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Mohanty's Theory of Person and Modernity in India¹

R.C. Majhi*

Most of our religious, moral, social and legal practices presuppose a concept of person without which human activities do not make any sense. If someone does act, it is she who can be held responsible for the action. It is appropriate to punish or reward her for doing it. If someone buys something, it is he who is entitled to be the owner of it. If the existence of an enduring *that* which is referred to by the concept of a person, an individual, an agent or subject is not supposed, arguably a whole lot of human activities remain unmanageable and unaccountable.

Any philosophical account of the presupposed, if it is going to be useful for us, so far as these activities are concerned, must cohere in some sense with the rest of the accounts that we have about the world and ourselves from other sources. For twenty five centuries or more, philosophers have engaged themselves with the task of explicating this concept of person and yet no satisfactory account has been worked out. Nevertheless, philosophical activity has helped us in many ways in improving our understanding of the concept. In this paper I will speak about Mohanty's theory of person and see if it is a plausible and acceptable theory.

I

We all are persons. What makes each of us a person? The first step in answering this question is to suspend out the favoured presumptions such as physicalism and idealism. In order to understand the concept of person, we need to be familiar with the related concepts Mohanty speaks of. One way to start is to look at the *intentional acts* such as perceiving, believing,

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1 The paper is the revised version of an earlier one presented in a colloquium 'On Person & the Challenges of Modernity in India' sponsored by ICPR, New Delhi at Visva-Bharati, Shantiniketan,

thinking, imagining, hoping, desiring, loving and hating. Bodily movements such as typing, working in a garden are also intentional acts. *Subject* is the source of intentional acts from which they issue forth directed towards an object. For example, believing involves a believer and an object that is believed in; typing involves one who types and an object that is typed, namely a paper. *The ego is the interior* mental life in its solitude cut off from one's involvement in the world. All the experiences with their built-in intentionalities remain as they are but the belief that one is part of the world is suspended. The result of this is that one finds oneself to be an ongoing temporal flow of experiences, not in the physical, objective time, but in the inner lived time. *The self* is the social ego. It lives, acts and grows in the real time and history. Armed with these concepts, Mohanty explicates his theory of person:

“A person is a subject, an ego and a self. Without being a subject, without having the possibility of that reflective loneliness which is the destiny of an ego, and without enjoying that social and historical identity which belongs to a self, a person would not be a person. But a person is more than any of these (Mohanty, *The self and its other*, 2002, p. 74).”

A person is an intentional entity in the sense that it is the source of intentionality, not something dependent on some intentional act, such as fictional entities or literary figures. A person is minded as well as embodied. It is a lived body, not a material thing. The person is a concrete, corporal entity who calls himself 'I', a bodily psychic unity that is appropriated into the structure of a unitary consciousness (Mohanty, 2003, pp. 73-74).

II

Mohanty claims that his account overcomes the Cartesian dualism in a way better than physicalism does. Let us see how it does overcome the dualism. What is the force of Descartes' dualism? It is that the mind could exist without the body. Kripke supplements the argument by saying that Descartes might equally well have argued the same conclusion, i.e., a person or mind is distinct from his body, from the premise that the body could have existed without mind (Kripke, 1982, p. 145). He further says, “Of

course the body *does* exist without the mind and presumably without the person, when the body is a *corpse*. This consideration, if accepted, would already show that a person and his body are distinct (Kripke, 1982, p. 145 fn. 74). Kripke's remark, as it appears, goes straight against Mohanty's claim that a person is a bodily thing. But the success or failure of the argument hangs on what counts as a body. In Kripke's argument, body is construed as a physical or material thing. Mohanty's account, on the other hand, speaks of a lived body. A lived body is an intentional body, a subjective body. Could a lived body exist without the mind and presumably without the person? Mohanty's view does not identify the person with the mind. A person is both a minded and embodied entity. Thus, his view excludes the possibility of a person without a lived body but admits the possibility of a body (corpse) without being a person. Thus, Mohanty rejects Descartes' thesis that mind could exist without a body. For similar reasons, a person without mind is impossible. How about a mind without being a person? Could there be a mind, which becomes defunct like a lived body becoming defunct (a corpse is a defunct lived body)?

Theoretically, there is no harm in supposing such a mind. There could be degrees of functioning of a lived body from optimal functioning to zero functioning, i.e. turning into a corpse; so also, there could be a mind with disintegrated functions caused by identity crises and other related psychotic and psychological problems and gradually succumbing into null functioning. All of these suggest that the account of person Mohanty offers is a dynamic one. Further, it follows that the mind and the body of a person function as an integrated whole. Moreover, a person is rooted in the world. Thus, Mohanty's conception of a person is in sharp conflict with the religious idea of a soul or a self transmigrating and living after death.

Mohanty considers his account better than the physicalist's. The physicalist identifies the person with the body construed as a material thing, unlike his phenomenological account of body lived. Kripke thinks that the physicalist's account is subject to modal difficulties. He says, "A theory that person is nothing over and above his body in the way that a statue is

nothing over and above the matter of which it is composed, would have to hold that (necessarily) a person exists if and only if his body exists and has a certain additional physical organization. Such a thesis would be subject to modal difficulties (Kripke, 1982).” One such example of modal difficulty would be to suppose that Helen Keller might have been a different person, had she been a normal human being like us.

Does Mohanty’s account face similar difficulties? No, because the Mohantian person is not simply an organisation of body matter. But one possible objection may be raised against the idea of the subjectivity and the intentionality of the human body. One may simply deny that there can be any such subjective and intentional body. But body subjectivity of course is not an identity thesis. There are bodily acts which are not intentional, such as digestive or circulatory processes. Nevertheless, the idea of body subjectivity creates a kind of uneasiness that cannot easily be ignored. The uneasiness might be due to the sharp distinction i.e. subjective-objective or mental-physical created by the philosophical tradition. Let us go back to Mohanty to see the plausibility of the body subjectivity. Take the example of typing. When someone types, it is not a mechanical process animated by indwelling mental intention. It is an integrated effort of her which is directed towards the object of typing- the paper. The whole body is oriented towards it, including the awareness of doing it. Another example- “If to be intentional is to be engaged with the world, to be directed towards it, then as I start climbing a mountain, my body, I myself, am totally absorbed in the tasks (Mohanty, 2002, p. 76).” This way of looking at the issue demands a radical change in considering what mental is and what physical is.

It is clear from the essay (Mohanty, 2002) that deliberate bodily acts are intentional, but it is not that clear whether a person, withdrawing his focus from the world around him, reflecting on his mental life, is also aware of his body. It is also not clear whether the stream of consciousness that constitutes mental life is also in some sense bodily activities. The reflective ego, it seems, has to be aware of the body, since being is involved in an activity. He speaks of bodily and mental intentionalities (Mohanty, 2002,

p. 76). This means that some intentional acts are of bodily nature while some others are mental. If the bodily intentional acts and the mental intentional acts are taken to be exclusive categories, then it appears that Mohanty's account while discarding the Cartesian ghost in the machine has kept behind its shadow in mental intentionality.

We have been discussing the formal account of a person. A person is a body and stream of consciousness unified by its internal intentional structure in which the subject, the ego, and the self are integrated into one single internal entity. But this is not a complete picture of a person. There is also a social dimension to it. The social personality of a person is drawn out of the socio-cultural system. The way the world, including oneself, is presented in one's experience is determined by one's culture. However, one's social self does not exhaust one's identity. She is not a mere point of intersection of innumerable social relationships. One critically reflects on the social origin of his beliefs and interpretations about himself; keeps a certain distance and refuses to submerge himself in his social relationships.

III

Is this account of a person a narrow one? It certainly is not. The formal account, of course, needs further clarification and be free from some alleged anomalies. The social account is also a schema. But, at the same time, it provides a rich account of a dynamic developing person and keeps open the innumerable ways a person can grow.

The plausibility of Mohanty's theory depends on the plausibility of the notion of intentionality. Further, some crucial and significant questions remain unanswered- what makes both believing and typing intentional? Why is there bodily intentionality? What distinguishes it from mental intentionality? He, of course, admits the incompleteness of the theory. That gives reasons for thinking about it more and improving the theory. Mohanty's theory of person is an attempt to go beyond the traditional dualistic approach and is a proposal for a unified theory of person. I think this proposal should be

seriously thought about.

How does it take up the challenges of modernity in India? What is modernity in India? To put it differently- who is a modern Indian? One is modern Indian, whose foremost considerations are that he is a citizen of India, secular in temperament and free from caste and gender bias. India, at present, is going through a difficult time of regionalism, communalism, religious fundamentalism, caste prejudices and gender discrimination and these evils are deeply rooted in our society. Some of these are popularised through propaganda as cultural identities. Now the question is- can the *self* (the social *ego*) who grows out of socio-cultural system accommodate the modernity in India? Of course it can. A person is a dynamic structure, not a rigid one. Hence, she is amenable to changes.

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Nature of the Qur'anic Universe in Knowledge, Space, Time Dimensions

Professor Masudul Alam Choudhury*

Abstract

The universe by its meaning and structure is unified by interaction, integration and evolutionary learning in the midst of divine unity of knowledge. In Islam this phenomenology inter-relating the unity of knowledge of the divine law with the world-system in explanatory ways is referred to as *Tawhid* in relation to the world-system. The universe self-actualizes within this unified world-system and unravels itself. Thus all sciences and human experiences are cast in the midst of such interactive, integrative and evolutionary learning processes, rising from lesser to higher degrees of moral consciousness. Consciousness is essentially knowledge induced. By it appear the created artifacts of space and time. The universe, and thus the socio-scientific world-system, self-actualize in Truth within this knowledge, space and time dimensions. The universe thereby attains a simulated perturbation mathematical state, whose curvature is never optimal in the usual sense of socio-scientific analysis that we encounter in received scientific analysis, as in the case of Relativity Physics or Newtonian Physics. Within such a generalized worldview of the universe is the specific but integral sub-system of economics, finance, and society. The emergent problems of the world-system are diverse in 'everything' and are process-oriented. Two examples of economic and social preference formation are examined within the phenomenological model of unity of knowledge (*Tawhid* in relation to the world-system). This phenomenological model is applied to the specific study of preferences in individual, social and institutional choices.

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Keywords: unity of knowledge, world-system, behavioral social science, phenomenology.

Background and objective

The following questions:

- (1) What is the Universe?
- (2) What is the nature of knowledge, space and time dimensions?

have been addressed by Choudhury (2009) elaborately. These issues are therefore not re-opened here. Instead, the objective in this paper is to combine and summarize the answers to the above two questions and provide a *Qur'anic* exegesis on the nature of the universe as it learns by the episteme of unity of divine knowledge. This episteme is referred to as *Tawhid* (meaning oneness of God) in its relationship to the learning and unifying world-system. Thereby, the matter of knowledge, space and time structure of the universe, is studied in relation to the opposites: Truth (*haqq in the Qur'an*) and Falsehood (*batil in the Qur'an*). These are, nonetheless, both signs of God (*ayaths in the Qur'an*). An extract of the generalized cosmic representation of the problem of phenomenology of unity of knowledge and the world-system is studied here in reference to individual and social preference maps. These are treated in the contrasting order of good preferences and bad preferences, as determined by human consciousness within the model of unity of knowledge. Such a divine phenomenon is referred to as the relationship between *Tawhid* (divine oneness in the *Qur'an*) and the world-system.

The universal knowledge, space, time curvature in terms of *haqq* and *batil*

The universe is the creative continuous domain of signs of God (*ayath Allah*). Yet those who observe and reflect on the *ayaths* are the true

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1. Qur'an (6:39): "Those who reject our Signs are deaf and dumb, -- in the midst of darkness profound: whom God wills He leaves to wander: whom He wills, He places on the Way that is Straight."

believers. Those who reject the *ayaths* are referred to as disbelievers.¹ Yet none can avoid the observation of the *ayaths*. The universal domain is thus strictly divided between H (*haqq*) and B (*batil*) in terms of the positive and negative treatment of the *ayaths*, respectively.²

The degrees of comprehension and rejection of the *ayaths* by Truth and Falsehood, respectively, are progressively changing from lesser to higher levels of human consciousness. Consciousness is the sure characterization of intrinsic knowledge, which is ontologically premised on divine oneness.

We denote the intrinsic knowledge by θ , which is derived from the stock of complete, absolute and perfect knowledge denoted by Ω . The domain of Ω comprises the divine law of oneness. It is represented mathematically as the super-cardinal topology, by virtue of its non-configurative property of absoluteness fully determining what we refer to as 'everything' (Barrow, 1991). But the matrix of $\{\theta\}$ -values are revealed in the order of unity by organic complementarities between things of the world-system as they are conceptualized, observed and reflected upon. This combination of formalism and observations is thus induced by the episteme of divine unity of knowledge (*Tawhid*). The derived knowledge-flows denoted by θ as the discursively limiting value of $\{\theta\} \in \Omega$ thus belong to the consciousness of the unified world-system.

Formalism in the pure ontological universe of divine oneness

That is, $H(\theta)$ denotes the domain of positive *ayaths*. But B has no independent power of its own.³ B exists as mathematical opposite of $H(\theta)$. Therefore, such so-to-say 'negative' *ayaths* are determined by the converse of $H(\theta)$. The existence of any of the two (H,B) requires the reflection and observation of the other.

2. Qur'an (53: 19-20): "Have you seen Lat, and Uzza, and another, the third (goddess), Manat?" (these are negative signs). Signs of God are pervasive: Qur'an (41:53): "Soon will We show them Our Signs in the (farthest) regions (of the earth), and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that your Lord does witness all things?"

3. Qur'an (2:38-39) declares that Satan (Falsehood) has no independent power of its own.

In other words, there exists a feedback mapping (f, f^{-1} in relation to \leftrightarrow) denoted by $(H \leftrightarrow B)$, such that, $B = f(H(\theta))$, f being the functional relationship of HB . Therefore, $B = B(\theta)$, though in the negative sense of the *ayath*. That is $dB(\theta)/d\theta < 0$, as $\theta \uparrow$. Besides, for each f there exists a well-defined f^{-1} in relation to each θ -value, such that $f \bullet f^{-1} = I$, identity mapping. But such a relationship is of human determination of Truth as being *perfectly* differentiated from Falsehood.

According to these perfectly differentiated states of Truth versus Falsehood, we define the degree of comprehension of truth (and thereby, falsehood) in the human population as follows:

$$C = H/B = H(\theta)/B(\theta) = (H/B)[\theta] =$$

$$(H = \alpha \text{ percentage of the total population of believers}) / (B = \beta \text{ percentage of the total population of disbelievers}) \text{ [as defined earlier]} \quad (1)$$

$$C(\theta) > 0.$$

$$dC(\theta)/d\theta > 0; dH(\theta)/d\theta > 0; dB(\theta)/d\theta < 0, \text{ as } \theta \uparrow. \quad (2)$$

In the case of increasing consciousness of the universe with the observers of divine oneness increasing, we obtain: $dC/d\theta > 0$.

The large-scale universe in knowledge, space and time dimensions

Ultimately, the degree of consciousness of the universe is gained from $\{\theta \in \Omega\}$ by an intermediate well-defining mapping denoted by S . We now write the well-defined meanings of H, B in terms of the worldly realized configuration of $\{\theta\}$ as follows:

For every $\theta \in (\Omega, S)$ explained in the ontological sense of the purity of (Ω, S) , the mapping $S \equiv f$.⁴ Affirmation of the *ayaths* implies acceptance of $\theta \in (\Omega, S)$, as this knowledge-flow reflects itself in the world-system of

4. S is the ontological mapping of W , the divine law, onto the world-system through the functional ontology of derived knowledge of oneness in its pure and phenomenological sense of relating to the events of world-system. S is referred to as the Sunnah, the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad. The core of the shari'ah, known as maqasid as-shari'ah, is thus the topological bundle of knowledge and the world-system denoted as follows:

diversity and continuity of reflected and observed entities and relations. We now denote such worldly observed categories by $H(\theta \in (\Omega, S))$. In the epistemic sense of worldly observations there also exist the co-determined reverse mappings ($H \leftrightarrow B$). But now the reverse mappings are not perfect categories as previously characterized to yield the identity map, I .

We write the resulting imperfectly comprehended and observed reverse mappings ($H \leftrightarrow B$) as, $f \bullet g = \delta > 0$. The implication here is this: Man is not perfect in knowledge to understand and observe the true reality. Thus Man is not completely dammed forever in the living world when he errs in the face of the divine hope of progressively rising to the conscious self-actualization of the divine truth of oneness in the evolutionary domain, $\theta \in (\Omega, S)$. Only in the pure ontological sense, that is in the ultimate decision of God (Hereafter), it is possible for the final state to be established by the representation denoted by $f \bullet g = \delta = I$.

With the above transformations of the pure ontological category into its worldly epistemic meaning of unity of knowledge, we re-write expressions (1) and (2) as,

$\{\Omega \rightarrow_s \{\theta\}\} \rightarrow \mathbf{x}(\theta) \rightarrow_w W(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta)) \rightarrow$ recursive continuity in knowledge, space, time until the Hereafter}.

The functional meaning of the shari'ah also involves human agency of textual interpretation and exegesis, say an extended functional mapping:

$\{\Omega \rightarrow_s \{\theta\}\} = (\Omega, S) \rightarrow \{\theta\} \rightarrow_f \{\theta^*\} \rightarrow \mathbf{x}(\theta^*) \rightarrow_w W(\theta^*, \mathbf{x}(\theta^*)) \rightarrow$ recursive continuity by discourse in knowledge, space, time until the Hereafter}.

The idea of discourse is taken up in two meanings, namely, discourse as consultative agency called the shura (Qur'an, 42:38), and intrinsic organic complementarities and unifying interrelations between 'everything' called God-consciousness (also worship, that is 'tasbih' (Qur'an, 42:49-53) The two meanings and functions exist in inexorable complex organic ontology. Together they form the phenomenological model of the universe.

While, $\{\Omega \rightarrow_s \{\theta\}\} = (\Omega, S) \rightarrow \{\theta\}$ as the core of the shari'ah forms the maqasid as-shari'ah; the organic form of the shari'ah being $\{\Omega \rightarrow_s \{\theta\}\} = (\Omega, S) \rightarrow \{\theta\} \rightarrow_f \{\theta^*\} \rightarrow \mathbf{x}(\theta^*) \rightarrow_w W(\theta^*, \mathbf{x}(\theta^*)) \rightarrow$ recursive continuity by discourse in knowledge, space, time until the Hereafter}; the wellbeing function, maslaha, is denoted by $W(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))$.

$$C(\theta \in (\Omega, S)) = (H/B)[\theta \in (\Omega, S)] = f \bullet g = \delta > 0, \text{ such that} \quad (3)$$

$$dC(\theta)/d\theta > 0; dH(\theta)/d\theta > 0; dB(\theta)/d\theta < 0., \text{ for each } \theta \uparrow \in (\Omega, S). \quad (3)$$

The knowledge-induced conscious learning relationship of the world-system

Consciousness and the consequential world-system rise and fall conjointly, as $\{\theta \in (\Omega, S)\}$ increases or falls, respectively. The result is reflected in the increasing or decreasing values of C , respectively. We write the sequences of such complex evolutions by,

$$C_i = \delta_i > 0, \quad (4)$$

$i = 1, 2, \dots$ in the discrete case, or $i \in \mathfrak{R}$, real space in the continuous sense.

But there is a limiting value of all such categories. This takes place in the penultimate structure of the universe, the Event of the Hereafter.⁵ That is, as the complex accumulation of $(\theta \in (\Omega, S))$ converges to the ontological state of completeness of knowledge in oneness denoted by Ω , then $H(\Omega) = H^*$; in the ontological pure state of the completed universe in its knowledge, space and time dimensions. H^* is therefore understood in the super-cardinal sense. Now, $B(\Omega) = B^*$, as negative entropy in the super-cardinal sense. But since H^* and Ω cannot be two different super-cardinal states of the same penultimate universe, therefore, $H^* = \Omega$, in the sense of the completed universe in knowledge, space, time. Also thereby, $C(\Omega) = \delta^*$, $dC(\Omega)/d\theta = \{\text{ZEROS}\}$ (Leon, 2002)⁶ of all functional relations of the completed universe in the super-cardinal sense.

⁵. Qur'an (78:1-5): "Concerning what are they disputing? Concerning the Great Event (News), about which they cannot agree. Verily, they shall soon (come to) know! Verily, verily they shall soon (come to) know!"

⁶ The theorem can be stated as follows: If the functional $p(x) \in S$, where S denotes the set of polynomials less than degree 'n' with the property that $p(0) = 0$, then S is non-empty, since it contains the zero polynomial. S is then a non-empty subspace of p_n , with, $\{a.p(0)\} = \{a.0\} = \{0\}$. Thereby, $(p_1 + p_2 + \dots + p_n)[0] = p_1(0) + p_2(0) + \dots + p_n(0) = 0 + 0 + \dots + 0 = \{0\}$, set of zeros of the polynomials in S .

Super-cardinality here means the completed structure of the final universe is incommensurate in form (Rucker, 1983). But from such a large scale (entropic and de-entropic) universal domain it is possible to derive relational meanings for the world-system (Choudhury, 2006, chap. 2)). An example of the super-entropic state of the physical universe, for which no space-time structure exists, is the ‘negative’ energy quanta, as of the inside of the Black Hole (Wald, 1992).

The implication here is that in the learning universe moving towards the consciousness of divine oneness, the idea of Falsehood disappears. Falsehood is destroyed by the reversal of entropy in the pure ontologically completed universe of divine oneness. The universe then attains its net worth. This is the quality of Pure Truth. In it, Falsehood is destroyed as an entropic complement of truth: $H \uparrow$ to its super-cardinality dimension; and $B \downarrow$ to its entropic zeros of relations. Consequently, $(H/B) \uparrow$ to super-cardinality, as $H \rightarrow H^* = \Omega$, and the identity I-map is established in its pure form, as shown above in the case of ontological purity..

Continuous transformation of discrete evolution of the conscious world-system

In the continuous case of learning by $\{\theta \in (\Omega, S)\}$, the learning universe moves inexorably towards its ultimate goal of the Hereafter. Continuity of the learning universe here rests primordially on knowledge-flows, $\{\theta \in (\Omega, S)\}$. This in turn determines the space and time structure (*ayaths* of the positive kinds). The heightened consciousness and its annulment of falsehood over the pervasively evolutionary complementing world-system across knowledge, space, time dimensions causes the δ -trajectory to learn and evolve from the point of pure ontological super-cardinal origin of (Ω, S) to the world-system of *ayaths* existing in evolutionary knowledge, space and time dimensions, finally moving towards the ultimate convergence in the super-cardinal universe of the Hereafter.

Such an evolutionary learning trajectory of rising universal consciousness towards the attainment of truth and the destruction of falsehood is denoted

by the continuous dynamic movement of the consciousness trajectory over the expanse of the knowledge, space, and time dimensions.

The evolutionary result combining the pure ontological Beginning, the World-System, and the pure ontological equivalence of the Hereafter is formalized as follows:

$$C((\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))) \in \text{relational order of unity of knowledge denoted by} \\ \{(\Omega, S) \rightarrow \text{world-system} \rightarrow (\Omega, S)\} = \delta(\theta) \quad (5)$$

Such that, $\mathbf{x}(\theta) = (\text{space } x_i, i = 1, 2, \dots; \text{time } t, \text{ all as entities induced by knowledge flows } \theta \text{ of divine oneness } \equiv \textit{ayaths});$

$$dC(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))/d\theta = \sum_i [(dC/dx_i) \cdot (dx_i/d\theta)] \quad (6) \\ dH(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))/d\theta > 0; dB(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))/d\theta < 0.$$

Note in the above expressions that we have generalized the forms by introducing $\{(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))\}$. This is due to the phenomenological context of expression (7) and its details that are projected on H, B, C when related to the world-system. The topological learning (knowledge), continuity (time) and pervasive (space) properties conveyed by expression (7) is also carried over and extended in the most generalized system of organic relations. All these are uniquely premised on the episteme of unity of knowledge in relation to the world-system. This episteme is the Tawhidi origin. It is recreated in the Hereafter, and is used to simulate the intermediating world-system of ‘everything’, namely $\{(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))\}$. The elements in such vector and matrix (and tensor representation enter the simulation of the wellbeing function, $W(\{(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))\})$. The simulation is done by circular causation between the $\{(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))\}$ -variables *ad infinitum*. Figure 1 summarizes such properties across the knowledge, space and time dimensions of evolutionary learning processes.

