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**Identity, Creativity  
and Modernization  
Perspectives on  
Indian Cultural Traditions**

**Indian Philosophical Studies, XIV**

Edited by  
*Sebastian Velassery*  
*Vensus A. George*

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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## PREFACE

For these global times India is a model for its ability to absorb its conquerors and to be enriched in the process. It has unity and diversity, but perhaps above all the ability to integrate both.

Few countries in the world have such a diverse and ancient culture as India. The Dravidians had a culture of their own before the arrival of the Aryans, who themselves were a mixture of different cultures (e.g., the Greco-Roman affinity to the Aryan Sanskrit language indicates that the Aryans belonged to a Pre-Indo-European race). After the Aryans several other nations came: Persians (521-485 B.C.), Greeks (327-325 B.C.), Huns (454 A.D), Arabs (712 A.D.), Mughals (1230 A.D.), Turks (1398 A.D.), Portuguese (1498 A.D.), French (1564 A.D.), and British (1639). All of these groups left something of their legacy in India, so that today it has a unique variety of cultures in its thinking as well as in its mode of life.

India has a peculiar power to absorb the best from these cultures and thought patterns. Its attitude of tolerance of all religions has contributed to synthesizing the positive qualities of its religions, cultures, and thinking. Indian culture is thus a unity in diversity, a harmony of contrasts. This has been traced to the following: firstly, a sense of unity of all life as the expression of an unseen reality, both immanent and transcendent; secondly, a desire for synthesis combining apparently disconnected fragments in life and experience in an essential unity; thirdly, a recognition of the sufferings and sorrows of life, with an attempt to remove these; fourthly, a feeling for the sacredness of life. This is expressed in the concept of non-injury (*ahimsa*) to all creatures when considered negatively and in the concepts of compassion for all (*karuna*) and service of humanity (*maitri*) when considered positively. Finally, there is great tolerance for other beliefs and points-of-view.

Yet, India is also a land of amazing diversity for all this has evolved around the Vedas of Hinduism and the related spiritual texts of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism, Vaishnavism, Judaism, Parsism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity. In addition, the philosophical systems of India, the social justice movements, communism, rationalism and radical humanism also have influenced its development. Caste divisions have been perpetuated as well, which give diversity and, of course, bring divisions to Indian culture. Hence, Indian culture is unique in its genius for wedding the deepest unity with the broadest diversity in an integral way of life.

This volume attempts to penetrate that genius in a sequence of four parts beginning with an introductory exploration of the Indian cultural tradition, followed by a philosophical anthropology and a socio-cultural analysis, and concluding in studies of culture and religion in earlier and in

modern India. Despite all the diversity, India survives as one, free and democratic due to its underlying and unifying spiritual culture.

Hence, this study entitled *Identity, Creativity and Modernization: Perspectives on Indian Cultural Traditions*, attempts to unfold the nature of Indian culture by clarifying its identity, by critiquing those elements in Indian cultural tradition that need a reassessment, and finally by highlighting those factors of Indian cultural tradition that have contributed the modernization of Indian society and the building of today's modern India.

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy wishes to express its gratitude to Professors Dharmendra Goel, Kamal Chand Sogani, Geeta Manaktala, A. Raghuramaraju, R. Gopalakrishnan, Veena Kapoor, U.A. Vinay Kumar, D. Bala Ganapathy and Augustine Perumalil, who have contributed the scholarly papers that make up this volume. A special word of thanks is due to Professor Sebastian Velassery, who, besides contributing two articles to this volume, initiated and organized the extensive project of forming and directing this team of outstanding scholars and to Professor Vensus George who was instrumental as well in the final preparation of the manuscripts. The Council is honored to include this work in its extensive series, rightly entitled for our times: "Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change".

*George F. McLean*

## INTRODUCTION

This volume entitled *Identity, Creativity and Modernization: Perspectives on Indian Cultural Tradition* consists of essays that represent the different ways of understanding Indian cultural tradition. In general, these essays survey the Indian cultural tradition through different systems of Indian philosophical schools and their later *avatars*, besides considering the structural components of Indian society and its dynamics. Thus, this project intends to explore the identity of Indian cultural tradition, to critique it as it is manifested in different systems of Indian thought and worldviews so as to unfold its creative dimensions, and to highlight those aspects of Indian cultural tradition that have contributed for the building up of modern India. In order to present the theme with clarity we divide this volume into four parts. We briefly consider below the titles of each of these parts and what each part attempts to do in elaborating the theme of this volume.

### **PART I. INTRODUCTORY EXPLORATIONS INTO INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION**

The first part serves as an introduction to the whole volume. The first of the two articles that comprises this part by Geeta Manaktala is a methodological introduction in understanding culture by using philosophical categories and approaches, while the second article by Sebastian Velassery gives an introductory analysis of Indian cultural tradition by considering some of its salient features. Now, we briefly consider what these two papers unfold in introducing different aspects of Indian cultural tradition.

Geeta Manaktala, in the paper entitled “Culture and Philosophy: A Methodological Introduction” attempts to explore the relationship between culture and specifically the role of philosophy in genuine understanding of culture and its values. To accomplish this task, the paper first intends to throw some light on the notion of culture itself. The notion of culture is explored by unfolding its general and specific meanings, by highlighting the changes that has taken place in the notion of culture due to changing times, and by considering a historical development of the notion of culture. Then, the paper examines man in relation to culture and explores how changing understanding of culture has challenged the fundamentals of the spiritual identity of the human person. Though man is called to integrate the inner being and outer environment of culture, he realizes that he himself is fragmented and divided because he is conditioned by culture. The commerce of consumerism and changed values threaten to further this divide within the human person, so much so that he is challenged to live his nature and identity as a spiritual entity. Finally, the paper takes up for consideration the role of philosophy and its relationship to culture and how this interaction can uphold significant values that would sustain the genuine identity of the individual and the society in the sociocultural context. Thus,

the interaction between culture and philosophy can not only take us to the right perception of culture and values in society, but also to the proper understanding of the human nature and its identity as a spiritual entity. Thus, according to Manaktala even if one does not accept philosophy as the only factor that gives the "outlook" or "worldview" of a given culture, it still is one of its major causes that can unfold the true meaning of culture and its relation to man.

In the essay entitled "Indian Cultural Tradition: An Introductory Analysis" Sebastian Velassery attempts to unfold the salient features of Indian cultural tradition, in view of unfolding its rich spiritual values and its limitations. According to him Indian cultural tradition has its foundation in the Vedas, because every later development in the field of religious practice, morality and customs has its basis in the teaching of the Vedas. Another significant feature is the message of spiritual unity. Indian cultural tradition is also conditioned by caste system and its culture of exclusivism, and so it is in need of transformation. The paper outlines earlier and later reformative movements that have attempted bring new perspective on Indian cultural tradition. As culturality of a culture can be understood only in relation to an ontology the paper attempts to explore Indian ontological worldview according to which all things are potentially embedded in an inexhaustible Ultimate Reality. This ontological perspective gives a vision of the universe in which every reality is related to the other, which, in turn, obliterates all distinctions between society and individual, God and man. In this context notion of *dharma* has lost its original meaning and understood in relation to the caste system. All must respect and live the *dharma* of one's caste. This distorted notion of *dharma* has exerted its influence not only in the social sphere of the Indian cultural tradition, but also in its political dimension as well as the perception of the human person. The political system is seen as an organism, in which people of each caste do their specific functions as per the rules of the caste for the betterment of the society, and the political authority has in fact no control over the caste structure. The human person is seen on the one hand as part of the society and on the other hand seen as the *Atman* which is the microcosm of the divine *Brahman*. Since man is part of the society and part of God, there is no place for human rights and justice in the Indian cultural tradition. The harmony and the consequent equality of the human persons are to be arrived at through compassion for each other and the mutual conscious striving for harmony. The paper concludes by reiterating some the significant points in a historical perspective.

## **PART II. PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION: A TRADITIONAL APPROACH**

The second part of the volume takes a traditional approach in surveying and understanding the Indian cultural tradition. Using this approach the authors – of the four papers that find their place in this part – are searching for the identity of Indian cultural tradition in terms of the



different systems of Indian philosophy and other foundational concepts that are essential in comprehending Indian cultural tradition. Veena Kappoor attempts to expound the metaphysical foundations of Indian cultural tradition by clarifying significant notions, such as Self-realization, *purusharthas*, and particularly the doctrine of *dharma*. In the next two essays U. A. Vinay Kumar takes up for consideration the Yoga system of philosophy and the practice of Yoga, which is used as a means for attaining Self-realization by most of the schools of Indian philosophy, while R. Gopalakrishnan's essay provides an account of Saiva Siddhanta, one of the theistic systems of Indian philosophy, and its sociocultural significance. Sebastian Velassery's article explores another elemental concept – the *guru*-tradition – on which the onto-genesis of Indian cultural tradition is founded. Thus, all the four essays explore the identity of the Indian cultural tradition. Now, we proceed to give a brief sketch of the contents of these essays.

In the paper entitled “An Itinerary into the Metaphysical Foundations of Indian Culture” Veena Kappoor attempts to explore the foundations of Indian cultural tradition from the metaphysical point-of-view. In doing this task, at the outset, the paper clarifies the concept of Self-realization, on which the metaphysical and moral points-of-view of Indian culture is founded. For, in the process of Self-realization of the human person the culture becomes the Self-expression of the Self-consciousness. Since Culture is the Self-expression of Self-consciousness, the evolution of culture takes place particularly in the context of the Self attaining freedom from its bondage. Then the paper takes up for discussion the notion of four principal goals of human life (*purusharthas*) embedded in the Indian cultural tradition, because the freedom of the human person from his bondage to ignorance is brought about in the life of the human individual when he attempts to live the *purusharthas* in the context of his cultural existence. Of the three *purusharthas* leading one to attain *moksha* – *artha*, *kama* and *dharma* – *dharma* has the priority over the other two as *dharma* must guide both *artha* and *kama* in their actualization. Hence, *dharma* forms the metaphysical foundation of ethics in Indian culture. In this context, the synthetic doctrine of *dharma* expounded in Bhagavad-Gita is briefly considered. Then, the paper takes up for discussion the relationship of the doctrine of *dharma* to the society, in which the attempt is made to explore how it orders and guides every dimension of social life. Having looked into different dimensions of Indian cultural tradition, particularly its ethical nature by analyzing the doctrine of *dharma* the paper asserts that the Indian cultural tradition is, in fact, founded on metaphysics. The conclusion deals with the diverse interpretations of the doctrine of *dharma* in Indian cultural tradition and some of their consequences.

