. But lest what we are urging seems naive and simplistic we must clarify our

understanding of these concepts so that the limits of tolerance and the conditions for dialogue can be addressed at some depth in their complexity.

IV. The Levels of Tolerance

In our understanding tolerance cannot have merely a negative or passive meaning. Rather it must also imply an active and positive response to coping with our differences. Thus we can distinguish levels of tolerance from reluctant forbearance to joyful acceptance. Here we are not considering the ethical constraints on tolerance in a negative sense, i.e., the boundaries beyond which tolerance would be unethical. This would require another discussion. Rather we focus more positively on the limits to which tolerance can be constructively extended.

Following Raimundo Panikkar, [Panikkar 1983: pp.20-36], we can distinguish four levels of tolerance. The first is tolerance as a practical necessity, i.e., bearing with a lesser evil for the sake of a greater good. This amounts to passively accepting necessary evils, and is little more than political pragmatism.

The second level is based on the realisation that the human grasp of any truth is always partial and never complete. Certainly, this is true of religious or revealed truth. Such a philosophical realisation makes us cautious in absolutising our own 'truths', and even more so in rejecting those of others we disagree with, and from such philosophically founded tolerance will come respect.

At the third level, ethical or religious tolerance derives from the moral imperative to love others, especially those different from us, even our enemies. This is far more demanding than the acceptance and respect at the earlier levels of tolerance. Yet the different 'other' here is still the 'object' of one's love. Such love can even make us celebrate our own differences, but it cannot overcome or transcend them completely in a higher unity.

Overcoming this objectification of the other is 'a mystical experience of tolerance.' Panikkar explains that here tolerance 'is the way one being exists in another and expresses the radical interdependence of all that exists'. (*ibid.*23) In the final analysis it is only this kind of mystical tolerance that can overcome and transcend the contradictions and conflicts between religious traditions, bringing them into a higher communion.

3. Tolerance and Dialogue as Responses to Pluralism and Ethnicity

Dimensions of Understanding

At each of these levels, the political, the philosophical, the religious, and the mystical, following Panikkar again, we can distinguish two dimensions of understanding, or rather pre-understanding.[*ibid*.25-34] Thus our comprehension can be in terms of a more or less explicit meaning that is conceptually grasped; or in the context of our pre-understanding, of implicit pre-judgments and presumptions, in terms of a meaningfulness that can be only symbolically represented. These are the levels of 'ideology' and 'myth', respectively.

Myth as defined by Panikkar, set 'the horizon of intelligibility' for us, 'over against which any hermeneutic is possible.' [*ibid*.101] It is taken for granted, unquestioned, a part of our pre-understanding, something we accept in 'faith'.

Once it is rationally articulated, myth is demythicised and so is our faith, in a 'passage from <u>mythos</u> to <u>logos</u>', from myth to reason, as the articulated conscious word. This then develops into an 'ideology', which in this context Panikkar describes as:

'the more or less coherent ensemble of ideas that make up critical awareness, i.e., the doctrinal system that enables you to locate yourself rationally... a spacio-temporal system constructed by the logos as a function of its concrete historical moment.' [*ibid* 21]

These distinctions have crucial implications for our understanding and practice of tolerance.

For the more coherent and cogent the articulation of an ideology is, the more likely it is to reduce other understandings to its own terms, or reject them, if they cannot be fitted into its own horizons. We do of course, need ideologies for we need to articulate and rationalise our understanding in the various dimensions of human experience. But ideologies must be able to accept such alternative understandings, and open themselves out into broader and deeper perspectives. This will depend on the myth, the pre-understanding, from which it derives. For the more extensive and intensive the myth's meaningfulness, the richer and denser its symbolism, the more open and accommodating the ideology that can be built on it.

Hence we can conclude with Panikkar: *'the tolerance you have is directly proportional to the myth you live and inversely proportional to the ideology you follow.'* [*ibid*. p.20, emphasis in original text] What we need, then, is a <u>metanoia</u> of our myths to escape and be liberated from the <u>paranoia</u> of our ideologies, whether religious,

political or otherwise. Both myth and ideology are found in all the dimensions of tolerance indicated earlier, though there is obviously a greater affinity for ideology in political and philosophical tolerance, as there is for 'myth' in the religious and mystical one.

Complexity and Challenge

With reference to our socio-cultural traditions, then, we can, and indeed we must distinguish between the mythic and the ideological. This makes for a greater complexity and challenge in our praxis, as an action-reflection-action process, a dialectical interaction between theory and practice. It is our conviction that the constructive potential of such a dialectic can be fully realised only in a creative dialogue for both myth and ideology. For it is only in the mutual encounter of myths that they are deepened and enriched, and in the reciprocal exchange among ideologies that these become more open and refined.

Now in this country, plurality is so deeply and intricately woven into our society that any attempt to homogenise it can only be suicidal. But ways of coping with it range from indifference and non-engagement, all the way to affirmation and celebration. Given the intricacies of our social interdependence, the first approach can only end with a nihilistic relativism if it does not collapse in annihilating chaos. The second must open into ever broader dimensions and deeper levels of tolerance. Only then can we experience a metanoia in ourselves that will free us from the paranoia we have of each other.

V. The Hermeneutics of Dialogue

Difference and Indifference

It is this second that must be the basis of a dialogue in which my 'self' and the 'other' are both discovered and enriched. And as we unveil our 'self' in the 'other', and the 'other' in our 'self', we will find that our deepest identity and bonding transcends all differences in an immanent I-thou communion. Indeed, dialogue is the most constructive and creative practice of tolerance, and the only viable way to cope with the bewildering diversity and difference that both challenges and confounds us, it is both a precious treasure and a dangerous legacy!

Now there is always a danger of celebrating differences in seclusion and not in dialogical encounters with the other. The assertion of such isolated alterity, as in fact with some post- modernists, easily 'shades over into the celebration of indifference, non-engagement and indecision.' [Dallmayr 1989:90] Such incommunicable uniqueness cannot but collapse into a nihilistic relativism, which is very far from the radical relativity on which a creative pluralism and a respectful tolerance must be premised.

Dialogue and Dialectics

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

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

Dialogue, then, goes beyond dialectics. For 'dialectics is the optimism of reason. Dialogue is the optimism of the heart.' [*ibid.* :243] Thus we can speak of a 'dialectical dialogue' which would pertain to the encounter of ideologies, while a 'dialogical dialogue' would be more pertinent to the meeting of myths.

'Difference', then, as Gadamer insists 'stands at the beginning of a conversation, not its end,' [Gadamer 1989a: 113] awaiting the moment of coherence, of fulfilment, of a 'fusion of horizon' that will complete the hermeneutic circle and set it off again for us— 'we who are a conversation'. [*ibid.*: 110] For we are constructed and deconstructed in dialogue with ourselves and others. Indeed, 'the conversation that we are is one that never ends.' [Gadamer 1989a:95] For dialogue and conversation are intrinsic to the human condition, the very language of our existence, the essential hermeneutic of all our experience.

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

'to recognise oneself (or one's own) in the other and find a home abroad— this is the basic movement of spirit whose being consists in this return to itself from otherness.' [Gadamer 1975:15]

But we would emphasise a further implication of such dialogical hermeneutics: 'the challenge to recognise otherness or the alien in oneself (or one's own).' [Dallmayr 1989:92]

VI. The Dialectics of Ethnicity

It should now be apparent how plurality without tolerance and dialogue can only lead to an intractable escalation of community and groups conflicts and contradictions, as in this country and so many others, especially in South Asia, where the ethnic cauldron so easily boils over into violence. Indeed, we are witnessing an increasing ethnification among our peoples.

Now given a plurality of discourses, ethnicity is best problematised as a dialectic process in which a group produces and reproduces itself in the context of its material history. A political economy approach does well in identifying the necessary conditions in this, but it must be extended to integrate a socio-cultural one to deal with the sufficient conditions of its development. Moreover, it is important to distinguish between a hegemonic and a counter-hegemonic ethnicity by locating ethnic divisions within the class structure of a society.

In describing ethnicity three dimensions must be considered: objective, subjective and contextual, as critical to understanding the construction of its identity and the recognition of its dignity. The first provides the objective basis for defining an ethnic category, the second makes for the subjective construction of an ethnic identity, and the third situates the social context for inter-group relations.

Ethnic Identity and Social Dignity

An individual's identity is formed in the intimate encounter with significant others. An ethnic identity, however, is socialized in a more public space. There is of course a relationship between the two in any ethnie, but the first is never a straightforward projection of the latter.

Inevitably there are those who can dominate such social spaces to their own advantage. Hence the importance of 'the politics of recognition' in shaping our identity, especially in a multi-cultural context. [Taylor 1992:25] Moreover, 'nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.' [*ibid*] i.e., a negative identity, a negated dignity. This is precisely what prejudice is all about.

The intimate relationship between identity and dignity must be considered in the context of the politics of universalism that founds equal dignity, and the politics of difference on which unique identities

are premised. The first leads to similarity and homogeneity which is the quest of the nation-state. Second accepts particularity and heterogeneity which is the aspiration of a multi-cultural society.

It is possible for one to contradict and displace the other. The first quest may cancel out the second aspiration or vice versa. There is then a dilemma here, but if we concede a priority to the universally human over the culturally specific, then a constructive reconciliation is possible. This would mean that a homogenizing universalism cannot be allowed to be so absolute as to negate cultural and ethnic diversities, but rather made to respect and even celebrate them. within the limits set by cultural rights. However, 'the right to culture' cannot be unconditional either. For cultural rights cannot contradict more fundamental human rights; rather they can only be legitimate in the context of 'a culture of rights.' [Bhargava 1991]

Class Contradictions and Ethnic Conflicts

A viable analysis of the multiple inter- and intra- ethnic and elite conflicts and contradictions must consider the class factor if it is to do justice, or indeed have any relevance to the complexities involved. Thus where a big ethnic community is stratified by class, or a large social class is segmented in diverse ethnic groups, contradictions between ethnic identities and class interests can develop, that allow group consciousness to be manipulated in favour of vested interests. Thus a dominant class can divide and rule subordinate ones by playing up its diverse ethnic identities just as an elite within an ethnic community can co-opt its people to alien interests by appealing to their common identity.

Hence ethnicity can be both mobilizing and divisive. It can be used to unite a group against discrimination; or to divide groups to exploit them. We must be sensitive to the delicate distinction between ethnicity as a uniting 'myth' and ethnicity as a dividing 'ideology'. Hopefully, such an analysis will help to reconstruct a more positive ethnicity, one that is neither exclusivist nor defensive, but respectful of and open to the other, as parts of a whole, in which each contributes and receives to the mutual enrichment of each group, and the overall advantage of society.

Nationalist Ideology and Ethnic Myth

The crucial question that must now be addressed is this: how do we ensure the necessary tolerance in order to promote a dialogue between the plurality of the 'self', the 'other' and the 'state' (the Other with the capitalised 'O')?

Nationalism has certainly been one of the five most powerful ideologies for mobilizing people in the modern world. [Ward 1959] Yet the very ideology that has been used to unite people in a common cause, has also been imposed on subordinate groups by dominant ones to assimilate them into their vested interests.

Here too as with ethnicity we must make a decisive distinction between the dual characteristics of nationalism. For 'nationalism' signifies both an ideological doctrine and a wider symbolic universe and fund of sentiments.' [Smith 1994: 725] The ideology claims the sole source of political power for the nation and the ultimate loyalty of its citizens, preferably in their own sovereign nation-state. The wider 'culture of nationalism' is concerned with transcending narrower group loyalties for the 'ideals of autonomy, unity and identity', [*ibid.*] in a larger more free, egalitarian and fraternal whole.

There is an inherent conflict here between an assimilating national ideology and a resistant ethnic consciousness. But in a wider weltanschauung of nationalism there need be no contradiction between the national mythology and the ethnic 'mythomoteur', the constitutive political myth of an ethnie.' [Smith 1994:716] They both can be reconciled in a larger whole, constituting a unity in diversity. We believe, such a pluralist culture of nationalism will allow for a multi-ethnic nation in a multi-nation state.

VII. The Gandhian 'Civil-State'

To our thinking, neither the adversarial model of conventional liberal politics, nor the recently proposed 'consociational' one of elite negotiation and consensus [Lijphart 1977:25] seem adequate to this venture. These are both Western models premised on a pragmatism born of their particular history. We need to break out of such textbook models, and imagine and construct our own, premised on the crucial distinction between the state and society so important for most non-western civilizations.

In the Gandhian view the more minimalist a state and the less dependent a society was on it, the greater the space for democratic

participation and national integration for a unity in diversity. [Jain 1989] For Gandhi the state was basically an instrument of violence in a concentrated and organized form, [Ramamurthi 1986: 136] and hence rather than the capturing of state power by a few, his endeavour was to generate people power for the many. This decentralisation and mass mobilization forms the basis of the Gandhian concept of a moral polity and the non-violent state. [Rao 1986: 147]

The basis for this would be the older civilisational order in which the state did not order society, rather it is the order of society that the state maintained. It is possible then, in this indigenous model, to consider

'the state not as an instrument of an ethnically defined nation, but a political entity functioning under the control of a civil society. It will be a state for and on the behalf of civil society: in brief a civil state and not a nation state' [Sheth 1989: 626]

Patriotism and Nationalism

For in Gandhi

'overtime, the Indian freedom movement ceased to be an expression of only nationalist consolidation; it came to acquire a new stature as a symbol of the universal struggle for political justice and cultural dignity.' [Nandy 1994:2-3]

Hence in Gandhi's patriotism,
'there was a built-in critique of nationalism and refusal to recognize the nation-state as the organizing principle of the Indian civilization and as the last word in the country's political life.' [Nandy 1994:3]

Indeed, for Gandhi, as with Tagore, this was 'the ultimate civilizational ambition of India: to be the cultural epitome of the world and convert all passionate self-other debates into self-self debates.' [*ibid*.:82] In other words to convert divisive debates into integrating dialogues, to transform exclusive identities into inclusive ones, to change hostile controversy into empathetic consensus.

For only a civil society, that can incorporate the state within a larger civilisational matrix of coexistence and co-operation among interlocking groups, will be able to defuse the conflict and contradiction between exclusive ethnicity and homogenising nationalism, and reconstruct them in more constructive and creative

ways, in the richer diversity of civilisation, and a deeper unity of civic humanism. Only then will the aggressive political nation-state have withered away! Only then will a multi-nation state constrained in a multi-cultural society be feasible.

VII. Concluding the Discussion

To recapitulate the argument, we began this presentation with a discussion of the inescapable plurality of our society, and urged tolerance and dialogue as an authentic humanising response. We examined the limits to which tolerance can be constructively extended at various levels, with respect to two dimensions of understanding: 'myth' and 'ideology'. We treated dialogue as a fundamental condition of our human existence and urged a metanoia of our hearts to free us from our paranoia of each other.

Finally, we focused on ethnicity as process, and the relationship of diverse kinds of ethnicity to various forms of nationalism. But none of these by themselves guarantee an adequate political model to address the fundamental issues involved: issues of social pluralism and distributive justice, of group identity and personal dignity, of ethnic diversity and cultural rights, of economic equality and political participation. Hence beyond the nation-state, a civil-state embedded in a civilisational order is required. This will make possible a multi-nation state in a multi-cultural society.

Today tolerance and dialogue are defining ways of being human in our plural, ethnified world. The relevance of Gandhi to all this cannot be over-emphasised: whether this be an ethic for tolerance or an epistemology for dialogue, an alternative politics or a counter-cultural community, Gandhi's sensitivity to pluralism and his understanding of truth as praxis, his commitment to non-violence and his practice of satyagraha, his pursuit of swarajya and his critique of modernity, all this and more makes Gandhi a crucial ally in defining the terms of a critical alternative discourse, for a multi-ethnic society in our times, a society in which tolerance and dialogue would be a crucially defining/definitive response.

Some Searching Questions

This study has attempted to identify the themes in a discourse relevant to a plural society and a multi-ethnic state, though it can by

itself make no pretence of dealing adequately with all the themes and topics involved. This would need to be part of a larger and perhaps a team effort to frame the questions to be probed and articulate the issues to be explored. Hence the attraction of a seminar/workshop that could help towards this end.

Here some of these questions and issues are presented for discussion at this seminar and further investigation later. These are intended to focus our concerns so that our response can be more fine-tuned and committed.

1. Given the hard reality of our pluriform society, and the impossibility of homogenising our peoples without dehumanising them, how do we set a framework for a 'politics of difference', based on unique identity, and a 'politics of universalism', based on equal dignity? What space do we give for the politics of recognition and affirmative action?

2. In choosing tolerance as our response to plurality, how do we explore the various dimensions and levels of toleration, and establish ethical and practical limits for them? How do we legitimate and practice a tolerance that is not just a matter of acceptance of the other, but one of respect for another's difference, and even a celebration of our diversity?

3. How do we contextualise the dialogue between the 'self' and the 'other', within and across various levels of interaction, of persons, groups, and communities in our society? How do we establish individual and community rights within a framework that respects the dignity of persons and the identity of groups?

4. What relationships do we need to explore and establish between civil society and the state? What are the possibilities and the resources we have to construct a 'civil state', that will contain both ethnicity and nationalism, since we seem unable to exorcise either in our world today?

References

Bhargava. Rajeev, 1991, 'The Right to Culture', in K. M. Panikkar, ed., *Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture*, Manohar, N. Delhi.

Dallmayr. Fred R., 1989, 'Hermeneutics and Deconstruction: Gadamer and Derrida in Dialogue', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, pp.75-92.

Das, Veena, 1994, 'Cultural Rights and the Definition of Community', in Oliver Mendelsohn and Upendra Baxi, ed.s, The Rights of Subordinated Peoples, Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi, pp. 64-116.

Fischer, Michael M.J., 1990, 'Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory', in Clifford and Marcus, ed.s, *Writing Culture*, pp. 194-233.

Gadamer. Hans-Georg, 1989a, 'Destruktion and Deconstruction.', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, pp. 102, 113.

_____(1989b) 'Letter to Dallmayr', *ibid*. pp.93-101.

_____(1975) *Truth and Method*, Seabury Press, New York.

Gupta, Dipankar, 1996, *The Context of Ethnicity: Sikh Identity in a Comparative Perspective*. Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi.

Ingold, Tim, 1994, *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, Routledge, London.

Jain. L.C., 1989, 'National Integration in a Gandhian Perspective' Gandhi Marg, Vol 10, N 12, pp. 751-66.

Joshi, P.C., 1987, 'Secularism and the Religiosity of the Oppressed: Some Reflections', *Man and Development*, vol. 9, No.4, Dec. pp. 201-235.

Lijphart, Arend. 1977, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration,* Yale, Univ. Press, New Haven.

Michelfelder. Diane P. and Richard E. Palmer, ed.s, 1989, *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter,* State Univ. of New York.

Nandy. Ashish., 1994, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism*, Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi.

Panikkar. R., 1983, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-cultural Studies*, Asian Trading Corp. Bangalore.

Ramamurthy. Acharya, 1989, 'Gandhian Perspective on the Reconstruction of the Indian Polity', Ramashray Roy, ed., op.cit., pp.146 - 164.

Rao. K. Raghavendra, 1986, 'Political Philosophy and Transformation of Indian Politics: The Gandhian Paradigm', in Ramashray Roy, ed. op.cit., pp.127 - 145.

Roy. Ramashray., ed., 1986, *Contemporary Crisis and Gandhi*, Discovery Pub. House, Delhi.

Sheth. D.L., 1989, 'State, Nation and Ethnicity: Experience of Third World Countries', *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol 29, No. 12, 25 May, pp. 615-26.

Smith. Anthony. D., 1994, 'The Politics of Culture: Ethnicity and Nationalism', *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, Tim Ingold, ed., Companion Encyclopedia. op. cit. pp. 706-733.

Taylor, Charles., 1992, Multiculturalism and 'The Politic of Recognition', Princeton Univ. Press, New. Jersey.

_____ *Reconciling Solitudes*, 1993, McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, Montreal.

Ward. Barbara, 1959, Five Ideas That Change the World, Hamish Hamilton, London.

4.
THE RECENT ATROCITIES AGAINST CHRISTIANS: SUGGESTION FOR AN INTRA-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Abstract:

Rather than a confrontationalist attitude, we need to take a firm stand of resistance by using all the official means, the media and especially the courts to protest and pursue the culprits when atrocities against our people are committed.

The first basis of our response to the recent atrocities against Christians in this country, should be to put our own house in order. Raimon Panikkar's suggestion of an 'intra-religious' dialogue, i.e., between persons within a religious community, is a potent and practical way for such a community to thus come to terms with itself, especially when it is under pressure from without. However, any dialogic encounter implies an openness to introspection and a willingness to change. It is on these presumptions that the reflections here are made, as an invitation, not a confrontation. We need to challenge ourselves to a more united and effective response to our current situation and not break into in-fighting and recriminations.

To begin we must have a serious examination of conscience about where we were, the official church and the Christian community, when other minorities were being attacked. Whether it was with regard to the Babri Masjid riots in 1992 December and 1993 January, or the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 or communal riots before that, I do not recall any official response from the Catholic church protesting such atrocities. Only a bishop in Delhi said something to that effect regarding the Babri Masjid riots, and he was not the Catholic one! Such silence requires a public act of repentance! And I do believe that this must be the beginning of our approach to the communal atrocities against us.

We need to understand the background of where such hostility comes from. Answering fundamentalism with fundamentalism only creates a spiral of violence as we have seen with religious minorities all over South Asia. It would be a pity if the Christians went the same way, and flattered themselves that this was martyrdom! We need to ask ourselves seriously about the difference between martyrdom and fanaticism!

We need to realise that we have not shaken off the cultural alienation arising out of a colonial past. The aggressive missionary of the past, full of zeal, cannot be our model today. Such a person is regarded as offensive. That is why the word 'missionary' is our vernaculars has such a derogatory connotation. We need a more open and dialogic approach to other religions and a greater respect and appreciation of believers of other faiths.

Extra-territorial jurisdiction does not sit well with any nationalist government. It is one thing to talk of a spiritual inspiration, from Rome; of a spiritual centre of focus and of unity in the chair of Peter, and another to have every single major administrative appointment controlled from outside. Surely the Catholic principle of subsidiarity needs to be applied in the church first before it is preached outside.

We need to seriously take into consideration that conversion in this country is a political act. And not only for the Hindutva brigade, but for a large number of well-meaning Hindus as well. We ourselves portray this as an act of spiritual service, in bringing people the truth, but too often it really amounts to increasing the membership of our own in-group or party! What is the import of the constant concern about the number of baptisms in this country and in the missions? Conversion is indeed a legitimate political act, but then we must fight any opposition to it politically and not just with the religious stance that we often take. The neo-Buddhists in this country make no pretence about the political implications and the social protest implied in their conversion out of Hinduism. Moreover, a change of religious commitment need not imply a change of cultural identity or of national loyalty.

We need a new theology to rethink what is often propagated as the direct proclamation of the Gospel. We cannot escape our past, with its close association of the missionary with colonialism. How do we witness the good news today, that Jesus brings us, in a way in which people can understand? After Vatican II can we hold the old axiom without further qualification: '*extra Ecclesiam, nulla salus*' (no

salvation outside the church)? Surely the old theology must now yield to a new one?

We need to develop a theology and a culture for our practice of inter-religious dialogue. This is really the need of the hour, and certainly the great contribution that the church in India can make not just to the universal Catholic Church, but also to world religions as well. But first, we must learn to dialogue from a position of equality. We still enter into discussions with the implicit belief that we have, the truth, the whole truth and that others always will have more to learn from us than we from them! Are we in dialogue as open to being converted by them as we expect them to be open to being converted by us?

The bishops of India should be able to issue a pastoral letter on national issues such as communalism, as the American ones have done on national issues there. It is a sad reflection on the leadership of the church in our country that this has not been done or even effectively considered.

We use minority rights in a defensive and often illegitimate manner. Thus, we insist that Dalit Christians get reservations as per Central government norms. But our own Christian institutions claim minority rights to reject reservations for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. The political climate is changing sharply against minority rights precisely because of such abuse. Isn't it strange that even Dalit Christians are complaining about discrimination in our church and we are claiming that the government must take the responsibility for social discrimination against them by reservations in government institutions even as we refuse to concede the same for them in ours? There is no overall policy in the church to give reservations for Dalit Christians in Christian institutions at all levels, let alone in positions of institutional administration and power.

Rather than a confrontationist attitude, we need to take a firm stand of resistance by using all the official means, the media and especially the courts to protest and pursue the culprits when atrocities against our people are committed. Making back-door deals with highly-placed officials, is not a game we can play today. Those in command must be sensitive to the situation of those in the 'trenches'. For as in any conflict, it is always those in the frontline facing the fire, who are more at risk than the ones behind who make the decisions.

The present atrocities might really shake us out of our complacency, but they could push us into a defensive stance and eventually into even greater withdrawal. I believe our challenge now is not just to pray to St. Michael to cast all our enemies into hell.

Rather I believe that the Spirit is calling us to examine ourselves and to reach out in dialogue and fellowship with all others especially those who suffer like we do. We must now, as a community, read and discern the signs of the times and follow where the Spirit leads us, in faith and hope and love.

5.
CREATIVE DIALOGUE FOSTERED THROUGH ART

 (A response to the Symposium), *Euntes Docete*, Vol. 8, 2003 – 2004, pp. 57 – 64 / 2050 words

Abstract:

The conscious and constant aim of religious art has been to suggest the divine and make it palpable. In its most important manifestations, the art is the echo of a supernatural world full of mystery and exaltation, expressed in palpable forms, understandable to the human mind. Often Indian art is suggestive of something beyond human forms, which do not correspond to the known physiological laws. The conventions adopted by artists are not only appropriate to express spiritual forms but they also contribute a treasure of aesthetic life.

I. Art as Creative

Art is creative; it reveals and challenges in all its 'languages', its symbolic expressions, in whatever form these may take: a verbal, auditory, visual, plastic medium. As creative art must then be innovative, dynamic, and transformative. Hence in a static and tradition-bound society, art will necessarily be counter-cultural; otherwise, it will not be art. Now all societies have such aspects, some more than others, and so, to the extent that they do, art will be counter-punctual in that culture. But in a social scenario of transition and change, or at least in those aspects where this obtains in a society, the art will be celebratory and affirmative. However, art responds differently to negative change. Here it unmasks and indicts. Thus, true art reveals and challenges our world.

Indeed, great art is found at the cutting age of such cultural transformation and great artists are often materialised in such times of rapid change. Hence if you want to recognise a genuine transformation or revolution in a society look at the art it is producing! If modernization and globalisation and the upheavals these bring are genuinely positive changes for a society, its art will reflect this. Art then is more indicative of a society and its culture than the social sciences are. And I am a social scientist and I am saying this.

Angelo da Fonseca, for example, lived in a colonial society and belonged to a colonial Church so it is no surprise that for a free spirit, his art was counter-cultural in that context. In a post-colonial society and in post-colonial Church his art would be celebratory and affirmative, as we see today, and if he is still not accepted by some, then we must ask those people in which age, in which time are they living!

II. Charisma as Prophetic

The prophetic always inspires. It denounces and destroys, but always in order to build and proclaim. But precisely because the prophetic by its very nature is charismatic, it must be routinised or else it is dissipated and lost. It cannot be preserved across time for other generations or across space for other peoples.

In the social arena, we have movements inspired by charismatic leaders, both good and bad. Gandhiji was surely charismatic, but so was Hitler, in many ways an evil genius. And yet their charisma had to be institutionalised in a movement, otherwise it

would have a very limited spread effect. Thus, a political movement inspired by a charismatic leader is institutionalised in a party, or a religious one in a church. It can then become bureaucratised and resist change. To the extent that it finds expression, the charismatic element in such a process remains dynamic but it must be constantly renewed.

Now religious experience is essentially charismatic, prophetic, of the spirit, and hence it is creative, innovative, dynamic. To be preserved it must get institutionalised and routinised. For this there has to be a church, a sangh, a mutt, an ulema. But all such institutions are inevitably inadequate without the prophetic element as well. This is precisely where the prophetic role of art becomes critical; it keeps alive the charismatic in religion! For it is needed to enflesh, to inculturate the religious message.

A religious tradition too needs both priest and prophet, but here as well the prophetic will be the dynamic element. The institution is meant to be at the service of the prophetic. The 'spirit' is more important than the 'letter' in any living tradition, whether religious, political, artistic or whatever. Thus, in a religious tradition, the spirit is the prophetic, divine element; the institution is the human, priestly one. But true prophets do not trivialise their traditions, rather they are routed and grounded in them, even as they transcend and transform them. Or else they would be 'false prophets'.

Angelo da Fonseca who lived during the freedom struggle of our country was a true prophet of religious art in his time. His life and work testify to this. What I would urge is that we do not make him the 'priest' in our own day. Let us not institutionalise him once again, and this is what seminars tend to do. I think it was Voltaire who said, when history wants to take revenge on a great man it sends him disciples! So we must not repeat what Angelo did. We must do something new. We must create our own art, not imitate his. This is his inspirational legacy that must grow with us.

III. Culture as a Design for Living

Culture transmits and transforms the social heritage of a society. It is a system of meanings and motivations and therefore all communication with human beings must be in their cultural medium. Otherwise, it could turn out to be not just non-communication, but miscommunication and misunderstanding. Hence all cross-cultural communication must be inculturated, it must be interpreted, indigenised and routed. It cannot be translated, transported, or

transplanted. That would be an evitable alienation. A true inculturation transcends cultural divides. It universalises and it unites.

Cross-cultural communication is particularly problematic, especially with art and religion, less so with science and technology. Because science communicates in concepts, with precise symbols, which can be expressed in accurate formulae, it is more easily translated and transplanted. Science is univocal and more readily universalised. Technological gadgets are little affected by changing cultural climes. However, wherever communication has to be open-ended, symbolic, metaphoric, where it is multi-vocal, multi-valent, as in fact, life itself is, then we need art. Otherwise, we do not really connect. More especially then, art is important for religious communication both within a culture and much more so across cultures.

This is the real trouble with the colonial world. It is a transported, transplanted world. And for whatever good colonialism might have done, finally there is very much more that was left undone. If you look at Asia today and compare the countries that were colonised with those that were not, this becomes startlingly clear on more than one axis of comparison.

Now to come to da Fonseca, he locates himself and is rooted in his time. His early art in Goa is evidence of this. But later he transcends this to communicate across cultures, not just within this sub-continent of multi-culturalism, but even across continents. For as has been rightly pointed out he also integrates many elements and aspects of art from beyond the shores of this land. So, his art transcends cultural boundaries. But once again we must not stereotype him, otherwise we will end up missing his message for our own contemporary culture.

IV. Religion as Incarnate

I believe all the religions must be incarnated. They must be enfleshed, otherwise they cannot be about both the human and the divine. They may be about one or the other, or about one from the perspective of the other, but only an integrated perspective on both the human and the divine both humanise and save. This is precisely what an authentic religion is meant to do. Religious communication must bridge the great divide, not just across cultures but across worlds: across the divine and the human, the transcendent and the

worldly, the *parmarthik* and the *parlaukik*, the *samsarik* and the *parmarthik* . These are not necessarily separate but they are distinct, and they have their specific messages that require their own syntax of communication. Across such divides all the media, even artistic ones, are inadequate, some more than others. Yet difficult though this might be, we do struggle to bridge these divides, impossible though this might seem.

Basically, then, there are two elements here, the divine and the human and this is finally bridged when, on the one hand, the divine initiative reaches to the human with an Incarnation or in avatars, with divine revelations and mystic grace; and on the other, when humans respond to and celebrate the divine with prayers and renunciations, in love and surrender. Thus does a true incarnation unite the human and the divine; it humanises the divine just as it divinises the human.

Such communication is necessarily creative. It must bring innovation, it makes all things new! Here, then, the importance of art for religion, rather than science and technology is apparent. Science is not designed to communicate religion, and certainly not vice versa. Technology often hijacks the religious message in unintended and unanticipated ways. As Galileo said: the Bible is meant to tell us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go!

And this is what Angelo Da Fonseca does in his art. He communicates across this great divide. He incarnates and enfleshes the divine, even as he divinises and spiritualises the human. His line and colour, the themes and compositions are all attempts to communicate across this divide, to express a supremely spiritual message in earthly symbols, and his paintings are evidence of how far he has succeeded in communicating with us.

V. Art As Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue

To begin with, here are a few pertinent *sutras*:
to be person is to be inter-personal;
to be cultured is to be inter-cultural,
to be religious is to be inter-religious;
The psychologists have convinced us of the first, while the sociologists are trying to teach us the second, and now theologians are coming to realise the third. But more than the theology it is art that can engage us constructively and creatively in the third.

I would like to illustrate this with a small story. My friend Aloysius Pieris, a truly seminal Asian liberation theologian, has a centre for peace and dialogue just outside Colombo, to bring together

people from both sides during the ongoing Sri Lankan civil war. The most effective way he could get them to communicate was through art. He initiated this dialogue to promote the peace process and inter-religious as well.

In an attempt at inter-religious communication, he once asked a Buddhist artist to paint a representation of Jesus, the way he imagined him. When I saw the painting, I found it very striking. Here was Jesus coming out of a house, in transition from a domestic scene into a public space as it were, accompanied not by his disciples or his mother but by young women. Perhaps Mary and Martha and others, I don't know who the artist had in mind.

Now how many of us have seen such a picture of Jesus coming out of a home followed by young women? We know that women served him. But we usually picture him with his disciples or with his mother, with his followers or his enemies. But with young women, even those who served him! When asked the artist simply said that he had not thought about it but that was the way Jesus came across to him.

But then on reflection, it seemed to all fall in place. Jesus is a religious founder who had a very open and close relationship with women and yet not even his enemies dare accuse him of sin! He is gender sensitive and gender just, egalitarian and non-paternalistic. He does not idealise women, nor does he demonise them. He treats them with a very natural ease.

And this is the insight the Buddhist artist seems to have captured, and which we seem to have missed. If it had been internalised more effectively, would we have been able to legitimise and be comfortable with patriarchy in our Church? The Holy Spirit has been depicted by artists as feminine. And in the early Church, Mary has been painted in priestly garments, because she had to have had all seven sacraments to be the perfect Christian. These are artistic impressions from an artist's imagination, but they do communicate to us something precious and important. It is precisely thus that artists like da Fonseca can help us all to see through and beyond our own truncated understandings and to respond in a new and creative dialogue.

6.
NEIGHBOURS IN A PLURALIST WORLD: THE CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS VERSUS A DIALOGUE OF RELIGIONS

Abstract:

In a globalising world, neighbours are no longer so much defined by geography, as by interaction and interdependence. This can bring about shared interests and common concerns that make good and lasting neighbours. Moreover, as sparks of the one divinity, sharing in the one Ultimate Reality, we are all children of the same Utterly Other God; our common concern is faith, which makes us brothers and sisters and neighbours, sharing a common humanity.

We Are All Neighbours

In a globalising world, neighbours are no longer so much defined by geography, as by interaction and interdependence. This can bring about shared interests and common concerns that make good and lasting neighbours. Moreover, as sparks of the one divinity, sharing in the one Ultimate Reality, we are all children of the same Utterly Other God; our common concern is faith, which makes us brothers and sisters and neighbours, sharing a common humanity.

This realisation can deepen our shared concerns. Thus both faith in the divine and concern for the human are the foundation of our neighbourliness. These are not opposed but complementary dimensions. For if the immediate basis of our concerns is ourselves, the ultimate one for believers, for persons of faith, must be God. 'Man is the measure of all things' the ancient Greek philosophers taught us, but God as the creator of all things, visible and invisible, is the one who measures humans, for God has given us our measure.

However, we cannot avoid the grim reality of divisions that mark our societies in spite of our desire to be better and more united neighbours. For if common human concerns bring us together, different social interests set us apart, just as faith in God unites, whereas differing beliefs divide. We cannot of course wish away such differences, nor can we impose a uniformity or enforce a consensus on them. The usual way of settling such differences was by confrontation and controversy, wherein each party tried not only to prove its own position, but at the same time to demolish the one of the other.

To my mind, this age of controversy settled nothing and neither did the religious wars it precipitated. For particularly with matters of conscience, human beings cannot be forced, or imposed on for an indefinite length of time. Yet there remains the temptation to fall back on such inhuman and 'final solutions'! History witnesses to numerous such instances even into our own era. Today in a globalising world, conflicting economic interests and political concerns are being interpreted as the 'clash of civilisations' with irreconcilable religious worldviews. In a unipolar world, such an understanding only invites the dominant cultures on the global stage to suppress or assimilate the subaltern ones there.

But repression and force only make for unstable and violent situations, that alienate neighbours. Ethnic cleansing and genocide await us at the end of this road. In our world today pluralism is an

inescapable given, whether cultural or political, ideological or religious, or otherwise. We have in the modern world evolved a whole doctrine of human freedom and the dignity of the human person. But we have still a long way to go in making these a reality in the lives of our people.

But differences are not only between the individual and the group, they are also between groups and peoples. Such differences at the level of the group can be even more intractable and uncompromising than those at the individual level. Religion is certainly one of the most primordial of these and fraught with a huge potential for explosive conflict. We are still coming to terms with the implications of religious freedom and cultural rights for different groups within a single society. We are beginning to realise that uniformity is not the only or the most creative response to difference. It often forces differences underground and when divisions disappear at one level they reappear at another, often in even more divisive and volatile expressions. Nor is mere co-existence a viable answer in an ever-shrinking world.

Hence we are coming to value diversity as something potentially enriching and even uniting at a higher level of unity. This is certainly true of our rich religious traditions when they are not manipulated for narrow political gain or subversive communal interests. It is such an enriching union which must inspire us as neighbours to reach out to each other in a common concern and in a shared faith, a union that brings us together with our differences into a unity in diversity, one that does not negate our peculiarities, but rather one that accepts and respects, yes, even celebrates them.

In other words the reality of pluralism today is not to be isolated as an unnecessary evil to be repressed before it engulfs us further; or tolerated as a necessary one to be distanced since it cannot be dismissed. Rather it is a challenge, which will not go away. It must be constructively and creatively met or it will exhaust, if not destroy us. Nowhere is this truer than of religious differences and diversity.