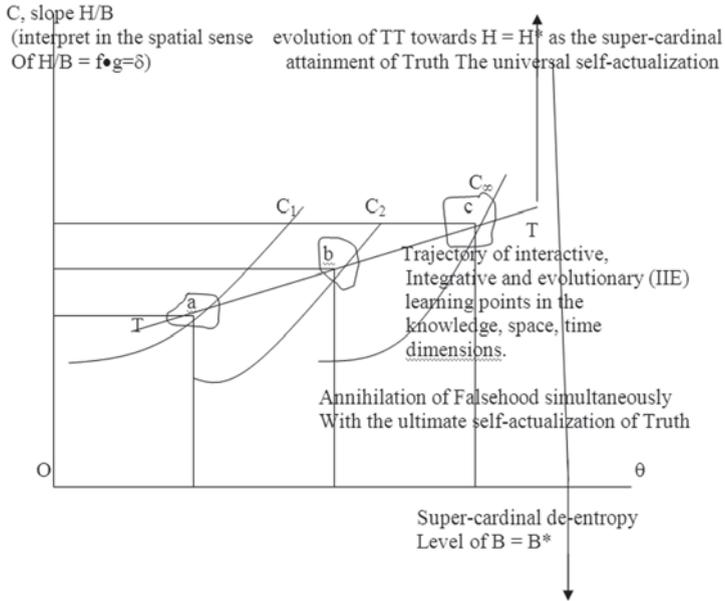


Figure 1: Dynamics of the ‘Tawhid World-System Tawhid = Hereafter’ relation

Figure 1 shows the movement of degrees of the self-actualizing universe in the midst of divine oneness as it is projected in the pure ontological sense and in terms of its relationship with the world-system:⁷

An application of the Tawhidi phenomenological model

An example of worldly relation derived from the phenomenological explanation of unity of divine knowledge can be found in Islamic economics,

⁷ Points like a,b,c,... along the IIE-trajectory are evolutionary equilibrium points of learning processes along the knowledge, space, time dimensions. Thereby, the families of C-curves form perturbation surfaces. So also the TT trajectory and the (H/B)[θ] relations in respect of entropic and de-entropic universes are characterized by incomplete learning. Only discursive behavior marks these learning processes. Here discursive behavior is experienced both by human agency as well as inanimate entities. In both cases discursive behavior in reference to the Tawhidi episteme is signified equivalently by unity of knowledge, participatoriness and pervasive complementarities all existing in continuous perpetuity in ‘everything’ across the knowledge, space, time dimensions.

finance and world-system studies. This field of intellection is filled with such examples. We take just one example here.

Consider two kinds of preferences (consumer, community, wellbeing and social choice, principal-agent, and firm specific). One set of preferences is ethically induced by the understanding of the world-system as an organic unity caused by the good things of life that are all induced by the episteme of unity of knowledge. This set of preference maps denotes $H(\theta)$.

The other set of preferences is a hedonic one described by self-interest, competition and individualism. These sets of preferences are opposed to each other. Yet there being no perfection in the knowledge flows of our experiences, learning in conscious oneness remains evolutionary always and everywhere pervasively. Such preference maps, particularly characterized in neoclassical economics and also transferred to marginalist foundation of macroeconomics (Dasgupta, 1987) are denoted by $B(\theta)$.

The above-mentioned model of universal consciousness in divine oneness is now described by the expressions (1)-(6). The example of the premise denoted by $\theta \in (\Omega, S)$ is the divine law, called the *shari'ah* (Islamic Law). The *shari'ah* is thus taken to be the core of the *Qur'anic* Law rather than a humanly developed (*fiqh*) Islamic Law (Ghazzali trans. Zidan, 1997). The *shari'ah* has its objective and purpose called the *maqasid as-shari'ah* (Masud, 1984). In our model, the *maqasid as-shari'ah* is denoted by the increase in the epistemic knowledge of divine oneness and its induced world-system with particulars denoted by,

$$(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta)) \in \{(\Omega, S) \rightarrow \text{World-System} \rightarrow (\Omega, S)\} \quad (7)$$

The *maqasid as-shari'ah* as so defined is evaluated by means of its wellbeing objective criterion called the *maslaha* (Masud, op cit). In our model, the *maslaha* is defined by $C(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))$. This is also denoted by $W((\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta)))$. The certainty property of the *maslaha* with the underlying functions of ethical preference induction and its effects on market transformation, institutional structuring, policy-making and human resource

development is denoted by the functions, $dC(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))/d\theta > 0$, $dH(\theta)/d\theta > 0$; $dB(\theta)/d\theta < 0$, as $\{\theta \in \Omega, S\}$ increases.

The end goal of the *maqasid as-shari'ah* and *maslaha* is self-actualization of the divine bliss in the Hereafter, as it is also to map the relations of the laws and consequences of this divine bliss on to the preferences of a good society. The measure of this worldly bliss is the attainment of self and society under the episteme of unity of knowledge. This kind of causality equivalently arises from the ontology of the oneness of God (*Tawhid*) and from the epistemology of organic unity of the world-system and its 'everything' in the light of the *shari'ah*. The *shari'ah* thus defines the functional ontology, which is reflected and observed in the learning towards unified preferences of self, community, society, institutions, diverse markets, and the nature of policies and social choices.

The super-cardinal relations of Truth destroying Falsehood as explained by Figure 1, and thereby rising to the net worth of universal consciousness, are the accomplishment of Man in relation to the universe. Within this universal attainment, preferences attain patterns emanating from the evolutionary learning universes that are never optimal in nature. Optimum exists only in the relational concept of super-cardinality at the End Event of the Hereafter and in the Originary Event of *Tawhid* as the pure ontology.⁸

There is yet another point of occurrence of optimality. This is the instantaneous happening at the core of the unknown. But this *hidden core* called *ghayb* in the *Qur'an* is not unraveled to the universe and its agents. It is in the custody of God alone.⁹

In the mundane world, the above phenomenological facts are borne out by the impossibility of attaining exact forecasts and predictions endeavored in futility by socio-scientific models (Mach, 2008; Soros, 1998). In our phenomenological case of the learning world-system in unity of knowledge, complexity replaces the outmoded linear models of scientific

8. Qur'an (92:13): "And verily unto Us (belong) the End and the Beginning."

9. Qur'an (39:63): "To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth....."

conceptions (Bertuglia & Vaio, 2005). Indeed, today science has become a study of process of change (Hull, 1988). Evolutionary cybernetic and system-views have replaced the orthodoxy of optimality (Johannessen, 1998; Shakun, 1988; Campbell, 1987).

According to the phenomenological model of unity of knowledge (*Tawhid*) the various curves of Figure 1 are described by simulative perturbations, as learning proceeds on towards the Hereafter through the medium of learning relations of the world-system. This learning continuity is implied by expression (7)

Preferences of individual and social choices, and thereby, their impact on markets, exchangeables, society and institutions attain similar transformations. Consequently, the *maslaha* functions (wellbeing function) is now denoted by the learning criterion,

$$\text{Simulate } C(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta)) \quad (8)$$

subject to iterations by circular causation between the variables,
 $(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta)) \in \{(\Omega, S) \rightarrow \text{world-system} : \rightarrow (\Omega, S)\}$:

$$x_i = f_i(\theta, \mathbf{x}_j(\theta)), i \neq j = 1, 2, \dots, n$$

(number of variables in the $\mathbf{x}(\theta)$ -vector.) (9)

$$\theta = g(\mathbf{x}(\theta)), \text{ which in the end is a monotonic positive representation of } C(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta)). \quad (10)$$

$C(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))$ now denotes the system of preference maps in ethical and social choices, subject to the progressive actualization of unity of knowledge, that is complementarities, between the knowledge-induced variables. This unifying experience is realized by circular causation dynamics of the relations in expression (9). Expression (10) implies that the *maslaha* is estimable. Therefore, policies and institutional changes and revisions of structures are possible in $C(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))$. $C(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))$ is synonymous with the function, $\theta = g(\mathbf{x}(\theta))$. In empirical works to estimate expression (10), a combination of structural multiple regression analysis along with Spatial Domain Analysis have been used for the complete simulation exercise of expressions (8)-(10) (Choudhury & Hossain, 2006).

An example of transformational reversibility between Truth (H(q)) and Falsehood (B(q))

The transitional form of the (H,B)[θ] relationship in Figure 1 and as implied by expression (7) implies that it is possible for either H and B to change sides. A false entity has scope to reject itself and revert to a good entity. Likewise, a good entity can demise into a false entity. These reversals can continue on in cycles, but with an ultimate convergence in respect of the discursively limiting derived values of $\{\theta \in (\Omega, S)\}$, as in expression (7).

An example of such transformational reversals is the reverse entropy caused by mankind's return to a sustainable and conscious consumption, production and resource mobilization and distributional patterns in socioeconomic development (Hossain, et al 1998). Such return to sustainability carries along with it transformational reversals in all possible entities, institutions, and individual and social preferences. Thus $B(\theta) \rightarrow H(\theta)$. For such a transformation we assign a payoff of 1 to $B(\theta)$. The payoff to $H(\theta)$ too is 1. Hence we have a matrix payoff of (1,1) for such a transformational reversal.

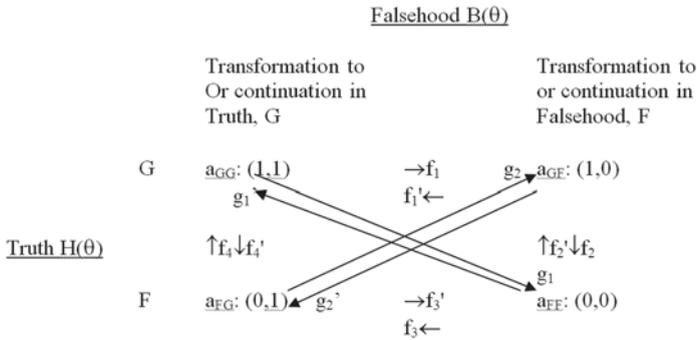
Likewise, it is possible to have a reversal of the type $H(\theta) \rightarrow B(\theta)$. In such a case, the matrix payoff is given by (0,0). An example of such a case is the good planet earth turned into ecological disaster.

The matrix payoff (1,0) stands for perpetuation of (H,B)[θ] across the usual Good, Bad combination. An example here is of the good earth perpetuating into a productive one in perpetuity; while the bad earth perpetuates into degraded earth.

The matrix payoff (0,1) stands for the reversal of a $H(\theta)$ situation into $B(\theta)$, as of Good entities becoming bad ones; while a bad situation reverts to a good one. An example here is of the good earth being degraded into barren one; and a barren earth being reverted into productive one.

In respect to the above explanation of transformational reversals Chart 1 gives the various matrix payoffs:

Chart 1: Matrix payoffs for transformational reversals between (H,B)[q] combinations over good and bad states of nature



The payoffs associated with a_{ij} , $i, j = G, F$ are interrelated across nexus of relationships and no independence is allowed for in the organic sense of systemic relationship. This is the implication of simulation of wellbeing subject to circular causation between the variables (*ayaths*) underlying expressions (8)-(10).

Consequently, the usual meanings of game-theoretic solutions by minimax and maximin games are untenable (Osborne and Rubinstein, 1994). Likewise, Nash-solution for steady-state equilibrium in the payoff matrix is untenable as well (Shubik, 1989). In the Prisoners Dilemma game applied to the problem of transformational reversibility, coefficients a_{GG} and a_{GF} are acceptable, but relational causality exists. Therefore, a_{FF} is unacceptable in the sense of transformational reversibility.

The results obtained have important implications in non-optimal games that essentially explain the relational learning consequences of knowledge-induced coefficients of payoffs (Osborne & Rubinstein, 1994). The analytical result also implies that the circular causation equations of expression (9)-(10) must be taken in their structural econometric forms. Reduced forms cannot be well-defined.

These are significant results for quantitative policy analysis. They also define the domain of institutional political economy involving Islamic

epistemic foundation to problems of economics, finance, society and science (Choudhury, 2007). The findings derived apply to the problem of preferences maps and to wider problems of decision-making under learning processes.

The following are the payoffs against each of the matrix entries with conditional probabilities (Hogg & Craig, 1965):

Payoff(a_{GG}) = $p_1(G|G)*1 + p_2(G|F)*1$; where $pi(x|y)$ denotes the conditional probability for the two contingencies $G|G$ and $G|F$, respectively. (11)

Payoff(a_{GF}) = $p_1(G|F)*1 + p_2(F|G)*0$; where the conditional probabilities have similar meanings as above for the cases as shown. (12)

Payoff(a_{FG}) = $p_1(F|G)*0 + p_2(G|F)*1$, with similar meanings for the conditional probabilities for the cases shown. (13)

Payoff(a_{FF}) = $p_1(F|G)*0 + p_2(F|F)*0$, with similar meanings for the conditional probabilities for the cases shown. (14)

Also refer to the cross causality as shown in Chart 1. This suggests that payoffs according to different possible transformational reversibility are functionally related. This allows for reconstructions of preferences at all levels by circular causation, while allowing for adverse possibilities in prevalent states of contingency.

As an example, consider the following result; the rest can be worked out:

$$g_1 = f_2 \bullet f_1 \Rightarrow$$

$$\text{Prob}(g_1) = \text{Prob}(f_2 | f_1) * \text{Prob}(f_1) =$$

$$[\text{Prob}(a_{FF} | a_{GF}) + \text{Prob}(a_{GF} | a_{GG})] * \text{Prob}(a_{GG}) \quad (15)$$

The *Qur'an*¹⁰ characterizes states of variations between highs and lows of moral achievement representing human possibilities affecting the

10. Qur'an (chapter 95, Tin, the Fig)

reversibility of preferences and their artifacts in the world-systems. Conditional probabilities and their payoffs are associated with such diverse possibilities defining transformational reversibility.

Conclusion: knowledge, space, time curvature of the world-system

The socio-scientific world-system manifests an interactively integrated and evolutionary domain that is graduated by circular causality between sub-systems and their entities via learning and unification. Consequently, the extended and evolutionary form of the $C(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))$ -function occurs across diverse sub-systems. These include the hard core sciences, as in the case of developing technology, and the social sciences as in the case of choices of institutional structures. The latter comprises the area of policy-making, decision-systems, etc. The preference maps denoted by simulated values of $C(\theta, \mathbf{x}(\theta))$ -curves in Figure 1 show simulative perturbations. Thereby, the interactively integrated and evolutionary learning relations in unity of knowledge across complementary sub-systems attain curvatures with simulative perturbations.

Therefore, the learning and unifying socio-scientific universe in knowledge, space and time dimensions has not steady-state curvature, as otherwise described by Relativity Physics and the non-process representation of physical and social sciences.

Contrarily, the *Qur'an* (13:1-5) explains the conscious universe as an interactively integrated and evolutionary (IIE) nexus, whose IIE-learning experience is gained through the process of learning in unity of knowledge. Such a process marks the phenomenology of unity between the divine law, *Tawhid*, and the world-system.

This kind of learning dynamics is marked by the realization of $H(\theta)$ moving inexorably towards H^* , as shown in Figure 1. The *Qur'an* characterizes the opposite of this worldview by $B(\theta)$, which annihilates itself as entropy on the face of $H(\theta)$. $B(\theta)$ thus moves perpetually and continuously towards its entropic end-state in B^* at the Event of the Hereafter. Thus *Tawhid* and the Hereafter as equivalent super-cardinal

ontology of perfection of knowledge that is purely unified are the Great Events of Reality (trans. Ali, *Qur'an*, 78:1).

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Transformative Philosophy

Jose Elambassery*

Introduction

As we open the news papers or switch on radios or TVs, we are bombarded with news of scams, frauds, violence and killings. We are also reminded of the extreme inequality and injustice prevailing all over the world. Commercials let us know that sections of people, even in a poor country, spend crores of rupees in conspicuous consumption while a vast number of people live in abject poverty. We have in recent times witnessed the collapse of global economy and the consequences of it felt by people all over the world. Recently in countries like Greece, UK, France, Ireland and Portugal workers and students took to the streets and indulged in violence to protest against injustices and protect their rights. No doubt there is need for a transformation. People all over the world hope and yearn for a world in which all human beings can live in peace and harmony, without violence and poverty. However such a world requires a transformation of the political, economic and social structures that exist in the world and among the people who inhabit this world.

Indeed, the world has witnessed tremendous progress on many fronts during the last few centuries, especially in the 20th century. But at the same time we have become increasingly aware of many of the failures and mistakes of the past. The first half of the 20th century witnessed barbarism and cruelty that challenged the very assumption of our being civilized human beings; in the latter half of the 20th century, people all around the world have gained in terms of education, health and income. Life expectancy at birth, and literacy and school enrollment rates have increased significantly. Greater numbers of people in developing countries today live under relatively pluralistic and democratic regimes. However, we also know that disparities

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between the rich and the poor—globally and within nations—are increasing fast. And, side by side with movements for self-governance and democracy, we find increasing incidences of ethnic conflicts and inter-communal violence brought about by identity politics, fanaticism and fundamentalism. In many countries the leaders are using the ethno-religious differences of their citizens to fuel conflicts and violence as we have witnessed in the former Yugoslavia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar and to a lesser extent in Gujarat in India.

Transformative philosophy is a search for the transformative potentialities of the philosophy of thinkers who could guide us in our endeavor for a just and egalitarian society. How can transformative philosophers be identified? To illuminate the concept we need to understand the terms “transformation” and “philosophy”. Transformation implies a fundamental change. The Webster’s Dictionary defines transformation as changing the “form”, “condition”, “character”, or “function”.¹ Philosophy has been defined etymologically as love of wisdom, as the branch of knowledge or academic study devoted to the systematic examination of basic concepts such as truth, existence, reality, causality, and freedom, search for truth, analysis of language, and so on. In this paper, by philosophy is meant the basic principles and concepts underlying the thinking of the philosopher concerned. The thinkers whose transformative potentialities that I hope to explore in this paper are Karl Marx, B. R. Ambedkar, Paulo Freire, Levinas and Amartya Sen. I have chosen these thinkers because I believe that they are relevant in the context of the contemporary situation in India.

Today India is trying to emerge as a world power and a developed country; she wants to have a seat on the UN Security Council as a permanent member and to have a say in international organizations. However, to become a genuinely developed country, India still has a long way to go. In the latest Human Development Index, India has been ranked 134 among 182 countries. The ranking clearly shows that India has failed in ensuring a

1 *Webster’s New World Dictionary*, Simon and Schuster, 1982.

better quality of life for its citizens, in spite of all the progress that the country has made.² Persistent inequalities, ineffective delivery of public services, weak accountability systems and failures in the implementation of pro-poor policies are the major bottlenecks to progress. Fifty percent of the hungry of the world are in India today.³ In the gender inequality index, India is at a poor 113th position among 138 countries.⁴

This reality demands a new politics, a new economics, a different type of education and development. I believe that the insights of these five thinkers could help us in transforming the society. Marx envisioned a socialist Utopia; his socialism is committed to the principles of equality and equity. In the caste ridden, unequal and unjust India, B. R. Ambedkar envisaged a democratic and egalitarian society through the constitutional means. Paulo Feriere's educational methodology is capable of conscientizing the students and transforming the mentality of the people so that they can work for a better future for everyone. Traditionally the Indian society is one which does not respect individuals but reduces them to categories of caste, creed and language. Levinas' plea for the unconditional affirmation of the other and respect for the other is a necessity, if India wants to be a country that will be respected and looked up to. Genuine development cannot be achieved by merely increasing the GNP or PCI but only by the ever widening areas of freedom of the people as envisaged by Amartya Sen.

Karl Marx

The term "Marxism" has always had a double connotation: a theoretical project for understanding the social world and a political project for changing it. Marxism always had an "emancipatory" dimension; it aimed to

2 Read more: India 134 on UN development index - The Times of India <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-134-on-UN-development-index/articleshow/5092156.cms#ixzz14r7E6QIw>

3 India accounts for 50% of the world's hungry <http://business.rediff.com/slide-show/2010/sep/17/slide-show-1-india-accounts-for-50-pc-of-the-worlds-hungry.htm>

4 Dipak Kumar Dash, TNN, Nov 10, 2009, Gender equality index: India ranks a poor 113 - The Times of India <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Gender-equality-index-India-ranks-a-poor-113/articleshow/5213883.cms#ixzz152KTXef4>

comprehend the aspects of human oppression and, by theorizing, the conditions for eliminating this oppression, to advance the struggle for human freedom. The normative ideal underlying the Marxist emancipatory project is classlessness. The existence of classes is seen as a systemic impediment to human freedom because it deprives most people of control over their destiny, violates the values of democracy, individual liberty and self-realization. Marxism as a whole contains three interdependent theoretical nodes: Marxism as class analysis, Marxism as scientific socialism and Marxism as class emancipation. The enormous appeal of Marxism came partly from the unity of these three elements for together they provided a basis for the belief that eliminating the miseries and oppressions of the existing world was not simply a utopian fantasy but a practical political project. However this unity no more exists and the dissolution of USSR and other socialist countries has given rise to questions concerning the emancipatory potential of Marxism.⁵

However, it would be unfortunate if, in the context of the disintegration of political Marxism, Marx's ideas were to disappear. Because Marx's theories remain and will continue "to remain relevant for as long as money is in short supply, and as long as problems intrinsic to the modern industrial world, such as poverty, differences in real opportunity between the rich and the poor, and similar economic difficulties continue to endure."⁶

Derrida notes:

In the wake of the fall of communism, many in the West had become triumphalistic and some have the audacity to neo-evangelize in the name of the ideal of a liberal democracy that has finally realized itself as the ideal of human history. However, the reality is that never have violence, inequality, exclusion, famine, and economic oppression affected as many human beings in the history of the earth and of

5 Erik Olin Wright, Andrew Levine and Elliott Sober, *Reconstructing Marxism* (London: Verso, 1992), 187-191.

6 Tom Rockmore, *Marx after Marxism: The philosophy of Karl Marx* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 205.

humanity...let us never neglect this obvious macroscopic fact, made up of innumerable singular sites of suffering: no degree of progress allows one to ignore that never before, in absolute figures, have so many men, women and children been subjugated, starved or exterminated on the earth.⁷

Derrida says that it will always be a fault not to read and reread and discuss Marx because there will be no future without Marx, without the memory and inheritance of Marx.⁸ Derrida believes that Marxism is all the more important because communism is essentially different from other labour and political movements in its *international* character. It was the first organized political movement in history of humanity to present itself as *geo-political*.⁹

From his early critical analysis of Hegel to the uncompleted late work *A Critique of Political Economy*, Marx's philosophy is committed to the goal of human emancipation. The young Marx expresses the driving motif of his whole philosophical and political activity in the following words:

Only when the real, individual man re-absorbs in himself the abstract citizen, and as an individual human being has become a *species-being* in his every-day life, in his particular work, and in his particular situation, only when man has recognized and organized his *forces proper* as *social forces*, and consequently no longer separates social power from himself in the shape of *political* power, only then will human emancipation have been accomplished.¹⁰

According to Marx the social practice of individuals is substantially the basis of all history, but as long as individuals are not conscious of the social responsibility of their conditions, what they create will be experienced

7 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), 80ff.