U.A. Vinay Kumar, in his paper “Yoga System of Philosophy: General Practice and Synthesis” begins his analysis of the Yoga System of Philosophy on the assumption that Yoga-practice has been widely used for attaining ultimate goal of one's existence (*moksha*), even though *moksha* might have had varying meanings for different philosophers and laymen. If

Yoga-practice has been widely accepted by all, then two significant questions arise: firstly, “how has the Yoga-practice – an apparently non-cognitive enterprise – come to occupy a role in the intellectual enterprise, which is a cognitive activity, such as philosophization?”; secondly, “how is that, almost all schools of Indian Philosophy have accepted Yoga as an indispensable means, (*sadhanaa*), for the attainment of *moksha* despite the possible technical difficulties? Alternatively, the points of concern are: firstly, the general interface between Yoga-practice and philosophy; and secondly, the essential quality or limb(s) of Yoga that is perceived as the logical link between Yoga-practice and philosophization, such that Yoga becomes indispensable to all schools of Indian Philosophy. The former point is of general nature and confines mainly to the first question. This point seems to presuppose a historical existence of some kind of general practice and also more than one covert/overt philosophical position; and also that they have utilized each other to make their own point, as for example, philosophy prescribes practical ways to attain the goal of *moksha*. However, these facts stand in need of analytical networking without which the alleged interface would make little sense. The paper attempts to elaborate on this point of analytical networking involved in the general interface first and then takes up the point concerning the essential quality or limb(s) of Yoga that is perceived as logical link between Yoga-practice and philosophization. In the conclusion, the paper considers the type of Means-End relationship applied by Advaitins and Samkhya-Yoga systems in the attainment of *moksha*.

The paper entitled “Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy: Socio-Cultural Dimension”, by R. Gopalakrishnan, attempts to provide an account of one of the theistic system of Indian philosophy and its sociocultural significance. According to R. Gopalakrishnan, Saiva Siddhanta as a philosophical school that takes shape in south India between 10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries is, indeed, a reflection Indian cultural tradition. It contains the quintessence of the revelation of the renowned sages known as the “Nayanars”. As an accomplished end – this system develops the doctrines based on the teachings of the “Agamas” especially the “Jnanapaada” and as the culmination of the *Siddha* one of the “Antahkaranas” – this system of thought is known as *Siddhanta*. The Ultimate Spirit of this system of thought and religious practice is Lord Siva, the Central Reality and a Personal Being. It is a well-knit philosophy and religion, wherein there is a balance of theory and practice, which avoids the two extremes of dry intellectualism or dogmatism and blind observances or superstitions. Thus, Saiva Siddhanta is a true expression Indian cultural tradition. Then the paper attempts to clarify the Saiva perception of the Individual self. Though the individual human person is part of the world and conditioned by *anava*, *karma* and *maya*, he is potentially soaked with divinity, which is to be manifested in due course so that each individual can be identified as a “person of Siva” than a person of himself. The paper, then, moves on to consider different pathways through which the individual aspirant can attain

his personal salvation. Salvation is attained by the divine grace of Siva, to whom the devotee surrenders in adoration, which, in turn, brings about annihilation of egoism and communion with the Lord. In the conclusion, R. Gopalakrishnan states that Saivism as a religion and Saiva Siddhanta as a philosophy are meant for elevating the people to the level of spiritual perfection and religious redemption, by destroying distinctions of caste and creed, and announcing the equality of all before Lord Siva, in the process making every one a *jivanmukta*, who constantly works for the welfare of everybody's happiness.

The paper entitled "Onto-Genesis of Indian Cultural Tradition" by Sebastian Velassery attempts to examine the foundations of the cultural heritage of India as rooted in a tradition, which may be called the *guru*-tradition. After clarifying the meaning of *guru* as understood in the Indian cultural tradition in general, the paper deals with three important dimensions of *guru*-tradition. Firstly the reality of the *guru*-tradition is explored in its historical beginnings, development and its consequences on Indian culture. In the Vedic times the Vedic-priest and in the later period the priest-intellectual are considered as *gurus*. With the emergence of rigorous caste division, the *guru*-concept becomes associated with the *brahmins*. Secondly, *guru*-tradition is analyzed as the state of *Guru-Consciousness* by exploring its nature and attainment. The term "*guru*" represents not only the enlightened teacher, but also the state of *Guru-Consciousness* – synonymous with *Brahman-Consciousness* – which is attained with the removal of ignorance and with the dawning of Self-knowledge. Thirdly, the paper takes up for discussion the reality of *guru*-tradition as realized in the person of the *guru* in his vision of oneness. Thus, *guru* is the embodiment of *guru*-tradition and *Guru-Consciousness*. To understand the *guru*-tradition as the person of the *guru* the paper unravels the unfolding of *guru*-concept in the Upanishadic literature, Post-Upanishadic literature – particularly as examined in Kularnava Tantra and the Shri Guru Gita – and the clarification of the Upanishadic concepts of *tapas* and *nyasa* – both of which are central characteristics found in the *guru* – as understood in the context of the Bhakti Movement. In the conclusion, Sebastian Velassery states that understanding Indian cultural tradition as *guru*-tradition implies that the values of this culture emerge from the lived-experience of the *gurus* and the foundations of the meaning and quality of life of Indians have centred on *gurus*, who are considered as the embodiment of the Absolute Reality.

### **PART III. SOCIOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION: A CRITICAL-CREATIVE APPROACH**

The third part takes a critical-creative approach in analyzing the sociocultural aspects of the Indian cultural tradition. It critically analyses those elements of Indian cultural tradition that need a reassessment and a rethinking. Thus, this approach, in throwing light on Indian cultural tradition, looks for its creative interpretation, new meaning and new

identity. Dharmendra Goel, in his essay critiques the absolutism of the traditional as well as the present-day Indian culture, which blocks the *gravitas* of the culture-creator thereby does not allow him to give creative expression to his perception of the Indian cultural tradition. A. Rahuramaraju in his paper critiques the project of modernity, the high-culture classical tradition in India and ideology of Hindutva that attempt to destroy multi-culturalism, which is part and parcel of Indian cultural tradition, while the article of D. Bala Ganapathy questions traditional categorization Indian philosophy as Orthodox and Heterodox systems and explores an alternative approach, which is not explicitly found in the writings of historians of Indian philosophy. Thus, all the three papers take a critical-creative approach in their clarification of different aspects of Indian culture. We briefly present here the contents of these three papers.

Dharmendra Goel, begins his critical essay “The Individual and the Collective in the Indian Culture” by asserting the fact that the Indian cultural and civilizational experience is marked by self-perpetuating ancient convictions, traditions, social practices, as well as ideologies that have often brought by outside interventions and political incursions into India and which accounts for the diversity of Indian cultural tradition. The diversity is held together by the cosmic rhythm of Transcendent Being, which is often represented by the allegory of the Dancing Nataraj or the Cosmic Reptile swallowing its own tail. This absolutistic perspective is a sort of metaphysical doctrine which is characterized by anti-historical spiritualism and other-worldly *ethos* and it resists any liberal interpretation of Indian cultural tradition. Hence there is the need to re-examine and review Indian cultural tradition by considering the *locus* of Indian culture, the analysis of cultural activity in Indian society and its consequences. Then the paper attempts at such a review of the historical representations of Indian cultural life. According to Dharmendra Goel, monistic culture theory – Absolutism held by the Hindu philosophy, dialectical materialism of Marx or the psycho-analytic theory of Freud – fails in this task, as they are one-sided and stifles true interpretation of Indian culture. Then the paper critiques the cultural creativity within the Indian cultural tradition in the contemporary times. In the conclusion Dharmendra Goel reiterates that creative interpretation of the culture should not be distorted by a catalogue of items of social structure, power relations, or ideological dogmas. Any cultural-creator is a living person, gifted with wonderful *gravitas* to declare his experience and hence he must be allowed to give expression to his creative activity within the context of the Indian cultural tradition.

In his paper “Multi-Culturalism and Civil Society in India: Past and Present”, A. Rahuramaraju attempts at an in-depth inquiry into the multi-cultural nature of the Indian society, those elements that support it and those factors that undermine and destroy it, both in the past and at present. According to him, India is multi-cultural in languages, sub-languages, arts, literature, music, architecture and many other dimensions. Having affirmed the multi-cultural nature of Indian society, the paper goes on to consider the

functions and structures that support and sustain it. There are three factors that assist the continuance of multi-culturalism: the horizontal and vertical dimensions of Indian culture that displays inner depth and upward transcendence; the special distance and temporal multiplicity; and the dynamic interaction between unity and diversity. Then the paper takes up for its consideration, those factors or ideologies that undermine and make every effort to destroy multi-cultural nature of Indian cultural tradition. A Rahuramaraju is of the opinion that the project of modernity, the high-culture classical tradition in India and ideology of Hindutva that attempt to destroy multi-culturalism. The project of modernity, for example, vehemently opposes to the division of powers in order to keep the authority of the state strong. In doing so it does not allow the growth of diverse groups and institutions. The high-culture classical tradition in India upholds unity in every sphere of human existence and attempts to destroy multi-culturalism. The Hindutva ideology, with its fundamentalist perspective does not allow multi-culturalism in Indian society. In the conclusion, the paper calls us to be cautious and work with the desirable aspects of multi-culturalism. Attempt to unify everything has a limit, because unifying at the cost of individual and social freedom is not acceptable.

The paper of D. Bala Ganapathy entitled “The Categorization of Indian Philosophy: An Alternative approach”, attempts to critique traditional ways of categorizing Indian philosophy as Orthodox Systems (*Astika Darsanas*) and Heterodox Systems (*Nastika Darsanas*) and explores an alternative approach, which is not explicitly found in the treatises of the history of Indian philosophies. He begins this study with the preliminary analysis of the term “*darsana*” which refers to a school or system of thought. Then the paper unfolds historically the *astika-nastika* categorization of Indian philosophy by citing the opinions of classical and contemporary authors. Having done this task, the paper takes up the question of the validity of the classification of *Astika Darsana* into six schools and *Nastika Darsana* into three schools. According to D. Bala Ganapathy, since there are 36 schools of Indian philosophy, the traditional categorization of Indian philosophy into just nine schools is based on some intellectual bias and, therefore, the Indian cultural tradition has not accorded due importance to the other 27 schools both in the works of commentators and historians. Hence, the paper takes up the issue of developing an alternative categorization of Indian philosophical systems that would give due importance to all schools. In attempting at an alternative approach in categorizing Indian philosophy, the paper highlights the efforts made by both classical and contemporary thinkers in this regard, thereby shows the inadequacy of *astika-nastika* categorization of Indian philosophy into 6+3 systems of thought to explain the whole of Indian philosophical systems. In the conclusion, the paper points to the necessity of viewing different systems of Indian philosophy as different attempts to grasp the Ultimate Reality. This view can lead us to see similarities and differences among all the systems in addressing the problems of life – empirical, metaphysical,

religious and spiritual – from different points of view basing on their historical backgrounds.