We cannot any more settle religious differences within, much less between, religious traditions through violence and controversy. Too much blood and tears have been shed on this already. The only way open for us now is that of tolerance and dialogue. No truly religious person can disagree with this. Only a few fundamentalists would, whose religious worldview is closed and exclusive. With such as these we must still exercise tolerance and attempt dialogue. But lest what we are urging seems naive and simplistic we must clarify our understanding of these concepts so that the limits of tolerance and the conditions for dialogue can be addressed at some depth in their

complexity we must sharpen our perspectives, leading to a practical praxis in process to a global ethic.

Limits of Tolerance

There is no exact equivalent for the word 'tolerance' in Sanskrit or Arabic (Khwaja 1992: 95,101). But that does mean that the concept itself was unknown. Thus Ashoka promulgated the first recorded edict for tolerance (Thapar 1961: 255) and Akbar made the first conscious attempt to establish a tolerant and secular state (Kabir 1955: 21). Today the promoters of 'cultural nationalism' has abandoned such tolerant and secular ideals. However, in our understanding tolerance cannot have merely a negative or passive meaning. Rather it must also imply an active and positive response to coping with our differences. Thus we can distinguish levels of tolerance from reluctant forbearance to joyful acceptance.

Following Raimundo Panikkar (Panikkar 1883: 20-36) we can distinguish four levels of tolerance. The first is tolerance as a practical necessity, i.e., bearing with a lesser evil for the sake of a greater good. This amounts to passively accepting necessary evils, and negotiating them as best one can. This is little more than political pragmatism.

The second level is based on the realisation that the human grasp of any truth is always partial, never complete. Certainly, this is true of religious or revealed truth. Such a philosophical realisation makes us cautious in absolutising our own 'truths', and even more so in rejecting those of others we do not understand or disagree with. From such philosophically founded tolerance will come respect.

At the third level, ethical or religious tolerance derives from the moral imperative to love others, especially those different from us, even our enemies. This is far more demanding than the acceptance and respect at the earlier levels of tolerance. Yet the different 'other' here is still the 'object' of one's love. Such love can even make us celebrate our own differences, but it cannot overcome or transcend them completely in a higher unity.

Overcoming this objectification of the other is 'a mystical experience of tolerance' (Panikkar 1983:23). Here tolerance 'is the way one being exists in another and expresses the radical interdependence of all that exists'. In the final analysis, it is only this kind of mystical tolerance that can overcome and transcend the contradictions and conflicts between religious traditions, bringing them into a higher communion.

Dimensions of Understanding

In each of these dimensions, the political, the philosophy, the religious, the mystical, following Panikkar again, we can distinguish two levels of understanding, or rather pre-understanding Thus our comprehension can be in terms of a more or less explicit meaning that is conceptually grasped; or in the context of our pre-understanding, of implicit pre-judgments and presumptions, in terms of a meaningfulness that can be only symbolically represented. These are the levels of 'myth' and 'ideology'.

Myth is 'the horizon of intelligibility or the sense of Reality.' (*ibid.* :101) It is expressed in the 'mythic narrative' with its varied themes, and disclosed in the 'living voice, the telling of the myth' (*ibid.*) In sum, 'myth is precisely the horizon over against which any hermeneutic is possible.' (*ibid.* :4) It is taken for granted, unquestioned, a part of our pre-understanding, something we accept in 'faith', defined 'as that dimension in Man that corresponds to myth.' (*ibid.* :5)

Once it is rationally articulated, myth is demythicised and so is our faith, in a 'passage from <u>mythos</u> to <u>logos</u>', (*ibid.* :21) from myth to reason, as the articulated conscious word. This then develops into an 'ideology':

'the more or less coherent ensemble of ideas that make up critical awareness, i.e., the doctrinal system that enables you to locate yourself rationally ... a spacio-temporal system constructed by the logos as a function of its concrete historical moment.' (*ibid.*)

These distinctions have crucial implications for our understanding and practice of tolerance.

For the more coherent and cogent the articulation of an ideology is, the more likely it is to reduce other understandings to its own terms, or reject them, if they cannot be fitted into its own horizons. We do of course, need ideologies for we need to articulate and rationalise our understanding in the various dimensions of human experience. But ideologies must be able to accept such alternative understandings, and open themselves out into broader and deeper perspectives. This will depend on the myth, the pre-understanding, from which it derives. For the more extensive and intense the myth's meaningfulness, the richer and denser its symbolism, the more open and accommodating the ideology that can be built on it.

Hence we can conclude with Panikkar: 'the tolerance you have is directly proportional to the myth you live and inversely proportional

to the ideology you follow.' (*ibid*. p.20, emphasis in original text) What we need, then, is a metanoia of our myths to escape and be liberated from the paranoia of our ideologies, whether religious, political or otherwise. Both myth and ideology are found in all the dimensions of tolerance indicated earlier, though there is obviously a greater affinity for ideology in political and philosophical tolerance, as there is for 'myth' in the religious and mystical one.

With reference to our religious traditions, then, religious 'faith' is essentially at the pre-rational, not irrational, level of 'myth', while religious 'theology' is necessarily at the level of 'ideology'. This makes for a greater complexity and challenge in our praxis, as an action-reflection-action process, a dialectical interaction between theory and practice. It is our conviction that the constructive potential of such a dialectic can be fully realised only in a creative dialogue for both myth and ideology. For it is only in the mutual encounter of myths that they are deepened and enriched, and in the reciprocal exchange among ideologies that these become more open and refined.

Levels of Dialogue

What we are suggesting here, then, is very far from a mere co-existence or mutual seclusion as a way of coping with pluralism. Rather we are urging a constructive dialogue between neighbours engaging both the 'myths' we seem to live by, and the ideologies we choose to act from.

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

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

Dialogue, then, goes beyond dialectics. For 'dialectics is the optimism of reason. Dialogue is the optimism of the heart.' (*ibid*. :243) Thus we can speak of a 'dialectical dialogue', which would pertain to the encounter of ideologies, while a 'dialogical dialogue' would be more pertinent to the meeting of myths.

For in a human encounter, 'difference', as Gadamer rightly insists, 'stands at the beginning of a conversation, not at its end,' (Gadamer 1989a: 113) awaiting the moment of coherence, of fulfilment, of a 'fusion of horizons' that will complete the hermeneutic circle and set it off again for us – 'we who are a conversation'. (*ibid*: 110) For we are

constructed and deconstructed in dialogue with ourselves and others. Indeed, 'the conversation that we are is one that never ends.' (Gadamer 1989:95) For dialogue and conversation are intrinsic to the human condition, the very language of our existence, the essential hermeneutic of all our experience.

As with tolerance so too with dialogue, we must distinguish dimensions of this involvement with each other. Recently Christians have been urged by the Church to engage in a fourfold dialogue ('Dialogue and Proclamation', Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, Vatican City, 1991, no.42.):

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

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

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

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

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

An Authentic Hermeneutic

A crucial issue for religions grounded in history and for faiths based on revelation, like Judeo-Christian-Islamic ones, is the one of dialogue as equals. Such traditions find it very problematic to concede that those outside their religious revelation and beliefs have an equal access to the truth. They feel themselves privileged in this regard, and compromise in this matter is tantamount to being disloyal to their faith. However, precisely in such a perspective, there is even greater need of an adequate hermeneutic that will make for dialogue, for it

becomes imperative to distinguish between etic and emic perspectives, the insider's and the outsider's standpoint.[1]

From an etic or insider's perspective, differing truths cannot lay claim to equal validity, unless they all are relativised, or brought into harmony at a higher level of unity. But this harmony may require an emic or outsider's perspective if the etic one is not inclusive enough. However, even an etic perspective without compromising itself must grant the right to hold, and the duty to respect different opinions, even one's incompatible with one's own, for in civil society the other's legitimate right to freedom, and claim to respect must not be compromised by imposing one's own dogmatic beliefs or ritual practice. This makes dialogue possible even between believers and atheists, in what we might call an 'extra-religious' dialogue.

Thus from an emic perspective then, an equal dialogue is less a matter of 'equal truth' than of 'equal freedom'. This demands that no standpoint is privileged above others, much less imposed, but all empathetically critiqued and challenged. For this, a common ground must be sought and the only common currency viable, given the variety and variations prevailing among our pluri-religious traditions today, is a basic humanism. It is at this level that any apparent controversy between truth and right, between tolerance and justice must be resolved. This will in turn have its own problematique but it is one in which all can engage as equals to set the conditions for a deeper religious discourse.

On the other hand, religions not based on an historical revelation, are not constrained by exclusive beliefs. However, from an emic one, inclusiveness too must go with its own cautions, its own intra-religious dialogue. On the one hand, it must not fall into relativism or degenerate into permissiveness; on the other, it must neither become a process of appropriation and absorption into a higher unity, wherein the distinctiveness of each tradition is lost, not just subsumed. The all-inclusiveness of some universalists sometimes seems to imply just this. A valid inclusiveness would demand the integration of diversities into an enriching and higher unity so that we have a 'diversity in unity' rather than a 'unity in diversity'. White light includes the wavelengths of all the seven colours, yet the rainbow has its own especial beauty.

Hence the necessity for a relevant hermeneutic. All this will, of course, demand a more liberal and humanist approach within each

[1] In the following discussion I am indebted to the comments of George Gispert-Sauch on my earlier draft.

tradition, which is precisely what an equal dialogue challenges each one to do. Raimundo Panikkar rightly insists:

'if *interreligious* dialogue is to be real dialogue, an *intrareligious* dialogue must accompany it, i.e., it must begin with my questioning myself and the relativity of my beliefs (which does not mean relativism), accepting the challenge of a change, a conversion and the risk of upsetting my traditional patterns.' (Panikkar 1978: 40)

Indeed, an intra-religious dialogue is a necessary condition for an inter-religious one, otherwise, we will have a debate, not a dialogue, controversy, not complementarity. Indeed, such transparency among believers and non-believers would make even an 'extra-religious' dialogue challenging and fruitful for both.

A Global Ethic

Hans Küng, one of the key drafters of the 'Declaration Towards a Global Ethic', for 'The Parliament of World Religions' in 1993 in New York, (Küng 1998: 11- 40) indicates three contemporary global challenges to which he proposes three corresponding responses. (Küng 1998) First: there is no survival of democracy without a coalition of believers and non-believers in mutual respect. This will demand consensus as the foundation of our solidarity. Second: there will be no peace between civilisations without a peace between religions, and there will be no peace between religions without a dialogue between them. In other words, inter-religious dialogue becomes imperative. Third: as globalisation sharpens differences in a diverse but imploding world, we need a new world order to contain such differences and resolve them, but there will be no new world order without a new global ethic.

This must be premised on universally accepted values and norms, for which a growing common ground is beginning to emerge, at least at the level of articulation. Giddens rightly remarks:

> 'This is probably the first time in history that we can speak of the emergence of universal values – values shared by almost everyone, and which are in no sense the enemy of cosmopolitanism. … values of the sanctity of human life, universal human rights, the preservation of species and care for future as well as present generations of children may perhaps be arrived at defensively, but they are certainly not negative values. They imply ethics of individual and collective responsibility, which (as value claims) are able to override divisions of interest.' (Giddens 1994: 20)

This must be the starting point of a global ethic which is an as yet an incomplete but not a directionless search, an ongoing, perhaps even a never-ending process, but one whose evolution leaves open the possibilities for progress as well as regress.

Eventually, these norms need to be worked out into concrete rights and duties, operationalised in an internationally recognised charter, like the UN declaration, but more importantly made effective by suitable structures and strictures at various levels, legitimated and empowered to protect these values and implement the respective norms, to hold agencies to account and remedy violations. In other words, an ethic that is founded on values, which are culturally operationalised in norms, which are structurally enforced.

A Holistic Praxis

The complexity of the issues involved in this whole discourse on tolerance and dialogue should now be apparent. It certainly calls for a fine-tuned critical analysis, and hopefully, this essay is a contribution in that direction. But a viable praxis must go beyond reflection to action, beyond interpretation to implementation. For this, we will need a holistic approach that can transcend polarities in an integral whole.

Thus we must find ways in which faith and reason critique each other so that premised on a genuine humanism, faith is always reasonable and meaningful, and reason always faithful to an authentic humanism. In our involvement in such religious controversies, we need to be both renouncers and sadhus, as well as activists and *karma yogis*. In our understanding of the complexities involved we need to be both contemplatives and mystics, as well as theologians and philosophers. And in our response to the issues we need to be both creative artists and poets as well as constructive critics and academicians.

Today more than ever before, for our threatened humanity, the only way of being human is to be in constructive and creative interrelationships with others, not in isolation from them, if indeed that were possible any more in our increasingly interdependent world. So also for our threatened religions in an unbelieving world, the only way of being religious is in solidarity with other believers not in confrontation with them. For today if to be a person I must be inter-personal, to be religious I must be inter-religious. In other words, to be human and religious we must be tolerant and in dialogue. Only

thus can we genuinely be our authentic selves, true believers and truly human.

Gadamer explains how 'to be in conversation, however, means to be beyond oneself as if to another.' For, as he insists all genuine dialogue must be premised on an authentic hermeneutic:

'to recognise oneself (or one's own) in the other and find a home abroad — this is the basic movement of spirit whose being consists in this return to itself from otherness.' (Gadamer 1975:15)

But we would emphasise a further implication of such dialogical hermeneutics: 'the challenge to recognise otherness or the alien in oneself (or one's own).' (Dallmayr 1989:92)

In the final analysis, indifference and non-engagement are hardly adequate or constructive ways of coping with our ever-increasing interdependencies in our globalising world. This certainly cannot make us neighbours. It can at best lead to a co-existence that can only be very precariously peaceful, and certainly not very creatively progressive. Most often it only brings alienation and chaos, in our situation of scarcity and competition.

To be really neighbours we need a *metanoia* of our hearts, to free us from our *paranoia* of each other. Our religious faith is a good place to begin to be neighbours, to share our common interests and to express our common concerns. Certainly, is it a better place to begin than our political geography which divides and rules us all. Indeed, such neighbourliness may make the difference between a 'clash of civilisations' and a 'dialogue of religions'!

Appendix

Some Practical Clarifications

Some clarifications at this point would seem in order. It is important at the very outset to distinguish dialogue from debate. The first seeks to relate oneself to, and understand the other, the second to convince the other and prove oneself. The first makes neighbours, the second alienates them.

Further in our religious understanding, we must distinguish between 'knowing', which implies certainty and security, and 'believing' which demands trust and surrender. The first brings knowledge, the second, faith. Thus we can say the devil knows but does not have faith. It is the vulnerability that comes from faith that must be the basis of our tolerance and dialogue.

Now faith is always premised on our experience and here we must distinguish again between having an experience, which founds faith, and articulating one, which requires concepts. Not everyone who has a deep religious experience can articulate it. Indeed the great mystics prefer silence! This is not a negation of the experience but rather a testimony to its depth. And again not everyone who speaks of an experience has necessarily been deeply moved by one. There is much articulation by proxy that is little more than experientially unauthenticated conceptualising.

We are pointing to a difference that is analogous to that of the artist and the art critic. Artists have the aesthetic experience, and struggle to express and communicate it as the best they can. Art critics may never have had one and frequently stand outside the experience, even though they write and talk about it. Unfortunately, all too often it is through the critic that we seem to have access to the artists' experience, rather than the artists themselves.

So too with religious experience! This must be the very foundation of an authentic dialogue and the call to even deeper tolerance. Yet too often we stop at the traditions that are meant to mediate and provide access to experience the reality that the religious symbols represent. With Thomas à Kempis would that we feel compunction rather than be content with defining it!

Finally, for a genuine dialogue, we must understand that martyrs are not fanatics! For a martyr, as the Greek word implies, is a witness to something of such great value that even life must be sacrificed. A martyr as a witness is necessarily other-centred. Fanatics affirm only their own convictions, however misguided or extremist. They are essentially self-centred. Thus, a martyr can practise tolerance and engage in dialogue; a fanatic cannot but be intolerant and contestational. Martyrs are more willing to die, fanatics most willing to kill!

References

Balasubramanian. R., ed., 1992, *Tolerance in Indian Culture,* Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi.

Dallmayr. Fred R., 1989, 'Hermeneutics and Deconstruction: Gadamer Derrida in Dialogue', in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter,* ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, pp.75-92.

Gadamer. Hans-Georg, 1989, 'Destruktion and Deconstruction.', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, pp 102, 113.

_____(1975) *Truth and Method*, Seabury Press, New York.

Giddens, Anthony, 1994, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future Radical Politics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Kabir. Humayun, 1955, *The Indian Heritage,* Asia Pub. House, Bombay.

Khwaja. Jamal, 1992, 'Concept and Role of Tolerance in Indian Culture', in ed., Balasubramaniam, pp.89-120.

Küng, Hans, 1998, *A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religion,* Continuum, New York.

Michelfelder. Diane P. and Richard E. Palmer, ed.s, 1989, *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter,* State Univ. of New York.

Panikkar. R., 1983, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-cultural Studies,* Asian Trading Corp. Bangalore.

Panikkar, Raimundo, 1978, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, Paulist Press, New York.

Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, 1991, 'Dialogue and Proclamation', Vatican City.

Thapar Romila, 1961, *Ashoka and the Decline of the Mau*ryas, Oxford Univ. Press, London.

7.
JUSTICE IN THE DIALOGUE OF RELIGIONS: WOMEN, DALITS AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN HINDU AND CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Unpublished paper presented at a seminar at the University of Wurtzberg on 'Justice in the Dialogue of Religions', 2005.

Abstract:

This presentation begins by defining the terms 'plurality' and 'pluralism' and describing the difference between them, sketching the condition for an equal dialogue and indicating the several levels of tolerance and the various domains of dialogue involved; and finally locating an understanding of justice within a liberationist discourse.

It then examines three areas in the light of the above, and in the context of the Hindu and Christian traditions in contemporary India. The Dalits, as illustrating the contradiction of poverty and oppression; women, as exemplifying the contradictions of gender and patriarchy in our society; and the environment and our relationship to it as typifying the multi-dimensional ecological crisis that is overtaking our planet.

I. Introduction: A Constructive Interrogation

Romanticising our own traditions and isolating ourselves in them is an inadequate and defensive response to the cultural challenges we face today. Gandhi's aspiration can provide us with our best starting point here:

I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them. (Young India, June 1921: 170)

This is the perspective from which our study is problematised: not the walled-in consciousness of a colonised mind, nor the rootless wonderings of the uncommitted spirit, but the serious quest for a mutually enriching encounter.

The presumptions on which this presentation is premised are as follows. Dialogue is the defining characteristic of the human condition, and plurality is an inevitable given in our world. Moreover, this plurality is multi-dimensional, and one of the richest and most persistent dimensions of this plurality is religion and the various cultures and social systems that evolve from this. The challenge for us is to evolve an integrated 'pluralism' out of this 'plurality', not just a peaceful co-existence, but an enriching encounter.

The inevitable conflicts and contradictions that must accompany such differences and diversity must be resolved through negotiation and dialogue and not forcibly reconciled by dominance and power. Dialogue and tolerance then are the only feasible approaches in our violent and conflict-ridden world. If peace is the fruit of justice, then, only when the demands of justice and fair play are met can any kind of harmony be sustainable over a period of time.

This presentation begins by defining the terms 'plurality' and 'pluralism' and describing the difference between them, sketching the condition for an equal dialogue and indicating the several levels of tolerance and the various domains of dialogue involved; and finally locating an understanding of justice within a liberationist discourse.

It then examines three areas in the light of the above and in the context of the Hindu and Christian traditions in contemporary India. The Dalits, as illustrating the contradiction of poverty and oppression, the great divide between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, in our world today; women, as exemplifying the contradictions of gender and patriarchy in our society, even though

they 'hold up half the sky'; and the environment and our relationship to it as typifying the multi-dimensional ecological crisis that is overtaking our planet.

II. Plurality and Pluralism

'Plurality' is the multi-dimensional social reality, and correspondingly pluralism, which includes various and diverse understandings, is a response to plurality. It is important to clarify and fine-tune the understanding of these concepts, lest our response be inadequate or even counterproductive. In fact, the great apprehension about pluralism is that it ends in relativism, which is certainly not an inevitable or necessary consequence.

The Problematic Context

All pluralism in society is eventually, founded on the polarity between the 'self' and the 'other' among different persons and diverse groups. These cannot simply be wished away, for the 'other' always poses a question to the 'self', that will not go away. One can ignore the question only for a while, for the questioning cannot be so easily negated, unless one destroys the questioner. History bears witness to how dominant persons and groups have eliminated subordinate ones in massacres and genocides, or forcibly assimilated them through miscegenation or ethnocide.

But where such brutal solutions cannot be attempted, either because of the realities on the ground or the ethical ideals in our culture, then, tolerance can be our only viable human response. Obviously, our understanding of tolerance, especially in a pluralist society, will have many dimensions and distinct levels. Hence the need for a dialogue between the 'self' and the 'other', one that moves through these dimensions and levels of tolerance to a fulfilling and enriching encounter of the self and the other.

Contemporary Complexities

The prevalence of pluralism in our post-modern world is more than a reflection of our present sitz-im-leben. It is one of the persistent givens of the human situation. It has at times been repressed by overt and/or covert violence, but only at great human cost. But then again

such repression only makes for an unstable equilibrium that cannot last very long. To our reckoning, in the measure in which societies have attained uniformity and solidity, there is always a corresponding unmeasured subterranean quantum of diversity and confusion that resists integration into such a homogenised, monolithic social order.

One could, mistakenly it seems to us, consider this resistance to be a matter of unfinished business; or, more correctly we would urge, interrogate such resistance in a search for an underlying explanation, which will help us to understand the human foundations of diversity and pluralism in its more basic aspects, before we go on to consider the multiple dimensions of their social consequences and finally our responses to them.

The complexity of our modern world cannot be contained in any single weltanschauung (Rahner 1969: 26), nor can a dominant one be imposed in a free and open society. But the problem of 'the one and the many' in the West goes back to ancient Greek philosophy. Intellectual answers have ranged from strict monism to complete scepticism, while social responses have varied from dictatorial totalitarianism to libertarian anarchism.

In the modern world, pluralism has emerged both as a mode of intellectual analysis and a normative doctrine. (Kariel 1968: 164) This Western pluralism was first premised on the individual's freedom of conscience but soon the necessity of intermediate groups to affirm and protect such freedom was realized.

Any human grasp of reality is necessarily constrained by intrinsic human limitations. This need not mean an inevitable ethical relativism. However, if the dignity and freedom of the individual is to be respected, then this must necessarily be expressed in a social pluralism. Because the individual cannot be sacrificed to the group, nor a subordinate group to a dominant one, pluralism cannot simply accept the utilitarian 'greatest good of the greatest number', that Bentham argued for; nor even the democratic 'tyranny of the majority', that de Tocqueville cautioned against; much less the socialist 'party-vanguardism' of Lenin's democratic centralism.

Rather within a framework of individual and group rights, pluralism is ultimately premised on the acceptance of differences, whether these arise from individual choices or from group diversity. This implies that individuals must have their freedom guaranteed, just as groups must have their culture protected.

Traditional Approaches

Now in some traditional societies at first reckoning, there may seem to be less support for such an understanding of pluralism. But a more careful and critical reading of tradition may reveal a helpful basis to build on. Thus traditional Indian society tended to be more ascriptive in assigning status to individuals and groups. Moreover, interrelationships were in principle hierarchically ordered rather than competitively stratified. In such a social system individual choice could be exercised only within prescribed limits that derived more from the functional role the individual played in society than from an understanding of the human person's inviolable dignity and inalienable rights.

Yet a plurality of groups was accepted and integrated into a social hierarchy where each had its protected niche. However, this pluralism was not premised on either individual freedom or social equality. Rather it was based on a bonding of individuals in the group, and of groups in society.

The pressures of social change are now displacing group claims on individuals by an assertion of the individual's rights, and replacing cooperative group interrelationships with competitive ones. The resulting sense of loss and of insecurity, of uncertainty and disorientation that such changes imply, for both individuals and groups, has precipitated tensions and conflicts that are explosive and violent, to the point where they seem uncontainable within our social system!

The Contribution of Diversity

But we cannot simply negate our traditions to ease the weight of the past on our present situation. Rather we need to critique, our traditions radically and draw on them as resources to understand and respond creatively and constructively to our present crisis.

This is precisely what Gandhi did with his construction of ahimsa and satyagraha. We must do this with the Jaina concept of *anekantavada* (the many-sidedness of truth) and *syadvada* (the interrelatedness of all things); with the Buddhist outreach in *sarvabhutadaya,* (universal compassion); with the advaitic relativising of *mayavad*a and *avidhya*; the Upanishadic ideal of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam,* (the universal family); with the materialistic rationalism *of charvaka*; with the religious pluralism, the *sarva-dharma-samabhava*, of the Sufi-bhakti heritage of our *sant-kavis*, etc.

To be sure such a construction of tradition is already being contested by an opposition to pluralism that is increasingly authoritarian and

fascist, uninhibitedly ethnocentric and chauvinistic. This we must challenge not by a denial of our past but by a critique of it, not by a flight from the present crisis but by an encounter with it, not by an escape into utopia, but a realistic provision for our future.

The basic foundation for all this must be a radical acceptance of the reality of pluralism in all the multi-faceted dimensions of its religious culture and of its political economy. This can then become the point of departure for a committed response. For acceptance cannot be creative or constructive if it is merely uncritical and passive. In other words, just as a critical modernity must interrogate tradition to construct the present, so too must a renewed tradition challenge modern pathologies with an alternative understanding of normality and not just glorify our past. (Saran 1989)

It is our contention that in the final analysis, the trajectory of our response to pluralism must begin with acceptance of difference and a respect for other identities and reach out to live and celebrate diversity as parts of a larger organic whole. (Kothari 1989: 20)

Plural Societies

Most modern societies are inevitably plural because of their complexity and scale. But plurality has characterised other societies including traditional ones. Plurality implies separate and distinct social groups coming together in some kind of more inclusive social order. We can distinguish two dimensions to such plurality. Structural plurality implies 'a social structure compartmentalised into analogous, parallel, non-complementary but distinguishable sets of institutions'. (Van den Berge 1967: 67) Cultural plurality implies different cultures or sub-cultures with their distinctive individual and collective identities within an over-arching civilisational unity, where distinctive identities are contained in a larger, layered one.

Structure and culture are necessary dimensions of any institutional system in society. Hence both these dimensions will be present in any plural or composite society. However, in a particular context, one or the other may be the more pertinent. Thus in the 'mature Western democracies' plurality is more structural, whereas in post-colonial societies, especially in South Asia, plurality is quite decidedly more cultural. And more often than not it is the cultural dimension that is more resilient in the segmentation and compartmentalisation of a plural society. However, there is an obvious interaction between the two. On the one hand, it might be easier to work out unifying structures when there is cultural consensus, on the other, it might very well be that the

functional integration of structures in fact brings about greater cultural consensus. But once again in particular contexts, one or the other may be the more problematic. The implications of this interaction for educational policy in a plural society need to be further probed.

Now if group diversity is one pole in a plural society, then a more inclusive unity, that holds these together will be the other. Without the first there would be no plurality, without the second there would be many single, not one composite society. Moreover, this larger unifying social order will also have a structural and cultural aspect. Structurally it is often the market and the polity that integrates diverse groups in a common social order. Culturally a common religion, language or older tradition can become the basis for a more inclusive civilisational unity. We need to further explore how far such structural and cultural pluralities pertain to Indian society.

Often the tension between these two polarities of unity and diversity has been dealt with by emphasising one and abandoning the other. Thus homogenisation is often seen as a solution for a plural society, imposed by an authoritarian government or a hegemonic class or group, sacrificing other minority groups. The history of the nation-states provides ample evidence of this. On the other hand, diversity could be permitted to a point where segmentation and compartmentalisation into groups can no longer be contained under an over-arching social order, so then these groups begin to seek their own separate and distinctive collective destinies and identities. The Balkanisation of empires can be instructive here. Both these approaches ultimately amount to a negation of plurality, though they seek the resolution of the unity-diversity tension in different directions. Pluralism, however, seeks to resolve this tension differently. While unity in diversity was once an official policy in India, today pluralism is under a menacing threat.

Universalism and Particularism

One viable way of coping with plurality would be within the politics of recognition. (Taylor 1992: 25) This involves both the politics of universalism and the politics of difference. The first is premised on human rights of individuals and the equal dignity of all citizens, and therefore is committed to enforcing equal rights for all. The second is premised on cultural rights, and is responsible for ensuring the unique identity of each cultural group. In the first individual rights, in the second collective ones are privileged.

Pluralism then is a way of coping with a plural society, that attempts to reconcile the polarity between universalism and particularism by affirming both: an 'equal dignity' for all citizens, and an 'unique identity'

for each group. Such pluralism must be founded on a deep and comprehensive understanding of tolerance, as the basis of a workable 'politics of recognition', that includes the 'politics of universalism' and the 'politics of difference'. (Taylor 1992) But then again only to the extent that such identities are defined positively is any reconciliation for real tolerance possible. This is really the only viable option in a society as resiliently diverse as ours.

III. The Context for Tolerance

One can distinguish several levels of tolerance. This is necessary because no dialogue is possible without a common and mutually agreed upon level of tolerance. Often dialogue collapses precisely because levels of tolerance are so different that people talk past, rather than to each other.

Truth and diversity

The reality of pluralism faces us with the question of tolerance. The term in English dates from the 16th century, though the notion itself is much older. For as a philosophical problem tolerance concerns the reconciliation of truth with freedom, i.e., the claims of truth versus the legitimacy of diverse opinions. (Post 1970). The implications of this for a society today are as painful as they were for Socrates in ancient Athens, which was not a very heterogeneous city! In the Roman Empire, the problem reached acute proportions in the persecution of Christians. With the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. these ended not so much in religious tolerance, as in eventual Christian dominance.

The post-Reformation religious wars left a divided and exhausted Christendom, which now began the pragmatic separation of church and state. However, this did not always guarantee real tolerance, as the limitations in the 'Act of Toleration', 1689, in England evidenced.

Yet 'the English Enlightenment was the greatest promoter of the notion of tolerance though mostly at the expense of theology and the binding force of the knowledge of truth (to which common sense was preferred).' (*ibid*.: 265) In France the strongly anti-clerical Encyclopaedists 'paved the way for the republican and democratic notions of the state,' (*ibid*.: 266) though its narrow rationalism provided 'a very doubtful basis for the tolerance which was always in demand.' (*ibid*.: 265) Thus in the modern West, the social origins of tolerance are to be found less in its monotheistic dogmatic religious beliefs than in the pragmatic resolution of intractable religious and political conflicts.

But tolerance is more than a matter of conflict resolution and emancipation. It is as multifaceted as the dimensions of the pluralism underpinning it: from intellectual worldviews to ethical values, from religious beliefs to cultural patterns, from political ideologies to economic systems, and from linguistic divisions to geographic regions. In fact 'there is no generally acknowledged definition of tolerance in the concrete'. (*ibid.*: 262) Moreover, a merely formal definition would run into practical difficulties.

The South Asian Scene

In Sanskrit and Arabic there is no exact equivalent for 'tolerance', (Khwaja 1992: 95, 101). But again the notion itself is not unknown or unacknowledged. For the basis for pluralism was well established in the orthodoxy of ancient Indian traditions, as we have already indicated earlier: Jaina non-violence, Buddhist compassion, Upanishadic universalism, sufi-bhakti mysticism. Indian orthopraxis, however, was less tolerant and could be quite violent.

But there were significant landmarks that have stamped our history. Thus Ashoka issued the first recorded edict for tolerance:

On each occasion one should honour another man's sect, for by doing so one increases the influence of one's own sect and benefits that of the other man . . . . Again, whosoever honours his own sect or disparages that of another man, wholly out of devotion to his own, with a view to showing it in favourable light harms his own sect even more seriously. Therefore, concord is to be commended, so that men may hear one another's principles and obey them. (Thapar 1961: 255.)

In medieval times, so Humayun Kabir argues convincingly, Akbar's was 'the first conscious attempt to formulate the conception of a secular state' (Kabir 1955: 21) in the country, but this was not followed through by his grandson Aurangzeb. In this century Gandhi's satyagraha for swarajya was a valiant attempt at a non-violent reconstruction of our society, but it could not succeed in preventing the violent Partition of the country. And today, we seem to have all but abandoned Gandhi as our society gets increasingly mired in violence of all kinds and at all levels.

Thus in India the intellectual acceptance of pluralism has not always gone along with the existential practice of tolerance. Indeed, we seem to have reached a flash point in our continuing crisis, when even the acceptance of religious-cultural pluralism is being contested by an aggressive 'cultural nationalism', which is very much the intolerant imposition of the dominant castes, threatening the existence of other subalterns and minorities.

Dimensions of Tolerance

In our understanding, a constructive and creative response to pluralism cannot mean mere endurance of, and resignation to, differences. It must include something more positive: the active acceptance of, and even the celebration of plurality. But to put such an orientation in context we must pursue this analysis further. As a response to pluralism, we can distinguish progressive levels in our understanding, all deriving from a deepening realisation of the reality, the truth, the <u>satya</u>, underlying our human situation; a reality that is radically pluralist, a truth that is essentially non-violent. These are not exclusive but rather overlapping dimensions and interpenetrating levels that form a continuous progression.

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

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

Levels of Understanding

Obviously, this is a utopian ideal for any society. But it is an ideal we can reach out to even if it remains beyond our grasp. For the dialectic between differences in a plural society must find expression in a

constructive dialogue between the self and the other, if it is to be a creative celebration, otherwise it is all too likely to implode in violent repression, that eventually dehumanises both. We shall return to a consideration of such a dialogue later. First, we must examine a more crucial aspect of our analysis.

In each of these dimensions we can, following Panikkar again, (*ibid.*: 25-3) distinguish two levels of understanding or rather pre-understanding: myth and ideology. Myth is 'the horizon of intelligibility or the sense of Reality.' (*ibid.*: 101) It is expressed in the 'mythic narrative' with its varied themes, and disclosed in the 'living voice, the telling of the myth' (*ibid.*) In sum, 'myth is precisely the horizon over against which any hermeneutic is possible.' (*ibid.*: 4) It is taken for granted, unquestioned, a part of our pre-understanding, something we accept in 'faith', 'as that dimension in Man that corresponds to myth.' (*ibid.*: 5)

Once it is rationally articulated, myth is demythicised and so is our faith, in a 'passage from <u>mythos</u> to <u>logos</u>', (*ibid.*: 21) from myth to reason as the articulated conscious word. This then develops into an 'ideology':

the more or less coherent ensemble of ideas that make up critical awareness, i.e., the doctrinal system that enables you to locate yourself rationally... a spacio-temporal system constructed by the logos as a function of its concrete historical moment. (*ibid.*)

All this has a crucial relevance for our understanding of the limits of tolerance. For, the more articulate and coherent, the more comprehensive and compelling an ideology is, the less place there is for tolerance in the area it marks out for its truth. Thus a more coherent ideology can accommodate others less, and a more comprehensive one allows less space for any others. Rather it will tend to reduce the others to its own terms and assimilate them. There can be no dialogue across the differences. Not that we must rid ourselves of all ideologies. Our human limitations require them. But we must at the same time realise their limitations. Hence the ideologies we use must be open and non-dogmatic, critical and non-authoritarian.

Whether or not an ideology will develop into an open or closed system of understanding will finally depend on the myth from which it derives. For the further the myth's horizons stretch and the more openness and space it allows, the richer will be the texture of its themes and the greater the intensity and density it will permit. Hence we can conclude with Panikkar: '*the tolerance you have is directly proportional to the myth you live and inversely proportional to the ideology you follow*.' (*ibid.*: 20) What we need, then, is a *metanoia* of

our myths to escape and be liberated from the *paranoia* of our ideologies, whether religious, political or otherwise.

Complexity and Challenge

Both myth and ideology are found in all the dimensions of tolerance indicated earlier, though there is obviously a greater affinity for ideology in political and philosophical tolerance, as there is for 'myth' in the religious and mystical one. This makes for a greater complexity and challenge in our praxis as an action-reflection-action process, a dialectical interaction between theory and practice. It is our conviction that the constructive potential of such a dialectic can be fully realised only in a creative dialogue for both myth and ideology. For it is only in the mutual encounter of myths that they are deepened and enriched, and in the reciprocal exchange among ideologies that these become more open and refined.

Now there is always a danger of celebrating difference in seclusion and not in dialogical encounter with the other. The assertion of such isolated alterity, as in fact with some post-modernists, easily 'shades over into the celebration of indifference, non-engagement and indecision.' (Dallmayr 1989: 90) Such incommunicable uniqueness cannot but collapse into a nihilistic relativism, which is very far from the radical relativity on which a creative pluralism and a respectful tolerance must be premised.

IV. The Hermeneutic of Dialogue

Dialogue can be in several domains and a proper hermeneutics if it is not to end in the superficial relativism that often comes in the way of a genuine and enriching encounter. The challenge of an equal dialogue will necessitate such an appropriate hermeneutic.

Dialectics and Dialogue

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

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

Dialogue, then, goes beyond dialectics. For 'dialectics is the optimism of reason. Dialogue is the optimism of the heart.' (*ibid*.: 243) Thus we can speak of a 'dialectical dialogue', which would pertain to the encounter of ideologies, while a 'dialogical dialogue' would be more pertinent to the meeting of myths.

'Difference', then, as Gadamer insists 'stands at the beginning of a conversation, not its end,' (Gadamer 1989: 113) awaiting the moment of coherence, of fulfilment, of a 'fusion of horizon' that will complete the hermeneutic circle and set it off again for us — 'we who are a conversation' (*ibid*. : 110) For we are constructed and deconstructed in dialogue with ourselves and others. Indeed, 'the conversation that we are is one that never ends.' (Gadamer 1989: 95) For dialogue and conversation are intrinsic to the human condition, the very language of our existence, the essential hermeneutic of all our experience.

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

to recognise oneself (or one's own) in the other and find a home abroad — this is the basic movement of spirit whose being consists in this return to itself from otherness. (Gadamer 1975: 15)

But we would emphasise a further implication of such dialogical hermeneutics: 'the challenge to recognise otherness or the alien in oneself (or one's own).' (Dallmayr 1989: 92)

Domains in Dialogue

Now if a dialogue must have purpose and content, its domain cannot be restricted to the dyad of the 'self' and the 'other', of 'ego' and 'alter'. It must be extended to a triad. It must be mediated by a third party, which will provide an objective point of reference that will make for 'contextualising human agency and culture in a dynamic holistic framework.' (Gupta 1996: 139) For us, the Indian Constitution and the human rights enshrined therein are certainly positioned to do precisely this, i.e., provide a reference point and context for our dialogue in which we as citizens can circumscribe acceptable and non-acceptable

'differences', set limits to tolerance and intolerance, and provide the guiding principles for dialogue within the quest for equality and freedom, for justice and fraternity.