8 Ibid., 13.

9 Ibid., 18.

10 Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol.3. (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1975) 168.

as if it were the consequence of natural laws, and so as something which determines them and rules over them. The objectified labor becomes expressions of alienation. Even if unconsciously produced, the conditions are products of human practice and not of natural laws, so they can in principle be overcome by human practice. Now this demands a basically different philosophy, a philosophy which serves human emancipation in this way becomes criticism which will lead to, as Marx says, “the categorical imperative to overthrow all those relations in which man is an abased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being”¹¹

What Marx wanted and envisaged was human emancipation, a society where all the human potentialities could develop in unhindered ways. With great precision and with great analytical skill Marx spelled out the paths leading to revolution which would usher in communism which he saw as the positive transcendence of *private property* as *human self-estrangement* and as the complete return of human beings to themselves, accomplished consciously and embracing the entire wealth of previous development. He believed that Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be the solution.¹²

Contemporary Indian Situation

Marxist ideology has been an important force in Indian social and political thinking and praxis, though the number of those openly belong to the communist parties or followers of the ideology in its entirety many not be impressive. Dogmatic belief in what was proclaimed to be the Marxist doctrine by the so-called socialist states was partly at least responsible for the stagnation and collapse of the socialist economies that we have witnessed towards the end of 20th century. It is well known that Marx had little respect for the so-called disciples; when he heard that some people

11 Ibid.,182

22 Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, Trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, (Middlesex: Penguin Books,1975) 348

were calling themselves Marxists he seems to have said all that he knew was that he was not a Marxist himself. He did not want disciples who would make a nice theory out of his ideas irrespective of the existing facts. Many Indian Marxists were and are ‘disciples’ of Marx who did not understand the Indian situation but kept on repeating the worn out and outdated phrases propagated for a time and later discarded by the defunct USSR and so-called communist China. Thus Marxism does not have the desired effect on the Indian society.

Officially India has accepted the socialist ideology and works for inclusive growth. Though India has advanced in science and technology, majority of Indians are still religious, superstitious and tradition-bound and believe in the caste system. They believe that the caste system is divinely sanctioned and so is worth preserving. Even the Dalit politicians believe in caste and manipulate it for personal advantage. In this context the Marxian belief that the structures in the society are human made and that humans can and should change them is extremely important. Clinging to her past, India can never progress nor be a genuinely democratic society. To transform the Indian society we do need the Marxian vision and faith in human beings. Someone who was influenced by the Marxian vision and understood the Indian situation is B. R. Ambedkar, the main architect of the Indian Constitution and one of the greatest leaders of India. He believed that the contributions of Marx that were worth preserving were the following:

1. The function of philosophy is to reconstruct the world and not to waste its time in explaining the origins of the world.
2. That there is a conflict of interest between class and class.
3. That private ownership of property brings power to one class and sorrow to the other through exploitation.
4. That it is necessary for the good of society that the sorrow be removed by the abolition of private property.¹³

13 Valerian Rodrigues, *The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 117.

B.R. Ambedkar

The role Ambedkar played has left its imprint on the Indian society and is still shaping the political and civil contours of the contemporary India and of political discourse. India in the recent times had a Dalit president and a chief justice. The present speaker of the Lok Sabha and the chief ministers of the most populous states in the country are Dalits. Perhaps none of this would have been possible if it was not for the constant struggle Ambedkar waged and the vision he embedded in the Constitution of India. His life is his message, so we have to look into his life and struggle to understand the liberative potentialities of his thought and his impact on the Indian society.

Ambedkar who was born in a poor untouchable Mahar family had to fight against social discrimination based on the Hindu Caste system from the very beginning of his life. He spent many years studying a host of subjects ranging from economics and anthropology to politics, law and religion, in colleges and universities, such as Elphinstone College, Bombay; Columbia University and London University. Yet, Ambedkar's education did not grant him the status of a fellow human being when he returned to India. Untouchability, practiced by an overwhelming majority of the caste Hindus as well as other religious communities, stigmatized him in the most pernicious ways.

Ambedkar gradually – because of his intellectual brilliance, commitment to the eradication of discrimination of the Dalits and opposition to the caste system – became one of the most prominent political figures of the time. He was very critical of mainstream Indian political parties for their lack of commitment to the elimination of the caste system. He wanted the Dalits to shape their political course and future. Their salvation lay in their social elevation, in their education and organization. They needed to get rid of the clichés associated with the Dalits; and so, he exhorted them to improve the general tone of their demeanor, re-tone pronunciations and revitalize their thoughts. In 1927, presiding over a delegation of more than 15,000 delegates, Ambedkar declared that removal of untouchability and

inter-caste marriage alone would not put an end to the ills of the untouchables, that all departments of service such as courts, military, police and commerce, should be reorganized on two main principles – equality and absence of casteism. He reminded them that they will attain self-elevation only if they learn self-help, regain their self-respect, and gain self-knowledge. One of the resolutions passed demanded the adoption of the principle that all are born equal and continued to be so till death. To achieve social and religious equality the first act he did was to organize at Mahad, Maharashtra, a public bonfire of *Manusmriti* on 25th Dec 1927, because *Manusmriti* was a symbol of injustice under which the Dalits have been crushed across centuries.

Ambedkar felt that the freedom struggle led by the Congress Party was a movement for power rather than for freedom; to the Congress party the cause of the freedom and liberation of the untouchables was peripheral and so he refused to join the freedom movement and thought it prudent to co-operate with the British and work for the political rights of the people. Ambedkar held:

There is no use having Swaraj if you cannot defend it. More important than the question of defending Swaraj is the question of defending the Hindus under the Swaraj. In my opinion only when the Hindu society becomes a castless society that it can hope to have strength to defend itself. Without such internal strength, Swaraj of Hindus may turn out to be only a step towards slavery.¹⁴

Ambedkar demanded a separate electorate for the Dalits which was fiercely opposed by Gandhiji. When the British agreed with Ambedkar and announced the awarding of separate electorates, Gandhiji began a *fast-unto-death* while imprisoned in the Yerwada Central Jail of Poona in 1932 against the separate electorate for untouchables. Concerning the Poona pact Ambedkar said, “The communal award was intended to free the Untouchables from the

14 Rodrigues, op.cit., 305.

thralldom of the Hindus. The Poona pact is designed to place them under the domination of the Hindus.”¹⁵

Upon India’s independence Ambedkar was appointed Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. The text prepared by Ambedkar provided constitutional guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens, including the freedom of religion, the abolition of untouchability and the outlawing of all forms of discrimination. Ambedkar argued for extensive economic and social rights for women, and also won the Assembly’s support for introducing a system of reservations of jobs in the civil services, schools and colleges for members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Ambedkar says that the Constitution, in addition to political democracy, also lays down an ideal.

While we have established political democracy, it is also the desire that we should lay down as our ideal economic democracy. We do not want merely to lay down a mechanism to enable people to capture power. The Constitution also wishes to lay down an ideal before those who would be forming the Government. That ideal is economic democracy, whereby, so far as I am concerned, I understand to mean, ‘one man, one vote.’¹⁶

Indian Constitution was adopted on November 26, 1949 by the Constituent Assembly. Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet in 1951, following the stalling in parliament of his draft of the Hindu Code Bill, which sought to expound gender equality in the laws of inheritance, marriage and the economy. The Bill was an attempt on his part to effectively transform the hierarchical relations embodied in the Hindu family and caste system and bring them in tune with the values that were embedded in the Constitution. The strong opposition from the orthodox Hindus eventually sabotaged the programme.¹⁷ On October 14, 1956 Ambedkar organized

15 Ibid., 22.

16 Sukhadeo Thorat and Narender Kumar, eds., *B.R. Ambedkar: Perspectives on Social Exclusion and Inclusive Politics* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 340-1.

17 Rodrigues, op.cit. 15-16.

a formal public ceremony for himself and his supporters in Nagpur where he completed his own conversion and then proceeded to convert an estimated 500,000 of his supporters who were gathered around him. Ambedkar died in his sleep at home on December 6, 1956 in Delhi.

By 1935 Ambedkar had lost all hope that Hinduism could be reformed. As a militant messiah he tried to instill in the vast masses of India's outcasts a sense of confidence, defiance, dignity, freedom and hope. According to Ambedkar,

The *Bhagavad Gita* is not a gospel and so it can therefore have no message and it is futile to search for one. The question will no doubt be asked: What is the *Bhagavad Gita* if it is not a gospel? My answer is that the *Bhagavad Gita* is neither a book of religion nor a treatise on philosophy. What the *Bhagavad Gita* does is to defend certain dogmas of religion on philosophic grounds.¹⁸

It was a defense of *chaturvarna* which helped to consolidate Brahmanism and the hierarchical system of caste.

It seems to me a matter of great regret that the Hindu civilization which is so many years old ...has produced five crores of Untouchable, some two crores of tribal people and some fifty thousand criminal tribes people. What can one say of this civilization? With a civilization which has produced these results, there must be something very fundamentally wrong, and I think it is time that Hindus looked at it from this point of view –whether they can be proud of the civilization which has produced these communities like the Untouchables, the criminal tribes and the tribal people. I think they ought to think twice – not twice a hundred times – they are conventionally called civilized – whether they could be called civilized with this land of results produced by their civilization.¹⁹

18 Ibid., 193.

19 Thorat, op. cit., 366-367.

He believed that a large majority of Untouchables who had the capacity to think out their problem believes that one way to solve the problem of the Untouchables is for them to abandon Hinduism and be converted to some other religion. Such a step was necessary because 'religion exists not for the saving of the souls but for the preservation of society and the welfare of the individuals'.²⁰ Ambedkar developed a new interpretation of Buddhism and in *The Buddha and His Dhamma* he transposes the Buddha's teachings to the present and suggests its contemporary relevance with respect to humanity. He saw Buddhism as an ideology that engages with the world, and privileges the poor and the exploited. He repeatedly asserted that the Buddha had a social message. Further he constructed Buddhism in opposition to Hinduism arguing that, if there are some traces of Hinduism in Buddhism, they could be attributed to Brahminical interpretations.²¹

Though a large number of Ambedkar's followers converted to Buddhism and a considerable number to other religions, the curse of caste system still continues to vitiate the Indian politics and society. The hold that the caste system had earlier has loosened to a certain extent but the mentality of the vast majority of Indians has not changed. A change in their mentality may be brought about by a new pedagogy and educational system. In ancient India education was the sole privilege of the upper castes; in the independent India it still is controlled by the upper castes; though education has become a fundamental right today, the method and purpose of education is not to produce innovative and free thinking creative individuals but persons who would accommodate to the existing structure and maintain the hierarchical structure of the society. Thus there is a need for educational systems that can conscientize people and make them agents of transformation. In this context the contributions of Paulo Freire could be looked into.

20 Rodrigues, op. cit., 238.

21 Ibid., 25.

Paulo Freire (1921-1997)

Paulo Freire is one of the most influential twentieth century writers on education. He was born on September 19, 1921 to middle class parents in Brazil. Freire became familiar with poverty and hunger during the 1929 Great Depression. Though the experience was rather brief and not very severe, it would shape and construct his particular educational viewpoint. Freire enrolled at Law School at the University of Recife in 1943. He also studied philosophy, more specifically phenomenology and the psychology of language. In 1964, a military coup put an end to his effort to educate the poor and the marginalized, and he was imprisoned as a traitor for 70 days. In 1976 Freire published his first book, *Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Soon after, he came out with his most famous book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in Portuguese in 1968. In 1979 he was able to return to Brazil where he died of heart failure on May 2, 1997.

Though Paulo Freire's philosophy of education had its roots in the Socratic method, it owed a lot to modern Marxist and anti-colonialist thinkers like Fanon. His *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* emphasized the need to provide the colonized and the marginalized with an education which was modern and anti-colonial at the same time. Freire tells us,

Thought and study alone did not produce Pedagogy of the Oppressed; it is rooted in concrete situations and describes the reactions of laborers (peasant or urban) and of middle-class persons whom I have observed directly or indirectly during the course of my educative work.²²

In Freire's view education is a social affair because for the poor and the dispossessed, social change is accomplished in unity through the power of the many who find strength and purpose in a common vision. Liberation achieved by individuals at the expense of others is an act of oppression. Personal freedom and the development of individuals can only occur in mutuality with others. Education for liberation provides for the development

22 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972),16.

of those skills and competencies without which the exercise of power would be impossible. Empowerment is both the means and the outcome of this pedagogy which could be called liberative education. Liberative education is mutually supported learning for empowerment aimed at liberative praxis which seeks to transform the social order. The content of such education is for the awakening of critical consciousness and the development of appropriate skills and competencies related to such praxis. Its process is dialogical, affirming the mutual and coequal roles of teachers and learners.

Freire believes that humanization is the vocation of human beings and that it is a historical possibility. To actualize this possibility one should become free. But people who have been and are oppressed could actually be scared of freedom. "The oppressed having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines are fearful of freedom."²³ This fear of freedom has to be overcome. The fear of freedom is also found in the oppressors. To attain freedom there must be praxis or putting into action the theories.

To surmount the situation of oppression, men must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity. But the struggle to be more fully human has already begun in the authentic struggle to transform the situation.²⁴

To preserve the existing system the establishment depends on what Freire calls the banking method of education.²⁵ "Banking" means students are being treated as empty bank accounts that are open to the deposits of the teacher. It does not make the students aware of the oppression that exists in the society and thus encourages oppression. Instead of the existing education system, Freire suggests problem-posing education which sees education as a practice of freedom and it denies that the world exists as a reality apart from human beings.²⁶ In problem-posing education, people

23 Ibid., 23.

24 Ibid., 24.

25 Ibid., 45ff.

26 Ibid., 52ff.

develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. Problem-posing education affirms humans as beings in the process of becoming. The unfinished character of people and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity. Problem-posing education is aimed at liberating dialogue and praxis.

The point of departure of problem-posing education must always be with people in the ‘here and now,’ the situation within which they are submerged. To transform the society they must perceive and believe that the reality in which they live is not fate or unalterable destiny, but merely as limiting and challenging situations. Understanding the world is possible only through dialogue. The essence of dialogue is ‘the word’ and the constitutive elements of the word are reflection and action. To speak a true word is to transform the world. To exist humanly is to name the world, to change it. Dialogue is the encounter between human beings, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Dialogue cannot exist in the absence of profound love for the world, for human beings and intense faith in them. Faith in the power of humans to make and remake, to create and recreate the world we live in. True dialogue demands “critical thinking”. Reflecting on the aspiration of the people and the basic contradictions that exist in the society, we should be able to problematize the concrete reality and intervene in the reality as subjects and transform it.

Freire’s Notions of Pedagogy and Epistemology

We could say that Freire’s pedagogy and attendant epistemology is framed by a modernist conception of the student as active constructor of knowledge which is meant as an ethical project, centered on the role of knowledge for the purpose of developing social justice. A question that can be asked is whether the constructivist epistemology of Freire is capable of providing adequate support for the ethical project he wishes to accomplish with his pedagogy. The world is the arena where the active student is free to act by grasping, taking, calculating, conceptualizing and

thematizing, i.e., to possess the world by conceptually grasping it. This epistemological action involves forging what Levinas would call a totality or an economy of the sameness, thematizing the world into categories. As a result, the world becomes part of the student's identity by being an extension of his or her conceptual structure. This gives the student, as an active agent, power over the world in order to transform it. As such it is structurally similar to the epistemology of the oppressors in banking education. To resolve this tension, Freire needs to ground epistemology in something that goes beyond constructivism to a level of knowing that might situate it in a deeper, more originary relation, which, according to Levinas, is where the knowing being lets the known being manifest itself while respecting its alterity without marking it in any way whatever by this cognitive relation. Freire's project of freedom or liberation for the oppressed is an important part of the move towards justice. However the Freirean freedom must be situated in ethics to have direction. Freedom must heed a call, endure a limit, be conditioned in one way rather than another. Justice is originary, not freedom. Thus Freire's pedagogy can be enriched by adding a Levinasian perspective to it.²⁷

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995)

Emmanuel Levinas who made ethical responsibility for "the Other" the bedrock of his philosophical analyses was born in Kaunas, Lithuania, of Jewish parents. He went to France in 1923 at the age of 17 to study at the University of Strasbourg. In 1928-29 he studied under Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger at the University of Freiburg. His family in Lithuania died in the Holocaust, while he did forced labour as a prisoner of war in Germany and his wife and daughter hid in a French monastery. Given this background, Levinas wanted to develop a philosophy that would not allow or justify the cruelty and dehumanization that he witnessed and experienced.

27 Clarence Joldersma, *The Tension Between Justice and Freedom in Paulo Freire's Faith-Full Pedagogy* Draft: May 11, 1999 <http://www.calvin.edu/~cjolders/WHAM99paper.html> (21-11-10)

Levinas' alternative to traditional philosophy which was to some extent responsible for or unable to contain the anti-semitism, the Holocaust, Nagasaki, Heroshima and violence was a philosophy that made personal ethical responsibility to others the starting point and primary focus for philosophy. A phrase often used to sum up his stance is "Ethics precedes ontology". Instead of the thinking "I" epitomized in Descartes' "I think, therefore I am," Levinas began with an ethical "I." For him, even the self is possible only with its recognition of "the Other." It is a recognition that carries infinite responsibility toward what is irreducibly different.

That ethics is *prima philosophia* is a principle that encapsulates the spirit of his thinking and serves as the basis for his first extended critique of Western philosophical tradition, namely, *Totality and Infinity*. According to Levinas, in its search for truth, "philosophy has mostly been ontology."²⁸ It has privileged thematization and knowledge at the expense of the absolute priority of ethics. This privileging shows itself in the way philosophy attempts to comprehend the nature of reality by subordinating what exists to an all-encompassing 'totality'. Confined within the totality, particular beings are understood as the bearers of attributes they share with other beings, whereby they are divested of their individuality and become conceptually 'the same'. For Levinas, the only being capable of resisting such totalization is the human Other. The Other absolutely resists all philosophical attempts at knowing and calls into question the violence and injustice of ontology. This calling into question occurs in the face-to-face encounter with the Other which "precedes ontology."²⁹

For Levinas, the subject matter of first philosophy is the ethical relation to the other human being; therefore, he puts ethics first whereas Heidegger puts it second. That is, for Heidegger, the relation to the other person is only a moment in a philosophical investigation whose ambition is the exploration of the basic question of metaphysics. For a philosopher like

28 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 42.

29 Ibid.,13

Heidegger, the other person is just one of many, one of the crowd or the herd. Therefore there cannot be anything absolutely surprising, challenging or remarkable about the other person. The other might become my colleague, companion or co-worker but not the source of my compassion or the object of my admiration. Levinas points out that the failure to underpin our social interactions by ethical relations can lead to the failure to acknowledge the humanity of the other. This is what happened during the Holocaust and the countless acts of violence and inhumanity in the twentieth century. In all these crimes against humanity the other becomes only a faceless face in the crowd, someone we can easily pass by, someone whose life or death merits only indifference.

The first time that Levinas uses the word ‘ethics’ in the text proper, he defines it as “the putting into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other.”³⁰ Ethics for Levinas is the critical question of the liberty, spontaneity and cognitive enterprise of the ego that seeks to reduce all otherness to itself. The ethical is therefore the location of a point of alterity, or what Levinas calls ‘exteriority’, that cannot be reduced to the same. Thus, morality is not an experience of values, but an access to exterior being. Levinas calls this exterior being ‘face’ and defines it as the way in which the Other presents himself or herself, exceeding the “idea of the other in me.”³¹ In the language of transcendental philosophy, the face is the condition of the possibility of ethics. Only by discovering the irreducible alterity of the Other can I understand that I am neither solipstically alone in the world nor part of a totality to which all others belong. The encounter with the Other characterizes human relationships at their most basic level and makes me realize that the world is not my unique possession and that I share this world with others. This realization calls into question my freedom and power. Such a situation is ethical because a lot depends upon how I respond to this realization. The Other escapes my power in the way that nothing else does. The resistance offered by the Other should not be understood as a force which is superior or even comparable to my own.

30 Ibid., 43.

31 Ibid., 50.

Levinas describes the resistance offered by the Other in paradoxical terms as “the resistance of what has no resistance—the ethical resistance.”³² This ethical resistance cannot be measured in terms of force. The authority of the Other is not compelling because the Other only orders me not to kill but has no means of persuading me to obey. Therefore, my obligation to the Other is not enforced by any rational argument or physical coercion which compels me to respect the vulnerability of the Other.

Ethics for Levinas does not provide a path to knowledge of right or wrong, good or evil. It is a point of contact with that which challenges me most radically and through that challenge my identity and relation with the world are thrown into question. My response to the encounter defines my ethical nature. Thus, what is most powerful about Levinas’ writing is his insistence on ethics as a challenge to the subject rather than as a solution to its problems.

In the contemporary Indian society people are reduced and boxed into categories of caste, religion, ethnicity, class, language, etc. This categorization has been responsible for the inhuman practice of untouchability, the massacres at the partition of the country, the genocide in Gujarat and the continuing violence against the marginalized. What is required is to be open to the otherness of the Other and respect the Other as a human being and take responsibility for the Other rather than reducing the Other to the same or see the Other as a threat to my freedom. Thus the Levinasian ethics is a must to complement the Hindu morality that prevails in the country.

Enrique Dussell, basing himself on the Marxian critique of Capitalism and Levinas’ critique of the western logo-centric philosophy, developed his Philosophy of Liberation in the context of the Latin American reality, which he called Transcendental Economics: an economics that transcends the categories of the traditional economics and makes the marginalized, the pauper and their needs the center and prime concern of economics. The Nobel Prize winning Indian economist, Amartya Sen, also known as

³² Ibid., 199.

“the Mother Teresa of Economics” for his work on famine, human development theory, welfare economics, the underlying mechanisms of poverty, gender inequality, and political liberalism, has attempted to restore to ethics its rightful place in economics.

Amartya Kumar Sen

Amartya Kumar Sen (born on 3 November, 1933) won the Nobel Prize in Economics for his contributions to the welfare economics. In the year 2010, Time magazine listed him among the 100 most influential persons in the world. Sen studied in India at the Visva-Bharati University School and Presidency college, Kolkata, and did his doctoral studies at Trinity College Cambridge. He was Professor and the Founder-Head of the Department of Economics at Jadavpur University, Calcutta, his very first appointment at the age of 23. Sen returned to Cambridge to complete his studies and spent four years studying philosophy there. He has taught at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Universities of Stanford, Cambridge, Berkeley, Calcutta, Cornell and Oxford. He has taught economics also at Delhi School of Economics and London School of Economics. He is an indefatigable defender of political freedom and believes that famines do not occur in functioning democracies because their leaders must be more responsive to the demands of the citizens. As a nine-year-old boy, he witnessed the Bengal famine of 1943, in which three million people perished due to the policies of the British government rather than due to the lack of food. Sen also is a vigorous defender of the rights of women. He believes that there are more than 100 million women missing in the world, the vast majority of them in India and other Asian countries, due to the neglect of female children, infanticide and feticide. He has called attention to the mortality impact of unequal rights between the genders in the developing world, particularly in Asia.

Development as Freedom

Over the past 50 years, “development” has generally been defined in terms of industrialization. Most economists define it as growth in real output

on a per capita basis. This theory uses income and commodities as the basis of one's well-being. However, Sen believes that wellbeing does not always depend on one's income but on many other physical, personal and social factors. Sen identifies at least five problems that will disqualify income as the right yardstick to measure the development or wellbeing of a society. They are:

1. Personal Heterogeneities
2. Environmental Diversities
3. Variation in Social Climate
4. Differences in Relational Perspectives
5. Distribution within the Family³³

While discussing approaches to development, Sen examines three philosophical traditions that have laid claim to the proper basis for social justice. First is utilitarianism, going back to Jeremy Bentham, with its emphasis on maximizing the total "utility" of a commodity for achieving "the greatest good for the greatest number." The second school is libertarianism which emphasizes both the natural and the inherited rights of all individual members of the community and holds them as inviolable. Finally, there is the principle proposed by John Rawls, which insists on choosing those social arrangements that maximize the well-being of the poorest members of a community, subject to the preservation of liberty. Sen argues that these conceptions of development are far too narrow and argues for a broader goal for development: increasing the capability of all human beings to achieve those things that they most value. Sen argues that we should attend not only to the distribution of primary goods, but also how effectively people are able to use those goods to pursue their ends. According to Sen, development should be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom such as poverty, tyranny, poor economic

33 Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 70-74

opportunities, systematic social deprivation, and neglect of public facilities, intolerance or over activity of repressive states.