#### **PART IV. INTIMATIONS OF CULTURE AND RELIGIONS IN BUILDING UP MODERN INDIA: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH**

The fourth part of the volume takes a philosophical approach in clarifying intimate relationship of Indian cultural tradition to religions that have emerged from it and that are assimilated into it, though they may have an outside origin. Being part of the Indian cultural traditions religions have played active role in enriching Indian cultural tradition by uprooting those negative elements inherent in it and by cultivating those positive aspects that belong to it. Thus, the fourth part of this book attempts to elaborate the contributions of religions in building up modern India and modern Indian society. Kamal Chand Sogani's paper explores in detail the contribution of Jainism to Indian cultural tradition, while the paper of Augustine Perumalil documents the contributions of Christianity in building up modern India. We briefly consider the contents of both of these papers.

Kamal Chand Sogani's paper entitled "Indian Culture and Jainism" is an in-depth exposition of Jaina system of thought and practice and its contributions to the socio-cultural and moral-spiritual spheres of Indian life. Sogani begins his paper by stating that Jainism as a religion and a movement against the Vedic tradition belongs to the *sramanic* tradition and has generated a remarkable social and cultural upliftment in the Indian society. Then the paper spells out some of the contributions of Jainism to Indian culture: the Jaina doctrines of *ahimsa* and *aparigraha*; the inclusion of the notion of modification (*pariyaya*) in the definition of substance (*dravya*) and its spiritual implication; the doctrine of metaphysico-axiological *anekanta* along with the doctrine of view-point (*naya*) in understanding both the material and spiritual reality; the use of the device *syadvada* as the key to the pointed communicability of knowledge and the device Sevenfold propositions (*Saptabhangivada*) for proper understanding of knowledge; the doctrine of *karma* as an explanation of the cognitive, conative and affective differences existing in the world at large; the mystical journey of the Self from darkness to light, from slumberiness to perfect spiritual awakening; the composite *sadhana* of *Tri-ratna* – known as spiritual-awakening (*samyagdarsana*), value-knowledge (*samyagjnana*) and ethico-spiritual conduct (*samyakcaritra*) – leading to emancipation (*moksha*); the religious and social freedom to women and the down-trodden people advocated by Jainism; acceptance of *sallekhana* as the spiritual welcome to death without any fear and perturbation; and the contribution of Jainism in the fields of art and literature. All these contributions have influenced the Indian cultural tradition in ever-so-many ways. In the conclusion Sogani claims that in the fields of socio-spiritual values, logico-metaphysical pronouncements, diverse Indian languages and meaningful artistic, scientific and secular consciousness, Jainism has enormously

contributed to Indian Cultural tradition, and has been instrumental in building up modern Indian society.

Augustine Perumalil, in his paper entitled “Christian Contribution to Building up Modern India” attempts to document the contributions of the Christian community to modern India. Christians have been in India from the very beginning of Christianity and the Christian community has integrated itself with the culture and philosophy of the land. As part of the Indian community, they have added some specific creative contributions coming from their historically inherited diverse background to the fermentation process that has fashioned modern India. This essay tries to assess realistically the contribution of the Christian community to the growth and development of modern Indian society. In doing so, it attempts to give a fitting reply to the lie cultivated by the Sangh Parivar, a Hindu right-wing organization, which has been poisoning the popular mind that the missionaries are out to forcefully proselytize Hindus, destroy Indian culture and civilization, and that the Christians are aliens, whose loyalty to India cannot be taken for granted. The Christian contribution to the betterment of the nation spans many different areas, both institutional and non-institutional. The paper names the following fields affecting social life: education, health-care, social service, social transformation, development of commerce and art, material and human resources, language and culture, empowering the weaker section of society, fighting social evils, research, publishing and public administration, and states that Christians are doing an outstanding work and are making their mark. While the paper gives a brief sketch of some of the major contributions of the Christian community to the socio-political and religio-cultural life of India, it makes a lengthy discussion on Church’s contributions to the liberation of the depressed classes, such as the *dalits* – the people of lower strata of the society, from lower castes and the outcasts of the Hindu society – the tribals and women. This is because the contribution of the Church in this area has been unique, substantial, decisive, and unmatched. In the conclusion Augustine Perumalil says that only because the Christian missionaries, moved by the love for the poor and self-sacrificing spirit, have gone to the remotest and the most backward regions of India to transmit the message of love in action, modern India has reached the commendable cultural and civilizational development of which it is proud of.

In the conclusion we raise the issue of the identity of Indian culture and its relevance in the globalizing world of today. The identity of Indian cultural tradition is to be found not in a fixed standard or ideology, but in relation to the multi-dimensional and diverse nature of Indian cultural tradition and therefore, unity in diversity is fundamental to its identity. Hence, there is no opposition between cultural identity and globalization, and between cultural authenticity and modernization of culture. The Indian cultural tradition must take the same spirit of accommodation and spirit of openness, with which it coped with the diverse influences that affected it over the years of its history in facing the diverse influences of a globalized

world. Thus, if the spirit of openness and accommodation – that is characteristic of Indian psyche – continues to be nurtured in the Indian cultural tradition, it would continue to discover and transform its identity and continue to modernize itself, in the process expand its impact in the globalized world.

The papers that appear in this volume are representative of different philosophies and worldviews that fostered and nurtured Indian cultural tradition. Thus, this volume provides a multifaceted space of articulating different aspects of Indian culture, which further lends a critical and creative edge to appreciate the Indian cultural tradition. The volume ends with a select bibliography of books and articles used by the authors in writing their respective papers.

*Vensus A. George*



**PART I**

**INTRODUCTORY EXPLORATIONS INTO  
INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION**



## CHAPTER I

# CULTURE AND PHILOSOPHY: A METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

GEETA MANAKTALA

### INTRODUCTION

In our consideration of the general theme of this volume *Identity, Creativity and Modernization: Perspectives on Indian Cultural Tradition*, a reflection upon a theme, such as “Culture and Philosophy” is especially important at least for two reasons. The first is the radical craze for modernity, which is taking place in the third world in general and India in particular, forgetting the fact that it is the cultural artifacts that have given the human beings a meaningful existence in the society, the clan, the tribe or the community that they “belong” to and as the result the human persons are getting dehumanized increasingly. Secondly, the term “philosophy” understood in relation to the term “culture” carries notably a metaphysical and epistemological connotation as one is tempted to believe that culture with philosophy has such derivative meanings. However, when one thinks reflectively, one is certain to come to the conclusion that a people and their society can be studied in terms of its culture and the worldview (philosophy) that helps them to carry on their daily lives. This implies that the inner implications of a culture can be understood and deliberated upon under the wide umbrella of a philosophy or the worldview that is characteristic of that particular people. Therefore, the question whether philosophers *qua* philosophers have anything to contribute to an active and mutually prolific encounter of cultures is a serious matter to be deliberated upon. It is also possible to look at the issue in a different perspective that if every thought and expression of philosophy and thinking are performed by the means of certain symbolic systems which remain culturally influenced, then philosophy also can be reduced to the expressions of a people in their cultural lives. It amounts to saying that the philosophical moorings that underlie the cultural specificities enable us to take into account the scope and catholicity of vision in such a topic as articulated above. Nevertheless, one might ask whether this approach in attaining meaning is not itself subject to the accented intellectualism and subjective or partisan interests which are characteristic of modern times.

In modern times, we have, to a certain extent, lost this deeper philosophical dimension and understand culture as basically a unity of man’s expressions of varied existence and its manifold diversity. It is suggested, in this paper, that the world of nature as the object of human activities based on cognition becomes a world of culture in its philosophical

or metaphysical sense. Accordingly, this paper is intended to reassess the human subject with regard to his physical and intellectual powers, which are subject to objective observation, and the will that searches for the good; yet more deeply the human dimension at which we integrate all of these in terms of his well-being, in the context of his culture. Since this is the purpose of this paper, in order to appreciate the nature and significance of culture and its relationship to philosophy, the paper attempts to take recourse to the following steps. First, it intends to throw some light on the notion of culture itself. Then, it will examine man in relation to culture and explore how changing understanding of culture has challenged the fundamentals of the spiritual identity of the human person. Finally, it will take for consideration the role of philosophy and its relationship to culture and how the interaction can uphold the significant values that would sustain the genuine identity of the individual and the society in the sociocultural context.

## **NOTION OF CULTURE**

In this section, we attempt to explore the notion of culture, by unfolding its meaning in general and its other diverse uses. We also clarify the change that has taken place in the notion of culture due to changing times. We conclude this section with historical development of the notion of culture.

### *Culture: A General Understanding*

It is generally accepted that man is a cultural being. However, when it comes to the question of delineating the notion of culture in greater clarity, we are at a loss. Every human being is shaped by twofold transmissions: genetical and social. By virtue of the former, man is a natural being; and by virtue of the latter, he is a cultural being. As a cultural being, man enables culture to emerge, to be kept alive and grow and lead to the creative capacity of a group of people characterized by the notions of unity, truth, goodness and beauty whose meaning and value suggest that culture at its base is a renewal or re-living of the origins in an attitude of profound appreciation.

There is a divergence of views in defining culture. One of the earliest definitions of culture, which is often quoted and considered valid even today, is given by E. B. Tylor.<sup>1</sup> According to him, culture is the sum-total of the beliefs, ideas, customs, laws, morals, arts and other capabilities and skills acquired by man as a member of society. B. Malinowski defines culture as the total way of life and the instruments – mental, social and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. E.B. Tylor: *Primitive Culture*, vol. VII, (London: 1871), p. 7.

material – of which this way is constituted.<sup>2</sup> For David Bidney, culture is the product of the agrofacts, artifacts, socifacts and mentifacts.<sup>3</sup> Culture in this latter sense can be regarded as a thing that exists. Accordingly, culture can mean the following threefold realities. Firstly, culture incorporates everything that serves to adapt man to his natural environment. Culture, in this way, comprises the means and methods by which man reacts to his environment: his means of acquiring food; and the implements that he uses for it, such as tools, weapons, cooking utensils, husbandry; and the means of transportation. Secondly, culture includes man's reactions to his social groups: his social institutions, such as the family, the kinship group, sibs and clans; the political institutions and laws; the position of man, woman and child in these institutions; the customs of birth, mating, death and funeral; the property rights and inheritance; and in general all laws and customs regulating private and social life. Culture, in this sense, also comprises man's creative and artistic activities and their products: his ornaments, carvings and sculptures; his paintings and drawings; his music and dancing; his story telling, myths and legends; and his poems and riddles. Finally, culture consists of man's beliefs about the transcendent world: his beliefs in the existence of superhuman powers and beings; the reality of the lower and higher deities, ghosts and spirits, demons and goblins; the existence of a soul and life after death.