But dialogue is surely more than a verbal exchange. It implies a reciprocity between the 'self' and the 'other' that can take place in various types of encounters and exchanges between persons and groups. Hence a complex and more nuanced understanding of dialogue requires a specification of various kinds of involvement of the 'self' with the 'other'.

Recently Christians have been urged by the Church to engage in a fourfold dialogue ('Dialogue and Proclamation', Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, Vatican City, 1991, no.42.):

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

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

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

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

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

In each of these areas of exchange, corresponding to the levels of tolerance delineated above, one can distinguish degrees of dialogue premised on differing understandings of the self and the other and the encounter between the two. Thus at the pragmatic level of tolerance, the other is perceived as the limitation of the self. Here dialogue becomes a practical way of overcoming differences, rather than by confrontation that could result either in the assimilation or in elimination of the other. At the intellectual level, where the other is seen as complementary to the self, dialogue seeks to overcome the limitations of the self with the help

of the other, rather than instrumentalise the other in the pursuit of self. At the ethical level, the self accepts moral responsibility for the other. In this dialogue, the self will reach out to the other to establish relationships of equity and equality. At the spiritual level, the other is perceived beyond a limitation or a complement or an obligation, but as the fulfilment of the self. Here dialogue would call for a celebration of one another.

Hence in conclusion we must emphasise that pluralism is possible only within a context of tolerance and dialogue. However, our tradition of tolerance seems to be increasingly displaced from public life and it now needs to be revived and extended. For this, we must distinguish levels and dimensions in our understanding of tolerance, lest the ideal of tolerance we aspire to and the limits to intolerance that we set become both impractical and naive.

So too with dialogue, even as we accept dialogue as necessary to the human condition, we must understand how the demands of dialogue must be extended to the various kinds of involvement of the self and the other. However, both tolerance and dialogue can only be meaningful within the context of human rights guaranteed by our Constitution.

V. A Comprehensive Understanding of Justice

Coming now to our understanding of justice, we have argued that in any kind of dialogue, there is an imperative for a point of reference and mediation. Very often this needs to be reinforced by a third-party mediator. However, this is not possible without a stable and mutually agreed upon common ground. Dialogue or tolerance that is not premised on a common and accepted understanding of justice, inevitably remains unstable and eventually becomes an unequal exchange, that in the long run will become relentlessly exploitative. The liberal democratic understanding of justice is the basis of the modern polities. The biblical understanding and the concept of Hindu dharma are somewhat counterintuitive to this, while the Indian Constitution draws from contemporary sources as well.

Justice as Fairness

John Rawls (1975) in his theory of justice has very incisively articulated an understanding of 'justice as fairness' that has become the defining point of reference in the liberal discourse. There is an inevitable tension in the liberal understanding of justice between equality and freedom and where Rawls succeeds in establishing a delicate and viable

balance, there are still those who will contest him on the right, refusing to compromise freedom regardless of the inequalities that might result, and those on the left, emphasising the necessity of equality even at the cost freedom.

What Rawls seems to come up against, unintentionally perhaps, are the limits to which liberal justice can be pushed. For it still leaves unresolved in practice some of the more fundamental cultural and structural contradictions in our society with regard to basic values and necessary institutions, human rights and social duties, to mention but a few by way of illustration. Indeed, it seems that these cannot be adequately addressed with a liberal perspective. A comprehensive theory of justice must cut deeper.

There is an imperative need for a common agreed-upon understanding of justice, fairness, of rights, founded on some objective basis beyond the interest or concerns of the parties involved. Further, even when this is arrived at, there still may well be disagreement on the application of this justice in concrete situations. This will necessitate a third party to mediate an agreement and monitor its implementation. Otherwise, inevitably the stronger will prevail and might becomes right. 'My justice is better than yours' syndrome!

Biblical Justice

A biblical understanding of justice is more pertinent if such impasses are to be avoided. For the biblical understanding is not simply justice as fairness, it goes beyond that to justice as liberation, particularly for the widow, the orphan and the stranger. In other words, justice for the '*anawim* of God is precisely the touched stone of a just society. Biblical justice itself implies a holistic understanding which is very much beyond the retributive justice of an eye for eye, a tooth for a tooth, which as Gandhi had said would make the whole world blind!

The deeper and more incisive understanding of biblical justice, particularly as confirmed in the New Testament, is one that is restorative not retributive, forgiving and healing not revengeful or hurtful. Such a holistic understanding of justice is better described than defined, better experienced in simplicity than articulated with sophistication.

Hindu Dharma

The Hindu concept of 'dharma' in itself is rich and complex. More generally it refers to an eternal and a universal cosmic law, which more particularly, is contextualised in every concrete situation. For our purposes here dharma is best understood as 'dutifulness', obedience to a universal law that rules the world and to which humans must align themselves in their lives. Dharma is particularly concerned with the duties of one's state of, and place in life. In this sense, the Hindu understanding brings a complement to the liberal understanding of justice, which is essentially premised on rights, not on duties.

Thus, Gandhi insists there can be no rights without duties, and for him, it was more than just a correlation, rather the foundation of justice and legitimation of rights was precisely the acceptance of one's duty and the responsibilities this imposed, and in a context of non-violence or ahimsa. Moreover, for Gandhi justice was essentially connected with truth, and hence his whole emphasis on 'satyagraha' or truth-force. It is precisely such a Gandhian understanding that provides a more viable basis of dialogue than any traditional one, particularly as expressed in the Manusmriti and some Hindu scriptures.

The Indian Constitution

The understanding of justice in the Indian Constitution as expressed in terms of human rights is not directly derived from the biblical or the Hindu one, but it goes beyond liberal individualism to a more socialist and communitarian perspective. The first would include democratic and economic rights, and the second group and community ones. Thus while fundamental rights are located in the individual, collective rights, such as the right to one's language and religion are group-based, as is affirmative action for the disadvantaged, such as those affected by caste, gender or other social biases.

This is the analytical framework in which now we shall try in the Indian context to examine three concrete situations — Dalits, the environment, and women — and discuss some viable responses developing in all the areas. The endeavour here will not be a statistical presentation, but rather to outline insightful and useful analyses and suggest feasible and constructive responses.

VI. Dalit Liberation

Introduction: The Contemporary Crisis

Caste-based movements have a long history in our society. More recently they have come into new prominence with the multi-dimension crisis we are undergoing. For today there is no gainsaying the failure of the social revolution envisaged by our nationalist movement, at least for the subalterns, for whom we have not as yet kept our tryst with destiny. In this study, the focus is on subaltern movements in Maharashtra to draw out their humanist and liberative potential, particularly in the context of the challenge of Hindu nationalism. Our focus here will be on the identity politics that once presaged a cultural revolution but seem to running out of control into the lunatic fringe!

Today the saffron wave seems to have taken too many of us by surprise. The secular left now sees a connection between 'Saffronisation and Liberalisation' (Ahmad 1996: 1329) and the predatory capitalism the latter has spawned. (Lele 1995: 38). The liberal right has found fault with the political left's unwillingness or inability, to come to terms with the ground realities of caste. Some view our predicament as due to the 'pragmatic communalism' of 'pseudo secularists', who have used the communal card to appease the minorities. Others explain it as the well-planned 'programmatic communalism' of the Hindutvawadis, who manipulate religious sentiment. Modernists see this revival as a failure of rationality and a regress into tradition; postmodernists blame the homogenising nationalist state (Gellner 1983) with its 'technocratic mindset' (Kothari 1988: 2227) for precipitating a communal reaction.

There are, then, several actors in the text of this drama and our endeavour must be to interpret each in its context, deconstructing their pre-judgement and uncovering their pre-options, even as we become more aware of our own as we listen to them. But there is one overriding and unresolved dilemma that the contemporary crisis leaves us with. For

Right now India is in the throes of these opposite tendencies: of an exclusivist and monolithic definition of 'nation' and 'state' and the more inclusive model of a pluralist participant and federal political structure. (Kothari 1988: 2227)

Integration or Autonomy

There were at the turn of the century two diverging paths open to the Dalit movement: an integration into a reformed mainstream Hinduism, with Sanskritisation; and a rejection of the Brahmanic tradition with an assertion of autonomy. The first represented by Bansode and Gavai drew on the bhakti traditions; the second led by Ambedkar was rooted in the Satya Shodhak movement. The two orientations were not easily reconcilable for they were driven by opposing forces:

While the basic social oppression and economic exploitation of the Dalits pushed them to a radical autonomy, at the same time there were powerful pressures for absorption: the sheer social and political power of caste Hindus and their organisations, the readiness of reformers to make concessions, the Hinduistic tendencies that came to dominate even movements opposing class exploitation. (Omvedt 1994: 134)

However, the road to Dalit autonomy required them to organise independently and define their non-Hindu, non-Aryan option, to articulate their stance on British rule and their position in the nationalist movement, to choose the social group and political allies to work with for their cause. This was no mean task and the ideology and leadership for it was, provided by Ambedkar.

Social Identity and Human Dignity

The economic emancipation that Ambedkar struggled to achieve for the oppressed all through his life still remains an unfinished revolution. However, his religious conversion to Buddhism, to which he led a large number of his followers, was seen by them not unwarrantedly 'as a social rebirth, a gaining of a new identity, a way in which the Dalits were leading, not simply joining a movement for the recreation of India.' (Omvedt 1994: 248)

For the Dalits this 'conversion as a gateway to self-respect' (Gore 1993: 99) was the culmination of a long and agonised struggle for identity and dignity, for liberation from caste oppression, so institutionalised in Hindu society, and legitimated by religion. Searching for the one 'principle in Hinduism which all Hindus, no matter what their other differences are, feel bound to render willing obedience' to, he concludes, 'that principle is the principle of caste.' (Moon 1987: vol. 3: 336) For Ambedkar Hinduism negated the essential dignity of the person by subordination to the caste group ascribed at birth. Only its total repudiation of a new religious identity could give these Dalits back their usurped human dignity.

A Postponed Revolution

At the beginning of and throughout his public life, Ambedkar challenged the institutional structures of his society and precipitated a real rebellion among his people: a rejection of an oppressive tradition, and an affirmation of an alternative identity. But at the end of his life's odyssey, the revolution he initiated remains incomplete: the exploitative structures still prevail, and the dignity of his people is as yet denied. Certainly, there was external pressure working against Dalit liberation, in the caste-class, liberal-democratic society of post-independent India. And yet, part of the betrayal came from the inner dynamics of the movement itself.

Once again, we see a subaltern movement of great promise splinter and dissipate its forward thrust. Not all the Dalits followed Ambedkar into Buddhism. At the time this would have put them beyond the pale of protective discrimination then given to the Scheduled Castes. The neo-Buddhists, or 'nav-Bhudhas', were mostly from his own Mahar caste, which also dominated the Republican Party. Here again, it was caste rather than class that was the basis for mass mobilisation.

In 1972 the radical Dalit Panthers challenged the older leaders with a new manifesto inspired by Naxalite imagery and more in tune with Marxist ideology than the Buddhist dhamma:

We want a complete and total revolutionary change. We do not want a little place in Brahman Alley. We want to rule the whole land. We are not looking at persons but a system. Change of heart, liberal education, etc., will not end our state of exploitation, when we gather a revolutionary mass, and rouse the people, out of the struggle of this giant mass will come the tidal wave of revolution. (cited by Joshi 1984: 146)

In today's opportunist and amoral factional politics, the need for unity among the subalterns, or at least a commitment to a common minimum programme for a united front is even more urgent. In this context, Ambedkarism is coming into prominence even beyond Maharashtra, among Dalits in the south and the Bahujan Samaj Party in the north. Yet with the saffronisation of his home state and the factionalism in the Republican Party there, Ambedkarism is still to come into its own in Maharashtra. The 'wave of revolution' remains beyond the horizon, waiting for the earth to quake with a Dalit revolt before it rolls over the land and engulfs 'Brahman Alley' in its wake.

The Contemporary Scenario

Yet it is undeniable that the Dalits are beginning to come into their own and are determined to find their place in the sun. But this is not happening within the Gandhian framework of reform. The significance of the change of designation from 'harijan', children of God, to 'Dalit', was meant precisely to express this.

And yet even as Ambedkar is more widely visible today in the public discourse than ever before, Ambedkarism, that is his ideology regarding, and approach to questions of justice seems to be of much less concern. Ambedkar seems to have become a symbol, a token to justify a movement that is most unfortunately concerned with an identity politics that privileges the leaders and exploits the led.

The right reaction with Hindu nationalism of the Sangh Parivar is a subtle, and often not easily perceived by the Dalits themselves, the response that has increasingly co-opted Dalits to causes and involvements that hijack their own liberation. Often it is the Dalits that do the dirty work for, and engage in the street violence on behalf of the upper caste/class leaders. This certainly does not serve Dalit interests or address their real concerns but merely gives them a temporary sense of belonging to the hierarchical society that has for so long excluded them. Moreover, the identity politics of the Dalits themselves is more a struggle for positional change for themselves, rather than for structural change in society. This of course is extremely short-sighted and opportunistic.

A Dialogue for Liberation

But given the Christian concern for the option for the poor and the Dalit quest for liberation, there are possibilities for a dialogue that needs to be explored. The Gandhian the idea of the Daridranarayan, the God of the poor, is something that needs to be re-activated. Gandhi's favourite talisman expressed this eloquently to Nehru:

Whenever in doubt recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. (CW 89: 125)

The Dalits have never quite forgiven Gandhi for his paternalism towards them and particularly his opposition to separate electorates when he forced Ambedkar to yield by beginning a fast unto death. Today I believe, it is important to draw on Ambedkar, who represents a modern liberal and democratic understanding of individual and collective rights. This is a rich heritage for a dialogue with Dalits, one that must go beyond tokenism and sloganeering.

These resources of inspiration for dialogue in the Indian tradition combine well with liberation theology, which must be the basis for a Christian encounter with Dalits. Such an encounter must not only engage the more liberal and left-oriented groups and even Gandhians, but it must also involve those attempting a liberation theology within Hinduism, like Swami Agnivesh. It must also reach out to the neo-Buddhists with Ambedkar and in fact, this ought to be the starting point.

Liberation theology with its 'promotion of justice' and 'option for the poor' is a contemporary understanding of a biblical ideal that is certainly very relevant to India. However, its original encounter with India was in the context of the Marxist analysis coming out in Latin America. There have been seminal Asian liberation theologians in India, such as Aloysius Pieris and George Soares-Prabhu, who have tried to indigenise this perspective.

Soares-Prabhu's understanding of the poor as an economic class in the New Testament and his reflections on the dharma of Jesus, a line of thought which he never completed developed, has opened the possibility of dialogue with a strong biblical basis. Pieris has pointed out three essential conditions in South Asia for any relevant liberation theology, namely economic poverty, popular religiosity and cultural diversity.

But theology alone cannot be the basis for a dialogue with Dalits, a political standpoint is equally important. There is a great danger for interest politics being displaced by identity politics. This becomes a critical area for a more constructive involvement. Clearly, the demands of justice here require that both identity, religio-cultural and otherwise, as well as dignity, eco-political and otherwise, must respected.

VII. Women and Gender Justice

The situation of women in patriarchal societies that now prevails the world over, covers a broad spectrum from a hopeful trend towards greater gender equality to tragic situations in which atrocities against women are commonplace. If most modern societies have still a long way to go, many traditional ones not only resist the restructuring of gender roles, they could even regress, turning the clock backwards under an oppressive patriarchal conservatism and/or a fanatic religious fundamentalism.

Personal Law

In India, gender relations are more complicated because not only is there a revival of traditional conservative and fundamentalist religion among all communities, but also because even intervention by law is complicated by the prevalence of personal law, pertaining mainly to marriage, family and inheritance. These laws are difficult to change without the community consent. Moreover, once this law is seen as founded on religious beliefs and values, then religious fundamentalism opposes all change no matter how constructive and reform-oriented it might be.

Resistance to the common civil code is such that any external imposition is likely to prove counterproductive and provoke a backlash from reactionary forces. A more viable approach would be to insist on gender justice in terms of fundamental rights guaranteed to all citizens by the Constitution, and then to amend personal law so that the specifics of gender injustice in that particular community is more pointedly targeted.

For since there are multiple kinds of patriarchy, that are specific to different communities, Kumkum Sangari rightly points out that one needs to amend personal law in specific community contexts. A common civil code not only would mean resistance and reaction, and it might not in fact be able to target the specificities of gender injustice in different communities. Unfortunately, the common civil code has become a slogan that is been used by Hindu fundamentalists against the Muslim minority to put them on the defensive. Moreover, the left and liberals who are not sensitive to religious and cultural nuances of personal law and the apprehensions of minority communities in this regard, often find themselves on the same side as the Hindu nationalist right, with whom they do make strange bedfellows!

Hindu Nationalism

Once we realize the caste society, which is so endemic to all the communities in the subcontinent, regardless of their religious or regional traditions, and that this hierarchy is strongly patriarchal, the situation of women in this country becomes apparent. The recent revival of Hindu nationalism, although it gives lip service to equality and the supposed rejection of caste, is deeply and subtly caste biased, as is apparent from the very leadership and the kind of neo-Hinduism projected. Moreover, the aggressive masculinity promoted, cannot but be prejudicial to women. It was Vivekananda who urged: read the Bhagvadgita with biceps!

As with the Dalits, women also have been co-opted into the agenda of cultural nationalism of the Sangh Parivar, and regrettably, they too are becoming willing collaborators. The vigour of the women's movement, which was once inspired by the left and by ecofeminism now seems to be running out of steam. Postmodernist reactions to modernity and science have in the end only strengthened the reactionary modernism of the Hindu nationalism. (Nanda, 2003)

Christian Ambiguities

Christians too are not exactly an example on the whole issue of women's liberation as can be seen from the controversies in the Church today. If the gender issue is not more controverted in the Christian Church in India, it is mostly because issues are not so far sharply focused, and the contradictions are not as yet coming out into the open. A good indication of something positive was the updating of Christian personal law, but here the role of the hierarchy was much resented by many women's groups, since they seem to be more concerned with institutional interests of the church than with the personal care of women.

De-legitimating Gender Bias

There is need to position oneself on the side of gender justice and then interrogate religious traditions, rather than sacralise and absolutise them and attempt to accommodate gender issues. Women's movements in different parts of the world have done much creative work in this context; even where battles have been won, the war still rages on. There are of course resources in the various religious traditions for a constructive dialogue to address this issue of gender justice, but unfortunately, these have been hijacked by religious fundamentalists. Religious symbols and myths have been co-opted to conservative rather than progressive ends.

In a patriarchal society, all women are disadvantaged and underprivileged. And yet depending on the social position of their caste, class, ethnicity, region, language etc. there are multiple disadvantages involved that are often cumulative. This is often being used as an argument against an overarching women's movement across all these different divides. But given that the basic position of women is one of subservience in various degrees, it is precisely this that can form the basic common ground on which the women's movement across these various divides can be premised. Unless of course, the movement gives into the divide-and-rule syndrome that

seems to be precipitated both from within and without with many fissiparous subaltern movements.

The Possibilities for Dialogue

Once again the basis here for a dialogue must be the common ground where women of all communities and religious traditions, who are really be oppressed, can come together. There are multiple disadvantages that different groups of women experience, i.e., gender, class, and caste. Hence it is important to link the women's movement both with liberation theology and a viable feminism in the quest for gender justice, and also with the relevant ecological understanding that is constructive and creative, and not one that is atavistic or essentialist.

A dialogue across various religious traditions would imply in this situation drawing on the resources of these traditions for a genuine women's liberation, which as we know implies men's liberation as well. The focus must be gender justice not a reversal of roles. But once again as with the Dalit movement, unless there is an openness to inter-religious dialogue and women's liberation and gender justice within these traditions, the dialogue across them cannot be very effective. However, in such a situation the starting point might well be outside the tradition, which then can precipitate the discussion within.

VIII. Environment

Introduction: The 'Immediate' Crisis

The global ecological crisis we have precipitated today is more than just an environmental one. It is really the culmination of the many unresolved crises of our world, struggling to be born into a new age. Little wonder, then, that the irrationality of war, so easily engulfs us in violent conflicts which threaten to career out of our control, even as the saner elements among us watch helplessly. The ecological crisis, then, poses a radical question to a human society's relationship to its sustaining environment—one that has become crucial for all of us on this planet, bound as, we are in a common destiny, our future together.

Ecological crises were not unknown in ancient societies. All classical civilizations exploited and degraded their environment. (Dubos 1972) Lynn white has a point in his accusation against the Christian one, (White 1967) but long ago Plato was already complaining in the *Critias* about how deforestation and overgrazing had degraded the environment and reduced Attica 'to the bones of a wasted body' There is now growing support for the view that Mohenjodaro and Harappa in the

Indian sub-continent eventually declined due to environmental degradation. (Rao 1990) And yet we seem to condemn ourselves to repeat such history on an even grander scale. (Dunlap 1979)

Seeking a Religious Understanding

The relationship of human societies to their environments is always a mediated one, firstly through their technology which interfaces directly with the environment, However, though it does indeed have a dynamic of its own, at a deeper level, technology is oriented by other socio-cultural systems of a society that together make up a 'design for living'. This must implicitly or explicitly orient us towards issues of ultimate concern, in function of which we cope with more immediate ones. To be authentically human, the 'world view' (Weltanschauung) of a society cannot but face such ultimate issues, and survival is just one of them, forced to our attention now by the ecological crisis, indeed the present dimensions of this crisis question most radically modern society with its technology and culture. We cannot escape by merely tinkering with parts of these. What is required is an equally radical response, which will make intelligible and validate our encounter with reality, and take us beyond mere survival, to find our place in, and accept our responsibility for the world.

Now if we accept with Paul Tillich, a description of religion as 'what ultimately concerns man', then we place religion at this most fundamental level of human concern as something essential to our collective human endeavour,' even when we are not faced with a crisis of survival but are rather on a quest for fulfilment—some might call salvation.

If our relationship to the environment and our place in the biosphere has not been perceived as a 'religious' issue by modern society, this is because it is not regarded as one of ultimate concern as yet. It still is a rather taken-for-granted, matter-of-fact, instrumental relationship from a position of dominance. This was not always so in pre-modern societies. But now the ecological crisis is challenging us to a religious response, in the sense we have just defined. But, if as some would claim, the existing religious traditions are inadequate to the present ecological crisis, (Berry 1990: 87) then surely we need a new interpretation to create a new understanding. For this a dialogue of religions is imperative.

Biblical Stewardship

The well-worn Biblical ideal of stewardship at its best is an anthropocentric understanding of our relationship to nature. Indeed, given 'Western theology's obsessive anthropocentrism', (Soares-Prabhu 1987) and the instrumentalization of nature in the Bible itself, (*ibid.* 137) it is unsurprising that Biblical stewardship does not break through to a non-instrumental relationship with creation. (Ref. Gn. 1:28-29, Ws. 9:2-3, Sir. 17 2-5 etc.) Nature still remains for human use and under various other pressures from the market and elsewhere, this too easily tilts over into 'abuse'!

Creation Mystique

Breaking away from such anthropocentrism is a creation-centred theology. A Teilhardian, faith in ' the world (its value, its infallibility and goodness)'. (Teilhard 1969: 19) There is a mystical element here that seeks to repossess the numinous psychic dimension of creation, so alive in primordial society, and to recapture our lost sense of revelation in nature, so central to the non-historical cosmic religions of the East. There is a deep feeling too for the organic realness of the world, a sense of unity and communion underlying, and inherent in all creation. However, this approach fails to make a cogent case to establish human responsibility for nature by negating the unique position of human persons.

Transcendent Monotheism

With the theocentric approach of the Abrahamic religions, no one part of creation can be absolutized so as to instrumentalize another, since all are relativized by one absolute transcendent extrinsic to all. However, this monotheistic lordship implies a dominance-dependence relationship between Creator and creature, which is projected into other relationships in society and its relationship to nature, with drastic consequences.

Collecting the Fragments

Each of these three approaches taken singly does not provide us with an adequate religious approach to the ecological question; taken together they do not add up to a satisfyingly comprehensive perspective either. For they are both partial and misleading. But each does point to an essential dimension in any genuine religious perspective on ecology:

the human, the cosmic, the divine. We must now attempt to bring these together in an integrated understanding.

Human Fellowship

Beginning with the human dimension, a shift from the ideal of 'stewardship' to the reality of 'fellowship', is essential. In the two creation stories in Genesis (Gn.1:1-2:4a and 2:46-25) besides the theme of dominion on which the 'stewardship' ideal is based, there is also the idea of relationship on which companionship can be founded. (Himes 1990: 43) Elsewhere too the relational dimension of human beings is certainly a well-founded biblical theme, and one that can be extended beyond just the human community. Thus 'thinking in relationships and communities is developed out of the doctrine of the Trinity, and is brought to bear on the relation of men and women to God, to other people and to mankind as a whole, as well as on their fellowship with the whole of creation'. (Moltmann 1981: 19) Hence 'trinitarian thinking must necessarily mean 'to think ecologically about God, man and the world in their relationships and indwelling'. (*ibid.*)

Cosmic Evolution

The philosophical problem of the one and the many is not resolved by positing a monistic unity of one substance in which the diversity and uniqueness of creatures, the individuality and personality of humans is lost in a basic uniformity. Rather these can be preserved in the unity of the great chain of being, (Lovejoy 1936) within the evolutionary process, going beyond Darwin and converging in a Teilhardian Omega Point. Further, the integration of this cosmic evolution can be comprehended in trinitarian terms as coming from the Father through Christ, and going back to him in the Spirit through Christ.

In the Hindu context, Sri Aurobindo elaborates on a dynamic view of cosmic evolution, where 'a mechanical, gradual, rigid evolution out of indeterminate Matter by Nature-Force', is rejected for 'a conscious, supple, flexible, intensely surprising and constantly dramatic evolution by a super-conscient knowledge.' (Aurobindo 1944: 11)

Divine In-Dwelling

Even more than cosmic evolution and human fellowship, divine in-dwelling establishes the fundamental unity of the world. Indeed, it validates and brings them together precisely because it suffuses them both.

The commanding Hindu metaphor of the world as the body of God, deriving from the ancient Rigvedic myth of the cosmic person *(purusa)*, dramatizes this in-dwelling with the forceful symbolism of a body-soul relationship, making of the cosmos the primary address, the dwelling place of the divine. St. Thomas Aquinas too is daring enough at times to use the same imagery: '*sic est anima in corpore, sicut Deus in mundo.*'(Sum. Theol. I-II, q.17 a. 8 ad 2.) The soul is in the body just as God is in the world.

In trinitarian terms, this can be beautifully expressed as: 'God-in-Himself, God-for-us.' (Sobrino 1981:84,nt. 29). In the final analysis, what this in-dwelling expresses is this: God at home in his creation and with his people (Moltmann:1981: 125) and they in turn at peace with him and each other.

The Cosmotheandric Perspective

Putting all three together we have what Raimundo Panikkar would call 'the total integrated vision of the seamless garment of the total reality: the cosmotheandric vision.' (Panikkar: 1977: 125) Panikkar also refers to this as 'the anthropocosmic' reality. (*ibid.*: 21, nt.8, and 68-69)

For everything that exists shares in the mystery of being, is within the range of human consciousness, and stands in relation to the world. The cosmos is not just matter-energy but it constituted as well by its intelligibility and its numinosity. The human is not just body-soul but consciousness that embraces the cosmos and reaches out to the infinite. The divine is not the utterly other apart from the world but an intrinsic creative presence in the cosmos and an intimate salvific one in human beings as well. Each dimension is what the other is not, and it is not any the less for being so intrinsically linked together, 'because the real is precisely the crossing of these dimensions. Every real existence is a knot in this threefold net.' (*ibid.*: 89)

Cosmotheandric Implications

Our starting point is the intrinsically valued and non-instrumental relationships that this understanding posits between all three dimensions of reality, so that no reality, nothing which exists, is ever purely a means, and all reality, everything real, has a value in itself as an end.

Human Rights: Western 'Jus'

Going back to the Roman idea of 'jus', the concept of rights in the West has evolved in a decidedly anthropocentric – even in an individualist – context. (Pieris, 1988: 527, & Schwatz 1977)

However, going beyond a rationalist positivism and a bourgeois individualism, human rights must fundamentally mean the right to be fully human. In the cosmotheandric perspective this would comprehend the cosmic and divine dimensions of the human and so encompass all other rights as well.

Now if the common good in its broadest sense is defined as the sum total of those conditions that make it possible for the members of the community to achieve the fulfilment of their nature, then extending our sense of community, or rather communication, beyond the human will provide a sound foundation for an ecological ethic.

Cosmic Duties: Eastern 'Dharma'

Deriving from the ancient myth of the cosmic person (*Purusa*) in the Rigveda (x, 90), and the world as God's body, is the Hindu understanding of *dharma* (*dhamma*). It is a most fundamental yet multivocal word in the Indian tradition. Quintessentially, '*dharma* is that which maintains, gives cohesion and thus strength to any given thing, to reality and ultimately to the three worlds (*triloka).*'

In this emphatically cosmocentric understanding, all the parts of God's body have rights, or rather claims of their own. What is distinctive of human beings is their duty, their *dharma*. The Gita develops this further with the idea of *svadharma*, one's own duty, specific to one's own context. Dharma is expressed in ritual (*rit*), in sacrifice (*yajna*) and in righteous behaviour (*niti*), which together keep the world in right order and harmony.

We can now see how dharma is not so much a foundation for individual rights of human beings, as it is for their cosmic duties. The *svadharma* of humans is precisely to maintain the cosmic community in its right order and harmony. For, 'the Jus to be human is always already founded on the Dharma of being cosmic.' D'Sa: 1990: 10) Thus the rights of the human and the *dharma* of the cosmic are intrinsically and inseparably bound together in the divine cosmic person of *Purusa*.

Cosmotheandric Integration

To find a common ground for a dialogue on environmental concerns we must put together an ecological ethic. An ethic, as we understand the term here, is a configuration of value preferences and behavioural norms, attitudinal orientations and motivating symbols, put together in an historical context for a specific people over time. The relationship between such an ethic to the structure and functioning of a society is certainly problematic, whether we speak of a religious ethic, like the Protestant or the Hindu one; or a secular one, like a work ethic or an ecological one. But to imagine that there is no relationship between the two, is to espouse a superficial and mechanical analysis of society. Today the ecological imperative demands an ethic that will restrain us from ecocide, and orient us beyond to a more responsible relationship to our environment. What we need, is a new paradigm for society, supported and maintained by such an ethic, with new moral values and a new 'mindfulness'

On the human dimension, this would mean the primacy of the common good. For this common good, a society must be structured on the principle of subsidiarity and its obverse, i.e, neither abrogating authority upwards for what can be done at lower levels of society, nor abdicating responsibility downwards for what must be done at higher ones. The values supportive of such subsidiarity are best expressed by solidarity, a term that encompasses our interrelationship, interdependence, and 'individuality', a term expressing need for autonomy and uniqueness. Ideally, it would be an egalitarian and participative society on a human scale, concerned, in Erich Fromm's terms, with 'being' rather than 'having', a community of free persons in communion with each other, the world and the divine. (Fromm 1976)

On the cosmic dimension, in the new paradigm, the primacy would be for sustainable development in the larger context of the cosmic evolution we have sketched above. This would mean more than just economic growth up to the carrying capacity of the environment more than merely 'Accommodating Human Needs and Numbers to the Earth's Resources,' (Brown 1979) more than a reduction of the environment to 'common property' and then optimising its use. (Edel 1973)

Such development can of course only be in terms of a qualitative growth, not merely a quantitative change, a 'limitation of the empire of necessity and the widening of the sphere of freedom', in Christopher Dawson's words. (1943) For this we must learn from the Taoist ethic of frugality, of 'grace without waste', not merely a contractual one of

accommodation, (Brown 1979) but rather a 'Gandhian ethic of restricted consumption.' (Jain 1988: 311)

The concern would then be not just for sustainable growth, but further for a *regenerative development* as well. This implies more than just leaving the environment uncompromised by degradation and pollution, but renewing it to create a new earth community—to reach beyond our grasp.

Finally, if this new paradigm for society is to be complete, it cannot avoid taking into account issues of ultimate concern which every human society must encounter. This would call for a paradigm, not closed in on itself, but at its very core, open to a beyond, a quest, for self-transcendence, immanent in the depths of the human, even as it subsumes the cosmic. For the human being is indeed *ens finitum capax infiniti* (a finite being open to the infinite).

IX. Conclusion: A Creative Dialogue

This *weltanschauung*, of human fellowship, cosmic evolution and transcendent-immanent reality, must indeed be spelt out into an eco-ethic which is both down to earth and meaningfully motivating. Such an ethic cannot be effective merely as a matter of personal morality. It must be articulated and structured in the values and norms, the attitudes and motivations of a society. It must be integrated into its 'design for living', and become the ground for an equal and just dialogue.

Pulling together the threads of this discussion, and collecting the fragments scattered through this presentation, we need to focus now on the implications for the dialogue between religious traditions.

To begin with, it should be quite obvious that the starting point for any true and open dialogue must be pluralism, not simply as a de facto given but as the de jure structure of reality as we know it. For the law of pluralism is written into all reality. Moreover, this pluralism must not just be an acceptance but truly a celebration of difference because it is dialogue across differences that can then be truly an enriching and ennobling encounter. Uniformity does not lend itself to dialogue, but simply to monologue no matter how many people actually participate in it.

The level of tolerance that we can commit ourselves to would also indicate the intensity of our celebration of the difference in the 'other'. Unity and not uniformity then is the end point of a dialogue but it is often a point beyond our present horizons. It must be a unity that will allow for diversity and precisely perhaps be a 'diversity in unity' rather

than a 'unity in diversity'. In other words, even in the unity the emphasis on diversity is not lost.

The coincidence of opposites in such a unity is clearly a mystical experience of tolerance, as Panikkar has elaborated. But clearly, this is not the beginning of the dialogue. It might be important to realise that the greater diversity, the more enriching and at the same time the more arduous will be this quest for a mystical unity in which opposites coincide.

Among the four domains of dialogue enumerated surely the richest is the sharing of experience and yet the more domains a dialogue embraces the more comprehensive it and the more enduring will be.

Intra-Religious Dialogue

While our focus here has mainly been on the dialogue between religions, it is important to realise that the *inter*-religious must be premised on the *intra*-religious. For unless the plurality within a religious tradition is encouraged, the differences celebrated, tolerance sensitised, it is unlikely that all these can be carried over to an inter-religious dialogue. What we need then is an intra-religious dialogue so that we can see, each in their own tradition, what we can do for ourselves as a preparation for dialogue. If can be non-defensive, then perhaps we will be able to initiate a non-violent and open dialogue with other religious traditions, and perhaps even with the fundamentalist within them. In other words, the *intra-* is the condition of the *inter*-religious dialogue.

Panikkar has described the intra-religious dialogue at the personal level thus:

An *intrareligious* dialogue, i.e., an inner dialogue within myself, an encounter in the depth of my personal religiousness, having met another religious experience on that very intimate level. In other words, if *interreligious* dialogue is to be real dialogue, an *intrareligious* dialogue must accompany it, i.e., in must begin with my questioning myself and the relativity of my beliefs (which does does not mean *relativism*), accepting the challenge of a change, a conversation and the risk of upsetting my traditional patterns. (Panikkar 1978: 40)

As St. Augustine confessed: *Questio mihi factus sum*. I am become a question to myself! I must face the question I am if I am to face the question that the other is to me.

But beyond a personal understanding of intra-religious dialogue, there is need for a community or societal one, a dialogue within a religious tradition between groups and perspectives. It is this level of dialogue we urge here.

We have already indicated how dialogue, especially in the Indian context, must be premised on a liberation theology that draws not just on the Christian but also on other religious traditions, bringing together the liberative aspects of these traditions. Specifically with regard to Dalits, women and the environment, there is a rich heritage available both in the Christian and in the Hindu traditions in the sub-continent that is waiting for the cross-fertilisation of a creative dialogue.

An Equal Dialogue

To tap the resources of our rich heritage, it is of the utmost importance to have an *equal* dialogue. For any dialogue that starts with the assumptions of superiority on one side, or has a hidden agenda intending assimilation or conversion or propaganda, other rather than a respect and enrichment that is mutual, an openness and freedom that is creative, can never be an equal exchange, and in the end like all unequal exchanges, whether between classes, castes, genders or even between communities, region etc. always becomes exploitative, and eventually can only be exploitative and oppressive. An unequal dialogue is always in some measure destructive, it can never be truly creative.

The dogmatic religious traditions find it very problematic to concede that those outside their religious revelation and beliefs have an equal access to the truth. They feel themselves privileged in this regard, and compromise in this matter is tantamount to being disloyal to their faith. However, precisely in such a perspective, there is even greater need of a hermeneutic approach that will make for dialogue, for it becomes imperative to distinguish between emic and etic perspectives, the insider's and the outsider's standpoint.

From an emic or insider's perspective, differing truths cannot lay claim to equal validity, unless they all are relativised, or brought into harmony at a higher level of unity. But this harmony may require an etic or outsider's perspective if the emic one is not inclusive enough. However, even such an emic perspective without compromising itself must grant the right to hold, and the duty to respect different opinions, even one's incompatible with one's own, for in civil society the other's legitimate right to freedom and claim to respect must not be compromised by imposing one's own dogmatic beliefs or ritual practice. This makes dialogue possible even between believers and atheists.

Thus from an etic perspective then, an equal dialogue is less a matter of 'equal truth' than of 'equal freedom'. This demands that no standpoint is privileged above others, much less imposed, but all empathetically critiqued and challenged. For this, a common ground must be sought

and the only common currency viable, given the variety and variations prevailing among our pluri-religious traditions today, is basic humanism. This will in turn have its own problematique but it is one in which all can engage as equals to set the conditions for a deeper religious discourse. Hence the necessity for a relevant hermeneutic.