Sen's "capability approach" sees human life as a set of "doings and beings" or "functionings." Capability reflects a person's freedom to choose between different ways of living. If freedom is intrinsically important, then, the alternative combinations available for choice are all relevant for judging a person's advantage, even though he or she will eventually choose only an alternative. In this view, the choice itself is a valuable feature of a person's life. On the other hand, if freedom is seen as being only instrumentally important, then, the interest in the capability set lies only in the fact that it offers the person opportunities to achieve various valuable states. Only the achieved states are in themselves valuable, not the opportunities, which are valued only as means to the end of reaching valuable states.

The foundational importance of human capabilities provides a firm basis for evaluating living standards and the quality of life, and also points to a general format in terms of which problems of efficiency and equality can both be discussed. The things that people value doing or being can be quite diverse, and the valuable capabilities vary from such elementary freedoms as being free from hunger and undernourishment to such complex abilities as achieving self-respect and social participation. The challenge of human development demands attention being paid to a variety of sectoral concerns and a combination of social and economic processes. To broaden the limited lives into which the majority of human beings in our country are willy-nilly imprisoned by force of circumstances is the major challenge of human development in India and the contemporary world. Informed and intelligent evaluation both of the lives we are forced to lead and of the lives we would be able to choose to lead through bringing about social changes is the first step in confronting that challenge, a challenge that we must face.

To transform the Indian society into one where there is genuine development and respect for human rights, the philosophies of the five thinkers we have dealt with would be of immense value. For Marx the very aim of philosophy was to change the world and create a classless

society rather than interpret it. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, had immense faith in democracy and peoples' capacity to create not only political but also social and economic democracy and he provided the tools for it in the Constitution. At the present juncture where education has been made a fundamental right for all, the quality of education is equally important and the problem-posing method of education proposed by Paulo Freire can be of immense use. In our country of scams, corruption, and violence against the marginalized, minorities and women, the plea of Levinas for ethics and unconditional affirmation of the Other is extremely important. What India needs today is not merely economic growth but inclusive growth and ever widening choices for all that is envisioned and advocated by Amartya Sen.

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Imagination of the Scientist- Mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

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Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), Jesuit priest, scientist paleontologist, mystic, poet, philosopher and theologian, had the singular honour of dying on the Easter Sunday in 1955. In his memory, this essay aims to capture the rich and inspiring imagination that runs through his writings. While he remained an unsung hero during his lifetime, scientists and mystics alike have taken note of his contributions not only to the cause of science, but to the tome of mystic literature as well. In him one could find the rare combination of a scientist-mystic, who has revitalized both science and religion by choosing the best from both disciplines. This paper in three parts, proposes to examine the process of imagination in general, the structure of a scientist's imagination in particular and that of a scientist-mystic with special reference to Teilhard de Chardin.

I

Human imagination, starting as tiny drops from the heavens, forges into a mountainous stream which runs down the slopes and precipices, gathering momentum as it beats down the impeding obstacles, sometimes in torrents and sometimes in gentle streaks, all the while babbling stories to the rocks, murmuring songs to the wild trees and whispering sweet melodies to the pebbles which welcome the caressing touches of the cool stream in anticipation and expectation of being polished. The flow brooks no adversaries and creates sand and soil before it winds its lazy serpentine way through the plains, meandering on the fragrant body of the mother earth, all the while fertilizing and vitalizing her vitals towards fruitfulness and abundance. It accomplishes its purpose before it becomes as it were nothing, perhaps just yet another drop in the mighty ocean. This metaphor just tells the story of the imagination of a scientist- mystic who is the repository of the two different currents of human experience, namely that

of contemplation and of action. In other words, she or he comes to represent in a dialectically dialogical manner, the fusion and confluence of passivity and activity in every domain of her or his person, be it emotional, intellectual, social or spiritual. 'Everything becomes physically and literally loveable in God; and God in return becomes intelligible and loveable in everything around us...as one single river the world filled by God appears to our enlightened eyes as simply a setting in which universal communion can be attained.' (Teilhard de Chardin 1968:168)

While authentic personal integration seeks to go beyond the oppressive dualisms, a scientist apparently works with the available data to explain the perceptible phenomena but mostly retaining the very dualities that she or he wants to overcome. 'In anthropocentric perspectives, matter often occupies a subservient secondary position as epiphenomena in which the nonhuman life-world is seen largely as of service or use to humans' (Ecotheology 2005:148). On the other hand the mystic attempts to achieve integration by working through the available data but sets her or his eyes on the surplus or the noumena as the focal point of her or his vision but mostly perhaps downplaying the observable phenomena. However, when one and the same person attempts to embody in her or his person both a scientific as well as a mystic vision, the story has to read very differently, 'the world as a meaningful tale' (Wildiess 1968:104). . When the narration of the story pertains to the structure of the imagination of a scientist- mystic, no further help can be had from any source other than the person's own narrative mode and the linguistic devices employed by the individual concerned. Hence the attempt to understand and expound some of the finer and subtler points of imagination of the scientist-mystic, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

II

Shaping and testing a theory of scientific imagination is made possible from the documented data of the scientist. Scientific imagination, like imagination in general, occurs at the interstices of certain historical moments

and at the borderlines of academic pursuits or disciplines. Scientific imagination is shaped by the faith of the scientist specifically within the framework of the themata and schemata already preconceived in the life-world of the scientist, which happens to be an open book of possibilities. Further scientific imagination is geared towards the beneficent and useful consequences that can accrue to humanity.

The uttered words of the scientist serve as floating buoys, which point to the presence of submerged and unuttered thoughts. One way of reconstructing the process of this imagination is to uncover the meaning that lies behind uttered words and images. Einstein's discussion on the structure of scientific imagination may be gauged from his letter to his friend Maurice Solovine (1952). He prefers to imagine visually and illustrates the imaginary map as follows: He begins with the totality of scientific experiences (E) represented by a horizontal line. At some point the scientist makes a leap to a set of axioms (A), which actually rest upon E. But the path from E to A cannot be logically accounted for. It is a psychological movement and to that extent subject to correction, review and disavowal. But once being perched upon A, the scientist logically educes a whole set of assertions (S). S is referred back to E. Once again this process is extra-logical as the relation between the concepts in S and experiences E are not of a logical nature.

For apprehension of reality in religion, for instance, logic will be of no avail. The crux of this process is the problematic of a link between the world of ideas and that of experience. The scientist works as it were between a large anvil and a fearsome hammer (Holton, 1999: 86). The anvil represents the extensive rebellion ignited by scientific reductionism and the hammer stands for the limits of scientific rationality. The anvil is from the new Dionysians, namely the social and cultural critics. The hammer is from the new Appollonians, who wish the scientist to be confined to the logical and mathematical side of science. These polarities represent rival worldviews but the actual sufferers are those who tread the middle path.

Those who tend to walk the middle path cannot dispense with the progress of civilization through scientific rationality. Nor can they give up

their will, wishes and desires to be guided by the discovery of universal natural laws. The individual feels and senses not only the futility of human desires and aims but also the sublimity and marvellous order, which reveal themselves both in nature and in the world of thought. This kind of connatural sympathy is the beginnings of a cosmic religious feeling which, together with the deep conviction of the rationality of the universe, serves as the noblest motive for scientific research. (Holton, 1999: 91). This motive leads one to adopt a 'world picture' that may be 'real' irrespective of individual observers.

On the other hand, Charles Reich, in 'The Greening of America', recommends the totality of human experiences which are 'trips' taken out into nature leading to the development of 'Consciousness III' that is primarily in a state of becoming. Where the humans and nature vibrate and overlap in a total experience of natural phenomena –it is nothing but an uncritical act of imagination that precludes any rational understanding of nature. 'Consciousness is imaged as having been extended from the divine realm to the humans as if God across space desired to impart psychic vitality to the languid body of Adam' (Ecotheology, 2005:348).

As against nature mystics like Reich, a scientist-mystic like Kepler sees human experience as triggering a puzzle and in trying to solve the puzzle, she or he is seen to be communicating directly with the Ultimate. Newton connects morality with the study of nature. Goethe moves out of the beaten track to assert that women and children endowed with only habits of attention are capable of communicating striking and true observations and contributing to science. One cannot therefore discredit the accompaniment and engagement of rationalistic and sensualistic components of knowledge. After all, human beings, mortal as they are, use both these faculties to map the contours of a fundamentally simple universe, characterized by necessity and harmony. It is only such knowledge that will generate effective and imaginative ideas. The recent trend to build a sociobiological synthesis is based on the worldview of flexible predeterminism and materialism with its dispassionate concern with secularized ethic. With its accent on rationality and its underemphasis on

symbolic forms, scientific endeavours are linked to an assessment of possible ethical and human values. (Holton 1999:126)

The crisis situation in the life of the scientist-mystic is defined and determined primarily by the constraints the person faces during her or his life journey; secondly by the factors which accompany the constraint, both subjective and objective and thirdly by the possibilities available to the person to overcome the constraint. This serves as the moment of reorientation and starting point for the construction of imagination. At these moments, imagination reaches a borderline where the individual comes upon a reality 'such as never was' and to a great extent gets puzzled by the problem. It calls up a lot of creativity and develops into an expansive moment of one's personality, which points to a new experience in consciousness as the ground of new knowledge and wisdom.

Once the borderline of creativity posits an object of active imagination, then the scientist-mystic pursues that as goal, meaning and value. As she or he is enthusiastically engaged in the development of the object, a vast supply of energy is directed towards the object of imagination. Discharge of energy characterizes all descriptions of imagination resulting in an aesthetic formulation of the content-object. This energy-creativity link has theoretical significance for oneself and for the spectator or the reader in that she or he is 'inspired' or 'fulfilled'. To this extent the energy potential of the scientist-mystic sets up higher goals for attainment and helps overcome conceptual obstacles (Holton.1999: 81).

The scope of imagination of a scientist-mystic covers a large area. In the first place, it acts on the inner psychic space. It addresses the existence of the two psychic spatial fields, namely the conscious and the unconscious and makes a vital crossover between the two. Secondly by introjecting the object of imagination, it attempts to reduce the anxiety caused by the problem and tries to solve the puzzle posed by the impossibility of a solution. This is evidently a very good defence mechanism. By 'introjection' is meant the process by which the functions of an external object are taken over by its mental representative, by which the relationship with an object 'out

there' is replaced by one with an imagined object 'inside'. 'Indisputably, deep within ourselves, through a rent or tear, an 'interior appears at the heart of beings' (Teilhard de Chardin 1999:24). Thirdly imagination effects a substitution of activity, namely from the empirical or practical activity space of the scientist to that of the fantasy activity space of the mystic. Correspondingly, there would be shift in the parameters of the source of action, action itself and the attendant object and feelings. Sometimes it may be instrumental in that the substitute activity serves the purpose of satisfying the inner and yet another goal of action. In a formal way, directionality, psychic widening, opening, distancing and symbolizing are associated with scientific-mystic imagination. On the temporal dimension, the imagination of a scientist-mystic sets the imaginative operation in the 'big picture' and the 'long term' perspective as that of one's entire lifetime, or the life term of the entire humanity or the lifetime of the cosmos.

If according to Einstein, the 'temple of science' becomes a cozy villa, then Teilhard is one of those persons who were motivated to enter that temple not necessarily as a flight from every day life but as a flight of fantasy to form for himself a simplified and lucid image of the world and thus overcome the world of experience by striving to replace it by this image. Perhaps this is what a poet, painter, mystic or scientist does in her or his own way. Into the image and its formation she or he places the centre of the universe and the gravity of one's emotional life in order to reach the peace and serenity that she or he cannot find within the narrow confines of swirling personal experience. In this manner the imagination of a scientist-mystic becomes an act of self-transcendence, an act of taking flight into the purer state of Being. (Holton 1999: 232)

Rigidity and fragmentation are the two impediments to the enlargement of imagination in the threefold approaches to life, the threefold attitudes of the mind and the threefold domains of values namely the scientific, the aesthetic and the religious which have nurtured the three values of culture and humanity namely truth, beauty and goodness. Imagination as the ability to make mental images does not merely stop with imitation of the forms of real things. But the powers of imagination actually go far beyond this to

include the creative inception of new forms hitherto unknown. (David Bohm 1987:261). Imagination becomes the beginning of the entry of creative perception into the domain of the manifest. Intuitive or perceptive reason tries to make explicit or express the ratio and proportion that is already implicit in creative imagination. For a scientist therefore reason is nothing but the unfolding of imagination. In the case of imagination getting crystallized its forms may become fixed giving rise to what is called fancy or fantasy. The power of fantasy enables the scientist to form familiar images and patterns and relate them.

John Paul Sartre is of the opinion that there is family resemblance among 'perception, ideation and imagination' because in all three there is a process or movement of the knower towards the object to be known. The noetic subject, noetic process and the noetic object form one trinity. Going by this, the logical structure of the scientist-mystic's imagination implies the adoption of the middle path of the golden mean, not being swayed over by an excessive enthusiasm towards empirical objects or metaphysical entities. Contemporary physics according to David Bohm, tries to tie up its findings with philosophical meaning in that it adopts the imaginative or the intuitive side to make new models of imagination. The 'implicate order' of Bohm may be considered to be a new form of imagination. (Renee Weber, 1986:34). It involves the free play of the mind without thinking too much about empirical pay-off. By assigning a creative and constructive role to imagination in scientific understanding, he goes on to say that primary imagination, as classified by Coleridge, is the directive creative intent within, namely the display in the mind. It is an unfoldment of some deeper operation of the mind that is displayed as if coming from the senses and one can grasp it as if looking at it directly as a whole. Primary imagination has the power of revealing. But the secondary imagination arises when an image is repeated from the primary display as in a fantasy.

In fact one should steer clear of the watertight compartmentalization of knowledge in the verifiable and the non-verifiable, as the intention of the knower is nothing but an intimate link with the object. However human consciousness does not seem to obliterate the whisker of a gap totally as

there is always a feeling on the part of the knowing subject that there is some distance between the object and the subject-consciousness. The maximum that a scientist-mystic can reach is the closest point of contact between subjective-consciousness and the empirical order. This is indeed a narrowing of the gap in the fond hope of undoing the duality that exists between reason and intuition. 'Imagination in the creative scientific sense is our attempt to verbalize deep insights about nature. Imaginative models would be multi-leveled, mutually supportive, and most importantly show their interconnectedness' (Renee Weber 1986: 37). It leads one to understand, comprehend and grasp the empirical reality directly and see it as connected to everything else.

An important aspect of this process of imagination is to ascertain clinically the mechanism of the brain by which some sort of understanding may emerge as to how the neuronal activities of the left and right brains operate while the scientist-mystic is in the imaginative mode. This may not be possible at present, as science and neuroscience have not yet come up with an instrument that can absolutely measure the moments of imaginative processes. Such measurements may become possible in future due to technological advancement. Besides, the inexplicable element of intentionality always places an obstacle in the direct monitoring of the human brain. The criterion of verifiability cannot be applied to the process either. Perhaps the only data available to us are the articulations and speculations left behind by the imaginer. We are led to collect the fragments of material of the scientist-mystic to reconstruct one possible structure of her or his imagination. The strong generation of representational diversity, the ability to bring to the conscious mind a variety of novel combinations of entities or parts of entities as images which are prompted by stimuli which can come either from outside or from inside world is one of the functions relevant for creativity. (Kari H Pfenninger 2001:65). The description of this diversity generating mechanism is termed as a very good imagination. A very important component of creativity in science and religion also involves a skillful manipulation of a number of formal elements such as line, colour and texture that are available from a range of elements that are in the natural and religious

systems. To this extent the power to abstract reality imaginatively through images is not a free choice but is determined by the way the brain transforms the world that is perceived.

Epistemic interstices are the fertile soil for the sprouting of the seeds of imagination. In fact creativity and new modes of existence for the subject-consciousness arise at the intersecting spaces between the imagining subject and the imagined object. The attempt of the imaginer is to reduce the gap that obtains between the ‘Being-For-Itself’ and the ‘Beings-In-Themselves’. This distance is the playground in which the imagined object is being approached in multiple ways by way of contemplation, question and description. The power of imagination is to enable the humans to see the things in the world as one thing or another giving rise to an aesthetic appraisal of the imagined objects. Perhaps the fear of being swallowed up by the unmanageable density of the stuff of the world is like ‘the viscous sticky honey, which runs off the spoon onto the top of the honey jar’ (Sartre, 1972: xv). The eye of imagination permits us to peer into the profundity of sense, which lies beyond the superficial aspects of the undifferentiated mass of objects. This profundity implies a ‘hypothesis of unreality’, which also constitutes the possibility of negation. We arrive at a profound sense of ‘Nothingness, Void, and Shunyata’ at one end of the spectrum and moving onto the opposite pole we land in ‘Being, Fullness, Ananda’. Based on the power of imagination to posit an object, one’s action gains in directionality. For the power to see things in different ways and form images about a so-far-non-existent future is identical with the power of imagination. ‘It is the creative imagination that makes the world. —It would be terrible if we were to know what our life in future would be’ (Renee Weber, 1986:57).

III

Nourished in the nursery of science and nurtured in the lap of the Society of Jesus, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the enigmatic scientist-mystic paradoxically combines in his vision multiple ways of contemplation and multifarious paths of action. The finest part of the Spiritual Exercises of St

Ignatius of Loyola, namely the Contemplation for Obtaining Divine Love, has left its indelible mark on this remarkable Jesuit scientist catapulting him onto a mystical realm in which his imagination of the cosmic perspective seems to take complete hold of him. While science as an experimental discipline lays stress on concepts like unity of science, uniformity in nature, hypotheses, experimental designs and principles of verification and falsifiability as cornerstones of theory building and explanation of the phenomena, it also, true to its avocation, makes space for the unexplained and hitherto unexplored portions of the cosmos. Teilhard is privileged to be one of those rare souls who imagines in and through space and time in hopeful anticipation of the emergence of the most highly evolved humanity, not just the individual person but all species as an enlightened whole. One could perceive the influence of the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans that makes an open manifesto of the cosmic purpose of the entire created order as the most singular and constitutive element of the Christian vision in general and the most significant part of the redemptive action of Jesus.

Teilhard's scientific-mystic vision and imagination have to be firmly located within the overall framework of his life and activity suffused with an orientation towards the divine as the enveloping milieu. It might well neigh become impossible to peep through his imagination if one failed to recognize the gripping melody of the universe that completely inundates him. Drenched in the overflowing profusion of the divine into the visible phenomena of the universe within which the phenomenon of the human seems to be caught up with the unstruck cadence, Teilhard clothes himself with the garment of the divine and adorns himself with the garland of cosmic beauty. The universe no longer appears to him in a linear way, as a series of unconnected facts and celestial events waiting to be explained away by a reluctant scientist. No longer do the cosmic events and seasons go in endless cycle in ever-increasing domains of concentrated complexities. The cosmic drama, the cosmic dance and the cosmic dream are not just interpenetrating motion pictures of spirality. They are in some sense all these and much more.

It is the 'More' of the universe that fascinates Teilhard to undertake the arduous journey of his mind and the ennobling pilgrimage of his imagination in unravelling the processes of the divine love working out a wonderful and purposeful schema. 'To try to see more and better is not therefore just a fantasy, curiosity or a luxury. See or perish' (Teilhard, 1999:3) The unedited Lebenswelt of this scientist-mystic is filled with the fragrance of the earth and the aroma of heaven. To this wellspring does he constantly return to get refreshed and replenished in contemplation and goes out in action in search of the operations of the divine. As such, the imaginative mode of Teilhard delves deep into the multiple pools of Being looking for pearls of great beauty. The process includes a variety of ways in understanding the manifestation of the divine.

When it comes to understanding the nature and structure of imagination in relation to the myriad ways in which the cosmic purpose has been articulated and formulated by the humans, one can classify the following types of imaginative frameworks. Scientists tend to imagine through but ahead of space and time; it looks fantastic. Mystics seem to imagine above space and time; it is therefore faith-filled. Artists practise their imagination along space and time; it becomes fanciful. Littérateurs let their imagination work about space and time; it turns out to be fictitious. Historians like their imagination to run after space and time; theirs appears to be factual. But a scientist-mystic weaves the texture of her or his imagination with the warp of faith and the woof of fact dyed with the fanciful and designed with the fantastic.

The spectrum of imagination, at once takes the scientist-mystic to the cosmic origins at one end and the cosmic destiny at the other. Both hold rich potential for the play and display of human imagination. While the scientist proposes the cosmic origins in linear and evolutionary terms, the mystic moves up into the original cloud of unknowing. While the mystic tends to fill the earth planet with the evolution of an enlightened species of higher spirits, the scientist is quite reluctant to hold out such positive prospects for humanity because of the immensity of deterioration and degradation heading towards total entropy. Therefore it becomes the task

of scientist-mystic to tread carefully on the razor's edge without succumbing to the pressure of either. Her/His imagination adopts a middle path in which both the reality of the scientific cosmos and the reality of the subjective spirituality interpenetrate into an interactive, engaging and inclusive mutuality. It cannot be contained by any one scientific perspective or theory as completely capable of explaining the cosmic purpose and it cannot be constricted by any one mystic vision or spirituality as the sole proponent of the destiny of the universe. The structure of imagination of the scientist-mystic therefore moves on the rails of metaphors, allegories stories and parables, which by their very nature contain multiple layers of meaning and are capable of multiple interpretations. This in-built mechanism of the structure of language enables the human imagination to structure the vision in multiple ways.

The safest bet available to the scientist-mystic is to imagine the entire cosmic process as a dancing and singing procession of nature and the humans. 'The scientist makes the dense matter dance to produce pure energy, the mystic –master of the subtle matter-dances the dance of himself' (Renee Weber 1986:16). From an anthropocentric perspective it is the story of a single drop of life with vast protein potential to develop into a human person slowly expanding into a great river of life and to contract and shrink into just yet another drop before it merges into the infinite and mighty ocean of life. The primeval waters of the mother's womb and the pristine waters of the vast ocean best symbolize one's origin and destiny. From a cosmic perspective, it is the history of the material molecules writing out their stories in ever-increasing complexities of consciousness carrying in their stride the whole humanity and its achievements of every kind and marching towards their ultimate destination. Be it story or history, it never stops to provide an unending mystery. 'Although the mystery of the details gives way before science's scrutiny, the overall mystery does not seem to yield to it' (Renee Weber, 1986:17). It is this part that always fascinates human imagination to enjoy the cosmic procession.

Imagination restores a semblance and sense of the mutilated and lost integral equilibrium and rejuvenates the meaning of existence. It occurs in

the cognitive domain of human experience and human consciousness. Perception and personality changes also accompany imagination most of the time and these two can be the outcomes of imagination as well. In relation to consciousness, imagination may be of two forms. One is through contemplation and the other is through action. In the imaginative process, both the imaginer and the imagined may be of active subjective nature leading to reflective imagination. When the imaginer is the subject and the imagined becomes object, then it becomes an apprehensive imagination. And if the imaginer and the imagined are objects then it moves into the realm of the unconscious, resulting in a kind of unitive imagination. Probably this is the domain in which the scientist-mystic is a witnessing imaginer to the site and seat of silent interaction between the facts of the empirical world and the events of the subjective world. This kind of logical structure of the scientist-mystic's imagination includes a wholesome combination of the conscious domains of reflection, experience and apprehension and the unconscious domain of witnessing. The attempt is to formulate a unifying theory of imagination.