It is universally admitted that only man has a capacity for ethical evaluation, practice of religion and enjoyment of art. It is only man who is capable of ceremonies and rites resulting from his beliefs and magical practices. Thus, when culture understood in the sense described above, man alone is capable of culture and only he has culture. The development of culture, at least to some extent, is dependent on man's free will and creativity, which includes his desires, caprices, vices, knowledge and ignorance. This implies that man is as much the creator of culture as its product and carrier. When man creates a cultural form, he reacts in a certain manner. However, he can react in a different way, given his free will and creativity. Man, on the one hand, is the child of a particular age, society, and convention, which we call cultural tradition; and on the other hand, man also contributes his share in the emergence of various cultural forms. This possibility refutes cultural determinism of man. Consequently, the development of culture cannot be worked out in the manner the natural sciences develop by generally valid laws and principles. Laws and principles of cultural development are valid only in general and to an approximate degree.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. B. Malonowski: *A Scientific Theory of Culture*, Biblioquest International.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. David Bidney: "Human Nature and the Cultural Process", *American Anthropologist*, vol. 49, July-September, (1947), pp. 375-395.

Having clarified the meaning of culture in a general sense, we move on to consider the different meanings in which the term “culture” is understood in the following sections.

*Culture: Its Wider and Restricted Usages*

The term “culture” can be understood both in its wider and restricted senses. In the wider sense, culture of a people consists of their language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, work of art, rituals, ceremonies and other related components. It also includes physical habitats and resources; the range of possibilities inherent in various areas of activity, such as the manufacture and use of tools; and the degree of social development.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, “culture” in the restricted sense emphasizes the transmission of ideals, values and heritage from generation to generation within a society, which it develops and gets modified in this process. In this sense, culture is not instinctive, but is acquired and learned, more efficiently so, by those who are called aristocrats. These persons are said to be the cultural elites.<sup>5</sup> The highest and deepest aspects of culture are conspicuously manifested in them. Culture in this restricted sense may, thus, be conceived as a refinement of life at all levels attained by the cultural elites.

T. S. Eliot in his book entitled *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* defines culture in the following way: “It is a product of a variety of more or less harmonious activities each pursued for its own sake, the artist must concentrate upon his canvas, the poet upon his type-writer, the civil servant upon the just settlement of particular problems as they present themselves upon his desk; each according to the situation in which he finds himself”<sup>6</sup> Given the importance of the harmonious activities that are pursued by each individual, it is important to remember that individuals are not separated consciousnesses, but persons who sense, feel, react and respond to individual situations and tasks. It is the community of humans, not of spirits, which needs to be built, with their capacities and needs for overcoming hardships and physical limitation. Generally a scholar is regarded as a man of culture, as for instance a musician, a painter or a priest. Culture as Eliot understood is intended to comprehend the disciplines or human achievements in one whole, where each has its own contribution. Proficiency in any one of human efforts does not constitute culture because culture of an individual cannot be isolated from that of a group and the culture of the group cannot be isolated from that of the society. It means that culture is constituted by several cultural activities of several human beings,

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th Edition.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Rekha Jhanji: *Knowledge, Culture and Action*, (New Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1994.), p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> T.S. Eliot: *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1948), p. 90.

all taken into account at once. It is only by an overlapping and sharing of interests, by participation and mutual appreciation that the cohesion necessary for culture can be obtained.<sup>7</sup>

*Culture: Its Symbolic Dimension*

Another interpretation of culture, given by sociologists and anthropologists, takes into account and directs us to its symbolic considerations. In the earlier period, culture is understood precisely as a collective noun, which has been used to define the human being outside his ontological realm and is confined to the natural realm. Certainly, when we speak of the “cultural” we reaffirm a philosophical commitment to the difference and particularly that is centered on man or the humankind. Animals are simply driven by impulses, instincts and needs, which act on their behavior impulsively and automatically. These organic needs drive animals to different kinds of activities from which they derive satisfaction. On the organic level, there is similarity between man and animal. However, man constantly aspires and works on himself in order to place him at a higher level and gradually transcends the limitations imposed by his biological nature.

The progress of man from animal existence to a fully cultured existence involves a number of stages. Conscious ability to distinguish between things on the basis of their qualities is said to be the first stage. Since man is a rational animal, his rationality tends to his superiority over other animals. He realizes and invents his freedom. Man attains his freedom by controlling his natural and social environment, thereby he is able to create, appropriate and appreciate values. In doing so, he is able to transcend his biological instinctive life. In the process of cultural progress, man develops the desire to live in conscious relationship with the totality of existence. The idea of culture, therefore, generates a concept, which provides a principle of unification for people across the world through time and space. As a result, it distinguishes man’s behavior from that of other creatures and it provides a conceptual break with the dominant explanatory resources of biology and genetic determinism. In this context, we could mention the notion of culture that emerged in the German intellectual tradition, which stands for the pinnacle of human achievement and societal aspirations. Culture in this sense, has come to specify that which is remarkable in human creativity and inventiveness. Rather than encapsulating human symbolic representations German term “*Kultur*” points to the levels of excellence in fine arts, literature, music and individual perfection.

The inquiry into the nature of culture is predominantly an inquiry into the nature of man himself: the manner and mode of his being, his expression, his silence, his communication, his living and his interaction. It

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

amounts to saying that the questions that are addressed to culture are necessarily centered on the patterns of human activity, which reveals man to him and thereby brings him into relationship with his environment. In other words, it is the expression of man's activities within a group and the group's activity within the larger whole or society.<sup>8</sup>

*Culture: Its Meaning in Changing Times*

With the changing times the way culture is understood also has changed. At present culture is defined as constituting both the material and non-material aspects of life, whether it is the arts, language, knowledge, values, beliefs, practices and technology that are available and are actively created and acquired by members of a society. It is upon culture that both the framework of a society is developed and the quintessential natures of the individuals, who are a part of it, are nurtured. Yet, its importance is often taken for granted with little concerted efforts being undertaken to preserve it in its pristine form and essence. In this rapidly changing world the spread of education, the introduction of technology, coexistence with other cultures and the complexities of modern life have posed great challenges to traditional cultures. Leaders and concerned individuals of all societies have tried to address these problems and proffered plausible solutions, but the onslaught of the above agents of change has transformed the essential nature of all cultures.

In fact, cultural change has become an inevitable phenomenon of the modern world with the resultant loss of many traditional elements. Accordingly, we may say that at this moment of history, one cannot remain isolated within one's own culture. Borders are crossed over and the built-up boundaries are overcome. Guarding one's identity in terms of one's culture and tradition has surpassed its limitations and the security zone that we have created for ourselves, have become a myth. Nevertheless, we can say that within the span of two short decades, we have morphed from a society that have feared and resisted change to a society that not only accepts change as inevitable, but also have completely taken dramatic turns so far as acquisition of changes are concerned. Moving from retail trends to urban planning, pop culture, technology, business and medicine, we are now completely accustomed to seeing one way of doing things quickly washed away by the next. We expect change so much that we put off major purchases to get the next season's features. We routinely ask, "What will be the next big thing?"

Thus, we see that everything around us is changing. Change – as we maintain – is the side effect of development, which may be physical, mental, economic, social or in plain language, the overall development. However, the change that is happening has a wider connotation and

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Sneh Pandit: *Perspectives in Philosophy of Culture*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers (P) Ltd, 1977), p. xiii.



implicitly has a much greater role to play in our daily lives. The sequence, sort of variations and changes are neither without rules nor are they strictly determined. It would be right to consider change as both the result and the precursor of development. Development depends on man's willingness to change, to take risks and to dispose of damaging beliefs. In other words, the extent of change defines the degree of growth. Hence, such a change in the existing cultures or values can be either adverse or favorable. Say for example, abolition of *sati* is a change in values for many, but not everyone in a society categorizes this change as needed. Hence, not all changes in principle are called for. If the above line of argument is valid, then we can say that all cultures are inherently not only predisposed to change but also resist change. There are dynamic processes that operate and encourage the acceptance of new things and ideas, while there are other forces that encourage changeless stability. It is likely that social and psychological chaos would result, if there are no conservative forces that resist change in a society.

*Culture: Its Historical Development*

At this juncture, it is appropriate to throw some light on the historical development of the concept of culture. The term "culture" is complex and divergent in its various applications and thereby defies the possibility and, indeed, the necessity of any singular designation. It is, nevertheless, real in its significance both in everyday language and within the fashionable discourses of modern society. Whatever its facticity, culture is a concept with a history. The idea of culture has emerged in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century largely as a reaction against the massive changes that have been occurring in the structure and quality of social life. These changes at the social, political and personal levels are both confusing and controversial. Such changes, through industrialization and technology, have been wildly unprecedented in human experience: they have been wildly expansionist in nature; the horizons have been simply consumed and grossly productive for good or bad; and is understood and legitimized through the slogan and ideology of progress. The social structure has been politically destructive; it has opened doors for the creation and sustenance of increasingly visible divisive forces.

This situation is brought about through new forms of ranking and hierarchy, is accompanied by the proliferating division of labor, and is combined with the diversity and proximity of population through urbanization and improved systems of communication. In one sense, the aesthetic and spiritual qualities of life, if compared to the rural rustic life, have been threatened by machine and the excesses of industrial society. The machine and mechanization of life has devoured the natural character of mankind. This process has culminated in Benjamin's "age of mechanical reproduction"; Marcuse's sense of "one-dimensionality"; and in Baudrillard's evocation of post-modernism. The "culture" that mediated

between ‘man’ and ‘nature’ can now be seen to mediate between ‘man’ and ‘machine’.