All this will, of course, demand a more liberal and humanist approach within each tradition, for which an intra-religious dialogue becomes necessary as a prelude to an inter-religious one. Otherwise, we will have a debate, not a dialogue, controversy not complementarity. Indeed, such transparency among believers and non-believers would make even an 'extra-religious' dialogue challenging and fruitful for both.

From an emic perspective, dogmatic traditions are often unwilling or unable to face the challenge of an equal dialogue. Such religious traditions need a relevant hermeneutic for an intra-religious dialogue to be more open and inclusive. Obviously, we are all conscience-bound to follow the truth wherever it leads. But the objective possibility of one's conscience leading one out of the fold as it were, is extremely problematic in an emic perspective, it is considered to be apostasy, but an etic one would find it easier to grant at least the subjective possibility of this happening in good faith. The crucial question here is how inclusive is one's perspective and how informed is one's conscience.

From at etic perspective, non-dogmatic traditions are generally not constrained by exclusive beliefs. However, inclusiveness too must go with its own cautions. On the one hand, it must not fall into relativism or degenerate into permissiveness; on the other, it must neither become a process of appropriation and absorption into a higher unity, wherein the distinctiveness of each tradition is lost, not just subsumed. The all-inclusiveness of some universalists sometimes seems to imply just this. A valid inclusiveness would demand the integration of diversities into an enriching and higher unity so that we have a 'diversity in unity' rather than a 'unity in diversity'. White light includes the wavelengths of all the seven colours, yet the rainbow has its own especial beauty.

Finally, if justice is to be a real concern in an inter-religious dialogue, then it must begin with an intra-religious one that addresses the injustices within one's own tradition, injustices perpetrated on one's own and on the other, injustices of commission and omission. But it must at the same time work towards being an equal dialogue, not just in the religious dimension but in others as well, and even become a fraternal dialogue where justice is subsumed by charity but never substituted for it! Such a dialogue must be a dialogical dialogue before it can be a dialectical one, a meeting of myths before an ideological encounter.

References

Ahmad, Eijaz, 1996, 'In the Eye of the storm: The Left chooses', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.31, No.22, 1st June, pp. 1329- 1343.

Aurobindo, Sri, *Evolution*, Arya Pub. House, Kolkatta, 1944.

Berry, Thomas, 1990, *The Dream of the Earth*, Sierra Club Books, San Francisco

Brown, Lester R., 1979, *The Twenty-Ninth Day*, New York, W.W. Norton.

Dallmayr. Fred R., 1989, 'Hermeneutics and Deconstruction: Gadamer Derrida in Dialogue', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, pp.75-92.

Dawson, Christopher, 1943, *The Judgement of Nations*, Sheed and Ward, London.

D'Sa, Francis, 1990, 'The Right to be Human and the Duty to be Cosmic: Cross Cultural Reflections on Human Rights and Cosmic Duties', De Nobili, College, Pune.

Dubos, Rene, 1972, *A God Within*, Charles Scribner and Sons, New York.

Dunlap, Riley E., 1979, 'Environmental Sociology' in *Annual Review of Sociology*, ed. Alex Inkeles, Annual Reviews Inc., Palo Alto, CA., Vol. 5, p. 243 – 273.

Edel, Mathew, 1973, *Economics and the Environment*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

Fromm, Eric, 1976, *To have or to Be?* Harper & Row, N.Y.

Fox, Mathew, ed., 1981, *Western Spirituality: Historical Rootes*, *Ecumenical Routes*, Bear & Co. Santa Fe.

Gadamer. Hans-Georg, 1989a, 'Destruktion and Deconstruction.', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, pp. 102, 113.

Gadamer. Hans-Georg, 1975, *Truth and Method*, Seabury Press, New York.

Gandhi, M.K., Complete Works (CW) 100 Vols.

Gore, M.S. 1993, The Social Context of an Ideology: Ambedkar's Political and Social Thought, Sage, N. Delhi.

Gellner, Ernest, 1983, *Nations and Nationalism*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

Gupta, Dipankar, 1996, *The Context of Ethnicity: Sikh Identity in a Comparative Perspective*. Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi.

Himes Michael J., and Kenneth R. Himes, 'The Sacrament of Creation: Towards an Environmental Theology', *Commonweal*, Vol. CXVIII, No. 4, 26 Jan 1990. p. 43.

Jain, L.C., 1988, 'Poverty Environment and Development and: A view from Gandhi's Window', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 23, No.7, 13 Feb, pp 311-320.

Joshi, Barbara, 1984, *Untouchable! Voices of Dalit Liberation*, 2nd ed. Books, London.

Kariel. Henry S., 1968, 'Pluralism', *in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol.12, Macmillan, New York, 1968 164-169.

Kabir. Humayun, 1955, *The Indian Heritage*, Asia Pub. House, Bombay.

Khwaja. Jamal, 1992, 'Concept and Role of Tolerance in Indian Culture', in ed., Balasubramaniam, pp.89-120.

Kothari, Rajni, 1988 'Integration and Exclusion in Indian Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol.23, No.43, 22 Oct, pp.2223-27.

Kothari. Rajni., 1989 'Ethnicity', in ed.s, David and Kadirgamar.

Lovejoy, Arthur O., 1936, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, Harvard Univ Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Moltmann, Jurgen, 1981, The Trinity and the kingdom of God, SCM Press, London.

Moon, Vasant, ed., 1987. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Bombay: Dept. of Education, Govt. of Maharashtra, Vol. 3vol.

Nanda, Meena 2003, *Prophets Facing Backwards: Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India*, Rutgers Univ Press, N.Brunswik, NJ.

Omvedt, Gail, 1976, 'Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: the Non-Brahman Movement in Western India: 1873-1930', *Scientific Socialist*, Education Trust, Bombay.

Panikkar, Raimondo, 1977, 'Colligite Fragmenta: For an Integration of Reality' in *From Alienation to At-oneness,* eds. F.A. Eigo and S. E. Fittipaldi, Villanova Univ. Press, Villanova, Penn.

Panikkar, Raimondo, 1984, *Inter-Cultural*, Vol. 17, No.1, issue 82, Jan-Mar.

Panikkar, R., *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, Paulist Press, NY., 1978.

Panikkar. R., 1983, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-cultural Studies*, Asian Trading Corp. Bangalore.

Pieris, Aloysius, 1988, 'Human Rights Language and Liberation Theology', *Vidyajyoti,* Vol. 52, No. 11, Nov. .527. Also

Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, 'Dialogue and Proclamation', Vatican City, 1991, no.42.

Post. Werner. 1970 'Tolerance', in *Sacramentum Mundi*, ed., Karl Rahner, Vol. 6, pp. 262-267.

Sangari, Kumkum, 1995, 'Politics of Diversity: Religious Communities and Multiple Patriarchies', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 51, pp.3287 – 3314, No. 52, pp. 3381 – 3389.

Soarees-Prabhu, George, 'The Sacred in the Secular', Vol. 17, No. 9. Mar.87, pp. 126 –136.

Schwartz, Bernard, 1977, The Great Rights of Mankind: An History of the American Bill of Rights, Oxford University Press, New York.

Radhakrishnan. S., 1927, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.

Rahner, Karl, 1969*, Theological Investigations*, Vol VI, Payton, Longman and Todd, London.

Rao, S. R., 'New Frontiers in Archeology' Heras Memorial Lectures 1990, Heras Memorial Institute, Mumbai.

Rawls, John, 1971, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, MA.,

Saran. A.K., 1989, 'Gandhi and the Concept of Politics: Towards a normal civilization', *Gandhi Marg* (1), 675-727.

Soarees-Prabhu, George, 1987, 'The Sacred in the Secular', Vol. XV11, No. Mar. pp. 136.

Sobrino, Jon, 1981, 'Christian Prayer and New Testament Theology. A Basis for Social Justice Spirituality,' in *Western Spirituality*, ed. Mathew. Fox.

Taylor, Charles.1992. *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Recognition*, Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton.

Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, 1969, *How I Believe*, Harper and Row, New York.

Thapar. Romila, 1961, *Ashoka and the Decline of the Maurayas*, Oxford Univ. Press, London.

Van den Berghe. 1967. 'Pluralism and the Polity: A Theoretical Exploration', in ed. Kuper, Leo and M.G. Smith, op. cit. pp. 67 – 80.

White, Lynn Jr., 1967 'Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis', *Science*, Vol. 155, No. 3767, 19 Mar

8.
THE DIALOGUE OF CULTURES: FROM *PARANOIA* TO *METANOIA*

[This was presented   at the Workshop on Minorities in Asia: Integration or Segregation, Asian Muslims Action Network, AMAN, on November 16, 2006, in Jakarta.]   A slightly shorter version   was published in the *Economic and Political Weekly,* May 26, 2007

Abstract:

The politics of exclusion has now precipitated a politics of hate that is tearing apart the social fabric. There is no denying the historic violence precipitated by cultural and religious differences. But there have also been exemplary harmony and creative synergies between different peoples as well, a real dialogue of cultures.

The Clash of Civilisations

The inevitability of a clash of civilisations, popularised by Samuel Huntington, (Huntington, 1993) now claims to have been prophetic. Particularly after the September 11th attack on the World Trade Centre, and the US-led war against terrorism, a 'holy crusade' against an 'Islamic jihad' has occupied the international stage, and preoccupied our political imaginations! The politics of exclusion has now precipitated a politics of hate that is tearing apart the social fabric, compelling us to ask if this is not becoming rather a 'clash of barbarisms' now.

Huntington's thesis is a replay of the temptation to essentialise culture in an oversimplification that premises human culture on inherent characteristics, and makes religion a matter of innate status, both of which are seen as givens that can at most be adapted but not subject to any real change. This only plays up, or rather plays into our paranoia of the 'other'. Amartya Sen rubbishes such a thesis, for such 'theories of civilizational clash have often provided allegedly sophisticated foundations of crude and coarse popular beliefs. Cultivated theory can bolster uncomplicated bigotry.' (Sen 2006: 44)

There is no denying the historic violence precipitated by cultural and religious differences. But there have also been exemplary harmony and creative synergies between different peoples as well, a real dialogue of cultures. For cultural and religious traditions evolve even to the point of changing into very new cultures and rather different traditions. Human identities based on them follow suit, or else there will inevitably be different degrees of dissonance and disorientation. When we realise that cultures are constructed, and we accept that religious affiliation must be a matter of conscience, then the human element of decision and choice can be brought back to

centre stage in our social and political life to reverse the spiralling violence, to heal old wounds, to create a new future.

However, we cannot avoid the grim reality of divisions that mark our societies. For if common human concerns bring us together, different social interests set us apart, just as faith in God unites, whereas differing beliefs divide. We cannot of course wish away such differences, nor can we impose uniformity or enforce consensus on them. The usual way of settling such differences was by confrontation and controversy, wherein each party tried not only to prove its own position, but at the same time to demolish the one of the other.

This age of controversy settled nothing and neither did the religious wars it precipitated. For particularly with matters of conscience, human beings cannot be forced, or imposed on for an indefinite length of time. Yet there remains the temptation to fall back on such inhuman and final solutions! History witnesses to numerous such instances even into our own era. Today in a globalising world, conflicting economic interests and political concerns are being interpreted as the 'clash of civilisations' with irreconcilable religious worldviews. In a unipolar world, such an understanding only invites the dominant cultures on the global stage to suppress or assimilate the subaltern ones there. Ethnic cleansing and genocide await us at the end of this road.

But differences are not only between the individual and the group, they are also between groups and peoples. Such differences at the level of the group can be even more intractable and uncompromising than those at the individual level. Religion is certainly one of the most primordial of these and fraught with a huge potential for explosive conflict. We are still coming to terms with the implications of religious freedom and cultural rights for different groups within a single society. We are beginning to realise that uniformity is not the only or the most creative response to difference. It often forces differences underground and when divisions disappear at one level, they reappear at another, often in even more divisive and volatile expressions. Nor is mere co-existence a viable answer in an ever-shrinking world. We need a dialogue of culture as a prelude to a dialogue of religions.

Plurality and Pluralism

The term 'plurality' implies diverse social groups coming together in some kind of more inclusive social order, like a common polity, a common market, or an overarching civilisational order. In our world today plurality is an inescapable given, whether cultural or political, ideological or religious, or otherwise. The complexity of our modern world cannot be contained in any single worldview, weltanschauung (Rahner 1969: 26), nor can a dominant one be imposed in a free and open society. Hence 'pluralism' as an ideological response that addresses this plurality with democratic equality and freedom of conscience must be a necessary concomitant of our coping with this diversity.

In any society, structure and culture are necessary dimensions. Structural plurality implies a set of distinguishable and diverse interrelated social institutions incorporated into an integrated social system. Cultural plurality refers to distinct cultures or subcultures with distinctive individual and collective identities within an overarching civilisational unity. Structurally, the market and the state, the economic and the political systems integrate diverse groups in a common social order. Culturally, a common religion, language or historical tradition becomes the basis for a more inclusive civilisational unity.

In the so-called 'mature Western democracies', plurality is more structural, whereas in post-colonial societies, especially in Africa and Asia, plurality is decidedly more cultural. More often than not, the cultural dimension is more resilient in its segmentation of a plural society. Caste or race, religion or language groups have more stable and less porous boundaries than class or interest groups, political parties and ideological movements. There is an obvious interaction between the two dimensions. Thus Indic civilisation has served as a common meeting ground for the diverse historical or religious traditions, and the different regional caste and language groups of the Indian subcontinent. It is the basis for the Union of India, the state which now provides a common economic and political order for the country. So too is European culture the basis for the European Union today.

Some such common basis is necessary for socio-cultural integration, involving some basic, even if minimal, orientation towards cooperation rather than conflict, lest the common meeting ground becomes the occasion for misunderstanding and hostility.

Europe was such a battleground in the last century. South Asia is a good example of such an implosion in our globalising world today.

Hence we are coming to value diversity as something potentially enriching and even uniting at a higher level of union. Such an enriching 'communion' must inspire us not just to a unity in diversity, that accepts and respects differences, but rather to a diversity in unity, that appreciates and celebrates them. (Kothari 1989: 20) For the reality of pluralism today is not to be isolated as an unnecessary evil to be repressed before it engulfs us further; or tolerated as a necessary one to be distanced, since it cannot be dismissed. Rather it is a challenge, which will not go away. It must be constructively and creatively met or it will exhaust, if not destroy us. But for this, we must have a positive and proactive understanding of tolerance and dialogue.

'Self' and 'Other'

All pluralism in society is eventually founded on the polarity between the 'self' and the 'other' among different persons and diverse groups. The 'other' cannot simply be wished away, but always poses a question to the 'self', one that will not just go away, and when the other is different the question can be threatening. One can ignore the question only for a while, but the questioning cannot be so easily negated unless one destroys the questioner. Indeed, the other is more integral to oneself than one might want to admit. The other helps to make sense of my experiences, but also interrogates my world.

History bears witness to how dominant persons and groups have sought 'final solutions' to eliminate or subordinate others in genocide and ethnocide, in cultural assimilation and religious conversion. Most of these attempts have failed leaving a bitter harvest for generations. But where such brutal solutions cannot be attempted, either because of the realities on the ground or the ethical ideals of a people, then, tolerance and dialogue can be our only viable human response towards a fulfilling and enriching encounter of the 'self' and the 'other'.

Moreover, it is important that this encounter between groups, between the self and the other, ego and alter, be mediated by a third entity; hence the need to extend the dyad to a triad. Whether this third party be a more specific agency, like 'the nation-state, or simply the government, (Gupta 1996: 11) or a more general frame of reference, like 'Chomsky's grammar, Levi-Strauss's 'structure', Marx's 'mode of

production', and Lacan's 'Other' (the big 'O'),' (*ibid*. 183) it is this triadic approach that makes for 'contextualising human agency and culture in a dynamic holistic framework.' (*ibid*.: 139)

In the Indian scenario, the most significant third in the triad is of course the state, for the Constitution of India recognises 'the principle of equality between groups *qua* group.' (Sheth 1989: 8) This is the foundation for collective rights with special consideration for the more vulnerable sections of our society, such as linguistic and religious minorities and socially and economically backward classes. At the international level, we would require a consensus on a viable global ethic. But today this is a far cry even for the UN. On the other hand, there are powerful movements for homogenisation within national states and ethnic societies.

Inclusive and exclusive Identities

Identities that are defined negatively against others in terms of 'what one is *not*', will tend to be exclusive and more dismissive of others. This creates in-groups and out-groups, stereotypes and scapegoats. Those affirmed positively, prescinding from others in defining 'who one *is*', will tend to be inclusive and not so disregarding of others. This allows for openness and receptivity. 'We *are not* like that', is less open to a broader inclusion in a larger common space than 'this is how we *are*'.

Exclusive identities emphasise differences and set up oppositions and polarities with the 'other'. Inclusive identities are inclined to affirm similarities and complementarities with the 'other'. These make for tolerance and flexibility. For example, identifying with one's linguistic or religious community need not mean hostility to other languages and religions. Yet when used thus, language and religion have been among the most effective markers to divide a society into 'them' and 'us'.

Identity and Dignity

Identity and dignity are intimately connected. Identity answers to, 'Who am I?'; dignity to, 'What respect am I due?'. The affirmation or the negation of one carries over to the other. The right to identity must include the right to dignity. One's identity is never developed in isolation but in interaction with significant others. However, this is never an entirely passive process. I discover myself, my horizon of

meaning and value, with and through others. 'Who I am' is always reflected off, and refracted through others. 'What I am due' is always in a social context mediated by them. The denial of recognition and affirmation amounts to a negation of my human identity.

As with individuals so with groups. The individual is affirmed, or negated in the group, as the group is in society. At the individual level, this mediation is essentially through interpersonal interaction; at the social level, it is also through myth and symbol, values and norms, collective memories and popular history. (Kakar 1993: 50)

Modern development brings rapid and radical change. The strain and stress can precipitate a disorientation in personal identity. In such situations, a crumbling self can lean on group support as a dilapidated building is trussed up by a scaffolding. In a world increasingly characterised by anxiety, uncertainty and disorder, there is an urgent need for the reassurance of security, trust and a sense of solidarity in a collective identity. Such identities become 'vehicles for redressing narcissistic injuries, for righting of what are perceived as contemporary or historical wrongs.' (Kakar 1993: 52)

Collective action is resorted to in order to redress individual insecurities. The group solidarity then becomes a substitute for lost attachments, a support to heal old injuries. Such collective remedies to individual trauma easily become totalising and aggressive. Confirmed in their self-righteousness, leaders manipulate and mobilise groups, disregarding the collective dignity of other groups as well as the individual dignity of their members. Thus in any social breakdown, it is easy to see why extremist responses come into prominence.

This construction of the sense of self in the context of a hostile other is necessarily a function of the needs of the insecure individual and the group. Sudhir Kakar, the psychoanalyst, explains how this exclusive identity helps increase the sense of narcissistic well-being and attributes to the other the disavowed aspects of one's own self. (Kakar 1992: 137) What is unconsciously disowned and rejected in ourselves, is projected on and demonised in the other. What is desirable in the other is denied and attributed to oneself. We are non-violent, tolerant, chosen, pure; the other is violent, intolerant, polluted, damned. They may seem strong, compassionate, devout but they are aggressive, devious and fanatical.

Individual and Collective Rights

Now an individual's identity is never formed in a walled-in consciousness. Such solipsism can only be dangerously pathological and asocial. So too a group's identity is never constructed entirely from within the group but always in an engagement with its environment, both natural and social. Thus the importance of dialogue with other groups and communities makes group identity a dynamic rather than a static process. Indeed, because group identity is always in process, it can be reinvented, reshaped, reconstructed anew by each generation. (Fischer 1990: 195)

Yet there is always the possibility, and, depending on the power relationship involved, the probability of a group being engulfed and assimilated into its social environment to the point that it loses its distinctiveness, its identity. Only when difference becomes a positive value in a society is there a defence against such encompassment, especially for the weaker, more vulnerable groups, such as tribals and Dalits, various religious and linguistic minorities and other economically and politically marginalised groups in our society. Only a sustained commitment to tolerance guarantees equal treatment and dignity for such groups, very much as it does for similarly vulnerable individuals.

And as individual rights protect individuals so too must cultural rights protect and promote group identity and dignity. 'Cultural rights', argues Veena Das, 'express the concern of groups to be given a sign of their radical acceptance in the world.' (Das 1994: 156) This is why they are contested with such political passion. However, conceding these de jure is not as yet affirming them de facto. Affirmative action is often needed but negated in the name of a formal justice that has lost its substance.

The basic foundation for all this must be a radical acceptance of plurality in all the multi-faceted dimensions of a plural society's religious culture and of its political economy. This can then become the point of departure for a committed response. For acceptance cannot be creative or constructive if it is merely uncritical and passive. In the final analysis, the trajectory of our response to pluralism must begin with rejecting social inequalities and accepting cultural differences, respecting other identities, and celebrating their diversity as parts of a larger social and cultural organic whole. Thus our pluralism is not so much to promote our unity over and above the

reality of our diversity, but rather to protect our diversity in our quest for unity.

Ethnic Identity and Social Dignity

Given a plurality of discourses, ethnicity is best problematised as a dialectic process in which a group produces and reproduces itself in the context of its material history. A political economy approach does well in identifying the necessary conditions in this, but it must be extended to integrate a socio-cultural one to deal with the sufficient conditions of its development. Moreover, it is important to distinguish between a hegemonic and a counter-hegemonic ethnicity by locating ethnic divisions within the class structure of a society.

In describing ethnicity three dimensions must be considered: objective, subjective and contextual, as critical to understanding the construction of its identity and the recognition of its dignity. The first provides the objective basis for defining an ethnic category, the second makes for the subjective construction of an ethnic identity, the third situates the social context for inter-group relations.

An individual's identity is formed in the intimate encounter with significant others. An ethnic identity, however, is socialized in a more public space. There is, of course, a relationship between the two in any ethnie, or ethnic community, but the first is never a straight-forward projection of the latter.

Inevitably there are those who can dominate such social spaces to their own advantage. Hence the importance of 'the politics of recognition' in shaping our identity, especially in a multi-cultural context. (Taylor 1992: 25) Moreover, 'nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being,' (*ibid*.) i.e., a negative identity, a negated dignity. This is precisely what prejudice is all about.

The intimate relationship between identity and dignity must be considered in the context of the politics of universalism that founds equal dignity, and the politics of difference on which unique identities are premised. The first leads to similarity and homogeneity which is the quest of the nation-state. Second accepts particularity and heterogeneity which is the aspiration of a multi-cultural society.

It is possible for one to contradict and displace the other. The first quest may cancel out the second aspiration or vice versa. There is then a dilemma here, but if we concede a priority to the universally human

over the culturally specific, then a constructive reconciliation is possible. This would mean that a homogenizing universalism cannot be allowed to be so absolute as to negate cultural and ethnic diversities, but rather made to respect and even celebrate them within the limits set by cultural rights. However, 'the right to culture' cannot be unconditional either. For cultural rights cannot contradict more fundamental human rights; rather they can only be legitimate in the context of 'a culture of rights.' (Bhargava 1991)

Class Contradictions and Ethnic Conflicts

A viable analysis of the multiple inter- and intra- ethnic and elite conflicts and contradictions must consider the class factor if it is to do justice, or indeed have any relevance to the complexities involved. Thus where a big ethnic community is stratified by class, or a large social class is segmented in diverse ethnic groups, contradictions between ethnic identities and class interests can develop, that allow group consciousness to be manipulated in favour of vested interests. Thus a dominant class can divide and rule subordinate ones by playing up its diverse ethnic identities just as an elite within an ethnic community can co-opt its people to alien interests by appealing to their common identity.

Hence ethnicity can be both mobilizing and divisive. It can be used to unite a group against discrimination; or to divide groups to exploit them. We must be sensitive to the delicate distinction between ethnicity as a uniting 'myth' and ethnicity as a dividing 'ideology'. Hopefully, such an analysis will help to reconstruct a more positive ethnicity, one that is neither exclusivist nor defensive, but respectful of and open to the other, as parts of a whole, in which each group contributes and receives to the mutual enrichment of every other group, and the overall advantage of society.

Nationalist Ideology and Ethnic Myth

The crucial question that must now be addressed is this: how do we ensure the necessary tolerance in order to promote a dialogue between the plurality of the 'self', the 'other' and the 'state' (the Other with the capitalised 'O')?

Nationalism has certainly been one of the five most powerful ideologies for mobilizing people in the modern world. (Ward 1959) Yet the very ideology that has been used to unite people in a common

cause, has also been imposed on subordinate groups by dominant ones to assimilate them into their vested interests.

Here too as with ethnicity we must make a decisive distinction between the dual characteristics of nationalism. For 'nationalism' signifies both an ideological doctrine and a wider symbolic universe and fund of sentiments.' (Smith 1994: 725) The ideology claims the sole source of political power for the nation and the ultimate loyalty of its citizens, preferably in their own sovereign nation-state. The wider 'culture of nationalism' is concerned with transcending narrower group loyalties for the 'ideals of autonomy, unity and identity', (*ibid.*) in a larger more free, egalitarian and fraternal whole.

There is an inherent conflict here between an assimilating national ideology and a resistant ethnic consciousness. But in a wider *weltanschauung* of nationalism there need be no contradiction between the national mythology and the ethnic 'mythomoteur', the constitutive political myth of an ethnie.' (*ibid.*: 716) They both can be reconciled in a larger whole, constituting a unity in diversity. We believe, such a pluralist culture of nationalism will allow for a multi-ethnic nation in a multi-nation state.

Patriotism and Nationalism

For Gandhi 'overtime, the Indian freedom movement ceased to be an expression of only nationalist consolidation; it came to acquire a new stature as a symbol of the universal struggle for political justice and cultural dignity.' (Nandy 1994: 2-3) Hence in Gandhi's patriotism, 'there was a built-in critique of nationalism and refusal to recognize the nation-state as the organizing principle of the Indian civilization and as the last word in the country's political life.' (Nandy 1994: 3)

Indeed, for Gandhi, as with Tagore, this was 'the ultimate civilizational ambition of India: 'to be the cultural epitome of the world and convert all passionate self-other debates into self-self debates.' (*ibid.*: 82) In other words, to convert divisive debates into integrating dialogues, to transform exclusive identities into inclusive ones, to change hostile controversy into empathetic consensus.

For only a civil society, that can incorporate the state within a larger civilisational matrix of coexistence and cooperation among interlocking groups, will be able to defuse the conflict and contradiction between exclusive ethnicity and homogenising nationalism, and reconstruct them in more constructive and creative

ways, in the richer diversity of civilisation, and a deeper unity of civic humanism. Only then will the aggressive political nation-state have withered away! Only then will a multi-nation state constrained in a multi-cultural society be feasible, i.e.: 'the state not as an instrument of an ethnically defined nation, but a political entity functioning under the control of a civil society. It will be a state for and on the behalf of civil society: in brief a civil state and not a nation state' (Sheth 1989: 626)

Truth and Tolerance

The reality of pluralism faces us with the question of tolerance. The term in English dates from the 16th century, though the notion itself is much older. For as a philosophical problem tolerance concerns the reconciliation of truth with freedom, i.e., the claims of truth versus the legitimacy of diverse opinions (Post 1970). The implications of this for a society today are as painful as they were for Socrates in ancient Athens, which was not a very heterogeneous city! In the Roman Empire, the problem reached acute proportions in the persecution of Christians. With the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, these ended not so much in religious tolerance, as in eventual Christian dominance.

The post-Reformation religious wars left a divided and exhausted Christendom, which now began the pragmatic separation of church and state. However, this did not always guarantee real tolerance, as the limitations in the 'Act of Toleration', 1689, in England evidenced.

Yet 'the English Enlightenment was the greatest promoter of the notion of tolerance though mostly at the expense of theology and the binding force of the knowledge of truth (to which common sense was preferred.' (*ibid*.: 265) In France the strongly anti-clerical Encyclopaedists 'paved the way for the republican and democratic notions of the state,' (*ibid*.: 266) though its narrow rationalism provided 'a very doubtful basis for the tolerance which was always in demand.' (*ibid*.: 265) Thus in the modern West, the social origins of tolerance are to be found less in its monotheistic dogmatic religious beliefs than in the pragmatic resolution of intractable religious and political conflicts.

But tolerance is more than a matter of conflict resolution and emancipation. It is as multifaceted as the dimensions of the pluralism underpinning it: from intellectual worldviews to ethical values, from religious beliefs to cultural patterns, from political ideologies to economic systems, from linguistic divisions to geographic regions. In

fact 'there is no generally acknowledged definition of tolerance in the concrete'. (*ibid*.: 262) Moreover, a merely formal definition would run into practical difficulties.

The South Asian Scene

In Sanskrit and Arabic there is no exact equivalent for 'tolerance', (Khwaja 1992: 95, 101). But again the notion itself is not unknown or unacknowledged. For the basis for pluralism was well established in the orthodoxy of ancient Indian traditions: Jaina non-violence, Buddhist compassion, Upanishadic universalism, sufi-bhakti mysticism. Indian orthopraxis, however, was less tolerant and could be quite violent.

But there were significant landmarks that have stamped South Asian history. Thus Ashoka issued the first recorded edict for tolerance:

'On each occasion, one should honour another man's sect, for by doing so one increases the influence of one's own sect and benefits that of the other man … Again, whosoever honours his own sect or disparages that of another man, wholly out of devotion to his own, with a view to showing it in favourable light harms his own sect even more seriously. Therefore concord is to be commended, so that men may hear one another's principles and obey them.' (cited Thapar 1961: 255.)

In medieval times, so Humayun Kabir argues convincingly, Akbar's was 'the first conscious attempt to formulate the conception of a secular state' (Kabir 1955: 21) in the country, but this was not followed through by his grandson Aurangzeb. In this century Gandhi's satyagraha for swarajya was a valiant attempt at a non-violent reconstruction of our society, but it could not succeed in preventing the violent partition of the country. Today, we seem to have all but abandoned Gandhi as our society gets increasingly mired in violence of all kinds and at all levels.

Thus in India, the intellectual acceptance of pluralism has not always gone along with the existential practice of tolerance. Indeed, we seem to have reached a flash point in our continuing crisis, when even the acceptance of religious-cultural pluralism is being contested by an aggressive 'cultural nationalism', which is very much the intolerant imposition of the dominant castes, threatening the existence of other minorities.

Levels of Tolerance

In our understanding, tolerance cannot have merely a negative or passive meaning. Rather it must also imply an active and positive response to coping with our differences. Thus we can distinguish levels of tolerance from reluctant forbearance to joyful acceptance. Here we are not considering the ethical constraints on tolerance in a negative sense, i.e., the boundaries beyond which tolerance would be unethical. This would require another discussion. Rather we focus more positively on the limits to which tolerance can be constructively extended.

Following Raimundo Panikkar, (Panikkar 1983: 20-36), we can distinguish four levels of tolerance. The first is tolerance as a practical necessity, i.e., bearing with a lesser evil for the sake of a greater good. This amounts to passively accepting necessary evils, and is little more than political pragmatism.

The second level is based on the realisation that the human grasp of any truth is always partial and never complete. Certainly, this is true of religious or revealed truth. Such a philosophical realisation makes us cautious in absolutising our own 'truths', and even more so in rejecting those of others we disagree with, and from such philosophically founded tolerance will come respect.

At the third level, ethical or religious tolerance derives from the moral imperative to love others, especially those different from us, even our enemies. This is far more demanding than the acceptance and respect at the earlier levels of tolerance. Yet the different 'other' here is still the 'object' of one's love. Such love can even make us celebrate our own differences, but it cannot overcome or transcend them completely in a higher unity.

Overcoming this objectification of the other is 'a mystical experience of tolerance.' Panikkar explains that here tolerance 'is the way one being exists in another and expresses the radical interdependence of all that exists'. (*ibid.*: 23) In the final analysis it is only this kind of mystical tolerance that can overcome and transcend the contradictions and conflicts between religious traditions, bringing them into a higher communion.

Dimensions of Understanding

At each of these levels, the political, the philosophical, the religious, the mystical, following Panikkar again, we can distinguish two dimensions of understanding, or rather pre-understanding (*ibid*.: 25-34). Thus our comprehension can be in terms of a more or less explicit meaning that is conceptually grasped; or in the context of our pre-understanding, of implicit pre-judgments and presumptions, in terms of a meaningfulness that can be only symbolically represented. These are the dimensions of 'ideology' and 'myth', respectively.

Myth as defined by Panikkar, is 'the horizon of intelligibility' for us, 'over against which any hermeneutic is possible.' (*ibid*.101) It is taken for granted, unquestioned, a part of our pre-understanding, something we accept in 'faith'.

Once it is rationally articulated, myth is demythicised and so is our faith, in a 'passage from mythos to logos', from myth to reason, as the articulated conscious word. This then develops into an 'ideology', which in this context Panikkar describes as: 'the more or less coherent ensemble of ideas that make up critical awareness, i.e., the doctrinal system that enables you to locate yourself rationally... a spacio-temporal system constructed by the logos as a function of its concrete historical moment.' (*ibid* 21) These distinctions have crucial implications for our understanding and practice of tolerance.

For the more coherent and cogent the articulation of an ideology is, the more likely it is to reduce other understandings to its own terms, or reject them, if they cannot be fitted into its own horizons. We do, of course, need ideologies for we need to articulate and rationalise our understanding in the various dimensions of human experience. But ideologies must be able to accept such alternative understandings, and open themselves out into broader and deeper perspectives. This will depend on the myth, the pre-understanding, from which it derives. For the more extensive and intensive the meaningfulness of the myth, the richer and denser its symbolism, the more open and accommodating the ideology that can be built on it.

Hence we can conclude with Panikkar: '*the tolerance you have is directly proportional to the myth you live and inversely proportional to the ideology you follow.*' (*ibid*.: 20 emphasis in original text) What we need, then, is a *metanoia* of our myths to escape and be liberated from the *paranoia* of our ideologies, whether religious, political or otherwise. Both myth and ideology are found in all the dimensions of tolerance indicated earlier, though there is obviously a greater affinity

for ideology in political and philosophical tolerance, as there is for 'myth' in the religious and mystical one.

Difference and Indifference

In Asia, plurality is so deeply and intricately woven into our society that any attempt to homogenise it can only be suicidal. But ways of coping with it range from indifference and non-engagement, all the way to affirmation and celebration. Given the intricacies of our social interdependence, the first approach can only end with a nihilistic relativism if it does not collapse in annihilating chaos. The second must open into ever broader dimensions and deeper levels of tolerance. Indeed, the constructive and creative practice of tolerance, is the only viable way to cope with the bewildering diversity and difference that both challenges and confounds us, it is both a precious treasure and dangerous legacy!

Now there is always a danger of celebrating difference in seclusion and not in dialogical encounter with the other. The assertion of such 'isolated alteriety', as in fact with some post- modernists, easily 'shades over into the celebration of indifference, non-engagement and indecision.' (Dallmayr 1989: 90) Such incommunicable uniqueness cannot but collapse into a nihilistic relativism, which is very far from the radical relativity on which a creative pluralism and a respectful tolerance must be premised.

Dialogue and Dialectics

For Panikkar 'dialogue' is a most fundamental condition of existence. It is our way of being. 'Dialogue is, fundamentally, opening myself to another so that he might speak and reveal my myth.... Dialogue is a way of knowing myself and of disentangling my own point of view from other viewpoints and from me.' (Panikkar, 1983: 242) Thus we can speak of a 'dialectical dialogue' which would pertain to the encounter of ideologies, while a 'dialogical dialogue' would be more pertinent to the meeting of myths.

'Difference', then, as Gadamer insists 'stands at the beginning of a conversation, not its end,' (Gadamer 1989: 113) awaiting the moment of coherence, of fulfilment, of a 'fusion of horizon' that will complete the hermeneutic circle and set it off again for us — 'we who are a conversation'. (*ibid*.: 110) For we are constructed and deconstructed in dialogue with ourselves and others. Indeed, 'the conversation that we are is one that never ends.' (Gadamer 1989: 95) For dialogue and

conversation are intrinsic to the human condition, the very language of our existence, the essential hermeneutic of all our experience.

Gadamer explains how 'to be in conversation, however, means to be beyond oneself as if to another.' For, as he insisted in 1960 all genuine dialogue must be premised on an authentic hermeneutic: 'to recognise oneself (or one's own) in the other and find a home abroad — this is the basic movement of spirit whose being consists in this return to itself from otherness.' (Gadamer 1975: 15) But we would emphasise a further implication of such dialogical hermeneutics: 'the challenge to recognise otherness or the alien in oneself (or one's own).' (Dallmayr 1989: 92)

Domains in Dialogue

In such an understanding of dialogue, we can then distinguish various dimensions of this involvement with one another, following the fourfold dialogue urged by the Catholic Church recently in the context of inter-religious dialogue, but certainly relevant to an inter-cultural one as well: (Dialogue and Proclamation 1991, no.42.)

1. '*the dialogue of life*, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, ...'

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

3. '*the dialogue of religious experience*, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, ...'

4. '*the dialogue of theological exchange*, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, ...'

The dialogue of life is at the level of sharing and encounter of our 'myths', which then is deepened in the dialogue of religious and cultural experiences. This can be an even deeper level of not just mythic communication but mystical experience as well. Collaborative action requires some level of ideological and political consensus, which can then be intensified and sharpened in a theoretically articulated exchange. Thus life and experience are at the level of 'myth' and mysticism; action and theory at the level that of 'ideology' and politics.

Cultural Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, as Paul Ricoeur (1976) and Hans Gadamer (1977) have argued, is a matter not just of interpretation, but rather of seeing

and seeing 'through' to the 'surplus of meaning' contained in the 'circle of the unexpressed'. (Linge 1977: xxxi) Now

'the hermeneutical phenomenon is at work in the history of cultures as well as in individuals, for it is in times of intense contact with other cultures (Greece with Persia or Latin Europe with Islam) that a people becomes most acutely aware of the limits and questionableness of its deepest assumptions. Collision with the other's horizons makes us aware of assumptions so deep-seated that they would otherwise remain unnoticed.' (Linge 1977: xxi)

The new and creative dialogue of cultures we are proposing must enable us to do this and, we might add, to see 'beyond' as well, beyond our exclusive and enclosed worldviews, beyond our truncated and limited levels of tolerance, beyond our comforting myths and tautological ideologies, so that cultures can truly encounter each other in a dialogue at the levels of life and experience, of action and articulation. It is precisely what is called a 'fusion of horizons', a breakthrough to higher more inclusive comprehension.