The life-world of the scientist-mystic presents problems, which cannot be resolved purely by fact-related or cognition-related activities. These can be resolved only by a process of imagination which is a special kind of activity, a special kind of work, reshaping one's subjective world and oriented towards seeking a satisfactory correlation between one's consciousness and existence as contents with newer meanings, patterns of order and relationships and thus expanding the horizons of meaningfulness into the 'More' and the 'Surplus' of life, being constantly catapulted by the 'Sling of an Utopia'. (Felix Wilfred: 2005)

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin exercises a special kind of seeing the matter and spirit that challenges the mechanistic models of understanding matter with a view to proposing the possibilities for the blossoming of matter into captivating complexities and consciousness. Matter and spirit together extend an open invitation to Teilhard to engage himself in the dialectical interaction that works as a constant in the process of evolution. The trio of matter, energy/spirit and the humans together open up a playfield in which

the humans take the centre stage. Despite an extra emphasis on the human involvement and appropriation of a large percentage of complexities within an overall scheme, an exciting and ennobling vision about the earth is offered in which humans become active moral agents of environmental upkeep.

Teilhard's integral and holistic vision tries hard to steer clear of the pitfalls of both anthropocentrism and biocentrism, even though he does not come across as a pioneering crusader of the present day environmental concerns. Implicit in his vision is a clarion call to symbiotic connectivity, which is both affectively and effectively carried out by deeply entrenching his filial and philosophical devotion and attachment to Mary as the visible face of the Divine into the ecological eschaton. His 'Hymn to the Eternal Feminine' is yet another pronouncement on Mary who becomes as it were the realization of the idealized state of humanity. She becomes the female representative of the evolved humanity in which matter and spirit are but two sides of the same reality permeated and pervaded by a supraconsciousness.

Teilhard's comic vision implies a resonating presence to the many facts of the earth, the biosphere as the laughing face of the earth and the noosphere as the thinking mind of the earth. There seems to be an interpenetrating mutuality between nature and the humans, which involves communion, communication and compassion. Divine presence is tied up with the world taking on a christic transformation. As Teilhard's God has become incarnate in the person of Jesus, the same God continues to be active in the becoming and evolution of the world till it reaches its fulfillment and fullness of becoming. The becoming of the divine to its full stature is a process as Christ 'has not yet gathered about him the last folds of his robe of flesh and love which is made up of his faithful followers' (Teilhard 1965: 133)

The Omega point according to Teilhard is that domain in which 'the Universal and the Personal grow in the same direction and culminate simultaneously in each other' (Teilhard 1959: 260). This is echoed in yet another passage from his essay 'My Fundamental Vision.' 'In Christ-Omega the universal comes into exact focus and assumes a personal form'

(Teilhard 1975:203). The Universal as unuttered Word has become individual Flesh and hence the entire cosmos is 'fleshified' with Christ who is the universal and throbs within the fleshy universe as the heart of matter, of humanity and of the world. His cosmic vision of union between God-in-Christ and the cosmos is the climax of his imagination.

Teilhard's imaginative sweep is further dovetailed by five kaleidoscopic moments, namely the Theopic, (Trinitarian), the anthropic (Christic), the semiotic (Eucharistic), the ecogynic (Marian) and the communitarian (Ecclesial). His predominantly Christian vision of a Convergent Cosmic evolution will definitely demand a corrective to put it firmly on the pedestal of a Cosmo-homic vision. Principally Christianity has informed beliefs, values and attitudes in the Western world. Human arrogance and superiority over nature stem from one's religious orientation. The first chapter of the book of Genesis has been the hot bed of debate and discussion among theologians, environmentalists and ecofeminists. The idea of nature as fallen and of humanity as sinful is the cardinal point in the discussion about nature and human relationship. A kind of tension has been set up between God and nature on the one hand and between nature and the humans on the other. Even the 'stewardship hypothesis' stands weakened within a master-slave pattern in which humanity stands as master over nature as slave. The humans have therefore gone all out to educate and deal with nature rather aggressively to make it good.

As nature and grace exhibit a tension and a paradox, the orders of creation and redemption are seen not in unison and symphony but as separate cadences. The imaginative vision of Teilhard incorporates the five moments of the Christian scheme within the overarching dynamic rapprochement between nature and grace, which are but the two epochs of the same love story. 'Sometime I should gather all my ideas together in a synthesis built around the foundation of everything: 'Love' (Teilhard 1975:186). Sacredness and holiness of nature is restored in Teilhard's vision through a spatial and contemplative way of seeing and experiencing the whole earth community. His love for and love of nature is the string on which every element of the earthly reality like pearls are strung together, as

it were 'making an inventory of the wonderful properties of milieu' (Teilhard 1966:16). The energizing power of love operates through the orders of creation, redemption and consummation of humanity. The forceful fragrance of love runs through every level of evolution right from atoms, molecules, cells, organisms, bodies, language, thought, reflective consciousness and the spiritual. Nature and the humans are bound together by bonds of attraction and adhesion. 'Future is seen as the outcome of interplay between laws of nature and human freedom'. (Wildiess.1968: 91).

It is the dynamic forces of the fire of love that completely suffuse the penta-domains of Teilhard's imaginative field. The most familiar familial model of love, exuberance, vulnerability and surrender takes hold of Teilhard when he wants to narrate the story and mystery of the Trinity deciding to involve themselves and strand their destiny with those of nature and humans in the never-ending spirality of evolution. The inscrutable concentration of effulgent energy, which holds the Most Blessed Trinity as the most loveable community makes a self-gift to be immersed and embedded into the material order becoming part of space and time.

The most visible form which makes this sap of love run through nature and humanity is the human form of Jesus who, in the density of the ordinary and mundane, invigorates the otherwise weak branches of the divine. Humanity in the person of Jesus Christ makes a rediscovery of its destiny and transforms all its desires to evolve into a higher form of consciousness, in which the divine is no longer a distant dream but a tangible original taste. The face of the divine is no longer veiled but shines on the pristine purity of nature and on the guileless innocence of the human faces. Teilhard visualizes matter as inextricably united with the spirit both labouring together for the emergence and growth of consciousness reaching its zenith in the personalized and conscious reflection of the universe in the humans.

The communitarian self of the Trinity is enfleshed in the Eucharist, which Teilhard celebrates on the bosom of the earth, body of the Divine, Gaia of God. The earth is no longer the fallen and humanity the sinful, but the offspring of love massaged in grace and goodness and measured and shared

in a banquet of abundance. Joy-filled homes and food-filled hearths will be the heralds of a new era of conscious sharing. Work for the upkeep of the earth and knowledge of the humans to contemplate the mysterious but beautiful workings of the divine will become prayer and worship.

Divine femininity finds its fullness of fragrance and radiance of wholeness in Mary, the symbol of maternal love. God's love gains in visibility in Mary, the completely realized form of humanity as the model of evolutionary perfection. Teilhard, brought up in the milieu of Christian rationality, scoops the wisdom of the earth, the Sophia, and mixes it with grace to fashion Mary as the exemplar of womanhood. In her the eternal divine feminine finds a willing partner to continue the Lila of evolutionary humanity to its consummation.

The last of Teilhard's domains is the ecclesial, the seed, servant and sign of an evolving human race. His imagination is very much coloured by the racial and religious superiority of the European Christian male. But in no way does that understate the purpose of human evolution. Even the organized relationalities of the Christian communities are but weak signs of the new species of the human communities yet to emerge on the face of the earth. The limited role assigned to the ecclesial community is to be the servant of the Word, the original potential seed poised to grow into a mighty Tree whose shade and coolness will be the shelter, haven and heaven of a new humanity.

IV

Teilhard's is a marvellous and humbling effort to match his penetrating insight into the phenomenon of the immense evolving cosmos consisting of billions of galaxies, each galaxy in turn consisting of billions of stars and the phenomenon of the evolving human mind with the ever silent, possibly co-evolving phenomenon of the divine. But the divine milieu is taken for granted. As his evolutionary framework is deeply entrenched into his catholic and ecclesial understanding, the theoretical aspects of the scope of evolution stand circumscribed. His attempt to broad base his ideas and the constraint

of his established foundations are seen to be in constant dialogue and intensify the impetus for the furtherance of conversation between science and religion.

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Dynamics of Mind and Contextual Philosophising

A.S.Dasan*

Abstract

Positing that mind is the source of *eros* and *thanatos*, all the positives and negatives in life, this paper delineates how mind has all the potential to make or mar a civilization. In this light, the author of the paper muses on the future of the philosophy of mind vis-à-vis contextual philosophising. The future and the success of contextual philosophising depend on how the multiple intelligences endowed with the mind respond to contemporary problems aggravating the human condition. Complexities of human living today demand a multiperspectival approach to solutions. Going beyond the traditional discourse on mind-body dualism, the author pleads for rearing and gearing the dynamics of the mind towards, what he calls, a 'glocalized approach to philosophising', which aims at analysing contemporary issues and philosophical concepts within a framework of diacritical and diachronic juxtapositions and constructs. Such an approach, he concludes, can significantly contribute to 'transformative philosophy and manifold contextual aesthetics'. This paper is a revised version of an extension lecture delivered by the author at Suvidya Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Bangalore, in Nov. 2009. – Editor.

I

***"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men
that the defences of peace must be constructed."***

– An excerpt from the Preamble of UNESCO's Constitution

Man is basically a social being capable of reasoning in freedom and yet, constantly interacting with others in a social milieu. Living in harmony

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without any trace of hegemony and self-aggrandizement would be the natural and ideal way of living. This is a beautiful truth, divine and human, valuable at all times as long as humanity lives, if not beyond. But, alas, the contrary is truer than the natural and ideal. As a result, the beauty of truth gets vitiated. Distortions occur, causing tensions and frictions in society. Life becomes a complex experience. Complexities arise because minds are in conflict hovering around vested interests and egoistic pursuits. This is a major problem today and it has been so since the days of Cain who had the gumption to ask God: 'Am I the keeper of my brother?' It decimates the human capacity 'to care for one another' which is one of the finest values the human race ought to cherish, if it were to sustain itself. Negatives occur but mind is not tired of pursuing certain positives against a number of negatives happening every day. This is the matrix wherein a glocalised approach to contextual philosophising becomes relevant, and the dynamics of the mind operative in contextual reasoning and problem-solving redefines the philosophy of mind beyond the traditional or conventional abstract constructs of mind-body dualism.

Against this backdrop, this paper posits that 'mind' is the source of all positives and negatives in life. If societal wellness is the basis for individual freedom, then the dynamics of the mind ought to be attuned to perennial, creative acts, despite the mind's capability to indulge in egoistic and destructive behaviour. If freedom and bliss are the ultimate goals in life, then human beings need to look inward. 'Man does not live by bread alone'. Dependence on outward objects and material progress alone cannot ensure enduring happiness. Looking inward, they need to realise that the mind is endowed with multiple intelligences capable of acting with prudence and discernment, just as a swan does, for individual and societal wellness. Redemption lies in a resolute pursuit of positives in life amidst awareness that negatives are painful part of life by virtue of the diversity in human nature and because of intellectual weaknesses, amoral behaviour, and psychopathic indulgences human beings are capable of.

To both scientists and philosophers, truth is a common pursuit. It is a collective endeavour in the midst of positives and negatives in life. It belongs

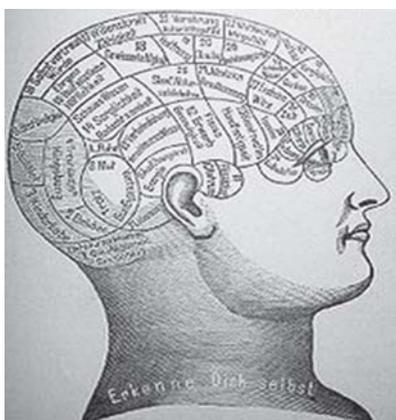
to all of us, human beings, as long as we can reason and discern. It is an intangible asset, mutable by hermeneutics from time to time, but ultimately all of us genuflect at its altar. Truth is a timeless value that survives the vagaries of nature and permutations, combinations and mechanisations of the mind. It stares in the face when conscience pricks and when ‘visitings of Nature’, to use the phrase of Shakespeare, confront us with a pinch of compunction. Truth is creative. Its hermeneutics evolve into perfection and fullness in time and history in a shaft of light provided by the dynamics of the mind. Man is the co-creator of truth, truth that emanates from God, the Supreme Mind, ‘Sat-Cit-Ananda’, that dwells in creation. Creation is, thus, an ongoing process.

From a scientific perspective, creativity/creation is a constant and perennial phenomenon. It occurs every day with individual minds activated imaginatively, intuitively, scientifically, and technologically. The fascinating occurrences, vis-à-vis arts, literature, science, and technology, happening across the globe, are crystal-clear instances to confirm that the mind ought to be studied beyond the traditional philosophy of dualism vis-à-vis mind and body and types of ontological dualism (substance dualism, property dualism, ontological dualism, Cartesian dualism) which have been debated for a long time within the realms of studies related to biology, psychology, philosophy, and religion. J.R.Searle’s paper on “The Future of Philosophy” (1) is a finely crafted essay that helps readers be aware of the fact that ‘the problem of mind-body dualism is the most amenable philosophy among contemporary philosophies to scientific solutions’, courtesy the progress made in neurosciences. Recent studies related to the five core areas of brain, namely memory, attention, speed, flexibility, and problem solving, have underscored the cognitive and the creative potential of the mind. The ‘inscape’ of a potentially creative mind may be common to other minds but the ‘instress’, to use the phrases of G.M. Hopkins, of a creative mind has infinite possibilities to shine trillion times in unique ways uncommon to human species. From a contextual and transformative philosophical perspective, one can ask: For what else should the mind shine hundred, or thousand, or million, or billion, or trillion times if not for the sake of enriching

human dignity, culture, and civilization, if not to eliminate conflicts and tensions, and if not to ensure human solidarity with a spirit of eclecticism?

II

Readers of this Journal may be aware of Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) view of the mind vis-à-vis instincts or drives. Instincts, for Freud, "are the principal motivating forces in the mental realm, and as such they 'energise' the mind in all of its functions." (2) He focused on two broad generic categories, *Eros*, the life-sustaining instinct, and *Thanatos*, the death instinct that motivates human actions of aggression, self-destruction,



(source: www.wikipedia.org)

and cruelty. Recent findings of V.S. Ramachandran (1951 -), Professor of Psychology at the University of California San Diego, and a renowned neuroscientist, are a highly researched trans-disciplinary treasure-house that makes a brief tour of human consciousness through phantoms in the brain and speaks volumes about the evolutionary processes taking place in the human brain. The neuroscientist's striking contention is that the interface between "the wiring in the brain and the firing of neurons in the brain" is such

that its dynamism is faster than the "collision of atoms, molecules, strings and vibrations" (3), and its impact is such that it is capable of making connections greater than those made by the particles in the universe. The uniqueness of the interface is such that it is capable of contemplating spatiality with infinities and reflecting on oceanic dimensions of life, life with a capital 'L', larger than particular / individual lives. His findings propel me to reason deeper and appreciate better why human mind and human language are 'profoundly different from ape's or lower primates' and how human mind and language can perform miracles after miracles by virtue of the dynamics of the right and left sides of the brain/mind.

To an unschooled mind, the mind may look like a lump. But, such is the power of the mind, made up of ‘three-pound mass of jelly’, that it can ensure that there can be many ‘Marco Polos, discoverers of the innumerable unknown and uncharted’ (*ibid*), that it can facilitate intuitive minds to perform exquisite marvels in terms of arts, music, literary imaginings, insightful ethical and moral musings, that it can derive aesthetic assimilations and articulations beyond sense, smell, feeling, and touch, and that it can fillip even physically challenged, or autistic patients to perform with incredible capacity. In parenthesis, I am reminded of the Academy-award winning film, **My Left Foot** (1989) which tells the story of Christy Brown, an Irishman, who, born with cerebral palsy, becomes a writer and artist by controlling his left foot which alone he could, directed by Jim Sheridan, starring Daniel Day-Lewis, which I had watched on the day of release in Dublin during my sojourn there for pre-doctoral studies. My point is that if even physically / mentally challenged persons can do so much, how much more can normal human beings do? This is one of the connotations I am inclined to derive from the findings of V.S. Ramachandran. As G.M.Hopkins observed, ‘time’ may be ‘eunuch’, but ‘instress’ is such a cogent agent within all of us that it can fire into glory shining trillion times just as Jesus Christ achieved through his resurrection. Readers familiar with Hopkins’ poem, “The Windhover”, will see the significance of my point.

The point is that abstract realms of philosophy with little relevance to context are losing significance. People, across the globe, quest for truth that prevails as an enduring norm, meanings against absurdities, conflicts, and clashes and consequences. They long for responsible freedom, freedom with a social conscience, human fellowships and peace, but fellowships are seldom, and peace has always been an elusive experience. The death instinct seems to overwhelm the life-instinct. Against these realities, contextual philosophising can aver that fellowship and peace cannot be attained by pursuits of individualism. ‘No man is an island’. An islanded consciousness is worse than being barbaric. It gradually belittles the natural self and decimates the social self of the individual.

Civilization cannot afford to perpetuate it. Complexities of today's existence make it a moral and ethical imperative that we gear and rear the multiple intelligences the mind and the dynamics of creativity are capable of. They provide enough scope for diacritical and diachronic readings, reasoning and philosophising.

In other words, today's existential condition, aggravated by systemic failures, political incrimination, corrupt practices, libidinal interests, and increasing psychopathic behaviour, requires multiple intelligences and multiperspectival insights for resolving personal and social crises. Contextual philosophising could provoke thinkers and philosophers to evolve modules of contextual reasoning vis-à-vis today's existential complexities in resonance with the rhythms the mind exudes through multiple intelligences. Multiple intelligences, understood as diacritical and diachronic tools for juxtaposing contemporary issues and discerning solutions to existential complexities, could redefine the philosophy of the mind and provide new directions to formulate an integrated approach, embracing learning across disciplines, to the study of philosophy. In this context, I wish to bring in another modernist thinker whose insights on the amazing capacity of the human brain are relevant here. He is Howard E. Gardner (1943 -), Professor of Education at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. In Gardner's view, "intelligence is not a single entity as if it were to be inherited, or as if knowledge hanged together in a structured whole." (4) Averting that the heyday of psychometric and behaviourist eras are over, he posits that man is endowed with a unique blend of intelligences ushering in human cognition to blossom and reach its fullness. These intelligences go beyond his original listing of seven:

- i) **Linguistic intelligence** that 'involves the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals'.
- ii) **Logical-Mathematical intelligence** that 'facilitates deductive and scientific reasoning';

- iii) **Musical intelligence** that ‘involves the skill to perform, compose, and appreciate musical patterns’;
- iv) **Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence** that ‘has the ability to use mental abilities to coordinate bodily movements in order to solve problems’;
- v) **Spatial intelligence** that ‘recognizes and uses the patterns of wide space and more confined areas’;
- vi) **Interpersonal intelligence** that ‘understands the intentions, motivations and desires of other people, and help interact effectively’;
- vii) **Intrapersonal intelligence** that ‘understands oneself, one’s feelings, fears and motivations’;

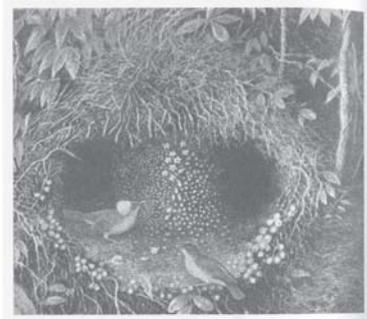
His later additions are:

- viii) **Naturalist intelligence** that ‘enables human beings to recognize, categorize and draw upon certain features of the environment’;
- ix) **Spiritual intelligence** (spiritual - not in the traditional sense of its unsubstantiated claim to grain of truth) that ‘explores the nature of existence in its multifarious guises’;
- x) **Existential intelligence** that concerns with ‘ultimate issues’, and
- xi) **Moral intelligence** that suggests ‘a concern with those rules, behaviours and attitudes that govern the sanctity of life’. (5)

In another book, *Five Minds for the Future* (2006), while outlining the specific cognitive abilities that could be cultivated by leaders and statesmen, Gardner includes five more:

- xii) **The Disciplinary Mind** ‘seeking the mastery of major schools of thought’, ii.
- xiii) **The Synthesizing Mind** ‘integrating ideas from different disciplines or spheres into a coherent whole’,

On the artistic front, interaction between the human brain and the mind results in the emergence of a broad spectrum of aesthetics ‘common to both humans and other creatures’ and specific to cultures and civilizations. To cite one example of aesthetics common to humans and other creatures, ‘bowerbirds from Australia and New Guinea’, as Ramachandran notes, ‘possess what humans perceive as artistic talent’.



(source: The Tell-Tale Brain)

They build different ‘nests – some, eight feet tall – with elaborately constructed entrances, archways, and even lawns in front of the entry way, with an arrangement of clusters of flowers into bouquets, sorting of berries of various types by colour, and formation of gleaming white hillocks out of bits of bone and eggshell’ (*The Tell-Tale Brain*, 194), all designed to attract individual females. If birds have been endowed with so much ‘wisdom’, how much more have human beings been? This is the bounty of Nature, if not the Providence;

- v) On the imaginative front, the dynamics of the mind exhibit a staggering variety of styles. ‘Art’, as Pablo Picasso observed, may be ‘a lie’ but it ‘makes us realise the truth’, and the truth revealed by art has an oxymoronic relationship with scientific truth arrived at by empirical investigations. Here again, it is the mind that is at display with a ceaseless pining for truth;
- vi) In terms of logical reasoning, it is crystal clear that these multiple intelligences do not operate independently or in an isolated manner. Instead, they complement one another by virtue of their interconnectedness in the wiring of the brain and by virtue of the innate and cultivated human capacity for logical reasoning;
- vii) The human brain can attain clinical or algebraic precision wherein the mind could go on being creative harnessing its billions of nerve cells

and contributing to the enrichment of culture and to the ennoblement of civilization. As society is the context, the mind can cultivate virtues of interdependence with a spirit of eclecticism and human solidarity that reflects a social conscience that could shave off self-centred relativism, and

- viii) On the transformative philosophical front, cumulative and integral use of multiple intelligences provides a fine matrix for contextual transformative philosophising wherein the connectivity of multiple intelligences plays a major role in diagnosing the negatives caused by destructive behaviour of mankind, in discerning and evolving ways to shun or shunt the negatives, in aesthetically and ethically measuring the complexities of contemporary society, and in contributing towards the resolution of crises haunting contemporary civilizations across the globe. What for do we philosophise if not for effecting change, change for the better? Hence, the relevance and significance of contextual philosophising.

IV

These findings teach us many things. As humans endowed with exquisite brain wiring, dynamic mental equilibrium and a soul, we need to ensure that the mind resolutely pursues, foregrounds, cherishes and celebrates positives, and positives only, in life. As social beings, we need to co-create a happier world meant for and beneficial to all. This is an arduous task towards which all the creative energy of mankind can be nurtured and geared. Contemporary philosophers and recent researchers in the area of neurosciences have started focusing on 'Theory of Mind' (ToM) vis-a-vis empathetic interaction with others. ToM tries to put forth path breaking strategies to discover 'the link between psychology, spirituality and health'. In today's matrices, social interactions and interpersonal relationships demand that the run of the mind is pro-active in such a way that all that we communicate and all that we create have the dynamics of ushering in a humane and compassionate world wherein the whole humanity will be free from contexts and experiences of hegemonic oppression and exploitation.