Culture, in a classical society, is equated with civilization. The term “civilization” is derived from the Latin term “*civis*”. It is a descriptive term for a state of belonging to a collectivity that embodied certain qualities. Thus, the term “civilization” describes a kind of stasis, a membership, or a belonging including man’s subjective feelings and aspirations. Indeed, it is a status once achieved cannot be given up. On the other hand, the idea of culture is not so much descriptive, but metaphoric and is derived from agricultural or horticultural processes of cultivating the soil. Culture is meant for tilling, cultivating and refining; it is said to be the working ground in order to raise crops, which is the condition consequent upon the development and strengthening of inherent powers and capacities – physical, mental, moral or spiritual. It is again understood as the transformation of nature into a methodical structure of proportion and completeness, which is conducive to and responsible for peace and happiness not only of the individual but also of mankind as a whole.

In the context of equating “culture” and “civilization”, the concept of culture began to have different meaning than its original meaning: for instance, the realm of accommodating socialization was understood as “cultivating the person”; education meant “cultivating the mind” and colonization was seen as “cultivating the natives”. In all these uses of the concept of culture there implies a process, which is not only a transition, but also is a goal in the form of ‘culture’ itself. It is here that the hierarchical notions of “a cultured person” or “a cultivated group” began to emerge. This changed meaning of the concept of culture even promised the idea of “a high culture” or “an elite class”. In all these uses of the notion of culture, there has come about a reduction of the metaphorical sense, and the term “culture” begins to acquire more and more descriptive sense of civilization.

## **MAN AND HIS RELATIONSHIP TO CULTURE**

The changing perception of culture, to which is man is related, in turn, brings about drastic changes in the way human nature and identity is understood and explained. Though man is called to integrate the inner being and outer environment of culture, he realizes that he himself is fragmented and divided as he himself is conditioned by culture. The commerce of consumerism and changed values threaten to further this divide within the human person, so much so that he is challenged to live his nature and identity as a spiritual entity. Thus, this section unfolds how man is conditioned and challenged both in his being and action by the way culture is understood in modern times.

*Man, Activity of Culture and the "Body of Expedients"*

The activity of culture does not mean that it is an activity of mere physical adjustments. It is profoundly different and subjective in nature; there are human cravings, which are deeper than the physical dimension and demand specific fulfillment. There is a "body of expedients" that human beings devise for mankind's survival. The "body of expedients" is a response to the "animal in man" to the challenges faced by human nature. However, human challenges are unique and are profoundly different from that of the lower animals in that they not only try to overcome the physical world, but also create a new world of their own. Human challenges work not only through instincts, but also through aspirations and ideas. It is these human aspirations and ideas that can make a "civilization" and create a "culture". Understood in this sense culture is a value concept. Man has created values and the values that he has created for himself have never satisfied him fully. So he has consistently examined facts in terms of values. The human tendency to evaluate factual realities in terms of ends and means is the proof of man's interest in those objects and activities, which carry some value. As constituents of culture, only those ideas, habits and technical processes evolved by man and which contributes to the enrichment of life bring about deep changes in man's personality.

Although culture is not the sole instrument of human progress, yet the real progress of human civilization cannot be measured except in terms of culture. A cultured man is endowed with attributes and powers worthy of a human being. He does not live merely as an individual but readily participates in the conscious and creative life of the human race. In other words, true culture extends habitual courtesy to human beings. In this context, it is pertinent to quote Devaraja. According to him "a man is cultured when he conducts himself consciously, creatively and impersonally."<sup>9</sup> Culture creates social consciousness; a cultured man not only respects creative activities of different kinds in the field of morality, art and literature, but also is sustained by all of them. His assessment of things and actions are not based on personal advantages or disadvantages, but on wider human interests as truly cultural activities are sources of happiness to everyone. Shri Aurobindo summarizes this idea in the following way:

The mind liberated from the lower control and preoccupation introduced into life a government, an uplifting, a refinement, a finer balance and harmony, the vital and physical movements are directed and put into order, transformed, even as far as they can be by mental agency, they are taught to be the instruments of reason

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<sup>9</sup> N.K. Deveraja: *Philosophy of Culture*, (Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1963), p. 91.

obedient to an enlightened will, an ethical perception, an aesthetic intelligence.<sup>10</sup>

*Predicament of Man Conditioned by Culture*

Modern man has grown up in a society, which is basically corrupt. When we look at the psychological structure of the society we live in, we discover that it is framed with greed, envy, ambition, competitive spirit, adoration of success and superstition. Such a society possesses a powerful machinery of conditioning. Man is conditioned in his body and mind simultaneously by the resources of his material environment and by the constant cultural, religious and political propaganda of the society he lives in. This conditioning is further hardened by the so-called education that we receive from our colleagues and at home. In this process, we acquire strong beliefs – religious, racial and political – which project their respective ideals to be realized. By creating these ideals, these systems of beliefs also create a gap between what is actual and what ought to be the case. Inevitably, this gap becomes the characteristic feature of the individual psyche. Thus, the result of the conditioning process is that the individual turns out to be a divided being. His thought and actions are divided between what he actually is and what he ought to become. This gap results in compartmentalization of life of the human person. The conditioned human person is essentially self-centered and tries to live on both sides of the divide, which, in turn, lands him into a painful bundle of contradictions. He harbors all the conflicting desires created by the gap within him. It is pertinent here to recall the words of Martin Heidegger:

The approaching tide of technological revolution in the atomic age could so captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practiced as the only way of thinking. What great danger then might move upon us? Then there might go hand and hand with the greatest ingenuity in calculative planning and inventing indifference toward meditative thinking, total thoughtlessness. And then? Then man would have denied and thrown away his own special nature – he is a meditative being. Therefore, the issue is the saving of man's essential nature. Therefore the issue is keeping meditative thinking alive.<sup>11</sup>

Such a gap between the ideal and the actual is embedded in the very structure of society, which demands from us, both the realization of the

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<sup>10</sup> Shri Aurobindo: *Life Divine*, (Pondicherry: 1950), p. 533.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 56.

ideal and the pursuit of our personal ambitions. The self-conscious pursuit of the ideals and virtues, individually and collectively, are only a testimony of contradictions within man signifying a desperate attempt to be both self-seeking and virtuous at the same time. The modern man, thus, remains fragmented, lacking an integrated passion and purpose in life. His insensitive existence is characterized by a total lack of insight into the nature of his subjectivity and its relationship with other people. He lives in a constant anxiety and a deep sense of alienation struggling in vain to overcome them. This is especially evident in this age of technology where no one would deprive the importance of specialized knowledge so as to enable man to attain particular ends. However, no one enquires as to what is the value of that knowledge which reinforces the divisions within and between men.

*Man: Builder of Unity between Inner Being and Outer Environment of a Culture*

Though man is fragmented and divided due to his being conditioned by changing perceptions of culture, he has the responsibility of building unity between the inner being and outer environment of his culture. The external or the outer “body” of culture refers to the heritage of a community that is outwardly and easily perceived consisting of the entire set of material artifacts and forms of behavior. It is described as the total body of material artifacts: tools, weapons, houses, places of work, worship, government, recreation and works of art. They are seen as distinctive forms of behavior patterns that are related to the most important aspects in life: such as birth, marriage and death; to the cult and to family relationships: such as behavior with children, parents, relatives and kinsmen; to the exercise of governance: such as behavior towards authority and deviants; and to the contracts: such as work, hunting, fishing, war and other organized aspects developed by a society sometimes deliberately and sometimes through unforeseen interconnections and consequences. All the above-said activities within a person’s particular life-condition, and through undergoing kinds and degrees of change, are transmitted from generations to generations.<sup>12</sup> Such an understanding of culture in this outer aspect is widely adopted in ordinary language. It finds an echo, for instance, over the mass media and in the activities of institutions, such as Ministries of Culture, Schools of Fine Arts, University Departments, cultural movements and festivals, literature, various conferences and seminars on culture. More often than not, culture is usually understood in this outer aspect and popularly understood accordingly.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. John P. Hogan, ed.: *Cultural Identity, Pluralism and Globalization*, vol. 1, (Washington D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2005), p.101.

However, the inner aspect or the “soul” of culture is the collective heritage of a people in their mental and spiritual activities centered on such orders as the systems of symbols, ideas, beliefs, aesthetic perceptions, values, and the like. Besides, this inner aspect like the outer aspect described above is patterned and structured by a community in its ongoing activities within its life-condition and transmitted from generation to generation. This inner aspect is sometimes described as the worldview (philosophy) that fashions a society. Kluckhohn and Kroeber<sup>13</sup> refer to this inner aspect as “the essential nucleus of ideas and values”. For Tentori, it is “an intangible something.”<sup>14</sup> The “soul” of culture finds an echo in these values and beliefs in which “the cultural material is collected and transferred into coherent models according to definite inner needs developed together with the group.”<sup>15</sup> Some thinkers perceive a link between the inner aspect of culture and the worldview (*Weltanschauung*). It may be noted specially that the inner aspect attains its concrete fulfillment in the external aspect of culture. Therefore, external aspect can be fully understood only by reference to its inner sources, which is the *raison d’etre* of the outer body of culture.

It has been our purpose to indicate that cultural values and preferences are a function of the priorities governing the survival behavior of each culture. When the society moves towards integration of these two dimensions of culture, the human subject with his freedom of choice provides the conditions for overcoming the deterministic animal behavior and the emergence of right values. This process is called intermediation of a culture. This intermediation and its prescriptions are what we call the values of the specific cultural and historical entity to which a person belongs. Man’s effort to integrate the inner being and outer environment of his culture also brings about a bearing on the integration of his own inner being and outer environment. We turn our attention to this point in the next section.

#### *Challenge to Man’s Existence as a Spiritual Entity*

The making of a genuine culture and civilization is always brought by the spirit of man, which unfortunately is threatened by the growth of technology. Technology has overpowered man to such an extent that he lives in a system that is so well organized that it becomes almost self-directing. In such a system, the scope for individual initiative is obviously reduced. The necessities of the individual reach him in a ready-made way. Even his likes and tastes are being determined by the “mass-order”, which indirectly through various modes of technical propaganda and advertising

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. C. Kluckhohn, and A.L. Kroeber, *Il Concetto di Cultura*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1982).

<sup>14</sup> T. Tentori, in C. Kluckhohn and A.L. Kroeber, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> R. Benedict, in C. Kluckhohn and A.L. Kroeber, p. 365.

determines almost each and every move of the modern man. His efforts are directed towards the fulfillment of his desires, but the objects of his desires reach him easily now. In that case, his happiness does not consist in fulfilling his desires, as he understands increasingly that they are being fulfilled mechanically.