Moreover, here we see the critical importance of culture in all its many forms. For culture is creative and innovative, dynamic and transformative. It reveals and challenges in all its symbolic expressions, in whatever form these may take in a verbal, auditory, visual, or plastic medium. For culture as the social heritage of a society is a system of meanings and motivations that must be both preserved and transmitted as well as enriched and transformed. All communication with human beings must be in their cultural medium. Otherwise, it could turn out to be not just non-communication, but miscommunication and misunderstanding. Hence all cross-cultural communication must be inculturated, it must interpreted, indigenised and rooted. It cannot be translated, transported, or transplanted. That would be an evitable alienation. A true inculturation transcends cultural divides. It universalises and it unites.

Cross-cultural communication is particularly problematic, especially with art and the humanities, less so science and technology. Because science communicates in concepts, with precise symbols, which can be expressed in accurate formulae, it is more easily translated and transplanted. Science is univocal and more readily universalised. Technological gadgets themselves are little affected by changing cultural climes, though they may have unintended consequences. However, wherever communication has to be open-ended, symbolic, metaphoric, where it is multi-vocal, multivalent, as

in fact life itself is, then we need the rich significance of symbol and metaphor, of art rather than science. Otherwise, we do not really connect in a creative dialogue both within a culture and much more so across them.

An Authentic Dialogue

This is the real trouble with the colonial world. It is a transported, transplanted alien world. It was an age of controversy and conquest not pluralism and dialogue. Moreover, an authentic dialogue is really possible only between equals, otherwise it just becomes unequal exchange and manipulation. And it is only now in a post-colonial world that we have the possibility and must assume the responsibility for such a multicultural and inter-religious dialogue.

A crucial issue for religions grounded in history and for faiths based on revelation, like Judeo-Christian-Islamic ones, is the one of dialogue as equals. Such traditions find it very problematic to concede that those outside their religious revelation and belief have an equal access to the truth. They feel themselves privileged in this regard, and compromise in this matter is tantamount to being disloyal to their faith. However, precisely in such a perspective there is even greater need of an adequate hermeneutic that will make for dialogue, for it becomes imperative to distinguish between emic and etic perspectives, the insider's and the outsider's standpoint.

From an emic or insider's perspective, differing truths cannot lay claim to equal validity, unless they all are relativised, or brought into harmony at a higher level of unity. But this harmony may require an etic or outsider's perspective if the emic one is not inclusive enough. However, any perspective must, without compromising itself, grant the right to hold, and the duty to respect different opinions, even one's incompatible with one's own, for in civil society the other's legitimate right to freedom, and claim to respect must not be compromised by imposing one's own dogmatic beliefs or ritual practice. This makes dialogue possible even between believers and atheists, in what we might call an 'extra-religious' dialogue.

Thus an equal dialogue is less a matter of 'equal truth' than of 'equal freedom'. This demands that no standpoint is privileged above others, much less imposed, but all empathetically critiqued and challenged. For this, a common ground must be sought and the only common currency viable, given the variety and variations prevailing among our pluri-religious traditions today, is a basic humanism. It is

at this level that any apparent controversy between truth and right, between tolerance and justice must be resolved. This in turn will require an intra-religious dialogue to set the stage so all can engage as equals in a deeper inter-religious discourse.

Religions not based on an historical revelation, are not constrained by exclusive beliefs. However, inclusiveness too must go with its own cautions, its own intra-religious dialogue. On the one hand, it must not fall into relativism or degenerate into permissiveness; on the other, it must neither become a process of appropriation and absorption into a higher unity, wherein the distinctiveness of each tradition is lost, not just subsumed. The all-inclusiveness of some universalists sometimes seems to imply just this. A valid inclusiveness would demand the integration of diversities into an enriching and higher unity so that we have a 'diversity in unity' rather than a 'unity in diversity'.

White light includes the wavelengths of all the seven colours, yet the rainbow has its own especial beauty.

Hence the necessity for a relevant hermeneutic will demands a more liberal and humanist approach within each tradition, which is precisely what an equal dialogue challenges each one to do. Raimundo Panikkar rightly insists:

'if *interreligious* dialogue is to be real dialogue, an *intrareligious* dialogue must accompany it, i.e., it must begin with my questioning myself and the relativity of my beliefs (which does not mean relativism), accepting the challenge of a change, a conversion and the risk of upsetting my traditional patterns.' (Panikkar 1978: 40)

Indeed, an intra-religious dialogue is a necessary condition for an inter-religious one, otherwise we will have a debate, not a dialogue, controversy not complementarity. Indeed, such transparency among believers and non-believers would make even an 'extra-religious' dialogue challenging and fruitful for both.

A Global Ethic

Hans Küng, one of the key drafters of the 'Declaration Towards a Global Ethic', for 'The Parliament of World Religions' in 1993 in New York, (Küng 1998: 11-40) indicates three contemporary global challenges to which he proposes three corresponding responses. (Küng 1998) First: there is no survival of democracy without a coalition of believers and non-believers in mutual respect. This will demand consensus as the foundation of our solidarity. Second: there will be no peace between civilisations without a peace between religions; and there will be no peace between religions without a dialogue between them. In other words, inter-religious dialogue becomes imperative. Third: as globalisation sharpens differences in a diverse but imploding world, we need a new world order to contain such differences and resolve them, but there will be no new world order without a new global ethic. Hence a dialogue of cultures is a necessary prelude to a dialogue of religions, just as a coalition of believers and non-believers will require an ethic premised on an egalitarian democracy.

This must be premised on universally accepted values and norms, for which a growing common ground is beginning to emerge, at least at the level of articulation. Giddens rightly remarks:

'this is probably the first time in history that we can speak of the emergence of universal values – values shared by almost everyone, and which are in no sense the enemy of cosmopolitanism. ... values of the sanctity of human life, universal human rights, the preservation of species and care for future as well as present generations of children may perhaps be arrived at defensively, but they are certainly not negative values. They imply ethics of individual and collective responsibility, which (as value claims) are able to override divisions of interest.' (Giddens 1994: 20)

This must be the starting point of a global ethic which is as yet an incomplete, but not a directionless search, an ongoing, perhaps even a never-ending process, but one whose evolution leaves open the possibilities for progress as well as regress.

Eventually, these norms need to be worked out into concrete rights and duties, operationalised in an internationally recognised charter, like the UN declaration, but more importantly, made effective by suitable structures and strictures at various levels, legitimated and empowered to protect these values and implement the respective norms, to hold agencies to account and remedy violations. In other

words, we need an ethic that is founded on values, which are culturally operationalised in norms, which are structurally enforced.

A Holistic Praxis

All this makes for a greater complexity and challenge in our praxis, as an action-reflection-action process. The constructive potential of such a dialectic between theory and practice can be fully realised only in a creative dialogue between myth and ideology. For it is only in the mutual encounter of myths that they are deepened and enriched, and in the reciprocal exchange among ideologies that these become more open and refined.

The complexity of the issues involved in this whole discourse on tolerance and dialogue should now be apparent. It certainly calls for a fine-tuned critical analysis, and hopefully, this essay is a contribution in that direction. But a viable praxis must go beyond reflection to action, beyond interpretation to implementation. For this, we will need a holistic approach that can transcend polarities in an integral whole.

Thus we must find ways in which faith and reason critique each other, so that premised on a genuine humanism, faith is always reasonable and meaningful, and reason always faithful to an authentic humanism. In our involvement in such religious controversies, we need to be both renouncers and sadhus, as well as activists and karma yogis. In our understanding of the complexities involved, we need to be both contemplatives and mystics, as well as theologians and philosophers. And in our response to the issues we need to be both creative artists and poets as well as constructive critics and academicians.

Today more than ever before, for our threatened humanity, the only way of being human is to be in constructive and creative interrelationships with others, not in isolation from them, if indeed that were possible any more in our increasingly interdependent world. So also for our threatened religions in an unbelieving world, the only way of being religious is in solidarity with other believers not in confrontation with them.

For if to be a human person I must be inter-personal, as the psychologists have convinced us; to be really cultured we must be inter-cultural, as the anthropologists would teach us, and to be truly religious must mean to be inter-religious, as theologians are learning today. In other words, to be human and religious we must be tolerant

and in dialogue. Only thus can we genuinely be our authentic selves, true believers and truly human.

In the final analysis, indifference and non-engagement are hardly adequate or constructive ways of coping with our ever-increasing interdependencies in our globalising world. This certainly cannot make us neighbours, partners in dialogue. It can at best lead to a co-existence, which can at best only be very precariously peaceful, and certainly not very creatively progressive. Most often it only brings alienation and chaos, in our situation of scarcity and competition.

Metanoia and Paranoia

In a globalising world, neighbours are no longer so much defined by geography, as by interaction and interdependence. Multicultural exchange and inter-religious sharing can bring about shared interests and common concerns that make good and lasting neighbours. Certainly, is it a better place to begin than our political geography which divides and rules us all. Indeed, such neighbourliness may make the difference between a 'clash of civilisations', which eventually becomes a cash of barbarisms, and a harmony of culture that opens into a 'dialogue of religions'! Moreover, as sparks of the one divinity, sharing in the one Ultimate Reality, we are all children of the same Utterly Other God; our common concern is faith, which makes us brothers and sisters and neighbours, sharing a common humanity.

This realisation can deepen our shared concerns. Thus, both faith in the divine and concern for the human are the foundation of our neighbourliness. These are not opposed but complementary dimensions. For the immediate basis of our concerns is ourselves, the ultimate one for believers, for persons of faith, must be God. 'Man is the measure of all things' —the ancient Greek philosophers taught us, but God as the creator of all things, visible and invisible, is the one who has given us our measure.

An adequate response in a pluralist world is not mere co-existence or mutual seclusion but a constructive dialogue engaging both the 'myths' we seem to live by, and the ideologies we choose to act from. For this, we must dare beyond the constraints of dialectical reason, which no doubt has its uses - and limitations. This must be the basis of a dialogue in which my 'self' and the 'other' are both discovered and enriched, the cultural 'other' and especially the 'counter-cultural other', within my own culture and across cultures too. For as we unveil our 'self' in the 'other', and the 'other' in our 'self', we will find

that our deepest identity and bonding transcends all differences in an immanent I-thou communion.

At all the four levels of tolerance and the four dimensions of dialogue we have sketched earlier, Gandhiji is an example and an inspiration. It took a Martin Luther King Jr., and a Nelson Mandela to demonstrate that he had relevance for the whole world today. Gandhi effectively based his praxis of ahimsa and satyagraha on an ethics of tolerance and dialogue. Indeed. for him: 'If we want to cultivate a true spirit of democracy, we cannot afford to be intolerant. Intolerance betrays want of faith in one's own cause.' (Young India 2 Feb 1921) Gandhi himself is a remarkable example of such an open yet rooted person:

'I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them.' (*Young India*, June 1921: 170)

For Panikkar, 'dialectics is the optimism of reason. Dialogue is the optimism of the heart.' (Panikkar, 1983: 243) Pascal wisely counselled: the heart has reasons that reason knows not off. Indeed, a genuine dialogue pertains less to the dialectical mind than to the compassionate heart. Religion is fraught with a huge potential for explosive conflict. We are still coming to terms with the implications of religious freedom and cultural rights for different groups within a single society. We are beginning to realise that uniformity is not the only or the most creative response to difference. Nor is mere co-existence a viable answer in an ever-shrinking world. We need a dialogue of culture as a prelude to a dialogue of religions. Only then can we experience a *metanoia* in ourselves that will free us from the *paranoia* we have of each other. For then, with Muhammad Ibn Arabi, the mystic, philosopher, poet, and sage of Spain (1165-1240), will I be able to say:

My heart is open to all winds:
It is a pasture for gazelles
And a home for Christian monks,
A temple for idols
The Black Stone of the Mecca pilgrim,
The table of the Torah
And the book of the Koran.
Wherever God's caravans turn,
The religion of love shall be my religion

And my faith.

Then I can be open to 'the cultures of all lands', even as I do not get 'blown off my feet'.

References

Bhargava. Rajeev, 1991, 'The Right to Culture', in K.N. Panikkar, ed., op.cit., pp.165-172

Clifford, James, 1988, The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Dallmayr. Fred R., 1989, 'Hermeneutics and Deconstruction: Gadamer Derrida in Dialogue', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, pp.75-92.

Das, Veena, 1994, 'Cultural Rights and the Definition of Community', in Oliver Mendelsohn and Uppendra Baxi, ed.s, op.cit., pp.117-158.

Das, Veena, ed., 1992, *Mirrors of Violence: Communalism, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi.

David. Kumar and Santisilan Kadirgamar, ed.s.. 1989, *Ethnicity, Identity, Conflict and Crisis*, ARENA, Press Hong Kong.

'Dialogue and Proclamation'. 1991, Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, Vatican City, no. 42.

Fischer, Michael M.J., 1990, 'Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory', in Clifford and Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture*, pp. 194-233.

Gadamer. Hans Georg. 1977, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley, 'Introduction' by Linge, p. xiv

Gadamer. Hans-Georg. 1989, 'Destruktion and Deconstruction.', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, pp 102 - 113.

Gadamer. Hans Georg, 1975, *Truth and Method*, Seabury Press, New York.

Giddens, Anthony, 1994, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future Radical Politics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK,

A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religion, 1998: 11- 40, *Continuum*, New York.

Gupta, Dipankar, 1996, The Context of Ethnicity: Sikh Identity in a Comparative Perspective, Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi.

Huntington. Samuel, 1993, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon and Schuster, New York.

Kabir. Humayun, 1955, *The Indian Heritage*, Asia Pub. House, Bombay.

1993. 'Reflections on Religious Group Identity,' *Seminar*, No.402, pp. 50 - 55.

Kakar, Sudhir. 1993. 'Reflections on Religious Group Identity,' *Seminar*, No.402, pp. 50 - 55.

Kakar, Sudhir, 1992. 'The Unconscious Aspects of Ethnic Violence in India', in ed., Veena Das, op.cit., *Mirrors of Violence: Communalism, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, pp.135-145.

Khwaja. Jamal, 1992, 'Concept and Role of Tolerance in Indian Culture', in ed., Balasubramaniam, pp.89-120*, op.cit.*.

Kothari. Rajni., 1989 'Ethnicity', in ed.s, David and Kadirgamar, op.cit..

Küng, Hans, 1998, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics,* Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.

Linge. David E., 1977, 'Introduction' to *Philosophical Hermeneutics* by Hans Georg Gadamer, op. cit. ix – lv.

Mendelsohn, Oliver and Upendra Baxi, ed.s, *The Rights of Subordinated Peoples*, Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi,

Michelfelder. Diane P. and Richard E. Palmer, ed.s, 1989, *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, State Univ. of New York.

Nandy. Ashish., 1994, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism*, Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi.

Panikkar, K.N., ed., 1991*, Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture,* Manohar, N.Delhi,

Panikkar, Raimundo, 1978, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, Paulist Press, New York.

Panikkar. R., 1983, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-cultural Studies*, Asian Trading Corp. Bangalore.

Post, Werner. 1970 'Tolerance', in *Sacramentum Mundi*, ed., Karl   Rahner, Vol. 6, pp. 262-267.

Radhakrishnan. S., 1927, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.

Rahner. Karl. 1969, *Theological Investigations*, Vol VI, Payton, Longman and Todd, London.

Ricoeur. Paul, 1976. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Texas Christian University Press, Forth Worth, Texas.

Sen, Amartya, 2006, *Identity and Violence,* Penguin, London

Sheth. D.L., 1989, 'State, Nation and Ethnicity: Experience of Third World Countries', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 29, No. 12, 25 May, pp. 615-26.

Smith. Anthony. D., 1994, 'The Politics of Culture: Ethnicity and Nationalism', in ed., Tim Ingold, *Companion Encyclopedia*. op. cit. pp. 706-733.

Taylor. Charles., 1992, *Multiculturalism and 'The Politic of Recognition*, Princeton Univ. Press, New. Jersey.

Thapar. Romila, 1961, *Ashoka and the Decline of the Maurayas*, Oxford Univ. Press, London.

Ward. Barbara, 1959, *Five Ideas That Change the World*, Hamish Hamilton, London.

9.
MY INTER-FAITH JOURNEY —MULTIPLE IDENTITIES, MULTIPLE BELONGINGS: COMMON GROUND FOR EQUAL DIALOGUE

Abstract:

This is an account of my inter-faith journey.

Setting the Context

When Vatican II opened a window on the world for our Tridentine Church we looked out over its 'Catholic' battlements to see a new world opening before our eyes. This fast-changing world was not new but our perspective was. We now encountered a new challenge to our Church and to our Jesuit charisma. Earlier forays outside our 'fortress Catholicism' were limited and tentative, and we always returned to the security of the high walls without daring to venture further afield. Now we were asked to read the signs of the times and dare to take bolder initiatives. With John XXIII, the charismatic pope, new breezes began to blow about this Church and, unfortunately, perhaps some were blown off their feet.

All this created an exciting expectation of change in a Church now reaching out to the modern world. Fr. Arrupe, our much-loved General, persistently challenged us to be pioneers at the frontiers, faithful to the Jesuit 'magis' in a new world longing for healing and wholeness. Our formators accompanied us into this brave new world, They inspired and not just taught; initiated us into philosophising and theologising with them, not just 'banking' what was learnt. 'Rethinking theology' was the shibboleth of Karl Rahner with which they encouraged us.

The Jesuit tradition of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue has a long history which I was heir to. It went back to Mateo Ricci (1552-1610) and Robert de Nobili (1577-1656), These were daring men adapting the faith to local cultures and religious practices, much ahead of their time. Not surprisingly, their vision was misunderstood and contested by lesser mortals. The tragedy of the suppression of the Malabar and Chinese Rites, 1704 and 1707 respectively, is something that the colonial Church in Asian has never recovered from and even in the post-colonial age we still are burdened with its painful legacy. Only as late as 1939 did the Roman Church withdraw the oaths required of missionaries regarding the Chinese Rites and in 1940 for the Malabar Rites. Fr. Shilananda, who later founded Sanjivan Ashram in Nashik district, introduced us in my noviciate to Malcolm Hay's vivid telling of this *Failure in the Far East: Why and How the Breach between the Western World and China First Began.* I remember with deep sadness feeling that we are four centuries behind now!

This was the context of my introduction into inter-religious encounters with the late Fr. Matthew Lederle, one of the founders of Snehasadan in the heart of the old city of the Peshwas. It was a centre for inculturation   and dialogue with Maharashtrian society in Pune. Matthewji, as he was affectionately called, was a versatile and persuasive figure. His doctorate in Pune University on *Philosophical Trends in Modern Maharashtra*, is still regarded as a major contribution and used as a reference for postgraduate studies in philosophy. He promoted Indian Christian art and a scholarship scheme for the underprivileged. Snehasadan was one of the earliest Jesuit ashrams and Matthewji played a major part in the Christian ashram movement in India, seeking a more culturally adapted expression of Christianity. Inter-religious dialogue was an integral part of this venture.

Providentially, I was to be able to spend my third year of theology at Snehasadan, while attending classes at Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, at the other end of town. Earlier, I made a pilgrimage with Matthewji through Bodhgaya all the way to Badrinath, where the ice Shiv Ling impressed me less than the Shivananda ashram and especially its acharya, Swami Chidananda. I have never forgotten the story Matthewji told me about the encounter of the Swamiji and the Indian bishops, whom he had taken to make a retreat in the ashram, in the wake of Vatican II. They asked the Swami Chidananda for a message and he came and said to them: brothers, I have just one thing to ask you, are you as willing to be converted to us as you expect us to be

willing to be converted to you? And he left. The bishops had never addressed such a question before, if they had ever thought of asking it!

How blind we are to the way others from outside our religious tradition view us, even as we attempt to understand in order to be understood! How unprepared, perhaps even reluctant, we are to dialogue with others as equals, i.e., to search for the truth together, and not engage with others merely to present our truth in acceptable ways to win them over! This is surely a distorted perspective on dialogue. But with Vatican II's new understanding of non-Christian religions and Teilhard de Chardin's (1965) cosmic Christ, so incisively developed further by Raimundo Panikkar, (1964) I came to a more inclusive Trinitarian perspective and a less exclusive Church-centred one.

This drove me to seek an intra-religious dialogue with myself and others in my own religious tradition, to search together for a more inclusive faith, one that would lose self-centredness, while retaining its distinctiveness and its uniqueness, and yet be understandable and meaningful to others outside this faith tradition. In other words, not be imprisoned in an insider or emic perspective, but to breakthrough to an outsider or etic one.

The dialectic between these two perspectives, emic and etic, has been the driving force and inspiration in my inter-faith journey. For singly and separately, neither one is comprehensive, and even together in dialectic tension, they cannot grasp the whole truth, which always remains beyond our horizon, a mystery to be pursued and experienced. Yet we must seek common ground on which we can meet in trust and tolerance, only then can we begin to dialogue as equals.

This journey has led me to accept and encourage in myself and others multiple cultural identities and multiple religious belongings, while being anchored in my own. I found Gandhi's approach to other cultures an inspiring challenge to be both, open and rooted:

'I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them.' (*Young India*, June 1921: 170)

Inter-religious dialogue must extend this cultural openness to religious traditions as well. As Mother Teresa, in her simple and direct way said in an interview with *Time* (1989): I love all religions, but I'm in love with my own. Hopefully, this love is not the kind that will us blind to others, but open our eyes wider to the beauty and depth of

other religious traditions, and so come to a better grasp of our own as well as theirs. This was not the approach in the earlier Tridentine age of 'controversy' when contentious debates, in which we so excelled, only left the protagonists satisfied with themselves and distanced from the others, and in the end all the more ready to do violence in the name of their own God.

All the major religious traditions of the world have had a living presence in South Asia and they are still popularly practised, pervasively believed and singularly resilient. Here is a history not just of peaceful coexistence between religious traditions, but of harmonious engagement and public discussion on religious matters, from the Adi Shankaracharya to the Emperor Akbar, and beyond. Regrettably, there have been undeniable ruptures and aberrations, as against the Jains in the South and with Aurangzeb in the North. Yet if dialogue is to be viable and vibrant in our world today, it needs to be demonstrated effectively here in South Asia. This will be the litmus for others around the world. But most deplorably our electoral politics still divides us, even as our civic society struggles to unite us.

What is patently missing in our ministries in the South Asian Assistancy today is a viable dialogue with Muslims and their cultural and religious traditions. The great work of Fr. Courtois in Kolkata in this regard has not been continued or carried much further. I have been very fortunate to meet and work with Asghar Ali Engineer, author, activist, and religious reformist, who founded The Institute for Islamic Studies and the Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism. I came to realise the wealth of goodwill inviting us to engage with Muslims. This is a challenge not just for Jesuits in South Asia but for the whole Universal Church and all the world as well. Perhaps the 35th General Congregation in 2008 will address this challenge and call Jesuits to this mission.

However, the stakes for India and the world are indeed high. Hans Küng, one of the key drafters in 1993 in New York of the 'Declaration Towards a Global Ethic' for 'The Parliament of World Religions', indicates three contemporary global challenges to which he proposes three corresponding responses (Küng 1998: 1- 40): there is no survival of democracy without a coalition of believers and non-believers in mutual respect; no peace between civilisations without a peace between religions; no peace between religions without a dialogue between them. Globalisation further sharpens differences in a diverse but imploding world which could leave us with *The Clash of Civilisations*, which some have already assumed to be inevitable (Huntington 1996).

More than ever, we need inter-cultural and inter-religious engagements in an equal dialogue: with the poor for justice, between cultures for harmony and among religions for peace. The Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) in its Sixth Plenary Assembly, 1996, calls us all to this threefold dialogue: 'with Asia's poor, with its local cultures, and with other religious traditions' (FABC 1995). This is a challenge for the Universal Church as well.

The 34th General Congregation of the Jesuits legislated this as our mission today and tomorrow, insisting that each of these dimensions conditions the others and none must be singly or separately considered. Thus, the Congregation pointedly integrated inculturation and dialogue into our mission, service of faith and promotion of justice, in its Decree 2, no. 47: no service of faith without justice, inculturation, dialogue; no justice without faith, inculturation, dialogue; no inculturation without faith, justice, dialogue; no dialogue without faith, justice, inculturation.

In my own inter-faith journey, each of the dimensions of this threefold dialogue powers and drives the others into one integrated whole. However, this must be preceded by, and premised on an internal openness that will presage and guarantee an external one. Thus, a dialogue within, i.e., an intra-personal, intra-cultural, intra-religious one, must be the foundation of a dialogue without, an inter-personal, inter-cultural, inter-religious one, respectively.

> Three *sutras* summaries for me this inter-faith journey:
> to be 'person' is to be inter-personal,
> to be cultured is to be inter-cultural,
> to be religious is to be inter-religious.
> And three negative ones complement them:
> no inter-personal dialogue without an intra-personal one,
> no inter-cultural dialogue without an intra-cultural one,
> no inter-religious dialogue without an intra-religious one.

For me, then, multiple identities and multiple belongings are very much part of the common ground we seek for an equal dialogue. Totalising identities and singularising belongings only makes for a more divisive, divided world, where dialogue is well-nigh impossible. Surely, this cannot be the kingdom Jesus preached. Raimundo Panikkar's description of his own journey has been the model for mine:

'I 'left' as a Christian, 'found myself' a Hindu, and I 'return' as a Buddhist, without having ceased to be a Christian.' (Panikkar 1978: 2)

This is a journey that is reiterated in ever-widening circles, ever more-inclusive *parakramas*. And so my inter-faith journey is still a work in progress.

References

Decrees of the Thirty-fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, Gujarat Sahitya Press, Anand, 1995.

Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, 1995, 'Final Statement of the Sixth FABC Plenary Assembly', *FABC papers,* FABC secretariat, Hong Kong, paragraph 6.3.

Hay, Malcolm, 1957, *Failure in the Far East: Why and How the Breach between the Western World and China First Began*, Neville Spearman, London.

Huntington, Samuel P. 1996, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon and Schuster, New York.

Küng, Hans, 1998, A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.

Lederle, Matthew, 1976, *Philosophical Trends in Modern Maharashtra*, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai.

Panikkar, Raymond, 1964, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London.

Panikkar, Raimundo, 1978, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, Paulist Press, New York.

Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, 1965, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Harper & Row, New York.

Time, 1989, 4 Dec. 'A Pencil in Gods Hands', interview with Edward Desmond.

10.

DIALOGUE IN A MULTICULTURAL, PLURI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE FOR A HOLISTIC APPROACH

From 'Windows on Dialogue', Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK), 2012

Abstract:

A viable and sustainable perspective on dialogue must be premised not on a walled-in consciousness of a colonised mind, nor on the rootless wonderings of the uncommitted spirit, rather it must be a serious quest for a mutually enriching encounter. The challenges we face today demand a critical interrogation of our multicultural and pluri-religious society before there can be any constructive dialogue between our diverse people and varied traditions.

I. A Critical Interrogation

A viable and sustainable perspective on dialogue must be premised not on a walled-in consciousness of a colonised mind, nor on the rootless wonderings of the uncommitted spirit, rather it must be a serious quest for a mutually enriching encounter. Romanticising our own traditions and worldviews and then isolating ourselves within is defensive and sterile; worse still, aggressively imposing them on others while denigrating theirs is indefensible and dangerous. Rather the challenges we face today demand a critical interrogation of our multicultural and pluri-religious society before there can be any constructive dialogue between our diverse people and varied traditions.

We need to be culturally grounded before we can be dialogically open. Gandhiji, as one rooted in his own culture yet open to others provides us with our best starting point here:

I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them. (*Young India*, June 1921: 170)

This presentation attempts an interdisciplinary perspective as a more holistic approach in a dialogic discourse. It begins by defining the terms 'plurality' and 'pluralism' and describing the difference between them, sets the context for tolerance, examines the hermeneutics of dialogue, and finds in our Constitutional ideals of justice and the aspirations for equality it sketches, a common ground for a just and equal dialogue, one that begins with intra-dialogic introspection and creates a culture of dialogue premised on our common humanity. This will require a cultural and religious

disarmament of the protagonists to make a fraternal dialogue possible.

II. Plurality and Pluralism

'Plurality' is the multi-dimensional social reality of a 'plural' society, and correspondingly 'pluralism', which includes various and diverse understandings of plurality, is a response to this. It is important to clarify and fine-tune the understanding of these concepts, lest our response be inadequate or even counter-productive. In fact, the great apprehension about pluralism is that it ends in relativism, which is certainly not an inevitable or necessary consequence.

The Problematic Context

All pluralism in society is eventually, founded on the polarity between the 'self' and the 'other' among different persons and diverse groups. These cannot simply be wished away, for the 'other' always poses a question to the 'self', that will not go away. One can ignore the question only for a while, for the questioning cannot be so easily negated, unless one destroys the questioner. History bears witness to how dominant persons and groups have eliminated subordinate ones in massacres and genocides, or forcibly assimilated them through miscegenation or ethnocide.

But where such brutal solutions are no longer feasible, either because of the ground realities in our society or the ethical ideals in our culture, then, tolerance can be our only viable human response. Obviously, our understanding of tolerance, especially in a pluralist society, will have many dimensions and distinct levels. Hence the need for a dialogue between the 'self' and the 'other', one that moves through these dimensions and levels of tolerance and the domains of dialogue to a fulfilling and enriching encounter of the self and the other.

Contemporary Complexities

The prevalence of pluralism in our post-modern world is more than a reflection of our present *sitz-im-leben*, (life-setting). It is one of the persistent givens of the human situation. It has at times been repressed by overt and/or covert violence, but only at great human cost. But then again such repression only makes for an unstable

equilibrium that cannot last very long. To our reckoning, in the measure in which societies have attained uniformity and solidity there is always a corresponding unmeasured subterranean quantum of diversity and confusion that resists integration into such a homogenised, monolithic social order.

One could, mistakenly it seems to me, consider this resistance to be a matter of unfinished business; or, more correctly I would urge, interrogate such resistance in a search for an underlying explanation, which will help us to understand the human foundations of diversity and pluralism in its more basic aspects, before we go on to consider the multiple dimensions of their social consequences and finally our responses to them.

The complexity of our modern world cannot be contained in any single *weltanschauung*, (worldview) (Rahner 1969: 26), nor can any single dominant one be imposed in a free and open society. But the problem of 'the one and the many' in the West goes back to ancient Greek philosophy. Intellectual answers have ranged from strict monism to complete scepticism, while social responses have varied from dictatorial totalitarianism to libertarian anarchism.

In the modern world, pluralism has emerged both as a mode of intellectual analysis and a normative doctrine (Kariel 1968: 164). This Western pluralism was first premised on the individual's freedom of conscience but soon the necessity of intermediate groups to affirm and protect such freedom vis-à-vis larger from more dominant institutions in society became apparent.

Any human grasp of reality is necessarily constrained by intrinsic human limitations. This need not mean an inevitable ethical relativism. However, if the dignity and freedom of the individual are to be respected, then this must necessarily be expressed in a social pluralism. Because the individual cannot be sacrificed to the group, nor a subordinate group to a dominant one, pluralism cannot simply accept the utilitarian 'greatest good of the greatest number', that Jeremy Bentham argued for; nor even the democratic 'tyranny of the majority', that de Tocqueville cautioned against; much less the socialist 'party-vanguardism' of Lenin's democratic centralism, or the continuous revolution of Trotsky.

Rather within a framework of individual and group rights, pluralism is ultimately premised on the acceptance of differences, whether these arise from individual choices or from group diversity. This implies that individuals must have their freedom guaranteed, just as groups must have their culture protected. If eventually, 'The

World is Flat', as some futurologists like Thomas Friedman predict (Friedman 2005), this becomes all the more imperative, because the other is the more easily accessed and flattened in such a world.

Traditional Approaches

Now in some traditional societies at first reckoning, there may seem to be less support for such an understanding of pluralism. But a more careful and critical reading of tradition may reveal a helpful basis to build on. Thus traditional Indian society tended to be more ascriptive in assigning status to individuals and groups. Moreover, interrelationships were in principle hierarchically ordered rather than competitively stratified. In such a social system individual choice could be exercised only within prescribed limits that derived more from the functional role the individual played in society, rather than from an understanding of the human person's inviolable dignity and inalienable rights.

Yet a plurality of groups was accepted and integrated into a social hierarchy where each had its protected niche. However, this pluralism was not premised on either individual freedom or social equality. Rather it was based on a bonding of individuals in the group, and of groups in society.

The pressures of social change are now displacing group claims on individuals by an assertion of the individual's rights, and replacing the old co-operative, hierarchical personal and group interrelationships with new competitive, democratic ones. The resulting sense of loss and of insecurity, of uncertainty and disorientation that such changes imply, for both individuals and groups, has precipitated tensions and conflicts that are explosive and violent, to the point where they seem unsustainable within our social system!

The Contribution of Diversity

But we cannot simply negate our traditions to ease the weight of the past on our present situation. Rather we need to critique, our traditions radically and draw on them as resources to understand and respond creatively and constructively to our present crisis.

This is precisely what Gandhi did with his construction of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. We must do this with the Jaina concept of *anekantavada* (the many-sidedness of truth) and *syadvada* (the interrelatedness of all things); with the Buddhist outreach in _sarvabhutadaya_, (universal compassion); with the advaitic

relativising of *mayavada* and *avidhya*; the Upanishadic ideal of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, (the universal family); with the materialistic rationalism of Charvaka; with the religious pluralism, the *sarva-dharma-samabhava*, of the sufi-bhakti heritage of our sant-kavis, with the Islamic *ijtihad* (creative interpretation) and *fiqh* (jurisprudence), with the Bhagvadgita and the Sermon on the Mount.

To be sure such a construction of tradition is already being contested by an opposition to pluralism that is increasingly authoritarian and fascist, uninhibitedly ethnocentric and chauvinistic. We must face the challenge of our cultural and religious plurality not by a denial of our past but by a critique of it, not by a flight from the present crisis but by an encounter with it, not by an escape into utopia, but a realistic provision for our future.

The basic foundation for all this must be a radical acceptance of the reality of pluralism in all the multi-faceted dimensions of its religious culture and of its political economy. This can then become the point of departure for a committed response. For acceptance cannot be creative or constructive if it is merely uncritical and passive. In other words, just as a critical modernity must interrogate tradition to construct the present, so too must a renewed tradition challenge modern pathologies with an alternative understanding of normality and not just glorify our past (Saran 1989).

It is our contention that in the final analysis, the trajectory of our response to pluralism must begin with acceptance of difference and a respect for other identities and reach out to live and celebrate diversity as parts of a larger organic whole (Kothari 1989: 20).

Plural Societies

Most modern societies are inevitably plural because of their complexity and scale. But plurality has characterised other societies including traditional ones. Plurality implies separate and distinct social groups coming together in some kind of more inclusive social order. We can distinguish two dimensions of such plurality. Structural plurality implies 'a social structure compartmentalised into analogous, parallel, non-complementary but distinguishable sets of institutions' (van den Berge 1969: 67). Cultural plurality implies different cultures or sub-cultures with their distinctive individual and collective identities within an over-arching civilisational unity, where distinctive identities are contained in a larger, layered one.

Structure and culture are necessary dimensions of any institutional system in society. Hence both these dimensions will be present in any

plural or composite society. However, in a particular context, one or the other may be the more pertinent. Thus, in the 'mature Western democracies' plurality is more structural, whereas in post-colonial societies, especially in South Asia, plurality is quite decidedly more cultural. And more often than not it is the cultural dimension that is most resilient in the segmentation and compartmentalisation of a plural society. However, there is an obvious interaction between the two. On the one hand, it might be easier to work out unifying structures when there is cultural consensus, on the other, it might very well be that the functional integration of structures in fact brings about greater cultural consensus. But once again in particular contexts, one or the other may be the more problematic. The implications of this interaction for educational policy in a plural society need to be further probed.

Now if group diversity is one pole in a plural society, then a more inclusive unity, that holds these together will be the other. Without the first there would be no plurality, without the second there would be many separate, not one composite society. Moreover, this larger unifying social order will also have a structural and cultural aspect. Structurally it is often the market and the polity that integrates diverse groups in a common social order. Culturally a common religion or language, an older tradition or a shared history can become the basis for a more inclusive civilisational unity. We need to further explore how far such structural and cultural pluralities pertain to Indian society.

Often the tension between these two polarities of unity and diversity has been dealt with by emphasising one and abandoning the other. On the one hand, homogenisation is often seen as a solution for a plural society, imposed by an authoritarian government or a hegemonic class or group, sacrificing other minority groups. The history of the nation-states provides ample evidence of this. On the other hand, diversity could be permitted to a point where segmentation and compartmentalisation into groups can no longer be contained under an over-arching social order, so then these groups begin to seek their own separate and distinctive collective destinies and identities. The Balkanisation of empires can be instructive here. Both these approaches ultimately amount to a negation of plurality, though they seek the resolution of the unity-diversity tension in different directions. Pluralism, however, seeks to resolve this tension differently through structural integration and cultural autonomy.

This was reflected in the once-official policy of unity-in-diversity in India. Today such pluralism is under a menacing threat.

Universalism and Particularism

One viable way of coping with plurality would be within the politics of recognition (Taylor 1992: 25). This involves both the politics of universalism and the politics of difference. The first is premised on human rights of individuals and the equal dignity of all citizens, and therefore is committed to enforcing equal rights for all. The second is premised on cultural rights, and is responsible for ensuring the unique identity of each cultural group. In the first individual rights, in the second collective ones are privileged.

Pluralism then is a way of coping with a plural society, that attempts to reconcile the polarity between universalism and particularism by affirming both: an 'equal dignity' for all citizens, and an 'unique identity' for each group. Such pluralism must be founded on a deep and comprehensive understanding of tolerance, as the basis of a workable 'politics of recognition', that includes the 'politics of universalism' and the 'politics of difference' (Taylor 1992). But then again only to the extent that such identities are defined positively is any reconciliation for real tolerance possible. This is really the only viable option in a society as resiliently diverse as ours.

III. The Context for Tolerance

One can distinguish several levels of tolerance. This is necessary because no dialogue is possible without a common and mutually agreed upon level of tolerance. Often dialogue collapses precisely because levels of tolerance are so different that people talk past, rather than to each other.