Readers of Indian philosophy, familiar with Aṣṭāṅga Yoga Sūtra's approach to mind, (7) know that this approach sees the dynamics of the mind linked to three entities, namely the knower (consciousness), the mind (knowing), and the known (world). The constant interface among them consists of three components, *manas* (thinking agent), *buddhi* (intellect) and *ahaṅkāra* (ego). All these three constituents are made up of three *guṇas*: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, and these triple *guṇas* are 'primary qualities of Nature' according to the Bhagavadgītā. They exist in all beings. Their strength and impact upon human beings – attitudes, behaviour, and actions – depend on their combinations, intensities and permutations. But, they, born of Prakṛti, reside in the Divine, in perfect rhythm and balance. Their different proportions in human beings are responsible for diversity in human nature and behaviour. Consequently, they influence the mind vis-a-vis *eros* (positives) and *thanatos* (negatives) in life. To attain freedom from all the negatives in life – from darkness, recklessness, and delusion, and to experience and enjoy sattvic state, a state of bliss, human beings could practise Ashtanga yoga sutras. The philosophy of Ashtanga Yoga implies that the mind is mutable. A wicked mind, or a mind with motiveless malignity, or a psychopathic mind affected by 'abjection' in the sense Julie Kristeva means, or a mind afflicted with 'negative humanism' need not be damned to the eternal stasis of hell. Diagnosis and treatment could tame and gradually redeem such incarcerated minds.

The philosophy of interaction between mind, self, and society has been one of the prominent arenas in socio-psycho-cultural discourses since the beginning of 20th century. Readers may be aware of the pragmatic philosophical approach of George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), one of the founders of American sociological tradition, whose focus was on 'the development of the self and the objectivity of the world within the social realm'. Emphasizing on pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, he averred that 'consciousness is not separated from action and interaction', and in fact, it is 'an integral part of both'. To him, "the individual mind can exist only in relation to other minds with shared meanings." (8) The echoes of the insights of his contemporaries, John Dewey (1859-1952), James Mark

Baldwin (1861-1934), and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) may also be noticed in his averment.

V

In conclusion, ‘contextual philosophising’ emanates out of practical, rather than abstract, reasoning, reasoning propelled by what I wish to call, ‘a glocalized approach to eclectic thinking’, hybridity of thought (Homi K. Bhabah), ‘tempeternity’ (Raimon Pannikar) of time, and ‘glocalization of space’ which are all broad enough to negotiate differences and arrive at, rather than defer, plausible meanings for life. A glocalized approach is aware of what is happening yonder, takes certain universal laws of aesthetics into account, and has an inclusive vision to act locally and contextually. It accommodates, assimilates and negotiates differences and aims at a meaningful convergence towards tenable meanings for life. It foregrounds, tames and harnesses the temporal in the light of eternal verities of life. This is the finest way of celebrating creative interdependence born of the multiple intelligences the brain exudes and the mind realizes in action. The world, today, is in need of interdependent living modules and experiences rather than Eurocentric, West-savvy, and elite-imposed bases and superstructures which tend to promote individualism to the extreme and drive people towards crass materialism and relativism, if not nihilism. The brunt of capital-intensive, hegemonic mind that promotes deadening consumerist life-styles has been too long in vogue, gradually decimating all that is beautiful and enduring in terms of human warmth and empathy. Can the life-instinct dynamics of the mind be creative and cogent enough to withstand, question, challenge, and overwhelm the havocs and onslaughts caused by consumerist life-styles? This is a question that should haunt contemporary philosophers looking for ways of contextual philosophizing.

Emerging knowledge societies insist on heterogeneity rather than hegemonic monoglossia so that multiple intelligences, human beings are endowed with, could contribute to reduction, if not complete elimination, of individual, systemic, and institutional malevolence. A quick perusal of the novel, *Playing Lions and Tigers* by Rohini Hensman (second edition,

2010), (9) impels me to add that minds conscious of multiple intelligences can be paradigm-shifters paving the way for a transition from hegemonic and exploitative ways of living to concentric and communitarian ways of living, where wisdom is no longer positional, that foreground togetherness with a sense of belonging. Such minds have a predilection to empathise with and serve the cause of the marginalised poor. Such minds have the capacity to see the futility of theory without praxis and transiency of praxis without vision and ideals. Such minds can contextualise by juxtapositions, counterpoints, comparisons and contrasts and synthesize a worldview commensurate with human solidarity based on love and respect rather than ethnicity, language, and religion. Such minds can create diverse alternative aesthetics wherein values of truth are kept alive and wherein compassionate solidarity prevails over the culture of violence and cruelty.

Migrations happening in the aftermath of globalization bring in distant memories of identities in the midst of inevitable experiences of alienation and racial discrimination. A positive mind understands how the world is one with abundant scope for fertility, fermentation, and leavening into heterodox humanity. Minds that cherish the wellness of all without discrimination are minds that never die. They have the synergy to ensure the convergence of all the positive energies of the mind which could be a great panacea to the ills of disequilibrium caused discrimination and loss of human identities. They are immortal in their impact. The world is in need of such minds. They know no fear and they are prophetic in spirit. Mary's 'Magnificat' in the Bible is a powerful and evocative reflection and manifestation of such a mind. Thinkers like Zhu Xi (1130-1200), Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) Gandhi (1869-1947), Tagore (1861-1941), Martin Luther King (1929-1968), and Mother Theresa (1910-1997) were some of the towering personalities who possessed and practised such minds and who resisted all dehumanising processes. Is it not possible for teachers of philosophy to prepare students to possess such minds? Until we are in a position

to do this, let us ‘hang up philosophy’. For, the future of philosophy lies in such contextualised reasoning rooted in and routed through praxis.

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Philosophy and Values in School Education of India

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Abstract

In this paper an attempt is made to draw out the contemporary relevance of philosophy in school education of India. It includes some studies done in this field and also reports on philosophy by such agencies like UNESCO & NCERT. Many European countries emphasise the above said theme. There are lots of work and research done by many philosophers on philosophy for children. Indian values system is different from the Western and more important than others. Education has become a tool to achieve efficiency in all walks of human life whether social, political, religious or philosophical. Every nation started developing its own specific set of educational values. For India it is very necessary to increase philosophical thinking, study and research. Philosophy could make significant contribution, particularly in relation to children's moral development, because the Indian curriculum currently neglects this aim. A teacher can play an important role in promoting this discussion because a teacher has the capacity to influence students with their thoughts and personality and to engage them in these activities. Philosophy needs to be included in the curriculum because it has demonstrated cognitive and social gains in children who were exposed to philosophy in their schooling.

The current education system in India is highly effective in developing individuals who can be successful in situations where they have an authority to follow, but is not so effective in preparing individuals to deal with situations, where they need to exercise their own judgments. The present paper concentrates on whether philosophy could make significant

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contribution, particularly in relation to children's moral development, because the Indian curriculum currently neglects this aim. Philosophy needs to be included in the curriculum because it has demonstrated cognitive and social gains in children who were exposed to philosophy in their schooling.

The NCERT (2005) in the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education*, mentions ethics and philosophy as fields that students will have to know about and understand through the curriculum. “*Ethics* is concerned with all human values and with the rules, principles, standards and ideals which give them expression. In relation to action and choice, therefore, ethics must be conceded primacy over each of the forms of understanding. Ethical understanding involves understanding reasons for judgments—for what makes something and some acts right and others wrong—regardless of the persons involved. Furthermore, such reasons will be reason for anyone; reason, equality and personal autonomy are, therefore, very intimately connected concepts. *Philosophy* involves a concern, on the one hand, with analytical clarification, evaluation and synthetic coordination of the aforementioned forms of understanding in relation to life, and on the other hand, with the whole, the ultimate meaning and the transcendent.”¹

It also puts special emphasis to stimulate the ethical development in students. In this context ethical development “calls for devising means and ways of helping children to make choices and decide, what is right, what is kind, and what is best for the common good, keeping in view the border implication for personal and social values.”²

Research in the area of assessment and enhancement of thinking skills in general, and socio-moral reasoning in particular, in India not are done properly. A report of the 5th *All India Educational Survey*, conducted by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), says, “More research is being done in the area of moral development than in the area of moral education. . . .existing value patterns have been surveyed but research on the inculcation of values through educational intervention is limited. Our suggestion is that while doing research work, more stress

should be given to formulation of educational objectives, preparation of instructional material and trying out the materials through experimental design research.”³

We should always know that education is not merely a matter of special science, but it presupposes an all-embracing view, that is, philosophy. It is because humanity is history and it reminds us that we began with childhood that we can understand childhood and find the paths along which to lead it. Education is no more than the positive representation of the history of humanity. It should keep in mind that, “The teaching profession has taken a new turn- it has become interestingly challenging. Education now would do well to keep in mind the three I’s – Innovate, Interest and then Impress. With the first the attention is captured. The second sparks the child’s curiosity. The third enables the child to retain.”⁴

In a study on Indian students, it has been found that the environment with which children deliberate philosophical issues necessitates mutual respect, empathy and cooperation resulting in moral conduct. Philosophical questions and reasoning about values and beliefs encourages more sophisticated moral decision-making. It relates to cognitive enhancements not only in the area of intellectual intelligence, but also in the area of moral and social intelligences. As Lipman suggests, “Children will learn that all ethical acts must have reasons and that it is well to think of the reason before one engages in the act, because if one does not, one must face the moral censure of one’s peers. This is not decision making by mere consensus. The guidance we receive is from a critical community that weighs the reasons for actions and not just the actions in isolation.”⁵

When we are doing discussion on philosophy for school children, one question generally arises, “Are children capable for philosophical thinking?” The answer is that there are many researches done in this field. Jean Piaget’s well known theory of cognitive development suggests that prior to age 11 or 12, most children are not capable of philosophical thinking. This is because, prior to this time, children are not capable of “thinking about thinking”, the sort of metalevel thinking that characterise philosophical

thinking. Philosopher Gareth Matthews goes further and argues at length that Piaget failed to see that philosophical thinking was manifested in the very children he studied. Matthews provides a number of delightful examples of very young children's philosophical puzzlement. For example, Tim (age about six years, while busily engaged in licking a pot, asked, "Papa, how can we be sure that everything is not a dream?"⁶ Examples of this kind you can find in his book and also there are many philosophers and departments who are engaged in this field and their sources are available on the internet.

Discussion on philosophy for children does not mean that we are dominating it, it is important for teachers to allow their students to develop their own ideas. And also the teacher will help students to develop an attitude to do the following obligations to society:

1. Actively support policies and programmes which promote equality of opportunity for all.
2. Work collegially to develop schools and centers which model democratic ideals.
3. Teach and model those positive values which are widely accepted in society and encourages learners to apply them and critically appreciate their significance.⁷

National Policy of Education (1986) states about the role and status of teachers in the following manner, "The status of the teacher reflects the socio-cultural ethos of a society; it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers. The government and the community should endeavour to create conditions which will help motivate and inspire teachers on constructive and creative lives. Teachers should have the freedom to innovate, to devise appropriate methods of communication and activities related to the needs and capabilities and the causes of the community."⁸

Moreover, the process of philosophical inquiry leads to moral action and positive social conduct in the form of respecting others, accepting differences and behaving responsibly. These cognitive and social outcomes

have an impact on the individual's personality, resulting in self-esteem and confidence. Mehta and Whitebread concludes that "Moral reasoning and behaviour requires careful decision making, emphasizing with others and commitment to one's decision. Since moral education enters education of the complete personality (cognitive, social and affective)."⁹

If we wish to teach philosophy to school children, then we need to devise right kind of curricula. It is necessary to introduce philosophy to children with the help of stories, novels of particular issues and biographies of philosophers and their ideas. We can't teach student of primary level history of philosophy, serious metaphysical, epistemological issues, but start with ethics and introductory logic and to develop analytical reasoning by making them think on a particular issue. Thoughtful and insightful discussions should start in student's regular classrooms. Work of art, thoughtful experiments, or even the daily newspapers can be used to trigger philosophical discussion of moral concerns. Student's stories, novels, essays can also used and different kinds of study material also produced according to their needs. Philosophy for children is endeavors can be found in colleges, universities, and associations in more than 20 countries around the world, so we can find different methods and material for it.

On the occasion of the World Philosophy Day, UNESCO has officially launched a special philosophical study entitled, *Philosophy: A School of Freedom-Teaching Philosophy and Learning to philosophize: status and prospectus*, which focuses on the state of the teaching of philosophy in the world at pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education levels, emphasizing pedagogical and didactic orientations for the promotion of the teaching of philosophy in the world.¹⁰ The philosophy programme is an integral part of UNESCO's activities, since all these major issues, such as peace, justice, democracy, freedom, human rights, education, and so on, have a solid philosophical background, with an analytical and conceptual rigour. Infact, UNESCO was born out of a philosophical and ethical investigation into the conditions of the world, the philosophy programme was undertaken by UNESCO in 1946, and just one year after the organisation came into being.

ICPR obscures that one thing that appears not to have been done in India in recent times is to take a serious look on the teaching, study and research in philosophy. Philosophy itself has always been a very core area in the history and culture of our country. But, for all practical purposes, philosophy seems to have become just like any other routine academic discipline in the country, since its teachers appear to have lost the vision of its special place and role in the general scheme of things. This is an extremely unfortunate development. It is sad that philosophy needs to be rescued from some of those very persons whose duty it happens to be to nourish and promote it.¹¹ UGC Report (1966) on Philosophy says, “To the solution of various problems in a country such as India, which has set before itself certain national goals and is striving hard to realise them, Philosophy has certainly a positive contribution to make.”¹² It can make a significant contribution as an academic discipline in India today if certain new approaches are followed. Within these approaches it includes logic, critical evaluation of our own heritage, awareness of the impinging of philosophy on other subjects of study, philosophy as the matrix of the sciences and philosophy of education it should concentrate on the urgent issues which our country face today.

Recently *Yashpal Report on Higher Education* suggested that, “One way of improving the quality of teaching of these additional disciplines and stimulating students’ interest is to allow students for whom a subject is additional to study along with these whom the same subject is primary. For instance, a mathematics student should study and undergo evaluation in philosophy as an optional subject alongwith student for whom philosophy constitutes the primary subject. In sum, there is a need to expose students, especially at the undergraduate level, to various disciplines like humanities, social science and aesthetics etc., in an integrated manner.”¹³

Our education system, unlike the western, was religion oriented and philosophies were developed later. But over the centuries philosophy had taken the lead role in education, and science and logic were introduced in our educational curricula. As a result, western socio-religious and education values started entering into our social fabric. Now, education has become

a tool to achieve efficiency in all walks of human life whether social, political, religious or philosophical. Yet, every nation started developing its own specific set of educational values. It is time that India should also develop its own set of educational values to keep its own identity among the nations in the modern times as it did in the ancient past.¹⁴

Now it is time to take effective measures to introduce courses on ethics and logic at all levels of our education system, like those found in European countries, because one of the goals in intersectoral strategy on philosophy at UNESCO is to promote the teaching of philosophy at secondary and university levels. It is heartening to note that countries like Belgium, Norway, Australia and Brazil, have already taken decisions to introduce philosophy from primary school. Some British Universities offer M.A. Philosophy of Management, Philosophy of Biodiversity and the like. They run centers like Centre for Applied Ethics, Centre for Practical and Professional Ethics, Centre for Philosophical Counselling etc.¹⁵ There are several of this types of centers also in India like Centre For Philosophy And Foundations of Science, New Delhi, Centre for Philosophy and History of Science, Pune University, Centre for Philosophy, J.N.U., New Delhi, Centre for Philosophy, N.I.A.S., Bangalore, De Paul Institute of Religion and Philosophy, Bangalore, Pratap Center of Philosophy, Amalner etc.

In the end, we can sum up our discussion by saying that every person is destined to do a certain task in his life. He would serve society in some capacity, if not society, at least his own family. If he raises his children in a proper way, it makes them good citizens, that itself is a kind of service of society. If we wish to rely upon Indian intellect to create a good society, students should opt for philosophy. Researches by scholars are undertaken on a large scale. We need philosophical temperament in society and for that we should steer away from religious bigotry, Casteism, and superstitions. And for this we should try to acquaint students with philosophy from his schooling.

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Why is Global Reduction not Possible in Testimonial Knowledge?

Dr. Biswanath Jena*

Introduction

From the practical and intellectual point of view, testimony cannot be denied as a source of knowledge. Its varied importance in the life of human being is so much that “we rely on testimony for our grasp of history, geography, science and more. We stake our time and fortune, even our lives, on our beliefs. Which plane to board, what to eat or drink, the instrument readings to accept- all decided through testimony.”¹ It is impractical and unusual for a reductionist or anti-reductionist to grasp the so-called ‘knowledge’ without relying on testimony. When this is not the case, then the obvious questions would be: what is the conceptual distinction between reductionists and anti-reductionists? Where do they differ? Conceptually, while the reductionists emphasize individualistic knowledge, the anti-reductionists attach more importance to commonsense or collectivistic approach. It is interesting to note that though their approaches to knowledge differ, they however depend on testimony. One may ask; what kind of ‘dependence’ is it? Is it a ‘dependence’ in a complete sense or in a general sense? Is this dependence fundamental, foundational and hard-core or in other ways? For a reductionist, the dependence is non-fundamental, non-foundational. On the other hand, anti-reductionists insist on the ‘foundational point of view’. For them, certain fundamental questions such as how do we acquire knowledge, what is the basic foundation of knowledge are matters of concern. Whereas reductionists concern themselves with query such as- how do we justify testimonial knowledge. Keeping this point in mind, I would like to discuss the problems of reductionism in the first section. In the second section, I will discuss the

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basic arguments of both the reductionists and anti-reductionists. The third section deals with the discussion on why global reduction is not possible.

Section I

Problems of Reductionism

Tradition of epistemology has tried to deal with the problems of reductionism by reducing the epistemic standard to more primitive categories. The primitive categories are perception, inference and memory. According to C. J. Insole “Each of these is fundamental in that none of them is reducible to the others in epistemic value; all three are needed, and none is certifiable by unaided appeal to the others.”² It shows that in the knowledge acquiring process of these, one alone cannot sustain without the other two. Irrespective of their dependency on each other, they are taken or considered as primitive source. However, no body raises the question of reducibility in the case of perception, memory or reason. But in the tradition of epistemology, as a source of knowledge, testimony always depends on other sources (not as a primitive source). This is clearly discussed by Hume. He says, “The reason why we place any credit in witnesses and historians, is not derived from any *connexion*, which we perceive *a priori*, between testimony and reality, but because we are accustomed to find a conformity between them.”³

The main dispute between reductionists and anti-reductionists in epistemology is based on a simple question: Can inductive inference through perception and memory prove the truth or falsity of testimony? If, through the help of inductive inference, we can establish the foundation of testimonial knowledge, then it is right to say that testimony will be reducible to perception or memory. If it fails, then one should think that, instead of inductive inference, testimony will be the foundation or testimony could establish the validity of inductive inference rather than perception and memory.

I would like to focus on the above problem in a simple manner. It is clear that there are two ways to solve this reductionists’ and anti-

reductionists' problem. Either testimony could be reduced to perception and/or memory or perception and/or memory could be reduced to testimony (in case of the assumption that reduction is necessary or without reduction knowledge is not possible). If we examine the tradition of Western epistemology, we will notice that testimony is always reduced to allegedly more primitive sources. But the Indian theory of knowledge gives more importance to testimony rather than perception. Though some schools like Buddhism and Vaisheshika try to define testimony by reducing it to inference or perception, still every system has its own particular view on theory of error. Theories of error mainly discuss how perception is wrong or how it leads to biased knowledge. It implies that in Indian epistemology some schools do not accept testimony as an independent source of knowledge for reasons of conceptual economic⁴. It is so because they found that it is not necessary to spend time by discussing its necessity and importance where there is no fault or doubt in it. For example, in our daily life we never think about air, which is very necessary for our survival, because there is hardly any scarcity or difficulty in getting it. When it will create some problem to human being, then air becomes a matter for discussion. On the whole we can say that, in Indian tradition the place of testimony is unquestionable.

Section II

Basic Arguments of Reductionist and Anti-reductionist

In this section, I defend the non-reductionists' view that testimony must not be grounded in other epistemic resources and principles such as perception, inference and memory. I agree with this because firstly, "there is no guarantee that reduction is possible".⁵ If there is no guarantee, then one cannot claim that it is necessary to reduce testimony to other sources. Let me accept, for the time being, that for reductionists reduction is necessary. By accepting that reduction is necessary for reductionists, there are two possible ways for us, i.e. optimistic and pessimistic. On the one hand, if testimonial knowledge can be reduced to perception, inference or memory then it will lead us to optimism. On the other hand, if it is not

reducible then it will lead us to pessimism. There is a choice for reductionists either to be an optimist or a pessimist.⁶ From the optimistic point, there will be no problem if we reduce testimony to perception, inference or memory, but, if reduction is not possible, then it will lead to pessimism and the problem arises as to whether, without reductionism, we can acquire knowledge or not. It is better to divide reductionists into two groups⁷ i.e. optimistic reductionists and pessimistic reductionists. From the optimistic point of view it is true that by reducing testimonial knowledge we can make others' clear about that knowledge. The question arises: how can we give or produce a clearer picture of testimonial knowledge through other sources of knowledge without invoking testimony? In my view, instead of reducing testimony to other, they add something in testimony, which makes testimonial knowledge stronger. It is adding in the sense that though it is already proved by testimony, it is going to be proved by perception or inference again. So the result is stronger than the previous position. From the pessimistic point of view, there is a skeptical position "about all the 'knowledge' we gather from testimony. Such a pessimistic reductionist will violate our common-sense restraint"⁸ because there are some sorts of knowledge in our everyday life, which is acquired only through testimony. At the same time, common-sense-restraint and reduction cannot be possible and we cannot deny the knowledge, which we acquire by reading books, from newspaper, from our relatives, etc., etc.

The first principle of epistemology to justify believing what others tell us is that "we have no reason to doubt their veracity".⁹ This is the principle of testimony. Though we have taken it as the basic principle of testimony, the question however arises as to what is the contribution of it to the basic principle of epistemology?¹⁰ How it is helpful to solve the traditional problem like the problem of perception and other minds. Definitely, testimonial knowledge helps us to justify our personal knowledge. For example, by asking somebody about our perceptual object, in accepting the reply, we are making a justification to our perceptual beliefs. In this way, there is the solution of the problem of external world i.e., "ask somebody, and they will tell you."¹¹ From the other's speech or word, we are getting confirmation

about the existence of external world rather than our perceptual belief or knowledge.

The problem of the ‘other mind’ is how do we know the thoughts, feelings, sensations, emotions, etc., of others. There are several ways like facial expression, bodily gesture, psychological position, from which we can imagine or know somebody’s mental or internal condition but it is clearer or easier to grasp if somebody tells someone about his feeling, thinking, or psychological problem. It is very easy to justify his/her belief or what he/she tells you. So by listening to or from what others say-so, the justification of other mind does not have problem. But through the other sources of knowledge like perception, inference, comparison, reason, it is too difficult to know others’ internal position. It is difficult to grasp others’ internal position, unless and until he/she expresses his mental disposition in words.

A conflict arises between the reductionist and the anti-reductionist, when reductionists accept the skeptical attitude about the testimony of others and the anti-reductionist “accept the principle of testimony as a principle that supplants the need for all other epistemological principles.”¹² So, their argument is:

- (a) Others are naturally disposed to speak the truth.
- (b) The objective of justification is to accept something if and only if it is true.
- (c) We are justified in accepting what others tell us.

II.I Argument against Anti-reductionists

Firstly, the natural quality of a person’s character to speak the truth is the disposition to say what one takes or believes to be true. There is no direct connection between what people believe to be true and what is true. The doubt is: what people take to be true or believe to be true is true or is a trustworthy guide to truth.

The second problem is: the role of testimony in the transmission of knowledge is very difficult to understand. It is difficult to understand because people are sometimes trustworthy and some times not; some people are trustworthy and some others are not and also some people are trustworthy about some matters in some circumstances and not about others in other circumstances.

At the same time, some one may be subjectively justified but objectively not justified. In other words, when someone thinks that he/she knows something by listening to others' words or by accepting that the speaker must be a trustworthy person, though actually the speaker is a liar. In this case, the listener justifies his/her belief from a subjective point of view. Whatever he/she is acquiring is a reliable source and true for him. In this sense, he/she is justified. In other sense, he/she is not justified when his/her 'personal justification is defeated by the fact of the matter'.