He searches for his happiness not only by seeking fulfillment in the “objects of desire”, but by “striving towards the goals” by exercising his capacities for newer and creative dimensions of life. This happens not only at the individual level, but also at the collective level. For example, some rules of the present-day marketing and the means used for influencing potential consumers by the mediation of advertising are not in accordance with the accepted norms of rational thinking, but rather they aim at luring the customers by using irrational means. The rationality of the contemporary market, therefore, consists in the view that rational modes of such activities cause irrational behavior patterns in the mass-society. In other words, the contemporary man has created a market, which, in turn, consumes him both spiritually and emotionally.

There are three great challenges a human person faces in this task of bringing integration within his own being and they require our special consideration. They are: firstly, man’s physical survival; secondly man’s moral integrity; and thirdly, man’s being as a spiritual entity.<sup>16</sup> Of these three, man’s being as a spiritual entity is the most significant. There is a threat to man’s survival as a spiritual entity because of man’s greed for gaining power and the resultant danger of consumerism. The new economic models and the ever-growing commerce of consumerism have changed our perception of individual values and the behavioral patterns in the society. The modern man has acquired new attitudes towards providing for his family through mental or physical work patterns, society, law and government. Traditional cultural values are threatened. Thus, modernity and its accompanying attitudes have become the major context within which most of us live. In his analysis of modern technological society Ella states: “There is no doubt that all the traditional cultures and sociological structures will be destroyed by technique before we can discover or invent social, economic and psychological forms of adaptation which might possibly have preserved the equilibrium of these peoples and societies.”<sup>17</sup> Consequently, man’s moral integrity assumes a different role and thereby human dignity has lost its depth and meaning.

## **RELATION BETWEEN CULTURE AND PHILOSOPHY**

It is in the context of diverse perceptions of culture and their

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Prem Kirpal, *Culture and Development*, (New Delhi: Har- Anand Publications, 1995), p. 64.

<sup>17</sup> J. Ellul: *The Technological Society*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), p.123.

consequences on the human person, there emerges the role of philosophy which could give a worldview in relation to which the true meaning of culture and its values can be rediscovered. Besides, it is an accepted fact that knowledge plays an important role in the emergence and development of new value systems. Thus, the interaction between culture and philosophy can not only take us to the right perception of values in society, but also to the proper understanding of the human nature and its identity as a spiritual entity. Thus, this section attempts to explore how culture is related to philosophy, and how philosophy can give a true interpretation of culture and its values.

#### *Values and Their Growth in the Sociocultural Context*

Values owe their origin to the sociocultural context. The relationship of values to the material world, the influence to which they are subjected to in specific societies, and the ways in which the given individuals act to contribute to the formation of values. Besides, the individuals and their community existences, which find expression in the behavioral patterns of the members of a given society, the customs and conventions that are generally accepted and followed in the society – all combine together to create values. Values, therefore, being moral in nature, are social facts and act as individual motives in the social context within which life is lived.

Society is not simply a conglomeration of individuals as such, that a dichotomy or conflict arises between the individual and the common good – though this constitutes a moral problem itself – but is rather constituted of persons who can act freely and responsibly. The person constitutes society just as he/she is constituted by society. Every finite person is as much a collective or social entity as he is an individual person. Accordingly, a good society whether national or global, can only be built on the quality of its individual members who are wise, compassionate, courageous and creative. Ultimately, development – as fulfillment of basic needs and as enjoyment of the quality of life – is founded upon and is sustained by human values of the individual and of his society. G.C. Pande comments on this point as follows:

A society is what you and I, in our relationship have created; it is the outward projection of all our inward psychological states. So if you and I do not understand us, merely transforming the outer, which is the projection of the inner has no significance, whatsoever, I create society, which is the replica, the outward expression of what I am. We see that all knowledge (information), thought structures, ideals, beliefs, concepts are sterile in



transforming the psyche of man, or in other words to bring radical transformation or mutation in the human psyche.<sup>18</sup>

This implies that only those values of life, which makes a man a human being in the true sense of the term and through which he leads a virtuous life must be accepted and nurtured. Every society has a traditional culture and its creation is based upon those values, which are adopted by our ancestors. Such a line of argument and thinking obviates the necessity of new-normative structures take shape in the value conceptions of society within the dynamics of social movements and thereby institutionalize new forms of social integration. These new value conceptions and changes in the value-system take place in the society, particularly in relation to the impact of knowledge on culture. In the next section, we turn our attention to this point.

#### *Knowledge and Its Impact on Culture*

The more dynamic is our knowledge the faster will cultural changes take place. In the areas of highly developed and dynamic knowledge conditions cultural changes occur as the result of rational activity. They are produced within the culture by its internal dynamism under the impact of uncontrollable external forces, whether natural or human. The more developed and dynamic is our knowledge in the given culture, the more self-induced are the changes that it undergoes. A dynamic culture forms a self-evolving system, which is accelerating in its evolution. If one wishes to understand cultural changes in general and contemporary culture in particular, one must first assess the principal factor, which produces this change, namely, knowledge.

In view of the above contention, it becomes apparent that the change of a cultural paradigm, which we witness, is neither accidental nor surprising in its occurrence. It is the logical result of the development of knowledge. The understanding of the role of knowledge in the development of culture is, therefore, essential for the understanding of cultural processes. An understanding of these processes is important in itself. Besides, cultural changes have important existential facts, which affect us deeply. From the point of view of knowledge, the right perception of its role in these changes gives us important insight into the causality of knowledge in general and to the relationship between knowledge and human beings. Therefore, what need to be recognized are the unique status of man as a human being and the worth of his life itself.

Man is essentially a self-transcending being, who can surpass the given situation by his capacity for reflection and self-awareness. The physical world has a new meaning for him as comprehended by his reason

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<sup>18</sup> G.C. Pande, *Meaning and Process of Culture*, (Agra: Shiv Lal Aggarwal & Co, 1972), pp. 4-5.

and superior intellect. The extent of this comprehension determines the event of his freedom. This continual interplay in man of his physical, mental and spiritual aspects is both a blessing and a peril for him. No creature, as the modern existentialists say, is capable of such abysmal depths of loneliness, crime, bewilderment, and despair as the present man is. Yet, by the organic development of his diverse capacities, he embodies the possibility of evolving a meaning and purpose for his life. Such a life when enkindled by an awareness of his deep abiding commitment to the world, can reach him to the highest strata of devotional life, which at the same time is the highest level of existential realization. Such a realization is the supreme concern of Universal Religion. It replaces the humanitarian ideals of compassion and charity with the spiritual precept of service of God dwelling in the hearts of all beings. This is the understanding of New Vedanta, which focuses on the new human possibilities, i.e., seeing one Self in all. Mere intellectual understanding and interfaith deliberations cannot attain such a harmony of the self with the other, nor can law enact it. It is to be discovered and realized by deepening our individual God-Consciousness. Vivekananda comments on this point: "Show by your lives that religion does not mean words or names or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those, who ... [have attained the higher levels of spirituality and is able to communicate it to others], can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are powers of light."<sup>19</sup> As Heschel puts it: "Human is he, who is concerned with other selves... Man cannot even be in accord with his own self unless he serves something beyond himself. The presence of the deep transitive concern opens up for many new ontological dimensions: the dimension of the holy. Surpassing the vegetative and the animal, man exhibits his deep transitive concern with God and it is in this that the *Imago Dei* rests."<sup>20</sup> Therefore, what is needed for the establishment of the world peace and the functioning of a universal dynamic humanism is the overcoming of the beastliness in man, through his education being carried beyond the intellectual to the spiritual dimension of his being. This is what Vivekananda calls the true religion, which he defines "as the manifestation of the divinity already in man."<sup>21</sup>

#### *Role of Philosophy*

In unfolding that which is spiritual in culture and in man, philosophy plays a dominant role. It not only plays a significant part in the formation of new values but also in appropriating and deciphering emerging trends in the

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<sup>19</sup>Sampooran Singh, *National Seminar on Science, Values and Consciousness*, (P.U., 2002).

<sup>20</sup>Heschel: *Between God and Man*, (Free Press Paperbacks, 1997), p. 23.

<sup>21</sup> Swami Ranganathananda, *This Humanism: A Moscow University Lecture*, (n.p.: Advaita Ashrama: 1996), p. 48.

areas of culture and civilization as they are related to the human person. Reflecting over culture as a whole, philosophy allows incorporating the needs and potencies of the current moment with its actual trends. The prognostic and projective functions of philosophy working together can bring about new world outlooks, while preserving the "spirit" which is fundamental to the culture. Such a role of philosophy is not conspicuous: philosophical thought is capable of penetrating into public consciousness neither directly nor swiftly, but implicitly and gradually and thereby embracing the most diversified spheres of man's spiritual activity. It can, therefore, check and limit the spiritual loss of humanity more objectively. It has been correctly appreciated by all thinkers that philosophers like Kant and Hegel has a greater influence over their contemporaries. It is also a sheer fact that the role that has been played by Martin Luther King in stopping the Vietnam War and changing the mentality of the American nation is due his philosophical vision and understanding of the things and events. The same can be said with regard to Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi and their philosophy of non-violence. The impact of philosophy on the society is visible if we look into the time of Aristotle and Socrates. A convincing part is played by the philosopher's way of life, which for Plato is "the very practice of philosophy". In a certain socio-cultural condition the impact of philosophical ideas are comprehensive and pave way for new accelerations.

What can we expect from philosophy today? What role does it play? Philosophy aims at evolving an integral system of views about the world and man's place in it, his relationship between consciousness and matter, and the inner connection between the spiritual and the material in man. It investigates man's cognitive, moral, aesthetic and religious dimensions and his sociopolitical relationship with regard to the events of natural and social lives. Moreover, it is argued often that philosophy is oriented to the highest principles of humanism. Philosophy empowers man to learn the essential truth about him; man is not exclusively a happening because of his nature but in essence he is a person who constitutes a certain ontic processes, which guarantees identity to him. Therefore, the humanistic value for a "philosophical attitude to life" is not confined in striving after imposed values or to poison life with malice or groundless illusions, but to have an inner strength based on principles, ideologies or even in the belief in a God. Sociological, philosophical and psychological researches have proved that people who are in discord with them, who fail to realize themselves in anything or to determine themselves in the system of values, most frequently cause social conflicts. As G.C. Pande opines, culture is based on the tradition of values and of Self-realization. According to him, values are the objects of valuing, a fundamental human activity. Valuing implies seeking, choosing and approving,<sup>22</sup> and in this process philosophy can be of great help.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. G.C. Pande, *Meaning and Process of Culture*, pp. 4-5.