Truth and diversity

The reality of pluralism faces us with the question of tolerance. The term in English dates from the 16th century, though the notion itself is much older. For as a philosophical problem tolerance concerns the reconciliation of truth with freedom, i.e., the claims of truth versus the legitimacy of diverse opinions (Post 1970). The implications of this for a society today are as painful as they were for Socrates in ancient Athens, which was not a very heterogeneous city! In the Roman Empire, the problem reached acute proportions in the persecution of

Christians. With the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. these ended not so much in religious tolerance, as in eventual Christian dominance.

The post-Reformation religious wars left a divided and exhausted Christendom, which now began the pragmatic separation of church and state. However, this did not always guarantee real tolerance, as the limitations in the 'Act of Toleration', 1689, in England evidenced.

Yet 'the English Enlightenment was the greatest promoter of the notion of tolerance though mostly at the expense of theology and the binding force of the knowledge of truth (to which common sense was preferred)' (*ibid*.: 265). In France the strongly anti-clerical Encyclopaedists 'paved the way for the republican and democratic notions of the state' (*ibid*.: 266), though its narrow rationalism provided 'a very doubtful basis for the tolerance which was always in demand' (*ibid*.: 265). Thus in the modern West, the social origins of tolerance are to be found less in its monotheistic dogmatic religious beliefs than in the pragmatic resolution of intractable religious and political conflicts.

But tolerance is more than a matter of conflict resolution and emancipation. It is as multifaceted as the dimensions of the pluralism underpinning it: from intellectual worldviews to ethical values, from religious beliefs to cultural patterns, from political ideologies to economic systems, from linguistic divisions to geographic regions. In fact, 'there is no generally acknowledged definition of tolerance in the concrete' (*ibid*.: 262). Moreover, a merely formal definition would run into practical difficulties.

The South Asian Scene

In Sanskrit and Arabic, there is no exact equivalent for 'tolerance' (Khwaja 1992: 95, 101), but the notion itself is not unknown or unacknowledged. For the basis for pluralism was well established in the orthodoxy of ancient Indian traditions, as we have already indicated earlier: Jaina non-violence, Buddhist compassion, advaitic relativising, Upanishadic universalism, the syncretism of Indian Islam, sufi-bhakti mysticism. Indian orthopraxis, however, was less tolerant and could be quite violent.

But there were significant landmarks that have stamped our history. Thus Ashoka issued the first recorded edict for tolerance:

On each occasion one should honour another man's sect, for by doing so one increases the influence of one's own sect and benefits that of the other man... Again, whosoever honours his own sect or disparages that of another man, wholly out of devotion to his own,

with a view to showing it in favourable light harms his own sect even more seriously. Therefore concord is to be commended, so that men may hear one another's principles and obey them. (Thapar 1961: 255.)

In medieval times, so Humayun Kabir argues convincingly, Akbar's was 'the first conscious attempt to formulate the conception of a secular state' (Kabir 1955: 21) in the country, but this was not followed through by his grandson Aurangzeb. In this century Gandhi's *satyagraha* for *Saranya* was a valiant attempt at a non-violent reconstruction of our society, but it could not succeed in preventing the violent Partition of the country. And today, we seem to have all but abandoned Gandhi as our society gets increasingly mired in violence of all kinds and at all levels.

Thus in contemporary India, the intellectual acceptance of pluralism has not always gone along with the existential practice of tolerance. Indeed, we seem to have reached a flash point in our continuing crisis, when even the acceptance of religious-cultural pluralism is being contested, both, by a violent 'cultural nationalism', which is very much the intolerant imposition of the dominant castes, threatening the existence of other subalterns and minorities, and by an aggressive religious fundamentalism which demands obedience to religious authorities, who then homogenise submissive followers.

Dimensions of Tolerance

In our understanding, a constructive and creative response to pluralism cannot mean mere endurance of, and resignation to differences. It must include something more positive: the active acceptance of, and even the celebration of plurality. But to put such an orientation in context we must pursue this analysis further. As a response to pluralism, we can distinguish progressive levels in our understanding, all deriving from a deepening realisation of the reality, the truth, the *satya*, underlying our human situation; a reality that is radically pluralist, a truth that is essentially non-violent. These are not exclusive but rather overlapping dimensions and interpenetrating levels that form a progressive continuum (Panikkar 1983).

To begin, with the first, tolerance as a practical necessity: bearing with a lesser evil for the sake of a greater good. But such political pragmatism does not cut deep enough to sustain itself under the stress and strain of rapid social change. A deeper understanding of tolerance is based on the realization of the essential limitations in any human grasp of truth or expression of reality: it must always be partial, it can never be complete. Such tolerance is but 'the homage the finite mind

pays to the inexhaustibility of the Infinite' (Radhakrishnan 1927: 317). Such a philosophical awareness makes us accepting of what we do not understand and respectful of what we disagree with.

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

Gandhi's Tolerance

These levels of tolerance can best be clarified by situating Gandhi's *ahimsa* along the continuum. Gandhi's tolerance is never just political pragmatism. He realizes that the truths we grasp are necessarily partial. They need to be complemented by the partial truths of others. Beyond intellectual realisation, he is sensitive to the moral responsibility for others we must own, and he reaches out to all in non-violence, which he describes more positively as love. In the final analysis, Gandhi's *ahimsa* is intelligible only as a mystical-spiritual union, a condition and presage of *moksha*.

Further, the level of tolerance we live by is not something arbitrarily chosen. It is set by the way the 'other' is perceived by the 'self'. From perceiving the other as practical obstacle, to positive complement, to moral obligation, to mystical-spiritual fulfilment, our perception of the other is always complex. Yet in a given context, one or the other perception will be the more operative, and so limit the level of tolerance correspondingly.

Thus, if the other is pragmatically perceived as a limitation on, or an instrument for oneself, at worst an obstacle or at best a means for my own fulfilment, then only a pragmatic level of tolerance as a practical necessity is possible. If the other is realistically perceived as complementary to oneself in overcoming one's own limitations, then

a more positive level of tolerance is possible in my relationship to the other, at least intellectually. Where the other is perceived as someone the self has a moral responsibility for, this brings tolerance to the level of ethics, religious or secular. Finally, at the mystical-spiritual level of tolerance the other is perceived as the necessary fulfilment of oneself. This demands a tolerance beyond politics and philosophy, even beyond religion and ethics. This was the tolerance Gandhi aspired to.

Levels of understanding

Obviously, this is a utopian ideal for any society. But it is an ideal we can reach out to even if it remains beyond our grasp. For the dialectic between differences in a plural society must find expression in a constructive dialogue between the self and the other, if it is to be a creative celebration, otherwise it is all too likely to implode in violent repression, that eventually dehumanises both. We shall return to a consideration of such a dialogue later. First, we must examine a more crucial aspect in our analysis.

In each of these dimensions we can, following Panikkar again, (*ibid*.: 25-3) distinguish two levels of understanding or rather pre-understanding: myth and ideology. Myth is 'the horizon of intelligibility or the sense of Reality' (*ibid*.: 101). It is expressed in the 'mythic narrative' with its varied themes, and disclosed in the 'living voice, the telling of the myth' (*ibid*.) In sum, 'myth is precisely the horizon over against which any hermeneutic is possible' (*ibid*.: 4). It is taken for granted, unquestioned, a part of our pre-understanding, something we accept in 'faith', 'as that dimension in Man that corresponds to myth' (*ibid*.: 5).

Once it is rationally articulated, myth is demythicised and so is our faith, in a 'passage from *mythos* to *logos*' (*ibid*.: 21), from myth to reason as the articulated conscious word. This then develops into an 'ideology':

the more or less coherent ensemble of ideas that make up critical awareness, i.e., the doctrinal system that enables you to locate yourself rationally... a spacio-temporal system constructed by the logos as a function of its concrete historical moment. (*ibid*.)

All this has a crucial relevance for our understanding of the limits of tolerance. For the more articulate and coherent, the more comprehensive and compelling an ideology is, the less place there is for tolerance in the area it marks out for its truth. Thus, a more coherent ideology can accommodate others less, and a more comprehensive one allows less space for any others. Rather it will tend

to reduce the others to its own terms and assimilate them. There can be no dialogue across the differences. Not that we must rid ourselves of all ideologies. Our human limitations require them. But we must at the same time realise their limitations. Hence the ideologies we use must be open and non-dogmatic, critical and non-authoritarian.

Whether or not an ideology will develop into an open or closed system of understanding will finally depend on the myth from which it derives. For the further the myth's horizons stretch and the more openness and space it allows, the richer will be the texture of its themes and the greater the intensity and density it will permit. Hence we can conclude with Panikkar: '*the tolerance you have is directly proportional to the myth you live and inversely proportional to the ideology you follow*.' (*ibid*.: 20) What we need, then, is a *metanoia* of our myths to escape and be liberated from the *paranoia* of our ideologies, whether religious, political or otherwise.

Complexity and Challenge

Both myth and ideology are found in all the dimensions of tolerance indicated earlier, though there is obviously a greater affinity for ideology in political and philosophical tolerance, as there is for 'myth' in the religious and mystical one. This makes for a greater complexity and challenge in our praxis as an action-reflection-action process, a dialectical interaction between theory and practice. It is our conviction that the constructive potential of such a dialectic can be fully realised only in a creative dialogue for both myth and ideology. For it is only in the mutual encounter of myths that they are deepened and enriched, and in the reciprocal exchange among ideologies that these become more open and refined.

Now there is always a danger of celebrating differences in seclusion and not in dialogical encounter with the other. The assertion of such isolated alterity, as in fact with some post- modernists, easily 'shades over into the celebration of indifference, non-engagement and indecision' (Dallmayr 1989: 90). Such incommunicable uniqueness cannot but collapse into a nihilistic relativism, which is very far from the radical relativity on which a creative pluralism and a respectful tolerance must be premised.

IV. The Hermeneutics of Dialogue

Dialogue can be in several domains and a proper hermeneutics if it is not to end in the superficial relativism that often comes in the way

of a genuine and enriching encounter. The challenge of an equal dialogue will necessitate such an appropriate hermeneutic.

Dialectics and Dialogue

For Panikkar 'dialogue' is a foundation condition of human beings. It is our way of being.

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

Dialogue, then, goes beyond dialectics. For 'dialectics is the optimism of reason. Dialogue is the optimism of the heart.' (*ibid*.: 243) Thus we can speak of a 'dialectical dialogue', which would pertain to the encounter of ideologies, while a 'dialogical dialogue' would be more pertinent to the meeting of myths.

'Difference', then, as Gadamer insists 'stands at the beginning of a conversation, not its end' (Gadamer 1989: 113), awaiting the moment of coherence, of fulfilment, of a 'fusion of horizon' that will complete the hermeneutic circle and set it off again for us – 'we who are a conversation' (*ibid*.: 110). We are constructed and deconstructed in dialogue with ourselves and others. Indeed, 'the conversation that we are is one that never ends.' (Gadamer 1989: 95) For dialogue and conversation are intrinsic to the human condition, the very language of our existence, the essential hermeneutic of all our experience.

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

to recognise oneself (or one's own) in the other and find a home abroad — this is the basic movement of spirit whose being consists in this return to itself from otherness. (Gadamer 1975: 15)

But we would emphasise a further implication of such dialogical hermeneutics: 'the challenge to recognise otherness or the alien in oneself (or one's own).' (Dallmayr 1989: 92)

Domains in Dialogue

Now if a dialogue must have purpose and content, its domain cannot be restricted to the dyad of the 'self' and the 'other', of 'ego' and 'alter'. It must be extended to a triad. It must be mediated by a third party, which will provide an objective point of reference that will make for 'contextualising human agency and culture in a dynamic holistic

framework' (Gupta 1996: 139). For us, the Indian Constitution and the human rights enshrined therein are certainly positioned to do precisely this, i.e., provide a reference point and context for our dialogue in which we as citizens can circumscribe acceptable and non-acceptable 'differences', set limits to tolerance and intolerance, and provide the guiding principles for dialogue within the quest for equality and freedom, for justice and fraternity.

But dialogue is surely more than a verbal exchange. It implies a reciprocity between the 'self' and the 'other' that can take place in various types of encounter and exchange between persons and groups. Hence a complex and more nuanced understanding of dialogue requires a specification of various kinds of involvement of the 'self' with the 'other'.

Recently Christians have been urged by the Church to engage in a fourfold dialogue ('Dialogue and Proclamation', Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, Vatican City, 1991, no.42.):

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

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

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

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

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

In each of these areas of exchange, corresponding to the levels of tolerance delineated above, one can distinguish degrees of dialogue premised on differing understandings of the self and the other and the encounter between the two. Thus, at the pragmatic level of tolerance the other is perceived as the limitation of the self. Here dialogue

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

Hence in conclusion we must emphasise that pluralism is possible only within a context of tolerance and dialogue. However, our tradition of tolerance seems to be increasingly displaced from public life and it now needs to be revived and extended. For this, we must distinguish levels and dimensions in our understanding of tolerance, lest the ideal of tolerance we aspire to and the limits to intolerance that we set become both impractical and naive.

So too with dialogue, even as we accept dialogue as necessary to the human condition, we must understand how the demands of dialogue must be extended to the various kinds of involvement of the self and the other. However, both tolerance and dialogue can only be meaningful within the context of human rights guaranteed by our Constitution and the 'culture of rights' (Bhargava 1991:171) it directs us too.

V. A Creative Dialogue

Common Ground to Higher Ground

In any society dialogue or tolerance must be premised on some stable and mutually agreed upon common ground of understanding in the socio-cultural and eco-political realms. Or else tolerance is easily exploited by the intolerant, and dialogue readily deteriorates into an unequal exchange favouring the dominant.

However, the common ground we seek is defined not just by overlapping areas or mutually acceptable, non-contradictory positions. It is not a mathematically arrived at least common denominator or highest common factor. Rather it is a dynamic and creative starting point which must be extended to include other areas of human values and concerns that may well be outside these religio-

cultural traditions and yet can still serve to question and critique them in turn. For instance, the eco-political common ground in regard to an economic system or a political ideology, in so far as this helps to further a multi-faceted cultural and religious dialogue. Thus if constructive tolerance brings us together on firm common ground, creative dialogue must take us from there to open higher ground.

But a precondition for this is the imperative for a common, agreed-upon understanding of both substantive and procedural justice founded on some objective basis beyond the interests or concerns of the parties involved. Further, even when this is arrived at, there still may well be disagreement on the application of this justice in concrete situations, which are often defined differently by the parties involved. If there is no third party to mediate an agreement and/or a reference point, from which to monitor its implementation, inevitably the stronger will prevail, might becomes right in a 'My justice is better than yours' syndrome!

The liberal democratic understanding and the regime of human rights derived from this is the basis of the socio-political consensus for modern democratic states. For us, this is minimally at least expressed in the Indian Constitution. This is the common ground on which all citizens must begin, the reference point from which to enlarge and lift this further to higher ground as well.

Liberal Justice

It should be apparent that no understanding of tolerance can be premised on injustice, and the practice of dialogue can be based on inequality. This must be the necessary basis of any constructive tolerance, of all creative dialogue.

John Rawls (1971) in his *Theory of Justice* has very incisively articulated an understanding of 'justice as fairness' that has become the defining reference in the liberal discourse. However, what Rawls seems to come up against are the limits to which liberal justice can be pushed. For it still leaves unresolved some of the more fundamental cultural and structural differences across societies with regard to basic values and vital institutions, human rights and social duties, to mention but a few by way of illustration. Indeed, it seems that these cross-cultural issues cannot be adequately addressed within a culturally constrained liberal perspective.

A comprehensive theory of justice must be inter-culturally contextualised and inter-religiously sensitive. Tolerance must not replace justice, nor must dialogue negate injustice, and yet they both

can draw on cultural and religious resources to bring forgiveness and reconciliation, to make justice not punitive or retributive, but restorative and healing. In the end, it seems apparent that liberal justice cannot, and perhaps does not intend to go beyond fairness to compassion, only tolerance and dialogue can get us there.

Gandhi's favourite talisman of considering the 'poorest and the weakest' (Collected Works Vol. 89:125) in our decisions can take us beyond the liberals' justice as fairness to richer and deeper levels of tolerance, beyond acceptance and respect to compassion and communion. But further, we can turn this talisman around

'not just to interrogate ourselves on how our decisions will affect the last and least, but rather to allow the poorest and weakest to affect, or rather 'infect' our decisions and our worldview.' (Heredia 2007: 358)

Intra-Religious Dialogue

Now dialogue *inter*-religious must be premised on a respect for, and even celebration of pluralism between religions. However, unless there is a pluralism within a religious tradition, where difference is also culturally respected and celebrated, tolerance religiously sensitised, it is unlikely that all these can be carried over to an inter-religious dialogue. What we need then is an intra-religious dialogue so that we can see, each in their own tradition, what we can do for ourselves as a preparation for dialogue. If can be non-defensive, then perhaps we will be able to initiate a non-violent and open dialogue with other religious traditions, and perhaps even with the fundamentalist within them. In other words, the *intra*- is the condition of the *inter*-religious dialogue.

Panikkar has described the intra-religious dialogue at the personal level thus:

An *intrareligious* dialogue, i.e., an inner dialogue within myself, an encounter in depth of my personal religiousness, having met another religious experience on that very intimate level. In other words, if *interreligious* dialogue is to be real dialogue, an *intrareligious* dialogue must accompany it, i.e., it must begin with my questioning myself and the relativity of my beliefs (which does not mean *relativism*), accepting the challenge of a change, a conversation and the risk of upsetting my traditional patterns. (Panikkar 1978: 40)

As St. Augustine confessed: *Question mihi factus sum*. I am become a question to myself! I must face the question I am, if I am to face the question that the other is to me.

But beyond a personal understanding of intra-religious dialogue, there is need for a community or societal one, a dialogue within a religious tradition between groups and perspectives. It is this level of dialogue we must eventually arrive at, not just inter-personal, but inter-group/community as well.

A Cultural Dialogue

Given the multidimensionality of pluralism, religion cannot be the only dimension of dialogue. Other dimensions too must engaged in a dialogic encounter based on tolerance. This necessarily implies a culture of dialogue. If we understand 'culture' comprehensively as a 'design for living', as anthropologists do, then in a multicultural society such a dialogue at the level of life, is the necessary foundation for other levels of dialogue in joint action, shared experience and theoretical articulation.

Moreover, where cultural homogeneity and political hegemony are privileged over social heterogeneity and civic tolerance, this inevitably results in the culture of silence, leaving people voiceless while the dominant others speak for them. Silence and suspicion are good neighbours readily spreading rumours and disinformation, fuelling odium and mistrust, thus creating a 'culture of suspicion', the very contradiction of a 'culture of dialogue'. A cultural dialogue, both intra- and inter-, can break the silence and open communication, discredit suspicion and create trust.

Radical openness and basic rootedness are the conditions of an enriching cultural encounter that will contribute to a more invigorated pluralism and an enhanced unity. This has been the real secret of Indic civilisation's survival over millennia! However today, our challenge cannot be mere survival. Rather we need a dialogue that brings together the human and liberative aspects within a tradition, and then reaches out to others. Each tradition has a rich heritage waiting to be constructively critiqued and cross-fertilised in a creative dialogue with others. But first, we will need a radical change, a *metanoia* of our hearts, to free us from the *paranoia* of each other. And once again Gandhi is an exemplar and challenge to us here.

In 1995 the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus in Decree 5 gave a particularly relevant mandate for dialogue to the Jesuits:

> 'to be religious today is to be inter-religious in the sense that a positive relationship with believers of other faiths is a

requirement in a world of religious pluralism.' (Dec. 5, No. 130)

Raimundo Panikkar rightly insists that 'dialogue is not a bare methodology but an essential part of the religious act par excellence.' (Panikkar 1978: 10) However, this dialogue must necessarily be cultural as well, for cultural and religious traditions are intimated intertwined. In a multicultural, pluri-religious society, dialogue in one domain demands the complement of dialogue in the other.

We can now sum up the imperative for dialogue in a few pertinent sutras (Heredia 2007: 323):

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

Psychologists have convinced us of the first; sociologists are trying to teach us the second; political economists are promoting the third; theologians are coming to realise the fourth. An inter-disciplinary perspective must bring these together in a holistic approach.

An Equal Dialogue

To tap the resources of our rich heritage, it is of the utmost importance to have an *equal* dialogue. For any dialogue that starts with the assumptions of superiority on one side, or has a hidden agenda, intending assimilation or conversion or propaganda, rather than a respect and enrichment that is mutual, an openness and freedom that is creative, such a dialogue can never be an equal exchange, and in the end like all unequal exchanges, whether between classes, castes, genders or even between ethnic communities, geographic regions, etc., eventually can only become exploitative and oppressive. An unequal dialogue is always in some measure destructive, it can never be truly creative.

The dogmatic religious traditions find it very problematic to concede that those outside their religious revelation and beliefs have an equal access to the truth. They feel themselves privileged in this regard, and compromise in this matter is tantamount to being disloyal to their faith. However, precisely in such a perspective there is even greater need of a hermeneutic approach that will make for an equal dialogue. Hence it becomes imperative to distinguish between emic and etic perspectives, the insider's and the outsider's standpoint.

Insider, Outsider Perspectives

From an emic or insider's perspective, differing truths cannot lay claim to equal validity, unless they all are relativised, or brought into harmony at a higher level of unity. But this harmony may require an etic or outsider's perspective if the emic one is not inclusive enough. However, even such an emic perspective without compromising itself must grant the right to hold, and the duty to respect different opinions, even ones incompatible with one's own, for in civil society the other's legitimate right to freedom and claim to respect must not be compromised by imposing one's own dogmatic beliefs or ritual practice. This makes dialogue possible even between believers and atheists.

Thus from an etic perspective, an equal dialogue is less a matter of 'equal truth' than of 'equal freedom'. This demands that no standpoint is privileged above others, much less imposed, but all empathetically critiqued and challenged. For this, a common ground must be sought and the only common currency viable, given the variety and variations prevailing among our pluri-religious traditions today, is a basic humanism. This will in turn have its own problematique but it is one in which all can engage as equals to set the conditions for a deeper religious discourse. Hence the necessity for a relevant hermeneutics.

All this will, of course, demand a more liberal and humanist approach within each tradition, for which an intra-religious dialogue becomes necessary as a prelude to an inter-religious one. Otherwise, we will have a debate, not a dialogue, controversy not complementarity. Indeed, such transparency among believers and non-believers would make even an 'extra-religious' dialogue challenging and fruitful for both.

From an emic perspective, dogmatic traditions are often unwilling or unable to face the challenge of an equal dialogue. Such religious traditions need a relevant hermeneutic for an intra-religious dialogue to be more open and inclusive. Obviously, we are all conscience-bound to follow the truth wherever it leads. But the objective possibility of one's conscience leading one out of the fold as it were, is extremely problematic in an emic perspective, it is considered to be apostasy, but an etic one would find it easier to grant at least the subjective possibility of this happening in good faith. The crucial question here is how inclusive is one's perspective and how informed is one's conscience.

From an etic perspective, non-dogmatic traditions are generally not constrained by exclusive beliefs. However, inclusiveness too must

go with its own cautions. On the one hand, it must not fall into relativism or degenerate into permissiveness; on the other, it must neither become a process of appropriation and absorption into a higher unity, wherein the distinctiveness of each tradition is lost, not just subsumed. The all-inclusiveness of some universalists sometimes seems to imply just this. A valid inclusiveness would demand the integration of diversities into an enriching and higher unity so that we have a 'diversity in unity' rather than a 'unity in diversity'. White light includes the wavelengths of all the seven colours, yet the rainbow has its own special beauty.

VI. Disarmament for Dialogue

In our society where cultural traditions are so central and popular religiosity so predominant, religious beliefs and institutional interests, cultural norms and social practices also dig themselves into self-defensive bunkers, and trench warfare becomes a battle of attrition in the attempt to overrun and dislodge each other. Today, almost as a matter of their survival we are challenged to rethink much of our traditional cultures and religious. But we need a disengagement before we can think of radical change. For

> 'when a culture entrenches its values and vested interests as non-negotiables, a *Cultural Disarmament* is the only *Way to Peace* (Panikkar 1995) Today we need similar commitment to a 'religious disarmament' to open a way to intra-/inter-religious harmony and intra-/inter-communal peace' (Heredia 2007: 359)

Raimundo Panikkar's description of his own quest captures such 'disarmament' most evocatively: 'I 'left' as a Christian, 'found myself' a Hindu, and I 'return' as a Buddhist, without having ceased to be a Christian' (Panikkar 1978: 2).

Such a disengagement from one's traditions need not compromise one's rootedness in them. It does not require a cosmopolitanism that we relativise all traditions, and be committed to none, a kind of 'place polygamy' (Beck 2000: 72), which globalisation seems to presage, a fluidity that makes us 'nowhere people', tourists everywhere but at home nowhere, lost in the interstices between too many spaces. Such open-ended cultural and religious tourism is hardly viable. It can only leave us rootless, alienated and anomic.

Thus Gandhi's rooted openness was the starting point of this essay, and Panikkar's committed disarmament is where it concludes.

The argument of this presentation proceeds from a rooted openness. Accepting multi-dimensional plurality, which includes social and political, cultural and religious traditions, not simply as a de facto given but as the de jure structure of reality as we know it, the challenge for us is to evolve an integrated 'pluralism' out of this 'plurality', not just a peaceful co-existence, but an enriching encounter. Hence this pluralism must not just be an acceptance, but rather a real celebration of difference, because then dialogue across differences can be a truly transforming encounter. Unity and not uniformity then is the end point of a dialogue but it is often a point beyond our present horizons. It must be a unity that will allow for diversity and precisely perhaps be a 'diversity in unity' rather than a 'unity in diversity'. In other words, even in the unity the emphasis on diversity is not lost.

Tolerance is the precondition and dialogue is the only feasible approach to inevitable conflicts and contradictions in our violent and conflict-ridden world. However, the level of tolerance that we can commit ourselves to would also indicate the intensity of our celebration of the difference in the 'other'. The coincidence of opposites in such a unity is clearly a mystical experience of tolerance, as Panikkar has elaborated. But clearly, this is not the beginning of the dialogue. It might be important to realise that the greater diversity, the more enriching and at the same time the more arduous will be this quest for a mystical unity in which opposites coincide.

Among the four domains of dialogue enumerated surely the richest is the sharing of experience and yet the more domains a dialogue embraces the more comprehensive and the more enduring it will be.

Moreover, dialogic partners must first find common ground so that together they can then move to higher ground. Furthermore, if the justice is to be a real concern, then one must first address the in justices within one's own tradition, whether these be matters of commission and omission, whether perpetrated on one's own and on the other, for these negate openness and mutuality. For this, an intra-religious dialogue becomes the necessary condition of an inter-religious one. However, dialogue must not be confined to the cultural and religious dimensions it must extend to others as well, to create a culture of dialogue, in which partners can engage in an equal dialogue. For this we must be able to bracket our insider perspective for an outsider one, respecting the others' freedom, even when we do not accept their beliefs, to find in our common humanity the ground for engagement with each other.

Here we can locate a fraternal dialogue where justice is subsumed by charity but never substituted for it! Such a holistic dialogue must be a dialogical dialogue before it can be a dialectical one, a meeting of the 'myths' we live by, beyond an ideological encounter of articulation and action. If we can disarm ourselves, culturally and religious, to break out beyond our ideologies and theologies, to share our human concerns and experiences, we will be able to engage in a just and equal exchange, a fraternal holistic dialogue, reaching beyond 'fairness' to compassion and forgiveness, to reconciliation and healing. Then beyond dialogue, there will be silence and peace.

References

Beck, Ulrich, 2000, *What is Globalization*?, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Bhargava, Rajeev, 1991, 'The Right to Culture', in K.N. Panikkar, ed., *Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture*, Manohar, N.Delhi, pp.165-172

Dallmayr, Fred R., 1989, 'Hermeneutics and Deconstruction: Gadamer Derrida in Dialogue', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, pp.75-92.

Friedman, Thomas L., 2005, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1989, 'Destruktion and Deconstruction.', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, pp. 102, 113.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1975, *Truth and Method*, Seabury Press, New York.

Gandhi, Mohandas K., *Collected Works*, 1958 - 89, 100 vols, Government of India, N. Delhi. Referred to in text as CW.

Gupta, Dipankar, 1996, The Context of Ethnicity: Sikh Identity in a Comparative Perspective. Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi.

Heredia, Rudolf C., 2007, *Changing Gods: Rethinking Conversion in India*, Penguin, N. Delhi.

Kariel, Henry S., 1968, 'Pluralism', in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol.12, Macmillan, New York, 1968 164-169.

Kabir, Humayun, 1955, *The Indian Heritage*, Asia Pub. House, Bombay.

Khwaja, Jamal, 1992, 'Concept and Role of Tolerance in Indian Culture', in ed., Balasubramaniam, pp.89-120.

Kothari, Rajni., 1989 'Ethnicity', in ed.s, David and Kadirgamar.

Kuper, Leo and M.G. Smith, ed.s, *Pluralism in Africa*, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley.

Panikkar, R., 1978, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, Paulist Press, NY..

Panikkar, Raimon, 1995, *Cultural Disarmament: The Way to Peace*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky.

Panikkar, R., 1983, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-cultural Studies*, Asian Trading Corp. Bangalore.

Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, 'Dialogue and Proclamation', Vatican City, 1991, no.42.

Post, Werner, 1970 'Tolerance', in *Sacramentum Mundi*, ed., Karl Rahner, Vol. 6, pp. 262-267.

Radhakrishnan, S., 1927, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.

Rahner, Karl, 1969, *Theological Investigations*, Vol VI, Payton, Longman and Todd, London.

Rawls, John, 1971, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, MA.,

Saran. A.K., 1989, 'Gandhi and the Concept of Politics: Towards a normal civilization', *Gandhi Marg*, (1), 675-727.

Taylor, Charles, 1992. *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Recognition*, Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton.

Thapar. Romila, 1961, *Ashoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, Oxford Univ. Press, London.

van de Berge, Pierre L., 1969 'Pluralism and Polity: A Theoretical Exploration', in Leo Kuper and M.G. Smith, ed.s, *Pluralism in Africa*, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley.

11.
PLURALISM AND THE PEDAGOGY OF TOLERANCE

The New Leam (independent news website), Oct 10, 2017

Abstract:

Education for pluralism would seem to be the only viable alternative for the scale and depth of the diversity in a society such as ours. Yet the relationships between a national education system and local educational institutions become extremely problematic in a structurally segmented and culturally diverse multi-ethnic society. In the Indian context, with education in the 'Concurrent List', i.e. it is both a central and state government subject how must educational policy reflect this Centre-State balance?

Basic Functions of Education

In the Durkheimian sense, it is through education that a society 'creates the conditions of its very existence'. This implies two basic functions for education. Firstly, that of transmitting an institutional heritage across generations as an agency of socialisation. This is the conservative function of education. And secondly, transforming this heritage through critique and creativity. This is the progressive function of education In a more stable social context it is the first that will be emphasised, while in a society subjected to change and development, it must be the second. However, both functions are

necessary for the survival and development of any society, but to which of these should education in India tilt?

In the Indian context, the role of education has been long debated. The old consensus expressed by the Kothari Commission in 1966 of 'Education for Development', has in practice given way to education for upward social mobility, whether this be in response to individual or for group claims. Today however, educational policies and the understanding of national development itself is being contested by a broad spectrum of groups: ethnic, caste, religious, cultural, linguistic, while upward mobility has become a free-for-all all, no-holds-barred contest. In this context, a more basic and prior consensus seems necessary for any feasible education policy. Education for pluralism would seem to be the only viable alternative for the scale and depth of the diversity in a society such as ours. Yet the relationships between a national education system and local educational institutions become extremely problematic in a structurally segmented and culturally diverse multi-ethnic society. In the Indian context, with education in the 'Concurrent List', i.e. it is both a central and state government subject how must educational policy reflect this Centre-State balance?

Plural Societies

Most modern societies are inevitably plural because of their complexity and scale. But plurality has characterised other societies including traditional ones. Plurality implies separate and distinct social groups coming together in some kind of more inclusive social order. We can distinguish two dimensions to such plurality. Structural plurality implies 'a social structure compartmentalised into analogous, parallel, non-complementary but distinguishable sets of institutions'. (Van den Berge 1969: 67) Cultural plurality implies different cultures or sub-cultures with their distinctive individual and collective identities within an over-arching civilisational unity, where distinctive identities are contained in a larger, layered one. Structure and culture are necessary dimensions of any institutional system in society. Hence both these dimensions will be present in any plural or composite society. However, in a particular context, one or the other may be the more pertinent. Thus in the 'mature Western democracies' plurality is more structural, whereas in post-colonial societies, especially in South Asia, plurality is quite decidedly more cultural. And more often than not it is the cultural dimension that is more resilient in the segmentation and compartmentalisation of a plural

society. However, there is an obvious interaction between the two. On the one hand, it might be easier to work out unifying structures when there is cultural consensus, on the other, it might very well be that the functional integration of structures might in fact bring about greater cultural consensus. But once again in particular contexts one or the other may be the more problematic. The implications of this interaction for educational policy in a plural society needs to be further probed.

Now if group diversity is one pole in a plural society, then a more inclusive unity, that holds these together will be the other. Without the first there would be no plurality, without the second there would be many single, not one composite society. Moreover, this larger unifying social order will also have a structural and cultural aspect. Structurally it is often the market and the polity that integrate diverse groups in common social order. Culturally a common religion, language or older tradition can become the basis for a more inclusive civilisational unity. We need to further explore how far such structural and cultural plurality pertain to Indian society. Often the tension between these two polarities of unity and diversity has been dealt with by emphasising one and abandoning the other. Thus, homogenisation is often seen as a solution for a plural society, imposed by an authoritarian government or a hegemonic class or group, sacrificing other minority groups. The history of the nation-states provides ample evidence of this. On the other hand, diversity could be permitted to a point where segmentation and compartmentalisation into groups can no longer be contained under an over-arching social order, so then these groups begin to seek their own separate and distinctive collective destinies and identities. The Balkanisation of empires can be instructive here. Both these approaches ultimately amount to a negation of plurality, though they seek the resolution of the unity-diversity tension in different directions. Pluralism, however, seeks to resolve this tension differently. While unity in diversity was once official policy in India, today pluralism is under a menacing threat.

Plurality and Pluralism

One viable way of coping with plurality would be within the politics of recognition (Taylor 1992: 25). This involves both the politics of universalism and the politics of difference. The first is premised on human rights and the equal dignity of all citizens, and therefore is committed to enforcing equal rights for all. The second is premised on cultural rights, and is responsible for ensuring the unique identity of each cultural group. In the first individual rights, in the second collective ones are privileged.

Pluralism then is a way of coping with a plural society, that attempts to reconcile the polarity between universalism and particularism by affirming both: an 'equal dignity' for all citizens, and an 'unique identity' for each group. Such pluralism must be founded on a deep and comprehensive understanding of tolerance, as the basis of a workable 'politics of recognition', that includes the 'politics of universalism' and the 'politics of deference' (Taylor 1992). But then again only to the extent that such identities are defined positively and inclusively and not negatively or exclusively is any reconciliation for real tolerance possible. This is really the only viable option in a society as resilient diverse as ours.

Levels of Tolerance

In a complex society, pluralism must be founded on a fine-tuned understanding of levels of tolerance and the limits of intolerance. Here following Panikkar (1983: 20-36) the levels of tolerance can be distinguished: pragmatic: the pragmatic necessity for a practical adjustment between opposing positions is chosen as the lesser evil. Intellectual: the intellectual realisation of our own human limitations opens us out to the need for others, however different they might be. Ethical: the moral obligation not to harm but to be just and fair to the others. Spiritual: reaching out to the other in a mutual enrichment to both.

There is here a continuous spectrum in the various levels of tolerance, from calculating the pragmatic limits of intolerance, through an intellectual realisation for the need, and an ethical obligation for the practice of tolerance, to a spiritual celebration of the enrichment of diversity. Now any understanding of tolerance that does not consider how limits must be set to intolerance would be impractical and naive. Hence we must set the social context within

which tolerance at any level functions, if indeed, we are to be able to cope with intolerance. For this some defining parameters must be effective both for individuals and for groups if tolerance is to be a viable social option in a plural society and not hijacked by cynical and chauvinistic intolerance; social equality for all; distributive justice across every social divide; fundamental freedom, political, religious, cultural, and peoples' participation.

A Pedagogy of Tolerance

Any pedagogy premised on tolerance must be non-violent and a negation of the 'pedagogy of violence' (Lele 1995) that promotes a politics of hate. Moreover, it will be a tolerance founded on a culture of dialogue as opposed to the 'culture of silence' (Freire 1972) that results from the politics of domination. Non-violent pedagogies of tolerance can be spread across the spectrum of the various levels of tolerance that have been distinguished earlier. Obviously, such pedagogies have to be worked out in detail, only general indications are given here. At the pragmatic level, it would be pedagogy of adaptive coping and creative enabling. This would have to include intellectual skills and emotional discipline. At the intellectual level, it would be a pedagogy of enquiry and discovery. The scientific methodology and the rationality it implies are a good illustration of this. Morally it would be a pedagogy of freedom and responsibility. Interpersonal encounters and social involvement can provide the context here. Spiritually it would be a pedagogy of love and celebration. For this, our rich religious and spiritual heritage can be drawn on and adapted for a contemporary context.

Degrees in Dialogue

Corresponding to the levels of tolerance, one can distinguish degrees of dialogue premised on different understandings of the self and the other and the encounter between the two. Thus at the pragmatic level of tolerance, the other is perceived as the limitation of the self. Here dialogue becomes a practical way of overcoming differences, rather than confrontation that could result either in the assimilation or in elimination of the other. At the intellectual level, where the other is seen as complementary to the self, dialogue seeks to overcome the limitations of the self rather than instrumentalise the other in the pursuit of self. At the ethical level, the self accepts moral

responsibility for the other. In this dialogue then, the self will reach out to the other to establish relationships of equity and equality. At the spiritual level, the other is perceived beyond a limitation or a complement or an obligation, but as the fulfilment of the self. Here dialogue would call for a celebration of one another.