The third problem is: reductionists argue that when we immediately justify what others tell us, without any reasoning, it does not describe why we immediately justify in accepting the testimony of others.¹³

II.II Anti-Reductionists' Answer to the Reductionists' Criticism

In answer to the first problem, for the anti-reductionists it is definitely a trustworthy guide to truth. We generally trust a person not only from our standpoint. There is also a social criteria or recommendation that works to choose a trustworthy person or expert in the concerning area. So a trustworthy guide to truth definitely leads someone in the right direction, whether it is a belief to be true or actually true does not matter. According to K. Lehrer, "to justify completely a believe it requires that- this belief cohere with one's acceptance system of beliefs, including probability assignment and it would also cohere with ones acceptance system purged of all falsehood."¹⁴

In answer to the second question, anti-reductionists argue that it is a human tendency to trust another human being. It is also clear whomever we will trust and whomever we will not. For example, we know very well

that a motor mechanic/engineer's statement regarding engine position of my vehicle is more trustworthy than a doctor's word. So, it may be difficult to choose an expert, but there is hardly any difficulty in trusting an expert's word. We cannot claim that in the same matter, someone is at the same time trustworthy and not trustworthy, because it is self-contradictory. In my view, reductionists' second argument is self-contradictory.

The third argument is regarding the immediate justification of testimonial knowledge. There is no doubt that we are largely justified in accepting testimony. But the question arises: how do we justify in accepting testimony? According to Sosa, we might appeal to a principle like "Testimony is correct more often than not".¹⁵ How do we accept this principle i.e., testimony is correct more often because there is so much testimony past, present and future. So, how does someone claim strongly somehow, we cannot apply this principle for future testimony. We can strongly say or predict about "the sort of people I have dealt with in the sort of circumstances now present, testimony is normally correct."¹⁶

About the correctness of testimony, H.H Price prefers to postulate a policy of accepting testimony which is very different from the above two principles. Though every policy/principle needs justification, he gives the pragmatic justification and says, "... if we did not adopt it we would forfeit the rich supply of knowledge brought by testimony."¹⁷ He clearly explains that if we suspend the judgment on everything based on testimony, then we will have to give up a lot which is generally known as knowledge.

According to Sosa " ...such a pragmatic defense of testimony is dubious... since the whole question before us is whether testimony provides knowledge and if so how."¹⁸ So he argues that knowledge justified through acceptance of policy is unacceptable. Sosa offers a general restriction on testimony that is the justification restriction. Justification restriction means, "Receiving information from another is no source of our own justification unless we attribute complete justification to the informant."¹⁹

Testimony is required strongly for the understanding of knowledge. In this context, Lehrer says that "... a child, like a recording device, may

receive any convey knowledge, but also, like the recording device lacks the understanding to have knowledge.”²⁰ In this process of understanding, there is no need to justify the informant completely. An informant can be trustworthy in the way a child or recording device can be trustworthy, but it also intrinsically depends on the informer who transfers the information to justify completely in accepting what they convey. So in the *prima facies*, informant must evaluate the informer whether he is trustworthy or not. There is a possibility that an informant can imagine circumstances in which the testifier is very unreliable.

Leibnitz, with a good example, elucidates this situation by using the word “Rhetoricians distinguish two kinds of argument: ‘artful’ ones which are developed from things by means of reasoning, and ‘artless’ one which simply rest on the explicit testimony either of some man or even, perhaps, of the thing itself. But there are also ‘mixed’ ones, since testimony can itself provide a fact which serves in the construction of an ‘artful’ argument”.²¹

The reductionists argument is that testimony is provisionally accepted as true until there is proof to the contrary. If this is the case, then how one testimony will allow another one as justified. It indicates that one conjecture is weighed against another. However, according to reductionists, one testimony cannot justify another testimony. We require or need other sources like perception, inference and memory for justification of testimonial knowledge. For instance, some one in a very needy position comes and asks for some money and promises to payback in a stipulated time. In this situation one cannot presume his word as justified, unless and until he shows that he has already done so. Generally we presume something only if it has been proved before. To presume something means it does not imply that we accept it before it has been proved.

In Leibnitz’s view, testimony can provide grounds for an ‘artful’ argument to construct or establish a fact which is true. But sometimes it fails to establish or generate a belief. Particularly, we do not readily believe the beliefs which are remote or strange from everything that we know,

because they do not resemble to be true. For example “... when an ambassador told the King of Siam that in our country the water turned so hard in winter that an elephant could walk on it without breaking through, the King said to him: Hitherto I have believed you to be a man of honour, but now I see that you lie.”²² From this example it is clear that we cannot completely justify anybody’s testimony whether it is true or false. We can say that the testimony of others makes a fact probable. The factual evidence is necessary to justify a belief or truth or falsity of a fact, but the opinion of others cannot be taken as a probabilistic value to justify a fact.

Reductionists’ inductive basis or reasoning for acceptance of testimony and justification of testimony is based on certain questions, which are fundamental to all. The basic questions are:

1. What are the conditions required for someone to testify something?
2. How can someone, who does not testify, know that some other person testified it and what he knows by knowing that someone testified it?
3. Generally in the process of inductive inference, we gather a large and diverse enough basis to the conclusion through perception and memory. Does this information gathering process or basis prefer that testimony is generally correct?
4. What sort of correlation do we need to postulate in the causal relation or connection between testimony and its correctness?

These are the basic questions raised by anti-reductionists against the reductionists’ approach to testimony. David Hume tried to answer or solve this problem by saying that “we are accustomed to find a conformity” between testimony and reality.

Section III

Why Global reduction is not possible

Reductionists defend global reduction. They only reject the local reduction. So anti-reductionists were the defendant of the local reductionism. Before going to the notion of global reductionism I would like to focus on the following questions: What do we mean by Global reductionism? Why is it not possible? How does it differ from local reductionism? What is the common factor in both?

Like strong and weaker versions of reductionism, there are also strong and weak versions of Global reductionism. According to the strong version of reductionism, “the justification of testimony as a source of belief reduces the justification of sense perception and inductive inference.”²³ Here it implies that in order to justifiably accept a speaker’s report, a hearer must have non testimonial based positive reasons. Without non-testimonial positive reason it could not be considered as a belief or knowledge. Elizabeth Fricker introduces a weaker version of global Reductionism; According to her “... a hearer has evidence that most of what she has ever learned through testimony is true, where this evidence does not in any way rest on knowledge acquired by her through testimony”.²⁴ Here, weaker reductionism at first accepts the testimonial knowledge and then tries to cross verify the truth or falsity of the given belief through the other non-testimonial sources.

Whether it is Global or local, they all try to reduce the source of knowing to another source. Keeping this concept in mind, global reductionists claimed, against the local reductionists view that ‘the so called knowledge and its sources can ultimately be reduced to perception’.²⁵ For them every event or matter of fact cannot be described or defined in terms of perception or inferential knowledge. There is some knowledge, which can be reduced to testimony also. So, for anti-reductionist global reduction is not possible.²⁶ According to them, only local reduction is possible. Then the question arises: what do we mean by local reduction? It means, in a particular event or matter, we can explain how one hearer can be justified in believing the

testimony of a particular person. In contrast, anti-reductionists claim that we cannot justify every belief; so global reduction is not possible from the justification point of view. But in case of local reduction, hearer has the capacity or, epistemic right to assume the speaker's statement as trustworthy without any evidence.

It is very difficult to assume that a speaker's statement is true or false or about the source of his belief without the evidential prove. To prove the trustworthiness of a speaker, we necessarily require some evidential proof, which may be based on perception, memory or inferential knowledge. But in case of the hearers, it is too difficult to say how to justify a hearer's belief in a particular occasion, what he has acquired from the speakers statement.

According to S. Bhattacharya "Global reduction involves reducing knowing by testimony in general to other forms of knowing."²⁷ He agrees with the Fricker's view who suggested that global testimony is not possible. According to Fricker "I readily agree with the anti-reductionists, there are general reasons, stemming from the essential role of the simply-trusted testimony in the causal process by which an infant develops into the possessor of a shared language and conception of the world, why the prospects of a global reduction seems hopeless."²⁸

Bhattacharyya also supported Strawson's view regarding the impossibility of global reduction. According to Strawson, "if knowing by testimony has to be reduced to other forms of knowing then they should be basic. So these forms of knowing cannot be memory, or even inference; for inference requires premises which in the long run, cannot established by inference, but have to be known otherwise. Although it is true, testimony cannot work without perception-hearing what a speaker says, or reading a written sentence, ordinarily by visual perception, or by tactual perception as in Brail, yet all these forms of knowing perception, inference, testimony are so closely related that one can not be reduced to others."²⁹

Reductionists cited some faults for which they claim that Global Reduction is not possible those faults are discussed below which are created problem with global reductionism.

V.I. Argument Against Global Reductionism

Reducing the epistemic resources such as memory, perception and inference, we are committed to a project that is not only enormously time consuming but incoherent. Reconstruction of testimonial knowledge by doubting or arguing leads to incoherence because “testimony-soaked developmental phase is the time when a person comes to know the world picture of common sense, including the common-sense conception of the link of testimony itself. It would be hopeless to try to get any independent empirical confirmation of the proposition ‘Testimony is generally reliable; any one individual’s personal observation base would be far too small for such feats. Our very conceptualization framework is itself socially determined during our acquisition of language. So even perception, memory and reason are dependent on past testimony. We cannot engage upon a testimony-purged reconstructive project when there is no testimony free belief-base to isolate and work from.”³⁰

Meaning and standards of correctness are dependent upon a social practice. Keeping this view in mind, Leslie Stevenson argues that the reductionist’s position is untenable. He says, “it would not be possible for an articulate Cursoe even to identify the content of other people’s assertions without accepting knowledge by testimony.”³¹ Without accepting the testimony of other people, what they perceive, we cannot even begin to assemble evidence to decide which of the observational statement is likely to be true. In this context Stevenson noted that :

“ If our lone enquirer is to begin to amass the inductive evidence which [the reductionist] says he needs before he may begin to accept even one piece of testimony, he has to establish correlations between *others’* that *p*, and the fact of *p* as observed by himself. But to do this, he has to know which noises or marks made by others constitute assertions of the *p*, and so he has to be able to know that some other minds are using symbols with certain meanings.... How could our lone enquirer know that someone means ‘That is bitter’ by a pattern of sounds they sometimes emit? Only, surely, by finding that noise is (fairly reliably) made only when tasting samples

which the enquirer himself recognizes as bitter. Thus one cannot justify interpreting certain performances as observation-statements, i.e., as testimony about what someone perceives, without already committing oneself to the assumption that such statements are reliable, likely to be true.”³²

The duties of a rational hearer amount to the following issues. First of all, our attitude to others’ testimony should depend on its subject matter. It is basically discussion about different kinds of telling. Secondly, different phases in the carrier of a recipient of testimony: the developmental and the mature phase. It raises two different questions about the epistemic status of testimony: How does testimony support a mature individual’s existing web of knowledge, her world theory? And what should be her attitude towards the new instances : uncritical trust or critical scrutiny of informant?

Fricker suggests, “... trusted past testimony has an ineliminable place in supporting a mature individual’s belief system, this does not imply that uncritical trust is the attitude she must or should take to new informants”.³³ In becoming an adult master of our commonsense scheme of things, it develops through a historical process of development where the attitude towards an informant was one of simple trust. In fact, our historical development does not in itself show that our testimonial knowledge does not reduce. It does preclude the Cartesian reconstructive opinion. The Cartesian reconstructive opinion is that at first identify and then suspend belief. In other words, first of all identify all the simple-trusted beliefs and other based on them and then accept them again only after the trustworthiness of their source is established form belief-base. If any body or person could follow this method then his/her testimonial beliefs would be simultaneously justified and count as knowledge without referring to presumptive right principle. This is called a global reduction of testimonial knowledge to other sources.³⁴

Suppose we are taking the help of the presumptive right principle, then our belief acquired through testimony or whose support depends in

part on testimony qualifies as knowledge only if we do not insist on the reductionist requirement. The question arises here: by taking the help of the presumptive right principle, can we completely eliminate the necessity of global reduction? No, it could not completely eliminate the presumptive right principle, at least with respect to an individual's developmental phase. Fricker supports this view and says "... this is the phase during which "light dawns gradually over the whole" (Wittgenstein 1977, §141), and a person comes to know the world- picture of common sense, including the commonsense conception of the link of testimony itself. Thus it brings awareness of the role of the speaker, and of the possibility of her lack of sincerity or competence."³⁵

Global reduction is unattainable in the developmental stage. It is only possible in the mature stage. Elizabeth Fricker³⁶ has discussed this issue very clearly. According to her, to become a master of our commonsense scheme of things, simple-trusted testimony is inevitable. She introduced an implicitly transcendental argument of testimony. That is:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|----|--|
| Commonsense Constrains (CC) | :- | We have knowledge through testimony. |
| Not Reduction possible (NRPoss.) | :- | Reduction of testimonial knowledge is impossible. |
| Not Reduction Necessary (NRNec.) | :- | Therefore, testimonial knowledge cannot require reduction. |

According to her, though reduction is not possible so it is not necessary. Why is reduction not possible? Because "it is impossible for any one of us to provide an independent proof of the trustworthiness of her past informant".³⁷ The empirical confirmation of trustworthiness must be achieved through establishing a generalization governing all instances of testimony: that it is generally reliable. According to Fricker "it is not in principle, the only way".³⁸

As an anti-reductionist, Coady well-established the foundation regarding the impossibility of global reduction elaborating through examples. He argues convincingly, against Hume, that there is no chance of my getting independent empirical confirmation of the proposition that ‘testimony is generally reliable’, because my personal observation-base is far too small. Hume only confines himself within the boundary of individual whereas Coady’s project is very natural and based on a social pool of observation. However, the strongest arguments come in chapter 9 of Coady’s book, where he points out that the theory – dependence of perception extends to a frequent reliance on background theory acquired through testimony. Often what is casually classified as perceptual knowledge is available through perception only, given such a background of theory acquired in part from testimony. For example, in my “observation “ that Russian soldiers are marching in a parade, my knowing them to be Russian may depend on inference from my earlier reading of a newspaper report (Often, though not in this example, the background theory will have been acquired during the early period of simple trust.) Equally, I can know them to be soldiers only if I possess that complex institutional concept. If, moreover, our conceptualizing framework is itself socially determined during our acquisitions of our language, then all perception is essentially dependent on past testimony.

However, there are at least three problems with global reductionism. The first is that before accepting any testimony at all, including that of their parents and teachers, very young children would have to wait until they have checked the accuracy of enough different kinds of reports from enough different speakers to conclude that testimony is generally reliable. Not only is it wildly implausible to suppose that most young children- or even adults – are capable of engaging in such a process, it also becomes mysterious how they would be able to acquire the conceptual and linguistic tools needed for an induction to the general reliability of testimony without accepting some testimony in the first place. Thus, if global reductionism is true, the very cognitive tools needed to acquire testimonial justification

would be inaccessible to epistemic agents, thereby leading ultimately to skepticism about testimonial knowledge.

Secondly, in order to have non-testimonially based positive reasons that testimony is generally reliable, one would have to be exposed not only to a non-random, wide-ranging samples of reports, but also to a non-random, wide-ranging samples of the corresponding facts. Both are problematic. With respect to the reports, most of us have been exposed only to a very limited range of reports from speaker. This limited sample of reports provides only a fraction of what would be required to legitimately conclude that testimony is generally reliable. With respect to the corresponding facts, a similar problem arises: the observational base of ordinary epistemic agents is simply far too small to allow the requisite induction about the reliability of testimony.³⁹ Whenever an epistemic agent, faced with lots of reports which are not in same category, but involves different aspects like complex scientific, economic, mathematical, geographical or historical theories, most of us simply lack the conceptual machinery needed to properly check the reports against the fact. The lack of the conceptual machinery then leads global reductionism towards skepticism about testimonial knowledge. These above two problems raise doubts on our ability to know or determine whether testimony is a generally reliable epistemic source or not.

The third problem is that it is questionable whether there even is an epistemically significant fact of the matter here. For example, there are epistemically heterogeneous list⁴⁰ of types of reports all of which are included under 'testimony in general'. Some of these types of reports may be generally highly reliable, some are highly unreliable and some are generally very epistemically mixed, depending on the speaker. Because of this epistemic heterogeneity, it is doubtful whether it even makes sense to talk about testimony being a generally reliable source. Thus, even if global reductionism were entirely successful and it could be shown that testimony is generally reliable, this conclusion would have very little epistemic significance.

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- ¹³ Ibid., P.53, all the above problems are also cited here.
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- ¹⁵ Ibid, p. 59
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- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 401.
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- ³⁵ Ficker , Elizabeth. “Telling and Trusting: Reductionism and Anti-Reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony”, *Mind*, 1995, p.402.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.393-411.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 403.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ See, Coady, 1992, p. 82.
- ⁴⁰ The reports about the time of day, what one had for breakfast, the character of one’s political opponents, one’s age and weight, one’s criminal record and so on.

Delineation of Zoroastrianism and Parsi Culture in the Fiction of Rohinton Mistry

Ms. P.Vetri Selvi*

Abstract

In the process of entertaining the people of the time, literature reflects social realities and the society at large. It captures the conflicts and the struggles of the people to preserve it for posterity. Indian Literature is an expression of its people, their cultures, their traditions and their ways of life. Contemporary Indian writing in English, with its post-colonial brand name, is gaining momentum and wide prevalence throughout the world. Rohinton Mistry is one of the pre-eminent writers of the post colonialist writing movement whose writings are diasporic in nature, which is one of the popular themes of post-colonial literature. His works include three novels, *Such a Long Journey*, *A Fine Balance*, *Family Matters* and a short story collection, *Tales from Firozsha Baag*. His writings bear a strong inclination towards Parsis and their culture. Though Rohinton Mistry now lives in Canada, he writes very little about Canada itself. Instead, he focuses almost exclusively on India, and on the state of the Parsi community within that country. Even when he writes about Canada in his short stories, he often represents the migrated land as the site of a Parsi diaspora, a place where immigrant Parsis search for their identities. He captures in his novels the life and struggle for survival of the Parsi community.

Zoroastrianism is the oldest world religion founded by Zarathushtra in Persia, the modern-day Iran. It was once the religion of the Persian Empire, but has since been reduced in numbers to fewer than 200,000 today. The followers of the faith are better known as Parsis. Though Zoroastrianism was never as aggressively monotheistic as Judaism or Islam, it does

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represent an original attempt at unifying under the worship of **one supreme god**. The religion is polytheistic comparable to those of the ancient Greeks, Latins, Indians, and other early peoples. The Zoroastrian sacred text is the *Avesta* (“Book of the Law”), a fragmentary collection of sacred writings. Compiled over many centuries, the *Avesta* was not completed until Persia’s Sassanid dynasty (226-641 AD). It consists of liturgical works with hymns ascribed to Zarathustra (the **Gathas**); invocations and rituals to be used at festivals; hymns of praise; and spells against demons and prescriptions for purification.

Zoroastrians pray to one god Ahura Mazda, meaning the “wise lord”, to help them in the dualistic battle between Spenta Mainyu, the “Bounteous Spirit” and Angra Mainyu, the “Destructive Spirit”. Humans are free to follow either spirit but, according to whether they commit good or bad deeds, are finally responsible for their fate.

The Parsis migrated from their homeland Persia (Iran), thousands of years ago to save their religion from the Islamic invasion of Iran. They arrived with their ‘sacred fire’ and sought refuge in India; and settled in Gujarat as fugitives in the 8th century, seeking freedom to practice their faith. They made a pact of understanding with the local ruler of Gujarat, Jadav Rana, who granted them permission to settle down in that place, of course with certain compromises. They include: the Parsi priest explaining their religion to the king, giving up their native language and speaking the local language, exchanging their Persian costumes to that of Indian, holding their wedding procession only in the dark.

In the centuries since the first Zoroastrian refugees arrived in India, the Parsis have integrated themselves in the drapery of which is called “Indian”, while simultaneously maintaining their own customs and traditions, to which they feel bound by the promises rendered in exchange for asylum. This in turn has given the Parsi community a rather peculiar standing - they are Indians in terms of national affiliation, but non-Indians in terms of ethnicity, traditions and customs.

In spite of their considerable and significant contribution to various facets of national life in the Indian subcontinent, little is known about the diminutive community of the Parsis. All the concerns of the community – declining population, state of widows, late marriages, inter-faith marriages, funeral rites, attitude towards girl child, urbanization, alienation, and modernist vs. traditionalist attitude to religion are aptly delineated in the works of Rohinton Mistry, who is a Parsi himself.

Presently if Iranians are asked about Zoroastrians identity, most of them will answer that those people are fire worshipers and like Jews and other pagans are unclean people. In western countries too, the people are not quite familiar with Zoroastrian philosophy. When they are heard of Zarathustra, they are reminded of “Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” written by the celebrated German philosopher, Nietzsche. Therefore, it can be rightly said that Zoroastrian philosophy, which was the main religious belief system of ancient Iranians and for about several hundred years was the basis of the Iranian culture and their life style, now is almost forgotten. Rohinton Mistry portrays the rich Parsi tradition in all his novels in order to facilitate the non-parsi people to fathom this age old Zoroastrian culture, in order to recognize the truth of such a rich philosophical faith, which has been the foundation of the ancient Iranian civilization, and thus try to repudiate any incorrect pre-judgements against it.

Zoroastrians build Fire Temples as places of worship. There are three grades of Fire Temples: Atash Behram, Atash Adaram, Agyary or Dar-e-Mehar and Atash dadgah or the house hold fire in every Zoroastrian home. The holiest Fire Temple in India is the Atash Behram at Udvada, about one hundred miles from Bombay, where the Sacred Fire brought by Iranian refugees from Iran has been continuously burning since 1741. The earliest Fire temple in India is the Atash Behram at Sanjan believed to have been consecrated around 790AD. The **sacred fire** must be kept burning continually and has to be fed at least five times a day. Prayers are also recited five times a day. The founding of a new fire involves a very elaborate ceremony. There are also rites for purification and for regeneration of a fire. Mistry gives a detailed picture of the Fire Temple in almost all his

works: “Even as a child, Mehroo had adored going to the fire- temple. She loved its smells, its tranquility, its priests in white performing their elegant, mystical rituals. Best of all she loved the inner sanctuary, the sanctum sanctorum, dark and mysterious, with marble floor and marble walls, which only the officiating priest could enter, to tend to the sacred fire burning in the huge, shining silver *afargaan* on its marble pedestal. She felt in their dance of life, seeing the sparks fly up the enormous dark resembling the sky. It was her own private key to the universe, somehow making less frightening the notions of eternity and infinity.”¹

A child born of Zoroastrian parents is not considered a Zoroastrian till he is initiated into the fold by the *Navjote* ceremony. The word *Navjote* means a new initiate who could offer Zoroastrian prayers. The ceremony of initiation consists of the investiture of the child with the sacred shirt called *Sudreh* and a sacred thread called *Kusti*. The *Navjote* ceremony is performed at the age of seven or nine or eleven, up to fifteen. Therefore, the child continues to wear the *Sudreh* and *Kusti* and perform the *Kusti* ritual with the prescribed prayers, throughout life. The *Sudreh* is made of pure, white muslin or cotton while the *Kusti* is woven of seventy-two threads of fine lamb’s wool. The word *Kusti* means a waist band. Being tied thrice round the waist, it points to the trinity of good thoughts good words, good deeds. These form a barrier insulating the individual from all that is evil. Once a child has had the *Navjote* performed, he or she is spiritually responsible for his or her own salvation through an observance of the morality and rituals of the religion. In ***Such a Long Journey*** there is a scene where Mistry explains how to do *Kusti* prayers. “He recited the appropriate sections and unknotted the *Kusti* from around his waist. When he had unwound all nine feet of its slim, sacred, hand-woven length, he cracked it, whip-like: once, twice, thrice. And thus was Ahriman, the evil one, driven away- with that expert flip of the wrist, possessed only by those who performed their *Kusti* regularly.”²

Mistry is very proud of his oldest religion and he says that all the other religions are influenced by his own. We could find many similar rituals in other religions like the Parsis praying to their God facing east like the

Muslims, their tying of *Kusti* resembles the *poonal* of Hindu Brahmins, the tying and untying of this during *Kusti* prayers resemble the *sandhyavandana* prayers of the Hindus and praying five times a day reminds us of the Muslims. But according to Mistry, the other religions have taken few rituals from the age old Zoroastrianism. He goes on arguing that his religion is the oldest. He compares Christ with the Zarathustra in the following lines. "...our prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your Son of God was even born; a thousand years before the Buddha; two hundred years before Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?"³ Most religious historians also believe that the Jewish, Christian and Muslim beliefs concerning God and Satan, the soul, heaven and hell, the virgin birth of the savior, slaughter of the innocents, resurrection, the final judgment, etc. were all derived from Zoroastrianism.