## CONCLUSION

Although culture is said to be the component of the world-view/philosophy that a particular society constitutes and builds for its ongoing survival, yet, in view of its specific character, philosophy plays a significant role in shaping culture. Philosophy, we are told, provides an understanding in denoting an intellectual project characterized by material as well as formal or rather methodological prerequisites. As Wimmer says, materially speaking, philosophy intends to clarify one or more of three fundamental fields of questions: the first question is concerning the structure of reality, which is studied in metaphysics, ontology, as well as in philosophical anthropology; the second question is concerning knowledgeability of reality, expounded in epistemology and logic; and the third question is concerning argumentation about norms which is explored in ethics, aesthetics, and in logic.<sup>23</sup> In other words, philosophy provides a “worldview” for the existing cultures and simultaneously cultures exert an influence on philosophy too. Part of philosophical method is the clarification of concepts, development of adequate terminology and examination of explicit presuppositions of propositions. In this respect, philosophy provides clearly a broadening of our outlook and understanding on the theme of culture. Hence, even if one does not accept philosophy as the only factor that gives the “outlook” of a given culture, it still is one of its major causes that can unfold the meaning of culture.

What philosophy has to do is that it should not restrict itself only to the epistemological approach, as it has been often the case, but rather it should now go beyond the epistemological dimension to the ontological aspect, so that man may be explained and understood in his totality. Thus, we may be able to explain the cultural decay that occurs in the modern situation more adequately and sufficiently. This demands a shift of attitude not only in economic or commercial terms but also in cultural and moral dimensions. This will facilitate and build upon the richness of humanizing cultures, which science and technology had omitted and often suppressed. Such an urge will search out new ways of living our freedom with other persons and groups in societies of different cultures. Accordingly, it is possible to retrieve the loss of the human subject in this complicated society of ours.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Cf. Franz M. Wimmer: “Intercultural Philosophy: An Overview”, *Satya Nilayam Journal of Intercultural Philosophy*, vol. I, February, (2002), p. 9.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. Swami Ranganathananda, *This Humanism: A Moscow University Lecture*, p. 48.

## CHAPTER II

# INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION: AN INTRODUCTORY ANALYSIS

*SEBASTIAN VELASSERY*

### INTRODUCTION

Indian history and culture has never been made interesting except by rhetoric. The task appears somewhat formidable one “to be tackled only by such as had the patience of a scholar and the zeal of a missionary.” Consequently, India’s past has been a closed book to all but the very few. However, the devoted work of a generation of scholars has thrown a flood of new light upon the subject. However, the results of their investigations have been chiefly intended for the specialists and many are still singularly blind to India’s spiritual and cultural values and her contribution to world culture. Historians and scholars have agreed upon the fact that India has made rich contributions to the development of world civilization. Today, the world finds itself in urgent need of the very insights of Indian philosophical thought, which is not conveyed to the common folk in its form and content. India’s insight of the spiritual nature of man and the oneness of human existence and her insight of the underlying unity of the different systems of thought provide the world today with that firm foundation on which alone a stable commonwealth of nations may be built.

In this essay we make an attempt to examine the salient features of Indian cultural tradition in view of unfolding its spiritual values and its limitations. Indian cultural tradition has its foundation the Vedas, because every later development in the field of religious practice, morality and customs has its basis in the teaching of the Vedas. Another significant feature is the message of spiritual unity. Indian cultural tradition is also conditioned by caste system and its culture of exclusivism, and so it is in need of transformation. The paper outlines earlier and later reformative movements attempted bring new perspective on Indian cultural tradition. As culturality of a culture can be understood only in relation to an ontology the paper attempts to explore Indian ontological worldview according to which all things are potentially embedded in an inexhaustible Ultimate Reality. This ontological perspective gives a vision of the universe in which every reality is related to the other, which, in turn obliterates all distinctions between society and individual, God and man. In this context notion of *dharma* has lost its original meanings and understood in relation to the caste system. All must respect and live the *dharma* of one’s caste. This distorted notion of *dharma* has exerted its influence not only in the social sphere of the Indian cultural tradition, but also in its political dimension, as well as the

perception of the human person. The political system is seen as an organism, in which people of each caste do their specific functions as per the rules of the caste for the betterment of the society, and the political authority has in fact no control over the caste structure. The human person is seen on the one hand as part of the society and on the other hand seen as the *Atman* which is the microcosm of the divine *Brahman*. Since man is part of the society and part of God, there is no place for human rights and justice in the Indian cultural tradition. The harmony and the consequent equality of men are to be arrived at through compassion for each other and the mutual conscious striving for harmony. The paper concludes by reiterating some the significant points in a historical perspective.

### **INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION AND ITS VEDIC FOUNDATIONS**

It is commonly pronounced by the scholars that the Vedic age of the Aryans has reached the stage of excellence of Indian civilization and culture. They have attained a high stage in knowledge, power and social organization. In the periods that have followed, all valuable things in man's life – philosophy, religion, sciences and even codes of conduct – are traced back to the Vedas. In fact, the Vedas have left abiding monuments in all facets of life. It is not be an exaggeration if we say that many of the later intellectual activities of Indian thinkers, to a great extent, have been only renewable attempts to present some aspects or the other of the Vedic thought. All philosophical systems of Indian Philosophy, whether heterodox or orthodox, are more or less representations of the Vedic conceptions of reality. The entire mythology of the later periods is based on the Vedic traditions. Even ordinary sciences like astronomy and medicine are associated with the Vedas. The entire Sanskrit literature of the later ages records the attempts of ancient Indians to understand the Vedic civilization to revive the Vedic culture and to approximate their lives to the ideals of the Vedic understanding of life and civilization.

The organization of Hinduism as a religion is said to be one of the principal achievements of the later Vedic period. The doctrine of soul, (*jiva*) the notion of Absolute (*Brahman*), the relation between man and cosmos, the relation between man and the Absolute, the principle of *karma*, the concept of liberation (*mukti*), the doctrine of ignorance (*maya*) and transmigration of the soul have their origin in and evolution from the Vedic literature, particularly from the Upanishads. Both, the doctrinal basis of Hinduism and the social basis of Hindu life are firmly laid in the later Vedic times. The Grihya Sutras prescribes the minutest details of the duties of man from birth to cremation laying down the ceremonies (*samskaras*) for each occasion, such as ceremonies at birth, naming, initiation, education, marriage and death. If the Grihya Sutras have created the Hindu community, the Dharma Sutras have organized the Hindu society on a conscious foundation by laying down social customs, usages, moral codes and laws.

In addition to Grihya Sutras and Dharma Sutras, equally important is the social doctrine of stages of life (*ashramadharma*). It divides the life of an individual in the society into four stages of life – student life (*brahmacharya*), married life (*grihasta*), life in the forest (*vanaprastha*), and life of a sage (*sannyasa*). Every devout Hindu is expected to follow this ideal. Another development of the later Vedic period is the development of the *chaturvarnya* or *varnadharma* system, later has metamorphosed into the caste system. It divides the society into four classes – priestly class (*brahmins*), ruling class (*kshatriyas*), trading class (*vaishyas*) and slave class (*sudras*). The caste system is a conscious attempt to regulate the organization of the Hindu society and to maintain the supremacy of the priestly class.

### **INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION AND ITS MESSAGE OF SPIRITUAL UNITY**

Today, when India is once more emerging from her eclipse, it is more than ever incumbent to explain to the world her glories of the past achievements in the domain of philosophy, religion, art, and even political philosophy. In all these domains of human life, the greatest contribution of India has been the message of spiritual unity of all reality. This message is based upon her perception, realization and practical application of the eternal truth of the spiritual nature of man and the spiritual unity and solidarity of humankind and civilization. This is fully borne out by the historical evolution of her spiritual course of life throughout the centuries. It is not right to belittle or ignore a culture which has given birth philosophers like Sankara, Ramanuja, Kapila; grammarians like Panini; the great philosophical wisdom which is exhibited in Upanishads; religious teachers and reformers like Buddha and Varthamana Mahavira; rulers like Asoka and Akbar, Krishnadevaraya and Shivaji; saints like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi; saints and politicians like Mahatma Gandhi; and Poet like Kalidasa and Tagore. It is equally noteworthy to state that India has produced great epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana, and treatises like Tirukural, which is composed by a saintly sage called Thiruvalluvar.

The magic wand of India's life is religion. Religion, in essence, is the unfolding of man's real nature, which is Pure Consciousness. This Universal Consciousness is the very soul of the human being. As all life is the evolution of that which is within, the Universal Spirit necessarily expresses itself through various peoples and nations in different circumstances and with widely different customs and methods of life. This is said to be the basic truth that is inherent in all Indian philosophical systems.

### INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION: CONDITIONED BY CASTE SYSTEM AND ITS CULTURE EXCLUSIVISM

One of the negative results of India's forgetfulness of her true spiritual unity is casteism. The caste system has developed in India's cultural and social life in the later Vedic and the Epic periods. Hence, it is more than 2000 years old. It is complicated and has split up Hindu society into more than 3000 watertight compartments. It has not only brought about the strongest impediment in the way of the solidarity of the Hindus, but also has created social inequality among them. It is against this system that Buddha and Mahavira, Nanak and Kabir have raised their revolt, but it has survived all these onslaughts.

The caste system, in its early stages, is not practiced the way it has evolved to be. In the Rig Vedic age, there have been only two classes of people in the society – the Aryans, the fair-skinned conquerors and the non-Aryans, dark colored original people of the land. The old pride of a conqueror is retained by the Aryans for many reasons. It has made them unwilling to allow the fusion of their race with that of the conquered *dasyus*. Further grouping of the Aryan society into *brahmins*, *kshatriyas*, and *vaishyas* takes place over many centuries in an evolutionary process. The fourth class of the people, who formed the bulk of the society, is called *sudras*, whose duty is to serve the other three classes. They are the menial and servile workers.