Substantive Content

Evolving such pedagogues, that would correspond to these various kinds of dialogue at the varying levels of tolerance, cannot evade the question of what is to be tolerated. For at various levels in a given social context the substantive content of tolerance will be culturally constrained and described. This would demand a discussion beyond the limitations of this essay. But some indication of the general contours of such a requirement can be listed. More generally, then, a non-violent dialogic pedagogy of tolerance must be founded on a sensitivity to the other that expresses itself in the multiple ways in the diverse arenas of social encounter such as a non-dogmatic religious openness, a positive appreciation of other cultures, a facility with languages other than one's own, equitable gender relations, egalitarian group rights, fundamental individual rights, ecological sensitivity....to mention but a few.

References

Freire, Paulo. 1972. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, England.

Panikkar, Raimundo, 1983, *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics*, Asian Trading, Bangalore.

Lele, Jayant, 1995, *Hindutva: The Emergence of the Right*, Earthworm Books, Madras.

Taylor. Charles., 1992, *Multiculturalism and 'The Politic of Recognition*, Princeton Univ. Press, New. Jersey.

van de Berge, Pierre L., *Pluralism and Polity: A Theoretical Exploration', in Leo Kuper and M.G. Smith*, ed.s, *Pluralism in Africa,* Univ. of California Press, Berkeley, 1969.

12.
DIALOGUE AS PEDAGOGY: LEARNING TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER

Keynote Address for 'Triple Dialogue in Asia: Origins and Significance', *Vidyajyoti,* New Delhi, 31 Aug 2016

Abstract:

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

Terms of Discourse

Dialogue is readily described as communicative exchange. However, it is more comprehensive than the 'communicative rationality' of Habermas, which he defines as:

'oriented to achieving, sustaining and reviewing consensus – and indeed a consensus that rests on the intersubjective recognition of criticisable validity claims'. (Habermas 1984: 17)

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

The Hermeneutics of Dialogue

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

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

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

Gadamer explains how 'to be in conversation, however, means to be beyond oneself as if to another.' For, as he insisted in 1960 all genuine dialogue must be premised on an authentic hermeneutic: 'to recognise oneself (or one's own) in the other and find a home abroad— this is the

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

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

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

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

Human beings are meant to be interrelated and interactive, not isolated and alone. Yet, there is always the danger of celebrating our own 'difference' in isolation and seclusion from others, and not in dialogue with them. We find examples if such 'withdrawal' among fundamentalists/radicals of various persuasions: religious communes, utopian communities,…This 'shades over into the celebration of

indifference, non-engagement and indecision' (Gadamer 1989: 90). Such an inwardly turned dialogue eventually becomes a monologue, whether of individuals or groups. This inbreeding can only lead to a genetic decline of the group's cultural and intellectual DNA. This further negates creative pluralism, undermines respectful tolerance and destroys any real possibility of a dialogue across differences with the other.

The Asian Scenario

The socio-political trajectories of Asian societies though their various stages of development from agro-rural to urban industrial societies are spread across a wide spectrum of developmental models and political ideologies. Consequently, there are wide variations in the levels of poverty and deprivation, both in intensity and scope, across societies and within each as well. Consequently, there are multiple modernities unevenly spread: whereas some regions are highly advanced other locales are left behind in an earlier historical age. Most Asians live in several different centuries simultaneously, even within their national boundaries.

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

All this makes for an intriguing Asian mosaic with positive possibilities for complementarities and exchange, but also real dangers of misunderstanding and conflict. Hence when the Federation of Asian Bishops (FABC) calls for a threefold dialogue, with the poor, with cultures, with religions, the purpose must be defined in terms of it a liberating, enriching, transformational promise. Such a dialogue must be both inclusively Asian and open to the world, universally global, and concretely local.

The Church in Asia must outgrow its colonial past to evolve into an authentic Asian Church, contributing to and learning from the Church

universal in a pedagogic dialogue. In developing a contextual theology for this evolution Peter Hai lists

'five of its major characteristics, which complement and enrich each other: (1) a synthetic contextual character, (2) a similarity between the FABC's theological methodology and that of Latin American liberation theologies, (3) a faith seeking dialogue, (4) an approach that encourages theological pluralism and aims to achieve harmony, and (5) a development that constitutes a paradigm shift in theology.' (Hai 2006)

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

Most recently two events have opened new horizons of possibilities for renewal and reform for both the Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus: the election of Pope Francis on 13th Mar 2013, who has brought a tsunami of change in the Church: and the convocation of the 36th General Congregation for 2nd Oct 2016 and the expectation of a new General. Both events have significant relevance for the Church and the Jesuits in Asia. This is the ecclesial context for our pedagogic dialogue in Asia.

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

knocks from within so that we will let him come out.'
https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/the-4-minute-speech-that-got-pope-francis-elected

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

Dialogue As Liberation: Learning From The Poor

The Contemporary Crisis

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

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

The economic inequalities of class in an earlier century precipitated a working-class struggle that in places called for a class war. After two devastating world wars this was largely defused by the welfare state. But half a century later, in spite of a remarkable decrease in absolute levels

of poverty the world over and Asia, even in developing countries, relative poverty, that is the differences between the rich and the poor, has jumped to unsustainable levels worldwide, even in poor countries. The evidence for this can be seen in the recent populist, majoritarian mass politics, in rich and poor countries alike that is compounded by nationalism and migration, and internal displacement. And as always it is the poor and minorities that are the worst off.

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

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

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

Thus the inequities of class and caste, precipitate hostilities of ethnicity, and religion negate the life-chances of the weaker sections of our peoples; the violence of religious fundamentalism that traumatises dissenting individuals and minority groups; political extremism hijacks human rights; the individualist consumerism of a market-driven economy and money power displaces human concerns; invidious competition has been institutionalised to discount group cooperation; overt success and public recognition for individuals are valued far more

than the silent sacrifice and unacknowledged contribution of persons;... these are just some of the characteristics of our social situation against which we must build counter-communities of solidarity for justice.

Solidarity for Justice

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

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

In other words, we must build a counter-cultural community that will seek 'another development' and an 'alternative politics' for a multicultural, a pluri-religious society, both on the national as well as the international scene. We must believe, as the World Social Forum keeps affirming: 'Another World is Possible!': where economic status is not skewed, cultural identities are inclusive and religions traditions are harmonious. But to take such a counter-culture seriously, we need to articulate a value frame of reference in which we function and evaluate ourselves critically against the vision and inspiration of a counter-cultural community of solidarity, where the personal good of each is the common good of all. This is the only way to decolonise ourselves from the neoliberal capitalism encircling global village.

The contrast-community of Christian faith has much to offer here not just in terms of the vision of the kingdom: a reign of peace and justice, reconciliation and harmony, of beauty and truth. It can also point to a

road map to get there: through renunciation and self-denial, with faith and hope, love and joy. This is what the Christian vision must be animated by: the experiences of its mystics and prophets, and articulate this in a contextualised theology of liberation for all, but preferentially for the poor, the last and the least.

Such a vision has been so evocatively articulated in Dec 4 of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1974-75), 'Our Mission Today' as the 'the service of faith and the promotion of Justice':

'If we have the humility and the courage to walk with the poor, we will learn from what they have to teach us what we can do to help them. ...to help themselves: to take charge of their personal and collective destiny.' (G. C. 32 Dec. 4. No. 50)

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

What sets the context for his preferential option for the poor and the promotion of justice, is not clerical bureaucratic administration but the Christian charism of love. Pope Francis is foregrounding once again a vision and mission for our world that was earlier articulated emphatically at the Latin American Bishops conferences at Medellin in 1968, Puebla in 1979, Santo Domingo in 1992. It was affirmed for the universal Church in the World Synod of Bishops in 1971 on 'Justice in the World':

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

And again in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975 (http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul06/p6evan.htm) he reaffirms this in Nos. 25- 39, and rhetorically asks: 'how in fact can one proclaim the new commandment without promoting in justice and in peace the true, authentic advancement of man?' (No. 31)

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

mission: 'Oh, how I wish for a Church that is poor and for the poor.' (http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/16/us-pope-poor-idUSBRE92F05P20130316)

A pedagogic dialogue with the poor must be premised on an option for the poor that embrace both, faith and justice; a faith that does justice, and a justice premised on Biblical faith. Our faith in God includes our love of God, but this is authenticated by our love of neighbour, especially the least and the last among them. Our promotion of justice is for all, but it is authenticated by our option for the poor. Biblical faith is not just intellectual consent, *fides qui*, but a total surrender to God, fides qua. This is the faith of the *anawim* of God. Moreover, Biblical justice necessarily includes forgiveness and reconciliation, which lead to peace and harmony. This is the justice of the prophets of God.

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

Dialogue as enrichment: Learning from the Cultural Other

Clash of Civilisations or Dialogue of Cultures

There is no denying the historical violence precipitated by collective differences of varying degrees and multiple kinds: political economic, religio-cultural. Today such collective violence is escalating everywhere. But there have also been exemplary creative synergy between different peoples, both across and within national borders. For social traditions do change even to the point of evolving into very new and rather different ones. Human identities based on them follow suit, or else there will inevitably be different degrees of dissonance and disorientation, as happens in times of rapid and radical social change when cultural traditions do not follow suit, or even resist the changes. Once we realise that cultures are socially constructed and so can be deconstructed, and we accept that religious affiliation to be a matter of freedom of conscience that can be informed and responsible, then the common

concerns that bind the human community together can be brought back to centre stage in our shared lives to reverse the spiralling violence, to heal old wounds, to create a new future.

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

Yet there remains the temptation to fall back on inhuman and 'final solutions'! Ethnic cleansing and genocide await us at the end of this road. To escape such a scenario, a dialogue of cultures and religions is imperative, and for this we must overcome our prejudgments as the necessary precondition to find common ground from which to move to higher ground together. This further demands an acceptance and tolerance of 'the other' without which no dialogue is possible, only debate at best and violence at worst. Globalisation has brought us closer, but it has not helped to make us more accepting of each other. Rather the opposite seems to have happened in the global village.

Celebrating Diversity

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

In Asia, plurality is so deeply and intricately woven into the very fabric, the whoop and waft of our society that any attempt to

homogenise it can only be suicidal. But ways of coping with it range from indifference and non-engagement, all the way to affirmation and celebration. Given the intricacies of our social interdependence, the first approach can only end with a nihilistic relativism if it does not collapse in annihilating chaos. The second must open into ever deeper levels of tolerance and broader dimensions of engagement.

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

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

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

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

Ideal of Tolerance

However, tolerance is more than a matter of conflict resolution and emancipation. A constructive and creative response to pluralism cannot mean mere endurance of, and resignation to differences. It must include something more positive: the active acceptance of, and even the

celebration of plurality. It must be as multifaceted a the pluralism as the broad spectrum of social pluralities addresses: from political ideologies to economic systems, intellectual worldviews to ethical values, religious beliefs to cultural patterns, ethnic divisions to geographic regions.

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

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

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

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

fulfilment, our perception of the other is always complex and so the levels of tolerance will overlap.

Moreover, using the terms as explained earlier, 'myth' and 'ideology' are two dimensions of tolerance; consensual ideologies underpin the pragmatic and intellectual tolerance; while religious and spiritual tolerance is premised on shared myths.

Limits of Tolerance

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

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

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

A regressive reaction seeking a haven in this heartless world by privileging and romanticising earlier traditional societies and isolating ourselves in that cocoon is an inadequate and defensive response to the multicultural challenges we face today. Yet cultural nationalists do promote such surreal and unviable social and religious traditions so out of sync with our contemporary world. A cultural dialogue requires that

we be open and rooted as well. Gandhi's aspiration can provide us with our best starting point here:

'I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them.' (Young India, June 1921: 170)

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

Dialogue as transformation: Learning from the Religious Other

Culture and Religion

Pascal wisely counselled: the heart has reasons that reason knows not off. (Pascal 1958: 222) Indeed, a genuine dialogue pertains less to the dialectical mind than to the compassionate heart. We are still coming to terms with the implications of religious freedom and cultural rights for different groups within a single society. Much of the contemporary collective violence must be read in this context. Both culture and religion are symbol systems that bring meaning and motivation to individual and social life. But of the two, religion is the more fraught with a huge potential for explosive conflict because it is far more charged with emotion and passion than cultural ones.

Clifford Geertz's *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) distinguishes the two. For him religion is a distinct domain within culture. Thus a culture

'denotes an historically transmitted pattern or meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.' (Geertz 1973: 89)

Whereas a religion is:

'(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive and

long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seems uniquely realistic.' (Geertz 1973: 90)

This explains why politics premised on the one or the other will then be qualitatively different and why religious identities are the more intractable of the two, especially in traditional religious societies.

Moreover, when the two identities overlap and even merge and communities constructed on such identities are the more impervious and solidary.

Reason and Passion

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

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

Science and Religion

A dichotomy between science and religion results in a dialectic rather than a dialogue between the two. Thinking in such binary opposites is more typical of Western than Eastern thought, where faith and reason are complementary, not opposed ways of seeking the truth. Both must be included in a more comprehensive understanding that opens to a genuine dialogue, not just between science premised on reason and religion premised on faith, but between religions as well. After all, more than just truth as knowledge, it is truth as reality, satya, that cannot be contradictory.

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

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

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

Ashis Nandy (Nandy 1992: 80) distinguishes between 'religion as ideology' and 'religion as faith'. All ideologies can help to interpret a

social situation, and they can be as dysfunctionally aggressive: whether as religious fundamentalism or cultural nationalism, liberal capitalism or socialist Marxism. We need liberating and open ideologies, not closed and exploitative ones. Religious faiths too and can be oppressive or liberating, extremist or moderate. We need to recover 'religious tolerance from everyday Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and/or Sikhism, rather than wish that ordinary Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Sikhs will learn tolerance from the various fashionable secular theories of statecraft.' (Nandy 1992: 86) Tolerance in both domains to is needed to make dialogue viable.

Faith and Reason

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

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

* faith and reason are complementary not contradictory ways of seeking the truth;

* what we believe depends on whom we trust;

* a rational methodology transgressing its inherent limitations can never yield 'rightly reasoned' knowledge;

* where we position ourselves influences how we reason;

*whether or not we believe depends on our self-understanding;

* if to believe is human, then what we believe must make us more human, not less;

* faith that is 'blind' is never truly humanising; faith that is not humanising, is to that extent 'bad faith';

* only a self-reflexive, experiential methodology is meaningful to the discourse of faith; a rationalist-empirical one is alien to it;

* act of faith is constitutively human it necessarily has a common religious basis across varying cultures and traditions;

* an inclusive humanism must embrace both 'meaningful faith', as well as 'sensitised reason';

* the dialogue between faith and reason must be pursued in the context of tolerance and dialogue or it will degenerate into a hostile debate across an unbridgeable divide.

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

Domains in Dialogue

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

Recently Christians have been urged by the Church to engage in a fourfold dialogue ('Dialogue and Proclamation', Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, Vatican City, 1991, no.42.):

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dialogue as Disarmament for Peace

Metanoia for Peace

For all the progress we might congratulate ourselves on, the last century has been perhaps the most violent century in human history. It still continues into the present. Asia has not been exempted from this. Violence is still the final arbitrator to conflicts and divisions that increasing riddles our societies and our world. A catalogue of the violence of these last years, genocides, atrocities, riots, terrorism,

murders, rapes, … are merely the external evidence of the constant social tension between countries, regions, communities, groups, individuals, … that never to go away but too easily escalate out of control.

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

A sound and stable peace must be founded on such complementarity, not on domination. It must be 'the fruit of justice'. A just social order necessarily implies freedom if it is to be compatible with human dignity. Moreover, if the dialectical tension between justice and order is effectively and constructively resolved, then we would have a third element in our understanding of peace that is harmony. This is a treasured Asian value. Each of these three elements, justice, freedom and harmony, can be described, but we still need to put them together in a collective 'myth of peace',(Heredia 1999) pursued both individually and collectively.

Vision and Mission

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

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

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

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

A Triple Dialogue

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

In the bewildering plurality of societies in our contemporary world, and some Asian societies, especially those in the middle East and South Asia, are more so than most, violent conflict often reaches an impasse. With the rapid social change and the insecurities it brings, with technologies of mass communication and mass mobilisation, of social media and individual connectivity, in which competing groups and conflicting interests implode, this impasse becomes a point of no return and no advance. National and local communities dig themselves into a kind of trench warfare. In such a war of attrition, the one alternative seem to be to withdraw into isolation, if that were possible at all; in a globalising world this would be dangerous and even unviable. The other is to mobilise for total war and mass destruction; this would be an inhuman price to pay even for the unlucky survivors.

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

could make a just society a more viable reality, where the personal good of each is subsumed into the common good for all.

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

A Pedagogic Dialogue

For a pedagogic dialogue with the poor we must first detach ourselves from our embedded vested interests and political ideologies, when these provide the strong armour against change for a better, more humane world, a more just and fraternal society. Only when we put off this armour will we find the humility and the courage, the faith and commitment to walk with and learn from, and also with the poor to find our personal and collective destinies together. This is the liberation a pedagogic dialogue with the poor teaches us.

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

Similarly in a society when a religious tradition is politicised it can explode into violence. Precisely because of its emotional charge of religious identities, such politicised religious violence becomes embedded and exorcising this demon may require a sustained effort

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

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

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

References

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, 1970, *Cost of Discipleship*, Macmillan, New York.

Dallmayr. Fred R., 1989, 'Hermeneutics and Deconstruction: Gadamer and Derrida in Dialogue', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, op. cit., pp.75-92.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1975, *Truth and Method*, Seabury Press, New York.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1989, 'Destruktion and Deconstruction.', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, op. cit., pp. 102-113.

Geertz, Clifford, 1973, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Fontana Press, New York.

Habermas, Jürgen, 1984, *Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two: Liveworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Book). Translated by Thomas A. McCarthy, Beacon Press, Boston, Mass.

Hai, Peter N.V., 2006, 'Fides Quaerens Dialogum: Theological Methodologies of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences', *Australian Ejournal*, Issue 8 - ISSN 1448- 6326 (https://vinhsonliem.wordpress.com/2010/10/17/fides-quaerens-dialogum-theological-methodologies-of-the-federation-of-asian-bishops-conferences)

Heschel, Abraham Joshua, 1991, eds. Harold Kasimow and Byron L. Sherwin, 'No religion is an island': *No religion is an island: Abraham Joshua Heschel, and interreligious dialogue*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, pp. 3 - 22.

Heredia, Rudolf C.,'2002, Dichotomy or Dialectic: Sutras on the Faith-Reason Dilemma', *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Win, pp. 41-51.

Heredia, Rudolf C., 1999, 'Gandhi and the Myth of Peace', *New Quest*, No. 136, Jul-Aug., pp.231-239.

'Justice in the World: World Synod of Catholic Bishops, 1971'. https://www.cctwincities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Justicia-in-Mundo.pdf

Kluckhohn, Clyde and W. H. Kelly, 1945The Concept of Culture. Pages 78–105 in *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*. Edited by Ralph Linton. New York: Columbia Univ. Press.

Kothari, Rajni, 1988, 'Integration and Exclusion in Indian Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol.23, No.43, 22 Oct, pp.2223-27.

Kuhn, Thomas, 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Univ. of Chicago, Chicago.

Linton, Ralph, 1945, *The Cultural Background of Personality*, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1945'

Nandy, Ashish, 1992. 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', in Veena Das, ed. *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, Oxford University Press: Delhi, pp. 69 -93.

Panikkar, Raimon, 1995, *Cultural Disarmament: The Way to Peace*, (trans.Robert R. Barr, Westminster John Know Press, Louisville, Kentucky.

Panikkar, Raimundo, 1978, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, Paulist Press, New York

Panikkar. R., 1983, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-cultural Studies*, Asian Trading Corp. Bangalore.

Pascal, Blaise, 1958, *Pensees*, F.P Dutton, New York.

Pieris, Aloysius, 1988, *an Asian Theology of Libertion*, T & T Clark International, London.

Piketty, Thomas, 2014, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Radhakrishnan, S., 1927, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.

Rahner, Karl. 1969, *Theological Investigations*, Vol VI, Payton, Longman and Todd, London.

Tylor, Edward Burnett, 1871 *Primitive Culture, John Murray London.*.

Veblen, Thorstein, 1899, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Macmillan, New York.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 1998, *Culture and Value,* Blackwell, London.

https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/the-4-minute-speech-that-got-pope-francis-elected

13.
SCIENCE, RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY: TRIPLE DIALECTIC TO TRIPLE DIALOGUE

Abstract:

Both science and religion are quests for truth, though with different methodologies each with its own limitations: science more experimental, religion more experiential. Scientific experiments are objective, validated by their replicability. Religious experience is subjective, authenticated by its meaningfulness. Spirituality seeks to appropriate this truth in a vision and express it in a way of life. It is in a quest for human fulfilment. The relationships between these are essentially compatible and complementary, though they can become opposed and antagonistic.

There is an ennui regarding the debates on 'science and/or religion'. Sometimes 'religion' is replaced with 'spirituality' but this seems to skirt rather than confront the deeper issues involved. The starting premise here is that the three terms are intimately related and the tension between them must be addressed with a more nuanced understanding of the terms. Only then can the dialectic between these be opened to a dialogue about them.

The anomalies in the relationship between these three can be addressed with a dialectic or a dialogue. Dialectic is used here in the sense of a tension between two opposing antagonisms that is resolved into a tertium quid, a third alternative. It is premised on a rational understanding. A dialogue is a conversation that seeks understanding between the participants so as to find common ground between protagonists and then move together to higher ground together. It is premised on a hermeneutic interpretation. Thus 'dialectics is the optimism of reason. Dialogue is the optimism of the heart.' (Panikkar 1983: 243) Thus we can speak of a 'dialectical dialogue' which would be premised on reason and rationality which would pertain more to reason-based science and spirituality; while a 'dialogical dialogue' would be premised on relevance and meaningfulness and would pertain more to faith-based religion and spirituality.

'Science' and 'spirituality' have meant very different things to diverse peoples. At the outset we need to agree on how they are to be understood at least for the purpose of this discussion to make consensus and disagreement the more credible and useful, or else we will talk past each other.

Science here is used to signify a systematic study of the world to create an organised body of knowledge about its structure and functions. Spirituality is used in the sense of a vision and way of life. Moreover, both these terms are intimately bound up with another, which must also be brought into the discussion: 'religion as 'what ultimate concerns man'. (Tillich 1958: 2)

Secularisation is a complex and multidimensional social process beyond the scope of this essay. Here we will understand it as a process of 'rationalisation', in Max Weber's(1968) understanding of the term, as a systematic application of reason to realty. In society this transforms mores into laws, social relationships into institutions and organisations into bureaucracies, nations into states,. … A secularised world claims to be premised on rationality, just as science claims to

privilege reason. Thus there is an obvious affinity between a secular world and a scientific worldview, a 'universe of meaning'. (D'Sa) Rationalisation demystifies our world and can free us from our oppressive traditions. But it also disenchants our world as well, making it a place where humans feel strangers in their home, for humans do not live by reason alone.

Science and technology based on it have a logic of their own and without human values and humane concerns, this can alienate and destroy rather than liberate and serve. But there are limitations as well, too often neglected if not denied. Reason is not the only human faculty with which we need to live in our world. We also need meaning and motivation, purpose and value. Nor is logic the only way to investigate our world. We need intuition and imagination, insight and understanding as well.

Both science and religion are quests for truth, though with different methodologies each with its own limitations: science more experimental, religion more experiential. Scientific experiments are objective, validated by their replicability. Religious experience is subjective, authenticated by its meaningfulness. Spirituality seeks to appropriate this truth in a vision and express it in a way of life. It is in a quest for human fulfilment. The relationships between these are essentially compatible and complementary, though they can become opposed and antagonistic.

This quest for truth could be more rationally objective and/or experientially subjective, or both if there is no real contradiction between the two. The relationship between science and religion can be either opposed and antagonistic: rationalist, positivist science versus fideistic, dogmatic religion; or compatible and complementary: the quest for truth through reason and experimentation along with the same quest through testimony and experience. Rationalism and positivism have their intellectual and methodological limits, which when exceeded, misdirects the scientific quest; fideism and dogmatism have their psychological and sociological compulsions, which if not overcome, betray the religious quest.

Spirituality, as a quest for human fulfilment, endeavours to appropriate and internalise this truth in a vision and way of life. As a vision, it expresses meaning and motivation, as a way of life it affirms purpose and value. The vision must necessarily be derived from a worldview which could be more reason-based or faith-based, or once again both, if there is no contradiction between them. In either case

such a spirituality would be more intensely religious in its worldview or less so, depending on how close this connection was. It could also draw on a more scientific worldview, in which case the consequent spirituality would be more rigorously secular or less depending on the closeness of the connection. Also, the worldview could derive from a single religious tradition or from multiple ones in for an inter-religious vision, if these traditions are inclusive and fluid, in which case we could speak of an 'inter-spirituality', combining many *sadhanas*.

As a way of life, a spirituality must be practical. It would be quite inadequate to merely articulate an abstract, intellectual understanding of this vision in terms of ideas. It must be further be expressed in concrete practises and norms for human beings living in society in a materiel world. Spirituality is often more concerned with practice than belief. Inevitably, such practices get ritualised and the norms standardised in a community following the same spiritual path. These are two elements of a religious tradition, and depending on how far this process goes, the way of life will begin to resemble a religious tradition and eventually even become one or at least similar to one, even if it is more rather than less secular. This is how ideologies become functional homologues for religion and spirituality.

However, Spirituality has a natural affinity with religion, certainly with a more open, less ritualist religion. Both are concerned with personal quests for a reality beyond the everyday mundane world, and as such can reinforce one another. Only when science negates any reality beyond the material is there a contradiction with spirituality and religion. Science then becomes a functioning discipline and mind-set, for the lab and for life.

Science, Religion and Spirituality

Symbol Systems

Science communicates in precise concepts that are defined as univalent and expressed in 'signs' for to facilitate communication If all truth is to be restricted to the empirical and all knowledge to be derived from inductive or deductive logical, then clearly in such an empirical-rationalist frame of reference, there is no room for a faith-based religion or spirituality in this such a worldview. Religious language is necessarily symbolic, for that is the only way the transcendental in ultimate concerns can be approached. This can be through words, as a scriptural text, or actions, such as rites and

rituals. A spirituality premised on a vision of the transcendental will better communicate in symbols, as a practical way of life this can also be done in concepts.

Symbols are quintessentially multivalent and to interpret them literally is to misread them and betray the communication or worse. A symbol system demands a hermeneutic to bring out not just the meaning but the meaningfulness of a symbiotic communication. This follows not so much the logic of reason but rather seeks a meaningful interpretation to bring out the 'surplus of meaning' beyond the communication. The explanatory power of the interpretation is what authenticates it.

Symbol systems are shared in society and across groups and communities. Strong emotions adhere to social symbol systems, particularly religious ones. As such they necessarily exist in the public domain. They cannot be isolated in a private one, for the public and private domains are in constant and interpenetrative interaction. When symbols systems overlap and with each other and collective interests in society, they reinforce each other and result in collective myths that are constructed into social identities. These can be open and inclusive, or closed and exclusive; ennobling and transforming or chauvinistic and oppressive.

Two Worldviews

Symbol systems always exist within a worldview, within a horizon of meaning. When differing worldviews meet and interact there can be either a clash of horizons and a mutual alienation, or a fusion and reciprocal enrichment. We need an authentic hermeneutic to critique these worldviews to find commonalities from which to bridge differences, and find common ground and move to higher ground.

Science too has its worldviews. That of Newtonian science was a closed system of cause and effect, of action and reaction. Einstein's relativity theory has pried this open and Heisenberg's quantum mechanics and introduced an indeterminism, that has now left physics still searching for an integrated theory to make sense of the anomalies and contradictions that still remain within a receding horizon. But it remains a secular-rational worldview, though less intransigent and arrogant than earlier ones. A religious worldview can be fideistic and dogmatic but under the pressures of secularisation, is opening to more relevant and reasonable and less dogmatic and rigid understandings. Spirituality has a smorgasbord of alternative

'visions', worldviews to choose from, depending which it chooses its way of life will follow accordingly.

A critique of the scientific-secular and a humanist-religious worldviews will help further this discussion. A dichotomy between science and religion results in a dialectic rather than a dialogue between the two. Thinking in such binary opposites is more typical of Western than Eastern thought, where faith and reason are complementary, not opposed ways of seeking the truth, *satya*, reality. Both must be included in a more comprehensive understanding that opens to a genuine dialogue, not just between science premised on reason and religion premised on faith, but between religions as well.

After a corrosive rationalism rubbished religion, postmodernism now undermines our confidence in the earlier modernism. A backlash of religious revivalisms and fundamentalisms is spreading like inkblots across countries and continents. To address such issues we need to understand the limits of positivist science based on the experimental method, and the horizons of religious faith based on an experiential quest. Each must be able to interrogate the other's truth in a constructive conversation rather than in an antagonistic debate. However, faith must respect the legitimate domain and methods of reason, which it turn must be sensitive to the belief convictions and value commitments of faith. We must steer clear of both a fideism that reject reason in the domain of faith, and a rationalism which displaces faith with reason.

Ways of Proceeding

Beyond the incremental progress of the experimental method, from time to time science crosses a threshold with a 'paradigm shift', (Kuhn 1970) that is, an intuitive leap of imagination a breakthrough to a new model of interpreting data and resolving old contradictions and opening new perspectives. This is not based on experimental logic, though it is post factum authenticated by it. An exaggerated faith in the experimental methodology remains blind to such imaginative intuitions.

The popular use of scientific technology is without much understanding of the theories and techniques that underpins it. It is pragmatically accepted because it works. This is an uncritical use of science quite alien to the scientific mind-set. It is analogous to 'faith'. Such uncritical pragmatism eventually instrumentalises and dehumanises science and leads to its misuse, as most obviously in modern warfare.

Religions are founded on the experience of charismatic persons whose teachings are institutionalised and experiences ritualised into a tradition. This is meant to give later believers access to the original experiences and teachings across history and geography. But these must be critiqued, interpreted and discerned to contextualise them in changing life situations. A living religious tradition must be renewed and contextualised to remain meaningful and relevant, or it ossifies and regresses into blind faith. Unfortunately, much of popular religiosity gets distanced from such good faith and mixed with superstition and magic. People seek assurance and certainty in their insecure and fluid world. This is faith with no *Cost of Discipleship*. (Bonhoeffer 1970) It easily blinds itself to dogmatism and fundamentalism which eventually consolidates into religious extremism, even fanaticism. When politicised into a religious ideology, this can precipitate horrific violence, especially when religion is put on the defensive, as with belligerent secularism or rationalism.

Ashis Nandy (Nandy 1992: 80) distinguishes between 'religion as ideology' and 'religion as faith'. All ideologies can help to interpret a social situation. , and they Closed, rigid ones The first can be dysfunctionally aggressive and exploitative: whether religious fundamentalism or cultural nationalism, liberal capitalism or socialist Marxism. We need liberating, open functional ones, to open our world to understanding and intervention. The second too and can be oppressive or liberating, extremist or moderate. We need to recover 'religious tolerance from everyday Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and/or Sikhism, rather than wish that ordinary Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Sikhs will learn tolerance from the various fashionable secular theories of statecraft.' (Nandy 1992: 86) Tolerance in both domains, ideology and faith to is essential to make dialogue viable. And we need charismatic persons to help with the breakthrough to sanity before an apocalypse overtakes as all.

Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970) demonstrates how the scientists are reluctant to abandon old theoretical models and marginalise those that do until forced by a paradigm shift that overtakes them. In such cases when scientific theories resist change, they function like an ideology, refusing to accept the limits of its own methodology and models and so denying a self-critique and compromising the open-endedness of a scientific worldview. The institutionalisation of science can create vested

interests can commercialise the scientific quest, displacing the pursuit of truth for that of profit, and an ideology will develop to rationalise this.

The vision of the truth that spirituality seeks and tries to appropriate and internalise may not be pertinent or valid for changed personal social contexts. The way of life chosen may be a rationalisation of psychological needs with their unconscious compulsions and project a hidden agenda for false security in comfort zones. Discernment and discretion is always necessary. Some external point of reference can help towards a reality check, and yet guides and gurus are not always guarantors of authenticity. For this transparency with oneself and in one's spiritual community is imperative.

Thus spirituality as a faith-based vision and a reason premised practise can straddle both: science as reason-based and religion as faith-based. In exploring the three-way relationship between these, makes it imperative to address the apparent dichotomy between faith and reason and turn an oppositional dialectic into an enriching dialogue.

Faith and Reason

Bridging the Divide

Perceiving faith and reason as binary opposites rather than as two alternate ways in our quest for truth is more typical of Western thought, where this readily leads to an impassable divide, as between fideism and rationalism. 'What has Athens got to do with Jerusalem?' asked Tertullian at the beginning of the Christian era when confronted with Greek philosophy! But if believers would privilege faith, rationalist would reverse the hierarchy, and never the twain would meet! The resulting dualism between faith and reason would seem to leave each in an independent domain of human experience and knowledge, compartmentalising our lives and impoverishing them into bargain, even as philosophers and theologians attempted to accommodate each other across the divide.

However, our contention here, as with in Eastern thought more generally, is that faith and reason are complementary not contradictory ways of seeking the truth, since truth itself, *satya*, as ontological reality even more than just epistemological truth, cannot be contradictory, otherwise reality itself would be absurd. What is needed is to include both in a more comprehensive understanding, which in fact would thereby be the more human for being the more

inclusive and holistic. However, we must first refine our understanding of what we mean by 'faith' and 'reason' so as to explore more incisively the relationship between the two.

If faith and reason are conceived as contradictory, the relationship between the two can only be oppositional and leads to an antagonism or alienation between them. Considered as contrary, the relationship would be dialectical, which implies reading one pole against the other and vice versa. Seen as complementary the relationship is then dialogical, which implies a conversation between different points of view to come to a consensus. For such a dialogue, we must begin with a basic question: *what does being 'reasonable' mean to faith, and again what does the being 'faithful' to reason require?*

For, though ours is an age, which at the global level may be characterised by secularism, there are as yet strong pockets of religious resistance, at times even provoked by this very challenge of globalisation. (Beyer 1994) There is an increasing religious revivalism and fundamentalism. The Enlightenment, an age of reason which seemed to have undermined the traditional age of faith Today a postmodern age is putting to question all the grand narratives that once seemed to epitomise the cutting edge of our evolving rationalist optimism.

A binary opposition between faith and reason easily leads to an unbridgeable divide between fideism and rationalism, which all too easily deteriorates into a schizophrenia between religious intolerance or withdrawal, between rationalist dogmatism or indifference! A more inclusive understanding is expressed in our *first sutra: faith and reason are complementary not contradictory ways of seeking the truth.*

Towards a Phenomenology of Faith

More conventionally faith is understood as giving one's assent to a truth on the testimony of another. The credibility of the belief rests on the trustworthiness of the testifier

This is what makes belief credible, that is, worthy of being believed. Thus, understood faith is a matter of belief that focuses on the content and its credibility. In so far as this testimony is external to the believing person, its trustworthiness would rest on the credibility of the one giving the testimony and its transmission, and not only on the content of the belief itself. Thus, what I believe is the *content of faith*, whom I trust is the *act of faith*. Thus, if *I believe you*, it is not just because I accept what you say as true, but more so because *I believe*

you are a trustworthy and truthful person. Hence our *second sutra: what we believe depends on whom we trust.*

This opens up the inter-personal dimension of faith that focuses not on our relationship to things as to objects, but to persons as to subjects, an I-thou, not I-it relationship. This is the faith that gives me access to the other person as a self-disclosing subject. For Martin Buber (Buber 1958) such I-thou relationships are possible with things as well. i.e. with nature. Gabriel Marcel's personalism (1952) would accommodate this, but an empiricist worldview constrained by a reductionist methodology cannot but discredit such 'knowledge'.

It is then the authority of the testimony, moral or formal, that legitimates belief. However, as this testimony gets institutionalised in a tradition it can get even more distant from the original founding experiences and events themselves. Thus, oftentimes, claims of divine inspiration for the authority of religious testimony made by such institutional traditions, or at times the author of this testimony, the testifier, is seen to have claimed divinity itself. This would seem to put such testimony beyond human scrutiny. However, any communication, and most certainly a revelation of the divine to the human, must inevitably involve filters. Indeed, even the immediacy of a mystical experience, in its very first and necessary articulation to oneself, and in its later communication to others, necessarily involves the mediation of human thought and language. This already implies an inescapable distancing from the original experience itself and the inevitable need for a hermeneutic understanding if the experience is to be relevant meaningful and reasonable.

In sum then:

'To believe is, formally, to know reality through the knowledge which another person has of it and which he communicates by his testimony; between faith and reality there intervenes the person of the witness, who communicates his knowledge so that the believer may share in it and thereby attain to the reality itself.' (Alfaro 1968: 316)

Articulating a Critique of Reason

The term 'reason' derives from the Latin '*ratio*' and its more restricted sense

'absorbs the meanings of 'giving an account', 'ordering things' or 'laying things or ideas out in a comprehensive way'. Other terms it may be contrasted with are *muthos* ('tale' or 'story'), *aisthesis* ('perception'), *phantasia* ('imagination'), *mimesis* ('imitation'), and *doxa* ('belief').' (Finch 1987: 223)

Logic, deductive and inductive, the experimental method, ... are among the various ways that have been proposed to systematise the use of such reason. Thus assent to truth here is 'reasoned', not dependent on testimony, but on evidence that can be verified, and which leads to conclusions that can be tested. This then is a rational method of investigation that leads not to 'belief' but to 'knowledge'. The acceptance of such knowledge must be based on intrinsic criteria, and not on any extrinsic testimony or authority.

So far the focus is very much on the method of rational knowledge not on its content. However, in practice much of what we accept as reasoned knowledge, scientific or otherwise, is not something that we have tested or verified for ourselves using any kind of rational investigation. Often it is merely on the authority of someone who 'knows better', In other words, on the authority of wiser, more learned, more knowledgeable persons, or sometimes it seems simply because of the compulsions of the formal position the person holds. For every bit of information in our lives cannot be traced to source and verified before being accepted. It is not just a practical impossibility, theoretically it would lead to an infinite regress, because the very methodology of any rational knowledge rest on basic premises, like the reality and intelligibility of the world we live in, which cannot be logically proven. They are experienced existentially.