Parsis prefer only fair skinned. According to them, only the low caste *ghatis* are dark skinned. In *A Fine Balance* Nusswan's wife Ruby is dismissed by her husband's grandfather just because she is little dark in colour. This is reiterated in the *Tales from Firozsha Baag* thus: "...Parsis like light skin, and when Parsi baby is born that is the first and most important thing. If it is fair they say, O how nice light skin just like parents. But if it is dark skin they say, *arre what is this ayah no chhokro, ayah's child.*"⁴

Each community has its own rituals especially during the times of birth, marriage, and death. Other Parsi writers like Bapsi Sidhwa and Boman Desai give elaborate description of Parsi marriage ceremonies in their works but Mistry does not give a detailed description of the Parsi wedding rituals in his works. Though few weddings are portrayed like Nariman's marriage with Jasmine Contractor in *Family Matters* and Dina Dalal's marriage in *A Fine Balance*, Mistry does not elaborate on them.

Zoroastrianism, rather the Parsis who practice it, is against Inter-caste marriages. Purity, in fact, is central to the Parsi ethos. Parsis believe in keeping their race pure, and frown on intermarriage. Orthodox Parsis believe in excommunicating Parsis who marry outside of the clan. *Family*

Matters charts the effects of religious bigotry and rigid traditionalism as they work their insidious way through generations of a family. In the prime of his life Nariman Vakeel was compelled by his parents and their orthodox Parsi circle to give up the woman he loved, a non-Parsi Goan, and marry the more appropriate Yasmin, a widow with two children. In the same novel the highly religious Yezad is suspicious about his son's love towards a non-Parsi girl he goes wild and he tries various dialogues to make his son fall in line with him. "...the League had discussed the 1818 case of a Parsi bigamist – married a non Parsi. "For his crime he was excommunicated by the Panchayat," said Daddy, raising his hand to signify the gravity of the punishment."⁵

Mistry plays a double role. Though he wants to protect the dying religion of his, he is always against the orthodox Parsis and he gives a subtle remark against their purity business through Murad in *Such a Long Journey*: "He says that perhaps the League of Orthodox Parsis could invent a Purity Detector, along the lines of the airport metal detector, which would go beep-beep-beep when an impure person walked through... I think bigotry is certainly to be laughed at."⁶

Whereas Intermarriages are not tolerated by them, Widow Remarriages are permissible in the Parsi society like that of Nariman Vakeel in *Family Matters* marrying Yasmin Contractor, the widowed lady with two children, and the offer for Dina Dalal, the young widow in *A Fine Balance* for a second marriage which she eventually turns down. Her brother tries to convince her thus: "Do you know how fortunate you are in our community? Among the unenlightened, widows are thrown away like garbage. If you were a Hindu, in the old days you would have had to be a good little sati and leap onto your husband's funeral pyre, be roasted with him."⁷

Parsis are great lovers of good food. "Someone chuckled loudly that where Parsis were concerned, food was number one, conversation came second."⁸ The Parsis consume a variety of non-vegetarian food, including the Indian Hindu's sacred Cow. "Lucky for us that we are minorities in a nation of Hindus. Let them eat their pulses and grams and beans, spiced

with their stingy asafetida- what they call hing. Let them fart their lives away... we will get our protein from their sacred cow.”⁹

Parsis are known for their family affection. Every Parsi family is close knit even when there are sufferings, which normally humans cannot withstand. Parsi Psyche permits acceptance of sacrifice in the name of family bond, a reference to which the following incidents are quoted. From the vantage point Roxana in *Family Matters* was able to watch the scene: “...nine year-old happily feeding seventy-nine... She felt she was witnessing something almost sacred, and her eyes refused to relinquish the precious moment, for she knew instinctively that it would become a memory to cherish, to recall in difficult times when she needed strength.”¹⁰

Mistry portrays the Parsi women to be docile beings, real homemakers and sacrificing mothers. Dilnavaz, Gustad Noble’s wife in *Such a Long Journey* is portrayed in the novel as busily cooking or filling water. As a responsible mother, she could even conspire with Miss Kutpitia, the spinster in the neighbourhood in creating spells for her family’s well-being. She is so concerned for her husband and children that she succumbs to Ms.Kutpitia’s *jadu-mantar* and does everything with limes, chillies and even with lizard’s tails. In *Family Matters*, Roxana is a typical Parsi woman with a typical Indian spirit. She loves her family and devotes her entire self to cater to their needs. Almost all the women characters portrayed in the novels of Rohinton Mistry are home lovers and are not earning members except for Dina Dalal in *A Fine Balance*. She moves from a protected girlhood under her father to the harsh reality of reductive femaleness under the protection of her brother.

Mistry is anxious about the Parsi youth of today. His works also highlights Parsi idiosyncrasies and bloody-mindedness. Among Indians, Parsis have got not undeserved reputation for eccentricity and even testiness. He uses Dr. Fitter in *Family Matters* to mouth his opinion: “Parsi men of today were useless, dithering idiots, the race had deteriorated. When you think of our forefathers, the industrialists and shipbuilders who established the foundation of modern India, the philanthropists who gave

us our hospitals and schools and libraries and bags, what luster they brought to our community and the nation”.¹¹

Mistry also draws the reader’s attention to several men and women of Parsi community remaining unmarried or single even at an advanced age. Many men and women remain thus like Jal, Coomy, Daisy in *Family Matters*, Ms. Kutpitia, Ms. Villie in *Such a Long Journey*. “Mistry makes possible the introduction into the text of hundreds of ageing Parsi single women like Villie, who eke out their lives, looking after ageing parents and at times spice them with harmless little flirtations with men and gambling risks.”¹² Mistry is more concerned about this fact because remaining unmarried would further contribute to the decline in Parsi population.

With dwindling figures looming large and the latest census putting their number merely at a few thousands, Parsis have set up a fertility clinic to preserve — and hopefully expand — their community. The clinic in Mumbai Central is the brainchild of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, a body officially inaugurated today. It is an attempt to raise awareness among Parsis, especially young couples, about the availability and necessity of fertility treatment. The seriousness of this problem is highlighted in Mistry’s *Family Matters*

Every religion in the world gloats over its way of disposal of the deceased the way they like and practice. The Christians and the Muslims take pride in burying the dead and the Christians remember the dead on 2nd November every year considered as All Soul’s Day. The Hindus prefer cremation. The Parsis neither bury nor cremate. They have a peculiar system of submitting the dead to the mercy of the elements by which long-necked, hairless vultures consume the flesh of the dead in an isolated spot called ‘The Tower of Silence’. The remaining bones are being disposed of. This habit of the Parsis is peculiar to them and cannot be found in any other race. “The Parsi system of disposal of dead bodies is unique... They are exposed to sun’s rays and are offered to birds on the same platform so that a king’s corpse may lie side by side with that of a pauper. All are equal

and no monument is erected to tell the glory of the great as no costly funerals or coffins distinguish the rich and the poor”.¹³

Though a long period, of at least three thousand years has elapsed since the time when most of the religious commandments of the Parsis were first issued, and though the community has, during that interval, seen many vicissitudes of fortune, they have adhered well-nigh faithfully to many of their ancient religious customs. Among these, is their custom of the disposal of the dead, which, however peculiar it may appear to the followers of other religions, appears to them to be the most natural and acceptable, supported as it is, even now, by the best scientific test of advanced sanitary science.

In accordance with their religious injunctions, the Parsis build their Towers of Silence on the tops of hills if available. No expense is spared in constructing them of the hardest and the best materials, with a view that they may last for centuries without the possibility of polluting the earth or contaminating any living beings dwelling thereon. “However distant may be the home of a deceased person, whether rich or poor, high or low in rank, he has always a walking funeral — his body is carried to the Tower of Silence on an iron bier by official corpse-bearers and is followed in procession by the mourners, relatives and friends, dressed in white flowing full-dress robes, walking behind in pairs and each couple joined hand in hand by holding a white handkerchief between them in token of sympathetic grief.”¹⁴

Mistry expends several pages over these death rites in his novels. Dinshawji’s and Major Billimoria’s death rites performed in the ‘The Tower of Silence’ as portrayed in *Such a Long Journey* is an example: “The mourners could see no more. But they knew what would happen inside: the *nassalers* would place the body on a *pavi*, on the outermost of three concentric stone circles. Then, without touching Dinshawji’s flesh, using their special hooked rods they would tear off the white cloth. Every stitch, till he was exposed to the creatures of the air, naked as the day he had entered the world.”¹⁵

Mistry writes with black humour in *Such a Long Journey* on the vultures which eat Parsi corpses and the debate in the community between the reformists and the orthodox, whom he refers to as ‘the vulturists’ and the opposing group who objected to such disposal methods of the dead. Mistry uses this chance to comment on the disposal method of the dead. “The orthodox defence was the age-old wisdom that it was a pure method, defiling none of the God’s good creations: earth, water, air and fire. . . . But the reformists, who favoured cremation, insisted that the way of the ancients, was unsuitable for the twentieth century. Such a ghoulish system, they said, ill became a community with a progressive reputation and a forward-thinking attitude.”¹⁶

Mistry also gives some of his findings of the Parsi society like he says that Parkinsonism and Osteoporosis are prevalent diseases in the society. . There is some evidence, too, that they have particularly high incidences of mental illness and haemophilia, both perhaps exacerbated by their defensiveness as a community and some degree of inbreeding. He uses Kersi in his short story to voice out his views. “That’s what osteoporosis does, hollows out the bones and turns effect into cause. It has an unusually high incidence in the Parsi community, he said, but did not say why. Just one of those mysterious things. We are the chosen people where osteoporosis is concerned”.¹⁷

Mistry along with some of the other Parsi diasporic writers like Bapsi Sidhwa, Farokh Dhondy, Firdaus Kanga, Dina Mehta and Boman Desai has succeeded in making the minority Parsi community visible to the mainstream culture of India and to the world. As Bharucha notes in the book *Indian English Fiction 1980-1990: An Assessment*: “ These texts as such are making a ‘last grand stand’, asserting the glorious Persian part, the Indian connection and finally the more recent western experience. This discourse also deals with the increasing tensions between the Parsi minority and the dominant section of Indian society.”¹⁸

The contribution of writers of fiction like Mistry opens a window on Parsis in India for their Canadian and other western readers. His account

of the Bombay Parsi community and its travails is the favourite subject of Mistry's Canadian-Indian fiction in English on which he concentrates in all the three fictional works of his. His fiction tells us more about the Parsi community in Bombay than a book of sociology possibly could. Mistry is able to project the emotional life and personal relationships of the Parsis as a valuable part of the wider human experience at the international level by writing about these things from across the worlds. Jaydipsinh Dodiya observes: "The Parsi writers are also sensitive to the various anxieties felt by their community. Rohinton Mistry has demonstrated this in responding to the existing threats to the Parsi family and community, and also to the country. He presents his community through the different narratives of his characters who invariably express their concern for their community and the changes that affect their community."¹⁹

Mistry's works provide authentic and scholarly insights into the Zoroastrian faith and some of its tenets. Further, it attempts to explore the distinctive character of the Parsi men of the current era in India. Rohinton Mistry entertains while he exposes the frailties of his characters with his gentle humour. It reveals that this minority community has to cope with hegemonic forces, identity crises and the struggle to create its own space. It is hard to accept the fact that the age-old Parsi community is facing its extinction. All the concerns of the community—declining population, brain-drain, late marriages, inter-faith marriages, funeral rites, attitude to the girl-child, urbanization, alienation, modernist vs. traditionalist attitude to religion and the existence or non-existence of ethnic anxieties, marginalization of the Parsis in the recent years, dilution of values, isolation in the urban scenario and the influence of massive commercialization—are aptly delineated in the works of the Rohinton Mistry.

End Notes

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Book Reviews

Creative Problem-Solving in Ethics **by Anthony Weston**

Review by V.Prabhu*

This is a book on ethics written by Anthony Weston and published by Oxford University Press. Book is focusing on the issue of creativity in ethics. Running to mere 70 odd pages, this book offers some refreshing insights to some of the issues of ethics and ethical problems. Author himself claims that this can hardly be a substitute for a philosophical book on ethics, but it is a 'how-to' book.

Often we engage our ethical class with the description of theories ranging from deontology, utilitarianism and the like. And we also characterize the philosophical study of ethics as involving ethical dilemma. Of course, a rigorous philosophical study does need to have such reasoning exercises in understanding the ethical implications of a given situation. On the other hand, a second thought on the actual life situations that we experience cause us to wonder; are they really such a cornering situation in ethics that we need to go for by strictly engaging ourselves in the ethicality of our actions on the basis of some theories? 'Need not be' is the answer given by Weston in this book. He belongs to the genre of thinkers, who does not feel that ethical issues always need to be studied with dilemmas in mind. Instead, he asks us to find out if any creative problem solving is possible in ethics. He describes "creative problem-solving as the art of expanding possibility. It is the ability to cast a situation or challenge or problem in a new light and thereby open up possibilities in it that were not evident before." He attempts to take few cases and give a sort of treatment which goes beyond the 'either-or' alternatives in ethics. A few techniques like brainstorming, provocations, going to extremes, etc. which are normally available in any creative thinking exercises, are made use of by the author in the book. With these problem-solving

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techniques, he tries to address ethical issues ranging from environment, abortion, assisted suicides, and what not.

Weston perceives ethical problem-solving as “not just a matter of finding a way out of a specific, practical fix. It is also an occasion to better live out our values and, indeed, do better the world itself.” This approach gives an interesting feature to this book that it often tries to address ethical issues more in terms of shared values than in terms of confronted disagreements between various members. This approach may give rise to creativity in addressing ethical issues. For example, let us take the issue of animal rights. Instead of taking a confronting attitude, why can't we think of shared values amongst the humans, say hardly anybody will be really wanting to cause unnecessary pain and suffering to other animals. So, that could be taken as a shared value and question then naturally would change to how to make humane use of animals possible; instead of a dilemma like do animals have rights or not? These types of exercises will give us a better chance to go creative in ethics.

Even though the book need not merit tall claims, personally I feel it deserves it. For those academicians, teachers as well as students who are absorbed in strong rigorous, abstract ethical theories and arguments, for them too, this will give an offbeat perception in dealing with ethical problems and issues. Positively, it is a worthy book to have as a handbook or a coursework for a class on ethics, though the price of the book seems to be on the higher side.

Selected Episodes from Raghuvamsam of Kalidasa by G.C.Nayak

R.C. Pradhan

Selected Episodes from Raghuvamsam of Kalidasa by G.C.Nayak (Value-Oriented Education Series , General Editor: Kireet Joshi), Auroville Press, Pondicherry, 2010, Pages: 103; Price Rs. 200.00.

The book under review is an important work by Professor G.C.Nayak which deals with the nature of human values in the great of epic *Raghuvamsam* of Kalidasa. The book is appropriately published under the Value-Oriented Education Series under the General Editorship of Professor Kireet Joshi. The book develops the nature of three important human values, namely, Heroism, Illumination and Harmony. Professor Nayak has highlighted these three values by taking into account the important episodes from the *Raghuvamsam* such as those from the lives of Dilipa, Raghu, Aja and Rama as depicted in the epic by Kalidasa.

Kalidasa is the greatest poet in Sanskrit literature after Valmiki and Vyasa. His epics and dramas have remained classics in the world literature. The genius of Kalidasa flourished not only in creating magnificent poetry regarding Nature and man, but also in creating characters which are the embodiments of values like those of Dilipa, Raghu, Aja and Rama. Among his female characters such outstanding creations are of those like Shakuntala, Indumati, Sita and many others. In Sri Aurobindo's words:

Kalidasa is a true son of his age in his dwelling on the artistic, hedonistic sensuous sides of experience and pre-eminently a poet of love and beauty and the joy of life. He represents it also in his intellectual passion for higher things, his intense appreciation of knowledge, culture, the religious idea, the ethical ideal, the greatness of ascetic self-mastery, and these too he makes a part of the beauty and interest of life and sees as admirable elements of its complete and splendid picture" (*The Foundations of Indian Culture*, SABCL, Vol. 14, pp. 300-1).

Kalidasa represents all that is best in Indian culture and philosophy of life. He has attempted to make his poetic creations a pathway to the higher realization of values. Professor Nayak has very aptly called Kalidasa a poet and a philosopher par excellence. He says:

An important feature of the poetic genius of Kalidasa lies in the fact that he was not merely an Indian poet of eminence but, intrinsically, he was also an Indian philosopher *par excellence*. In India, a poet and a philosopher are not so sharply divided from each other, for the Sanskrit word *Kavi*, which stands for a poet is, as a matter of fact, supposed to be *rsi*, and *rsi* stands for one who is a seer (mantra drasta) of truth (p. 23).

Kalidasa was in the above sense a seer (mantra drasta) of truth and had a vision of life which ascends from the mundane to the higher spiritual level of life culminating in the idea of the realization of Brahman. He had imbibed the four-fold values of life (*purushartha*) which are embedded in the Indian philosophy of life. A true Vedantin, he has made it evident in his numerous writings that the highest goal of life is *moksa*.

Kalidasa has depicted the life of his characters in the most sympathetic and dignified way as they all embody the supreme values of life such as dharma and *moksa*. He leaves no stones unturned in making his characters represent the ideal human beings. His depiction of Rama and Sita, for example, in the *Raghuvamsam* and Shakuntala and Dushyanata in the *Abhijnana Shakuntalam* is marvelous so far as the embodiments of the highest values are concerned. It is in this context that Professor Nayak has chosen to highlight the values of heroism, illumination and harmony in the epic *Raghuvamsam*

Professor Nayak has chosen four characters such as Dilipa, Raghu, Aja and Rama for the purpose of highlighting the values of heroism, illumination and harmony. All these characters have embodied the highest values of life. Dilipa, as is well known, is the most illustrious king of the

“House of Raghu” as he is the one who laid down the foundations of the solar dynasty to which Dasaratha and Rama belong. Kalidasa minces no words to extol the heroic deeds of Dilipa in the episode in which Dilipa faces the lion while tending the heavenly cow Nandini in the Himalayas. He wanted to save the life of Nandini by offering his own life. This is the height of his heroism and his humility. He ruled his kingdom according to the principles of Dharma and never deviated from the path of rectitude. As Professor Nayaka points out, Dilipa also embodied the virtues of truthfulness, compassion and harmony in life. He established a morally ruled kingdom according to the highest wisdom of the *Rishis*. He established harmony among all men and between man and Nature.

Professor Nayak has taken the characters of the kings such as Raghu, Aja and Rama as following in the footsteps of king Dilipa in the observance of Dharma. Raghu, the son of Dilipa, after whom the dynasty is called is an embodiment of heroism in the battlefield and is the ideal king like his father who ruled his subjects like his own children. Professor Nayak writes:

What is most significant however about the great hero, viz., Raghu is that he had not only conquered all his opponents during his youth and established his kingdom without any rival, he also took to sannyasa in the last stage of his life and conquered the triple constituents of matter (gunatraya) for attaining balance and ultimately attained the summum bonum (highest good) through yogic practices (p. 57).

Like Dilipa, Raghu is not only an ideal king but also an ideal human being who was compassionate towards his subjects and also to all the human beings. The poet is eloquent in his praise for the ideal character of the king Raghu by pointing out the right kind of virtues the king practiced.

The greatest and the most adorable character in the *Raghuvamsam*, according to Professor Nayak, is that of Rama, the son of Dasaratha who is depicted as the most virtuous human being. Like

Valmiki, Kalidasa pays the greatest tribute to this character by making it the ideal manifestation of all moral virtues embodied in Dharma. Professor Nayak writes:

In *Raghuvamsam*, Rama stands before us as a colossal figure in whom the lofty qualities of the descendants of the solar race have reached their culmination. He is the epitome of dharma, it is rightly said, a model for others to follow, in whom heroism, harmony and illumination, all these virtues, find their best manifestation (p. 68).

Such is the ideal character of Rama that he has been adored as an incarnation of Vishnu. He has shown exemplary courage in the face of adversity, utter humility even in relinquishing his kingdom for the sake of keeping his father's promise to his mother Kaikeyi and his keeping his moral life above his personal love for his wife Sita. Such was his wisdom that he sacrificed all his earthly comforts to keep the dharma intact. Though he was a king he always lived the life of a sannyasin.

Professor Nayak has brought out the moral dimension of the ideal characters in the *Raghuvamsam*. He has shown that Kalidasa as a philosopher-poet has extolled the ideal of the moral life by writing about the characters of kings. While being kings these characters have lived like moral beings who gave up their earthly possessions when they became aged and lived like sannyasins even while enjoying royal power. They combine both the virtues of a king and the virtues of an ideal human being. They are the embodiments of the ideal of *sthitaprajna* as depicted in the *Bhagvadgita*. As pointed out by Professor Nayak, Kalidasa's moral vision of life has come out in the highest form of literature.

The important contribution of Professor Nayak's book lies in highlighting how to inculcate moral values through literature. Literature is the best medium of imparting value-education to the young minds. Kalidasa's writings show the way literature can elevate human mind from the mundane to the higher spiritual level of our life. The virtues like heroism, harmony and illumination have an eternal appeal to the human mind which when put

into practice can bring about a change in the human life. It is for effecting this moral change in the society that value-oriented education is introduced. The study of the great works of Kalidasa can provide the right means of moral education in our society

Professor Nayak has in his book brought out the subtleties of Kalidasa's moral vision, his depth of understanding of the human character and above all in depicting the grandeur of the moral ideal of heroism, harmony and illumination by quoting extensively from the text of *Raghuvamsam*. Therefore the book can be read profitably by any student of philosophy and literature. No one can miss the author's deep understanding of the Kalidasa's philosophy of life and values in addition to the latter's depiction of the beauty of life and Nature.

Month	Year	Subject	Guest Editor's Name	Mailing Address
June	2011	Hermeneutics	Sreekumar Nellickapally	srkumar@iitm.ac.in
December	2011	Religious ideas, imagery and popular cultural expressions - Cross-currents between traditions, modernity and postcolonialism.	Archana Verma	Archanav34@gmail.com
June	2012	'Philosophical Foundations of Eco-criticism'	Vanathu Antony M	vanathuantony@sify.com
December	2012	Indian Psychology	Sangeetha Menon	prajnana@yahoo.com
June	2013		R. Murali	murali_phil@hotmail.com
December	2013		V. Prabhu	vprabhu@iitg.ernet.in
June	2014		George Panthanmackel	gpanthanmackel@gmail.com

The editorial board has decided to designate a Guest Editor each for the coming issues of the Suvidya Journal of Philosophy and Religion from June 2011 issue onwards. Anyone who wants to contribute an article please contact the Guest Editor or the Chief Editor.

M.A. AND PHD IN PHILOSOPHY AT SUVIDYA COLLEGE, BANGALORE

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Other Relevant Information

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