'Rational knowledge' then has an element of 'faith', which is often neglected. But once again this refers to its content. What needs to be examined is the methodology by which such knowledge is arrived at. For even when such knowledge is accepted in 'faith' in principal at least it can be tested and verified. However, even while acknowledging the limitations of a methodology, one must also accept its validity where this applies. And so our third sutra: *a rational methodology transgressing its inherent limitations can never yield 'rightly reasoned' knowledge.*

In this context Karl Popper's distinction in his *Open Society* (Popper 1962) between classical rationalism and critical rationalism is pertinent here. The first seeks secure knowledge from axiomatic premises, the second accepts given knowledge as 'hypothetical' and through critical testing seeks to further refine and extend it. Thus Euclidian geometry is completely rational within the constraints of its own premises, but the non-Euclidian ones start from different assumptions and has extended geometric applications substantially.

A critical examination of the methodology involved in these rationalisms would arrive at certain limitations that are often neglected and even violated by their proponents for reasons that are external to the methodology itself. This is precisely what the sociology of knowledge has drawn attention to and has convincingly demonstrated, how the underlying presumptions, which inevitably are socially derived, prejudice our presumed rational and impartial objectivity. These presumptions and pre-judgements are beyond the investigative methodology of such reasoning itself. How then do we critique such presumptions and prejudices? For if the ideal of the Enlightenment, of an unbiased, autonomous subject, must be abandoned, how does this become a positive constituent of any interpretation, and not a limiting one? It is precisely here once again that the relationship between faith and reason must be interrogated.

Thus we have the Kantian '*a priori*'s that are accepted as methodological imperatives if such empirical/experimental knowledge is to be possible at all. However, there are pre-judgements and presumptions that must ground any rationality, as the hermeneutic tradition would insist. Moreover, when non-empirical and/or experimental sources of knowing are involved, other methods of ascertaining truth are required. Dilthey's (1991) understanding of an interpretive discipline, and Weber's (1968) *verstehen*, empathetic understanding, do offer such viable methodologies, while hermeneutics and deconstruction have today demonstrated the limits of the old Enlightenment rationalism and have offered alternative analytic approaches. In making, then, this distinction between the content and method of reasoned knowledge, we discover not just the limitations of the empirical-experimental methodology, but we once again uncover the 'faith' element that is more often than not decisive in the content being accepted.

For the prejudgements and prejudices that hermeneutics and the sociology of knowledge emphasise are not subject to reason so much as to the interests and status, the 'unconscious ideologies' and

fundamental options of those involved. For Hans-Georg Gadamer, the present situation of the interpreter is not something negative, but 'already constitutively involved in any process of understanding.' (Linge, 1977: xiv) We can never be entirely rid of our prejudices, or more literally our 'pre-judgements', or in communication terminology our 'filters'. For 'the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience.' (Linge 1977: 9) It follows there can be no pre-suppositionless interpretation, since there is no pre-judgementless experience! Consequently our *fourth sutra: where we position ourselves influences how we reason.*

To conclude then:

'There has been a marked decline in the prestige of reason in the twentieth century, due to a changing awareness of the conventionality of what passes for reason. But the present age does not suffer so much from a want of rationality as from a too arrow conception of what constitutes rationality. To some present-day critics, rationality has been purchased at the cost of human meaning and human understanding.' (Finch 1987: 224)

Faith as Constitutive of the Human

As with content and method we need now to make a somewhat similar distinction with regard to faith. Too much attention has been focused on faith as content, that is, 'belief'. We need to examine the faith as act, and what precisely makes such belief possible. Why in fact do we accept the testimony of others? Once again the capacity to make this act of faith is certainly an *a priori* condition for the necessarily interdependent lives we live. Moreover, if we grant that we are not the ground of our own being, then this 'faith' must transcend and reach beyond the horizons of the human. But if all truth is to be restricted to the empirical and all knowledge to be derived from inductive or deductive logic, then clearly in such an empirical-rationalist frame of reference, there is no room for faith, or as Paul Tillich says, for 'what ultimately concerns man'. (Tillich1958) Hence our *fifth sutra: whether or not we believe depends on our self-understanding.*

In this sense, Panikkar rightly insists that faith becomes a 'constitutive element of human existence'. (Panikkar 1971:. 223 – 254) And it is precisely as such, that we must test any content of faith. For a content of faith that does not fulfil the human dimension, i.e., to make the believer more human, cannot be 'good faith'. And so our *sixth sutra: if to believe is human, then what we believe must make*

us more human not less! The test of good faith then would be whether the act of faith gives assent to a content that is in fact humanising. And this is precisely what an experiential self-reflective rationality can do. This is where and how we must test the reasonableness of our faith.

So too with blind faith; here the act of faith becomes compulsive rather than free, and 'catechs' on a content that promises security and perhaps even grandiosity, rather than one that expresses trust and dependency. But only when we accept that faith is a constitutive dimension of human life, do we have a framework for making such an investigation. Thus *sutra seven: faith that is 'blind' is never truly humanising; faith that is not humanising, is to that extent 'bad faith'.*

Language as Distinctive of the Human

But if faith is a constitutive dimension of human existence, (Panikkar 1971:. 223 – 254) certainly we must say the same of reason. The classical definition of 'man' we have come to accept from Aristotle is 'anthropos logicon', translated as rational animal. But this does not quite integrate the elements of faith and reason together. It is a one-sided definition that stresses only a single dimension, which certainly might help to identify humans, as opposed to animals but it does very little to help to a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of what is distinctively human. Panikkar insists 'we are more than rational animals and we are certainly more than mere machines.' (Panikkar 2013: 4)

In fact, the original Greek word used by Aristotle was '*logicon*' from *'logos'*, which in its more restricted sense means 'word'. Hence, Aristotle's definition would more correctly be translated as man is a 'verbal animal', or 'speaking animal'. In other words it is language that becomes the distinctive and defining characteristic of human beings. This of course implies reason but much more than that as well. Anthropologically this makes sound sense. And it is precisely because language implies inter-communication and inter-relationship, that is expresses so well the inter-dependence of humans, for there is no such thing as a private language. It is only such a comprehensive understanding of the human that gives us a framework in which faith and reason can be included, as distinct but complementary dimensions of the human.

However, unfortunately reason is often used to investigate, challenge and even rubbish the content of faith, by applying a rational-empirical methodology. This is precisely to misunderstand the language of faith, which is not at the level of rational-empirical

discourse but always a symbolic one. What is needed rather is an interrogation that derives more from a hermeneutic investigation that contextualises content, and to interpret the content at the various levels of meaning that are often present therein, from the literal and the direct, to the symbolic and the metaphoric. For when it comes to the act of faith, an experimental methodology with its objective emphasis, is quite inadequate to such a subjective act. What we need is a more self-reflexive and experiential methodology, which while being subjective is neither arbitrary or irrational, but one which focuses on symbolic 'meaningfulness', more than literal meaning and more than just on measuring quantities and determining cause and effect. Thus our *eighth sutra: only a self-reflexive, experiential methodology is meaningful to the discourse of faith; a rationalist, empirical one is alien to it.*

Besides inductive and deductive logic, there are many kinds of rationality as Max Weber has emphasised, but they are other complex ways in which reason can impinge on human life as when it rationalises or 'orders' it on the basis of law, bureaucracy, tradition or charisma. (Weber 1968) Instrumental and value rationality are just two classics examples of this from Weber. Broadly he understands rationality as the application of reason or conceptual thought to the understanding or ordering of human life. This is articulated in our *ninth sutra*: *in so far as there can be many understandings and orderings of human life and society, there must correspondingly be many kinds of rationality as well.*

Institutional Dilemmas

The institutionalisation of religion involves fundamental dilemmas that must be lived in tension since they cannot be resolved or wished away. For as Thomas O'Dea (1969: 56) so insightfully points out: *religious experience needs most yet suffers most from institutionalisation.* This is our *tenth sutra.* Precisely because such experience is so fragile and impermanent it needs institutions to preserve it through historical generations and spread it across geographical spaces; and yet it is so ephemeral and ineffable that it cannot but be distorted and alienated by this very institutional process. In Max Weber's phrase, the 'routinisation of charisma', is both necessary and subverting. There is a correspondence here between the charismatic experience that is more a matter of faith, and routinised institutionalisation that is more a concern of reason. Hence

our *sutra eleven: 'experience' is necessary to vitalise institutions, and vice versa, 'institutions' are needed to preserve experience.*

For even as new experiences precipitate new understandings, they can alter our consciousness in radical ways, which then demands a renewed faith. For 'on the one hand, there is an interpretation of the faith conditioned by one's view of reality and on the other there is a view of reality nurtured by one's interpretation of revelation.' (Libano, 1982: 15) Echoing W.I. Thomas (Thomas 1928: 571-572). And so we have *sutra twelve: while it is true that faith does not 'create' reality, it does make for a 'definition of the situation' that is real in its effects; and vice-versa, our experience of reality affects our faith-understanding.*

Religious traditions that have stressed 'orthodoxy' (right belief) tend to focus more on the content of faith, whether this be the intellectual content of the beliefs taught and accepted or the moral values and norms. The first focuses on intellectual truth, the second on moral goodness. However, such orthodoxies tend to neglect the act of faith, which as a constitutive dimension of our life represents precisely an internal critique, an intrinsic guarantor of a content of faith, which ought to fulfil our deepest human desires and hopes.

For this a religious tradition must emphasise 'orthopraxis' (right practice), where the focus is on the act of faith. For here the crucial emphasis is neither on belief in the true or the good, but rather a commitment to the true and the good, not so notional acceptance but to authentic human living, an existential engagement with, and a critical reflection on living in fidelity to the true and the good, not merely confessing it. It is at this fundamental existential level that the relevance and meaningfulness of faith must be sought. For it is at this level of living praxis, that truth, intellectual or moral, must be internalised to have meaning and motivation. Rationalist logic best pursues the truth it investigates within the limits of its methodological discourse. Beyond these boundaries it becomes reductionist and invalid.

For the relationship between faith and reason to be very fruitful, reason must critique faith for its fidelity in humanising our life, with humanising meaning and motivation; just as faith must be engage with reason to serve this same humanising project, affirming its validity within the domain of its own discourse. Hence there is an inclusive need for a constant search in an ongoing religious tradition for an ever deeper and more relevant 'orthopraxis' and 'orthodoxy', rather than an uncritical, unchanging faith; as also the continuing

scientific quest for a more adequate and pertinent 'rationality' beyond the rationalism of the Enlightenment. And so our *thirteenth sutra: faith and reason must complement and critique each other in an ongoing humanising dialogue.*

A Humanising Dialogue

Our hermeneutic suspicions can now become the points of departure for us to initiate and continue this dialogue across the apparent divide between faith and reason. But we must first be clear with regard to the horizons of understandings in which it takes place. Only then can there be a 'fusion of horizons' which can give the dialogue 'the buoyancy, of a game, in which the players are absorbed,' (Linge 1977: xix) as the later Wittgenstein had observed. (Wittgenstein 1962) And it will happen, as in 'every conversation, that through it something different has come to be.' (Linge 1977: xxii)

In making a distinction between the content and the act of faith, we realise that the content may vary across various cultural and religious traditions. However, the act of faith in so far as it is constitutively human, will necessarily have a great similarity across cultures and religions because at this level we begin to touch on the most fundamental aspects of the human. Here again, it is our faith, both as act and content that can help us discern the human authenticity of these pre-judgements and presumptions.

This precisely becomes the basis for an enriching inter-religious dialogue, which can begin to bridge the divide between religious traditions, and in which one can recognise oneself in the other and the other in myself! Because the act of faith is constitutively human, it will necessarily have a common basis across varying cultures and traditions. This then is our *fourteenth sutra*: *the act of faith rather than the content of faith must become the primary basis of interfaith dialogue.*

Today the revivalism of faith traditions justifies the unreasonable and even the irrational in the name of faith, while a rationalist secular science dismisses all faith-based beliefs as irrational and unscientific. This merely turns the dilemma between faith and reason into an irresolvable dichotomy not an enriching exchange. We must embrace both as expressed in our *fifteenth sutra: an inclusive humanism must embrace both 'meaningful faith', as well as 'sensitised reason'*. The 'hermeneutics of suspicion' must eventually yield to the 'hermeneutics of faith'. (Ricoeur 1973) For it is only thus that we will be able to bring a healing wholeness to the 'broken totality' of our modern world, in

Iris Murdoch's unforgettable phrase. This gives us the *sixteenth sutra*: *the relationship between faith and reason must be pursued in the context of a hermeneutic circle as a dialogue or it will degenerate into a debate across an unbridgeable divide*.

It was Jonathan Swift who said that we have enough religion to hate each other but not enough to love each other. This can be rephrased in our last and seventeenth sutra: *we seem to have so much 'dogmatic belief' we become intolerant of each other, and not enough 'human faith' to appreciate and learn from each other*! Indeed, once a tradition get locked into and becomes an ideology, whether religious, spiritual or even scientific, boundaries get fixed, borders are closed. There can be no 'fusion of horizons' only a clash of worldviews, and worse a 'clash of civilisations' once these are premised on antagonistic ideological worldviews, often masked as religious.

Triple Dialectic to Triple Dialogue

Truth as satya, reality, is many-sided, *anekantavada* as Jaina philosophy rightly affirms. There can be many perspectives on it and no single one alone can be so comprehensive as to grasp all of it. However, it cannot be contradictory, and neither can science, religion and spirituality be in contradiction in so far as these pursue truth. Their apparent differences arise from their different perspectives and methodologies. These are contraries not contradictions and result in a dialectical tension between the three not a negation of one by the other. A more nuanced understanding of such contraries would resolve them into complementarities that can the basis for resolving these tensions: science as reason-based and religion as faith-based, as also a spirituality that could be premised on one or the other. We need to find common ground between the three for a dialogue, and turn the triple dialectic into a triple dialogue.

The pursuit of science always opens to new frontiers in its domain. When it exceeds its limitations of its own discourse, it loses its way and betrays its pursuit. Beyond those frontiers are ever receding horizons of other realities beyond the discourse of science, to which science can point to but never really pursue. These are the ultimate human concerns and anomalies of human life. Religion ventures into this domain to unravel this reality and relate humans to it. Spirituality too engages with it.

But religion too can lose its way, when bad faith displaces good faith, and transparency and trust is compromised for security and

certainty. The dilemma between charisma and institutionalisation demands a delicate balance to stay the course. In its effort to appropriate and internalise the truth whether of science, or religion or even art, spirituality helps stay this course. Least spirituality too loses its way, it must balance withdrawal and detachment, which could lead to esoterism and exclusiveness, with engagement and concern, which could become superficial and populist.

The necessity of this triple dialogue is well illustrated by our present ecological crisis precipitated by climate change. We need a new science with an alternative technology to replace the old ones. For what caused the problem in the first place is unlikely to provide an appropriate solution to it. It will only be more of the same rehashed and disguised. Moreover, the crisis is embedded in our consumerist culture and the market economics that sustain it. We need a radically new worldview which is not likely to come from within the perspectives of old sciences. A change of world view and mind-set is imperative.

Religion can provide the relevant meaning to for a new worldview to reenchant our world and change our mind-set with, and inspire us with the necessary motivation to respect and reverence our planet. For as the UN Conferences on the Environment and Development forewarning us: we have 'only one earth' to care for and share. Yet acceptance of a worldview would still be notional not real, unless it is internalised by persons and socialised in society in terms of values and norms in our behaviour and attitudes. For this spirituality must appropriate the vision and express it in a way of life.

A Cosmotheandric Solidarity

For the triple dialectic to yield to a triple dialogue, we need to envision a more holistic universe in which the three are engaged in a mutually enriching interlocution. The domain of science with its reason and experimental method is the material cosmos. Humans are a *part of* this cosmos, not *a part from* it. The domain of religion is the transcendental beyond the material, the ultimate human concerns intrinsic to conscious human beings. Faith and experiential reflection stretch this domain beyond the just the human to the divine, whether this is conceived as a personal ultimate 'Thou', a *saguna Brahma* or an impersonal reality beyond the material, the Real of the real, a

nirguna Brahma. Spirituality brings this together with its vision and way of life.

Thus the cosmic, the human and the divine can come together in a cosmotheandric vision. (Panikkar 1977: 125) This is crucial to address the multiple crises overtaking our world today. The ecological crisis inflates them all and anticipates a disastrous catastrophe that could overtake our species and our planet. To address this effectively we must harmonise the material cosmos, and human consciousness and integrate them all in a cosmostheandric solidarity, (Raimon Panikkar, underpinned by reason-based science and faith-based religion, and an eco-spirituality adequate to this task. *(http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/i_es/i_es_panik_d harma.htm)*

Pope Francis has attempted to sketch this in his encyclical *Laudato Si* ('Praise be' the first words of Francis of Assisi's 'Canticle to the Sun') The encyclical is subtitled: *On Care for Our Common Home.* It echoes the plea of the UN's Earth Summits: *Only One Earth: Care and Share* (UNEP 1992) more emphatically and lyrically than the staid matter of fact UN Climate Change Agreement Conference, Paris 2015. (Ghose 2016: 201 -) The Pope refers to the patron saint of the environment: 'Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human.' (Laudato Si No 11) Indeed, if we do not get our act together and bring science, religion and spirituality on the same platform, we might sleepwalk through the Great Derangement overtaking us (Ghose 2016) and precipitate an already looming apocalypse, a *pralaya.*

References

Alfaro, Juan, 1968, 'Faith', *Sacramentum Mundi*, ed., Karl Rahner, Herder and Herder, New York, pp. 313 – 322.

Beyer, Peter, 1994, *Religion and Globalization*, Sage, London.

Buber, Martin, 1958, *I-Thou*, Charles Scribner, New York.

Dilthey, Wilhelm, 1991, Selected Works, Vol 1, ed., Makkreel, Rudolf A', and Frithjof Rodi. Princeton Univ Press, Princeton.

D'Sa, Francis X. S.J. '*Art and Spirituality*', unpublished manuscript,

Finch, Henry Le Roy, 1987, 'Reason', in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed., Mircea Eliade, Vol. 12, Macmillan, New York, pp. 223 – 224.

Gadamer, Hans Georg, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 1977, trans. and ed. David E. Linge, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley

Ghosh, Amitav, 2016, *Great Derangement – Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, Penguin, India.

Kuhn, Thomas, 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Libano, J.B., 1982, *Spiritual Discernment and Politics: Guidelines for Religious Communities*, trans. Theodore Morrow, Orbis, New York.

Linge, David E., 1977, 'Introduction', pp. - ix – lv. in Gadamer, op.cit..

Marcel, Gabriel, 1951, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope.* H. Regnery Co.,Washington, D.C..

O'Dea, Thomas, 1969. *Sociology of Religion*, Prentice-Hall, N. Delhi.

Panikkar, Raimondo, 1977, 'Colligite Fragmenta: For an Integration of Reality' in From Alienation to At-oneness, eds. F.A. Eigo and S. E. Fittipaldi, Villanova Univ. Press, Villanova, Penn.

Panikkar, Raimon, 1995, *Cultural Disarment: The Way to Peace*, (trans. Robert R. Barr, Westminster John Know Press, Louisville, Kentucky.

Panikkar, Raymond, 1971. 'Faith-A Constitutive Dimension of Man', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, V.8, N.2, pp. 223 – 254.

Panikkar Raimon, 2013, *The Rhythm of Being: The Unbroken Trinity*, The Gifford Lectures Edinburgh University Panikkar, Orbis Books, NY.

Popper, Karl, 1962, *The Open Society*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Ricoeur, Paul, 1973, 'Ethics and Culture: Habermas and Gadamer in Dialogue', *Philosophy Today*, Vol.17, Summer, pp. 153 – 165.

Thomas, W.I. and D.S. Thomas, 1928, *The child in America: Behavior problems and programs.* Knopf, New York

Tillich, Paul, 1958, *Dynamics of Faith*, Harper and Row, New York.

UNEP, 1992, Only One Earth: The Long Road via Rio to Sust... (Hardcover) by Felix Dodds, Michael Strauss

Weber, Max, 1968, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology,* New York, Bedminster Press.

Weber, Max, 1964, *Sociology of Religion*, Beacon Press,Boston.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 1967, *Philosophical Investigations*, (trans. G.E.M. Anscombe) Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

BIBLIOGRAPHY–VOL VI

Alfaro, Juan, 1968, 'Faith', *Sacramentum Mundi*, ed., Karl Rahner, Herder and Herder, New York, pp. 313 – 322.

Bangert, William¸ *A History of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis, 1986)

Beck, Ulrich, 2000, What is Globalization?, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Beyer, Peter, 1994, *Religion and Globalization*, Sage, London.

Bhargava. Rajeev, 1991, 'The Right to Culture', in K. M. Panikkar, ed., Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture, Manohar, N. Delhi.

Boxer, C.R., The Portuguese Seaborne Empire: 1415-1825

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, 1970, *Cost of Discipleship*, Macmillan, New York.

Buber, Martin, 1958, *I-Thou*, Charles Scribner, New York.

Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, London, 2 (1921-23)

Cronin, Vincent, *A Pearl to India* (New York, E. P. Dutton & Company,1959)

Correia-Afonso, John, *Jesuit Letters and Indian History. 1542-1773* (Heras Institute, Bombay, 1969) Oxford University Press.

Dallmayr. Fred R., 1989, 'Hermeneutics and Deconstruction: Gadamer and Derrida in Dialogue', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, op. cit., pp.75-92.

Das, Veena, 1994, 'Cultural Rights and the Definition of Community', in Oliver Mendelsohn and Upendra Baxi, ed.s, The Rights of Subordinated Peoples, Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi, pp. 64-116.

de Souza T.R , "The Portuguese in Asia and Their Church Patronage" in *Western Colonialism in Asia and Christianity*, ed. M.D. David (Bombay, 1988)

D'Costa, Anthony, *The Christianisation of the Goa Islands: 1510- 1567* (Bombay,1965).

Dilthey, Wilhelm, 1991, Selected Works, Vol 1, ed., Makkreel, Rudolf A', and Frithjof Rodi. Princeton Univ Press, Princeton.

D'Sa, Francis X. S.J. '*Art and Spirituality*', unpublished manuscript, undated.

Dumont, Louis, 1972, *Homo hierarchicus: The caste system and its implications,* London: Granada,

Fenicio, Jacobo, The *Livro da Seita dos Indios Orientais* (Brit. Mus. Ms Sloane 1820) of Father Jacobo Fenicio, S.J., edited with an introduction by Jarl Charpentier (Uppsala, 1933)

Finch, Henry Le Roy, 1987, 'Reason', in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed., Mircea Eliade, Vol. 12, Macmillan, New York, pp. 223 – 224.

Fischer, Michael M.J., 1990, 'Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory', in Clifford and Marcus, ed.s, Writing Culture, pp. 194-233.

Francis, A., , "Soclo-Historical Study of the Pandarasamy" in *Jesuit Presence in Indian History,* editor Anand Amaladas (Anand, 1988) p. 318-333.

Freire, Paulo. 1972. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, England.

Friedman, Thomas L., 2005, The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1975, *Truth and Method*, Seabury Press, New York.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1989, 'Destruktion and Deconstruction.', in ed.s, Michelfelder and Palmer, op. cit., pp. 102-113.

Gandhi, Mohandas K., *Collected Works*, 1958 - 89, 100 vols, Government of India, N. Delhi. Referred to in text as CW.

Geertz, Clifford, 1973, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Fontana Press, New York.

Ghosh, Amitav, 2016, *Great Derangement – Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, Penguin, India.

Gupta, Dipankar, 1996, *The Context of Ethnicity: Sikh Identity in a Comparative Perspective*. Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi

Kuhn, Thomas, 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Habermas, Jürgen, 1984, Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two: Liveworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason (Book). Translated by Thomas A. McCarthy, Beacon Press, Boston, Mass.

Halbfass, Wilhelm , *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (State University of New York Press)

Hai, Peter N.V., 2006, 'Fides Quaerens Dialogum: Theological Methodologies of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences', *Australian Ejournal*, Issue 8 - ISSN 1448- 6326 (https://vinhsonliem.wordpress.com/2010/10/17/fides-quaerens-dialogum-theological-methodologies-of-the-federation-of-asian-bishops-conferences)

Heschel, Abraham Joshua, 1991, eds. Harold Kasimow and Byron L. Sherwin, 'No religion is an island': No religion is an island: Abraham Joshua Heschel, and interreligious dialogue, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, pp. 3 - 22.

Heredia, Rudolf C.,'2002, Dichotomy or Dialectic: Sutras on the Faith-Reason Dilemma', *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Win, pp. 41-51.

Heredia, Rudolf C., 1999, 'Gandhi and the Myth of Peace', *New Quest*, No. 136, Jul-Aug., pp.231-239.

Heredia, Rudolf C., 2007, *Changing Gods: Rethinking Conversion in India*, Penguin, N. Delhi.

Houtart, François, *Religion and Ideology in Sri Lanka* (Bangalore: Theological Publications, 1974) p.5 .

Indica, "Fr. Roberto de Nobili, S.J., The First European Orientalist", *Indica,* Indian Historical Research Institute, Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume (Bombay, 1953) p. 373.

Ingold, Tim, 1994, Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology, Routledge, London.

Jain. L.C., 1989, 'National Integration in a Gandhian Perspective' Gandhi Marg, Vol 10, N 12, pp. 751-66.

Joshi, P.C., 1987, 'Secularism and the Religiosity of the Oppressed: Some Reflections', Man and Development, vol. 9, No.4, Dec. pp. 201-235.

'Justice in the World: World Synod of Catholic Bishops, 1971'. https://www.cctwincities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Justicia-in-Mundo.pdf

Kariel, Henry S., 1968, 'Pluralism', in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol.12, Macmillan, New York, 1968 164-169.

Kabir, Humayun, 1955, *The Indian Heritage*, Asia Pub. House, Bombay.

Khwaja, Jamal, 1992, 'Concept and Role of Tolerance in Indian Culture', in ed., Balasubramaniam, pp.89-120.

Kluckhohn, Clyde and W. H. Kelly, 1945, 'The Concept of Culture'. Pages 78–105 in *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*. Edited by Ralph Linton. New York: Columbia Univ. Press.

Kothari, Rajni, 1988, 'Integration and Exclusion in Indian Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol.23, No.43, 22 Oct, pp.2223-27.

Kothari, Rajni., 1989 'Ethnicity', in ed.s, David and Kadirgamar.

Kuper, Leo and M.G. Smith, ed.s, *Pluralism in Africa*, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley.

Kuhn, Thomas, 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Univ. of Chicago, Chicago.

Lele, Jayant, 1995, *Hindutva: The Emergence of the Right*, Earthworm Books, Madras.

Libano, J.B., 1982: 15, *Spiritual Discernment and Politics: Guidelines for Religious Communities*, trans. Theodore Morrow, Orbis Books, New York.

Linge, David E., 1977, 'Introduction', pp. - ix – lv. in Gadamer, op.cit..

Lijphart, Arend. 1977, Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration, Yale, Univ. Press, New Haven.

Linton, Ralph, 1945, *The Cultural Background of Personality*, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1945'

Marcel, Gabriel, 1951, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*. H. Regnery Co.,Washington, D.C..

Michelfelder. Diane P. and Richard E. Palmer, ed.s, 1989, Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter, State Univ. of New York.

Mundadan, A Mathias, *Indian Christians: Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy* (Bangalore, 1984) p. 136.

Nandy, Ashish, 1992. 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', in Veena Das, ed. *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, Oxford University Press: Delhi, pp. 69 -93.

Nandy. Ashish., 1994, The Illegitimacy of Nationalism, Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi.

Newman, John Henry, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (New York, 1914)

O'Dea, Thomas, 1969. *Sociology of Religion*, Prentice-Hall, N. Delhi.

Panikkar, Raimondo, 1977, 'Colligite Fragmenta: For an Integration of Reality' in From Alienation to At-oneness, eds. F.A. Eigo and S. E. Fittipaldi, Villanova Univ. Press, Villanova, Penn.

Panikkar, Raymond, 1971. 'Faith-A Constitutive Dimension of Man', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, V.8, N.2, pp. 223 – 254.

Panikkar Raimon, 2013, *The Rhythm of Being: The Unbroken Trinity*, The Gifford Lectures Edinburgh University Panikkar, Orbis Books, NY.

Panikkar, Raimon, 1995, *Cultural Disarmament: The Way to Peace*, (trans.Robert R. Barr, Westminster John Know Press, Louisville, Kentucky.

Panikkar, Raimundo, 1978, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, Paulist Press, New York

Panikkar. R., 1983, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-cultural Studies*, Asian Trading Corp. Bangalore.

Pascal, Blaise, 1958, *Pensees*, F.P Dutton, New York.

Penrose, Boies , *Sea fights in the East Indies in the Years 1602-1639*, Harvard University Press , (Cambridge, Mass., 1931) .

Pieris, Aloysius, 1988, *an Asian Theology of Libertion*, T & T Clark International, London.

Piketty, Thomas, 2014, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Plattner, Felix, *Jesuits Go East* (Westminster, Maryland, 1962) p. 20.

Podipara, Placid J. , *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians* (Kottayam, 1979).

Popper, Karl, 1962, *The Open Society*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, 'Dialogue and Proclamation', Vatican City, 1991, no.42.

Post, Werner, 1970 'Tolerance', in *Sacramentum Mundi*, ed., Karl Rahner, Vol. 6, pp. 262-267.

Radhakrishnan, S., 1927, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.

Rajamanickam, S , "Robert De Nobili: Christianity in the Indian Version", *Jeevadhara,* 17 (1987) p.304·321.

Rajamanickam, S. , "The Goa Conferenee of 1619: A Letter of Fr. Robert de Nobill to Pope Paul V", *Indian Church History Review*

Rajamanickam, S , *The First Oriental Scholar* (Palayamkottai, 1972) p, 77.

Radhakrishnan, S., 1927, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.

Rao. K. Raghavendra, 1986, 'Political Philosophy and Transformation of Indian Politics: The Gandhian Paradigm', in Ramashray Roy, ed. op.cit., pp.127 - 145.

Rahner, Karl. 1969, *Theological Investigations*, Vol VI, Payton, Longman and Todd, London.

Ramamurthy. Acharya, 1989, 'Gandhian Perspective on the Reconstruction of the Indian Polity', Ramashray Roy, ed., op.cit., pp.146 - 164.

Rawls, John, 1971, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, MA.,

Ricoeur, Paul, 1973, 'Ethics and Culture: Habermas and Gadamer in Dialogue', *Philosophy Today*, Vol.17, Summer,

Roy. Ramashray., ed., 1986, Contemporary Crisis and Gandhi, Discovery Pub. House, Delhi.

Saran. A.K., 1989, 'Gandhi and the Concept of Politics: Towards a normal civilization', *Gandhi Marg*, (1), 675-727.

Sheth. D.L., 1989, 'State, Nation and Ethnicity: Experience of Third World Countries', Economic and Political Weekly, Vol 29, No. 12, 25 May, pp. 615-26.

Smith. Anthony. D., 1994, 'The Politics of Culture: Ethnicity and Nationalism', Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology, Tim Ingold, ed., Companion Encyclopedia. op. cit. pp. 706-733.

Taylor, Charles, 1992. *Multiculturalism and The Polities of Recognition*, Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton.

Thapar. Romila, 1961, *Ashoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, Oxford Univ. Press, London.

Thomas, W.I. and D.S. Thomas, 1928, *The child in America: Behavior problems and programs.* Knopf, New York

Tillich, Paul, 1958, *Dynamics of Faith*, Harper and Row, New York.

Taylor. Charles., 1992, Multiculturalism and 'The Politic of Recognition', Princeton Univ. Press, New. Jersey.

_____. Reconciling Solitudes, 1993, McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, Montreal.

Toynbee, Arnold *, The World and the West,* Oxford University Press, (London, 1953)

Tylor, Edward Burnett, 1871 *Primitive Culture, John Murray London..*

UNEP, 1992, Only One Earth: The Long Road via Rio to Sust... (Hardcover) by Felix Dodds, Michael Strauss

van de Berge, Pierre L., 1969, 'Pluralism and Polity: A Theoretical Exploration', in Leo Kuper and M.G. Smith, ed.s, *Pluralism in Africa*, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley.

Veblen, Thorstein, 1899, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Macmillan, New York.

Williams, Raymond*, Culture and Society, 1780-1950 (London, 1958)*

Ward. Barbara, 1959, Five Ideas That Change the World, Hamish Hamilton, London.

Weber, Max, 1968, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology,* New York, Bedminster Press.

Weber, Max, 1964, *Sociology of Religion*, Beacon Press,Boston.

Williams, Raymond, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950 (London, 1958)* p. 376.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 1967, *Philosophical Investigations*, (trans. G.E.M. Anscombe) Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 1998, *Culture and Value*, Blackwell, London.

https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/the-4-minute-speech-that-got-pope-francis-elected

INDEX

TABLE OF CONTENTS EXPANDED

8.THE DIALOGUE OF CULTURES: FROM *PARANOIA* TO *METANOIA*

List of Abstracts

1. OPENING THE DOOR: THE JESUIT MISSIONARY CONTRIBUTION TO DIALOGUE

Abstract: In their encounter with the cultures and peoples of the mission lands, the Jesuits made their best contribution to a deeper dialogue. This study will try to set the context in which this encounter took place, describe the vision which set the dialogue going, and outline the debate which led to its untimely suppression. The approach here will be sociological rather than historical, in that it will not focus on the 'chronological inter-relationships between particular events with a view to determining their causality', but rather on 'the relationship between the fundamental elements of the social organism existing at the given time'.

2. BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS: DIALOGUE AND DIALECTICS

Abstract: Book review article of *Between Marx and Christ: The Dialogue in German-Speaking Europe.*

3. TOLERANCE AND DIALOGUE AS RESPONSES TO PLURALISM AND ETHNICITY: THE RELEVANCE OF A GANDHIAN DISCOURSE

Abstract: This study attempts to outline an area of concern and is a beginning rather than a conclusive statement. The inspiration for this venture has come from Gandhi, who by acting locally has challenged us to think globally, even when we think differently from him. This is not merely an intellectual 'search', but a spiritual 'quest' as well. The attempt here is to orient and focus our response to the increasing ethnification in our plural society.

4. THE RECENT ATROCITIES AGAINST CHRISTIANS: SUGGESTION FOR AN INTRA-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Abstract: Rather than a confrontationalist attitude, we need to take a firm stand of resistance by using all the official means,

the media and especially the courts to protest and pursue the culprits when atrocities against our people are committed.

5. CREATIVE DIALOGUE FOSTERED THROUGH ART

Abstract: The conscious and constant aim of religious art has been to suggest the divine and make it palpable. In its most important manifestations, the art is the echo of a supernatural world full of mystery and exaltation, expressed in palpable forms, understandable to the human mind. Often Indian art is suggestive of something beyond human forms, which do not correspond to the known physiological laws. The conventions adopted by artists are not only appropriate to express spiritual forms but they also contribute a treasure of aesthetic life

6. NEIGHBOURS IN A PLURALIST WORLD: THE CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS VERSUS A DIALOGUE OF RELIGIONS

Abstract: In a globalising world, neighbours are no longer so much defined by geography, as by interaction and interdependence. This can bring about shared interests and common concerns that make good and lasting neighbours. Moreover, as sparks of the one divinity, sharing in the one Ultimate Reality, we are all children of the same Utterly Other God; our common concern is faith, which makes us brothers and sisters and neighbours, sharing a common humanity.

7. JUSTICE IN THE DIALOGUE OF RELIGIONS: WOMEN, DALITS AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN HINDU AND CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Abstract: This presentation begins by defining the terms 'plurality' and 'pluralism' and describing the difference between them, sketching the condition for an equal dialogue and indicating the several levels of tolerance and the various domains of dialogue involved; and finally locating an understanding of justice within a liberationist discourse.

It then examines three areas in the light of the above, and in the context of the Hindu and Christian traditions in contemporary India. The Dalits, as illustrating the contradiction of poverty and oppression; women, as exemplifying the contradictions of gender and patriarchy in our society; and the environment and our relationship to it as typifying the multi-dimensional ecological crisis that is overtaking our planet.

8. THE DIALOGUE OF CULTURES: FROM *PARANOIA* TO *METANOIA*

Abstract: The politics of exclusion has now precipitated a politics of hate that is tearing apart the social fabric. There is no denying the historic violence precipitated by cultural and religious differences. But there have also been exemplary harmony and creative synergies between different peoples as well, a real dialogue of cultures.

9. MY INTER-FAITH JOURNEY —MULTIPLE IDENTITIES, MULTIPLE BELONGINGS: COMMON GROUND FOR EQUAL DIALOGUE

Abstract: This is an account of my inter-faith journey.

10. DIALOGUE IN A MULTICULTURAL, PLURI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE FOR A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Abstract: A viable and sustainable perspective on dialogue must be premised not on a walled-in consciousness of a colonised mind, nor on the rootless wonderings of the

uncommitted spirit, rather it must be a serious quest for a mutually enriching encounter. The challenges we face today demand a critical interrogation of our multicultural and pluri-religious society before there can be any constructive dialogue between our diverse people and varied traditions.

11. PLURALISM AND THE PEDAGOGY OF TOLERANCE

Abstract: Education for pluralism would seem to be the only viable alternative for the scale and depth of the diversity in a society such as ours. Yet the relationships between a national education system and local educational institutions become extremely problematic in a structurally segmented and culturally diverse multi-ethnic society. In the Indian context, with education in the 'Concurrent List', i.e. it is both a central and state government subject how must educational policy reflect this Centre-State balance?

12. DIALOGUE AS PEDAGOGY: LEARNING TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER

Abstract: Dialogue is readily described as communicative exchange. However, it is more comprehensive than the "communicative rationality" of Habermas, The nature of dialogic communication focuses less on rational meaning than on hermeneutical meaningfulness. Moreover, to be credible, dialogue must be sensitive to the differences of local situations, and to be effective it must consider their commonalities as well differences and thus develop an overall architecture for a more universally sustainable dialogue.

13. SCIENCE, RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY: TRIPLE DIALECTIC TO TRIPLE DIALOGUE

Abstract: Both science and religion are quests for truth, though with different methodologies each with its own limitations: science more experimental, religion more experiential. Scientific experiments are objective, validated by their replicability. Religious experience is subjective, authenticated by its meaningfulness. Spirituality seeks to

appropriate this truth in a vision and express it in a way of life. It is in a quest for human fulfilment. The relationships between these are essentially compatible and complementary, though they can become opposed and antagonistic.