Though this may be the beginning of the caste system in the Indian society, in its original form, it is more of a class system rather than a caste system. In the beginning, man's class status is decided by his profession and conduct, rather than by his birth, as it is evolved to be and practiced today. The following examples illustrate this point clearly: Dronacharya, the famous military instructor of the Pandava brothers of Mahabharat is a *brahmin* by birth; the great sage Vasishta is born of a prostitute; Parashuram, a *brahmin*, becomes a *kshatriya*; Vyas is a fisher woman; Vidura, the guide, philosopher and friend of king Dhritarashtra, is a son of a prostitute (*dasiputra*). In all the above cases the birth of these persons does not determine the class to which they have belonged. Therefore, historians and scholars argue that formation of the caste system is engineered and patterned by the considerations, such as racial factors, the philosophy of action, political domination and occupational bias. The class-divisions eventually become hereditary and are based on one's birth due to the selfishness of the priestly class who has given a theological and supernatural explanation of their origin. Accordingly they interpret scriptural (*sastric*) injunctions to perpetuate the hereditary superiority of *brahmin* class as the superior caste.

Even after sixty years of independence from Great Britain, Indian people continue to be in the grip of caste consciousness. Historically, India has been surviving as a nation with closed groups that are divided by caste, creed and language. Traditionally Indian people have been bound by the



authority of scriptures (*smriti*), teacher (*achara*), Dharma Sastras, and Dharma Sutras, which have enabled the Hindu society to develop a philosophy of exclusion and made a section of its people untouchables by denying them their rights as persons and very often their existence as individuals. The traditional social value of *varnadharma*, which has been operating the social consciousness of this country, has resulted in the segregation of the majority in the hierarchic pattern of social arrangement, which restricts the interaction between individuals belonging to various groups. Since the status and opportunities of the individual are coupled with the *jati* (caste) one belongs to by birth, and one's birth itself is theologically conditioned by the past *karmas* one has performed in the previous birth, the oppression towards these groups are made easy and theologically found correct. The age-old Indian concept of *dharma* is interpreted in terms of *varnadharma* by Manu, Prasasthapada and Kautilya, it seldom provides a place for the majority group of people, who are called *sudras* and later metamorphosed as *dalits*. Since this majority group of people is denied accessibility to the various Vedic literatures, they have been systematically prevented from knowing the truth these scriptures contain. The effect of such exclusivism is a reduction of philosophy (*anvikshaki*) to the higher castes (*brahmins*), who have been able to systematically reject reason that is philosophy including any deeper and authentic sense of human freedom. This results in the Indian concept of *dharma* undergoing a series of interpretations and being conveniently used as a theological weapon for the suppression of the human spirit. Down through the centuries, this broken group of people (*dalits*) is imposed enslavement by the powerful interpretations of the apparently harmless exegesis of and footnotes to the doctrines, such as *dharma*, *karma*, *svadharma*, *niskamakarma* and *mahayoga*.

Besides, such an outlook and world-view looks upon women as inferior to man in intelligence. This point is clearly taken up in Anusasana Parva in the conversation between Yudhishtira and Bhishma regarding the status of women. In this text the latter replies to the former that a woman is naturally a temptress and a lurer; she is not endowed with the strength of will to resist temptation, and therefore always stands in need of protection by man (43.19). A menstruating woman and a woman who has delivered a child are equated to a corpse and an outcaste. This oppressive outlook is not based on equality, freedom and social justice. Even in this modern age, this particular attitude towards women conditions the mental framework of people in some parts of India. Although women are held in great esteem in Vedic times, yet they are condemned to a most humiliating position in the age of the *smritikars*.

## INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION AND ITS NEED FOR CREATIVITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The present Indian society is moving from its being a closed system towards a state of change and progression marked by the assertion of the human spirit irrespective of innumerable castes and creeds. The philosophical requirement at present is a re-understanding and a re-creating of the metaphysical notions, such as *dharma*, *rita*, *yajna*, *tapas* and *nyasa* which have a rich meaning in the Vedic past and have been interpreted by the upper castes in order to uphold their supremacy and suppress the identities of the people of the lower strata of the Indian society. Instead of regarding *dharma* as the caste-duty and other above-mentioned concepts in their narrow meanings, we need to reinterpret them in such a way that we may be able to appropriate the real meaning and content of Indian cultural tradition. In other words, the meaning of these concepts and especially the concept of *dharma* has to be understood in terms of human dignity and worth irrespective of a person's caste and creed, which is the need of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In such an attempt, we face certain challenges of enormous importance. Two significant constants that should accompany man in this endeavor are creativity and social change: creativity as the basic faculty of the human spirit and social change as that he causes permanently by his creativity. In other words, creativity and social change are concomitantly interrelated in every culture and specifically in the transformation of a culture and its civilization. Where there is creativity, there is social change. In man's case, being creative as he is, as the existence of man necessarily implies it, there ought to be creative capacities of man, which he articulates in his life situations in the society. Thus, it implies that as long as man is as he is, he initiates social changes because the power of the human development lays just in the mutual dialectical interaction of these factors, the former representing a human constant and the latter a necessary social motion in and through which this human constant gets developed and applied.

It follows, then, that man is basically a creative being and his creativity distinguishes him in the phylogenetic sense from all other species. It is the basic content of man as well as his joy, which he expresses in art, philosophy, life styles, and social life. Thus, creativity in human life leads to his fulfillment as a human person, which he realizes in the course of history and the evolving of civilization. What is meant by creativity needs an explanation: it is the faculty of man that results in transforming, in some way, of the existing reality, whether it is natural or social, material or spiritual, and in introducing new elements given by personal specificity and, thus, paving to the creation of a new reality and new starting point for new transformation of Indian cultural tradition. We could look into some of such reform movements that have attempted to transform Indian cultural tradition, both its earlier and later history.

*Initial Reform Movements and Transformations*

This process of a continuous transformation of a cultural tradition draws upon not only individual experiences but also upon the activities of small and large societies. We may call them revolts, which in the existing social conditions have marked the beginnings of human creativity and, thus, have brought about social changes. For instance, in the Greek Islands of Ionia, Heraclitus preaches his new doctrines; in Iran Zoroaster launches his protest against the prevailing religious superstitions; and in China people welcome the philosophic teachings of Confucius who gives them a higher conception of the duties of life.

Likewise in the Indian historical and cultural life, these processes of new creating realities and transformation are evident in the various faces of her sojourn. The consequences of this accelerating process in the history of Indian society have generated different philosophies, which, in turn, are conducive to promoting and initiating social and political changes. The people being disgusted with old philosophical dogmas and religious practices look for simple methods of worship and easier means of liberation from the ills of this mundane existence. Consequently, new leaders of thought and religions spring into vigorous activities and give a new direction to life in India. They revolt against the old order of things, such as the existing social patterns, the ritualistic form of religion and the absolute power of the priest-craft, which have discarded the principles of social mobility, equality and justice. These philosophies of revolt are anti-caste in spirit. They uphold the sanctity of human spirit and its freedom irrespective of caste and creed. These reform movements, humanitarian and theistic, gathered force and momentum in the socio-cultural life of the Indian people.

Some of these movements have been initiated by ascetics and wandering teachers. Some of them have rejected the authority of Vedas and Vedic priests. They denounce blood sacrifices, which constitute a large part of the *brahminic* rituals and even deny the very existence of God. Right conduct, according to them, is the only way of getting out of the existing meshes of doctrines like *karma* and *samsara*. The greatest of these existing wandering teachers are Varthamana Mahavira and Gautama Buddha. The philosophy of the former takes the shape of a reform movement known as Jainism while the latter has led another movement in India's cultural history called Buddhism. These movements are not initially creeds but "an appeal for holier living in the bosom of the existing Hindu religion and society." In other words, these movements have revolted against the burdens of ritualism, belief in *mantras*, extreme form of sacrifices, supremacy of *brahmins* and the caste system in the society.

*Later Reform Movements and Transformations: The Non-Elites*

There have been other sects that have revolted and taught variations of doctrines and practices in the upward march of Indian social and cultural

life. The Ajivikas, for instance, are said to be sages belonging to the untouchable class (*sudra sannyasis*) whose leader is Makkali Gosala. Born a slave himself, Makkali is a radical teacher who denies even the basic doctrine of Hindu thought, such as the theory of *karma*. According to him, “man is subject to the laws of nature. Action, therefore, cannot lead man out of the inevitable and so a quietist view of life is desirable.” Gosala’s followers have been based in Sravasti, the capital of Kosala, where Gosala has preached his doctrine about sixteen years before Varthamana Mahavira, the founder of Jainism. Ajivikism altogether has disappeared from India in the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. after being shifted from province to province.

There are other sects that are founded by Ajita Kesakambaten and Purana Kassapo, who are popular teachers and who have taught different ideologies and doctrines that question the then existing belief system of Hinduism. Besides these sects, there come about within the fold of orthodox Hinduism some other sects, which do not distinctly repudiate the Vedas. The features of these sects are the following: the worship of one particular God as the supreme deity, who is conceived as Vishnu, Siva, Sakti or some other form. Salvation can be achieved through his grace, if one follows the path of devotion (*bhakti*). The devotees of Vishnu called Vaishnavas or Bhagavatas and the movement is called Vaishnavism or Bhagavatism. The devotees of Rudra or Siva are called Sivites and their sect is called Saivism. There are other philosophies and reform movements that have contributed to the cultural and social development of India, such as the Bhakti Cult, the Sakta Cult and Tantrism.

The history and cultural development of India cannot be completed without mentioning the name of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. Though he is a family man with wife and children, he renounces the world, wanders over many lands, visits all holy places and gathers spiritual experience. His mission is to bring an end to the conflict among religions. He revives the pure monotheistic doctrine of the Upanishads. His followers are known as Sikhs. They later are transformed into a military nation by the successors of Guru Nanak, who are known as the *gurus* of Sikhs.

## **INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION AND ONTOLOGY**

Every access to “culturality” of any culture is made possible through a specific ontology. This should make us pause before generalizing our insights about the Indian cultural tradition. All truths, despite their universal claims, are valid only within the parameters of the ontological tradition of a people or a country. In the case of western ontology, the world of history is so serious that its approach to reality and truth are wholly determined by it. Indeed, here only the historical is true and therefore the historical is real. For what is not historical is illusory and therefore not true in western tradition. Accordingly, in the western world-view all things begin not only in time, they also develop in time. Hence, the concept of history is of paramount importance for the western mind.

In the Indian tradition, however, there is no such once for all beginning or end of all creation. Hindu metaphysics and worldview consider that all things are potentially embedded in an inexhaustible Ultimate Reality, which periodically manifests itself in multiplicity and eventually takes that back into its unmanifest Being. This taking back or destruction means not a total annihilation of being, but its transformation into another name and form (*nama-rupa*). The new that is beginning now is organically related to the old, which has come to an end. This is, not only of the world at large, but also true of human beings. The law of *karma* and rebirth ensures that each new generation being born is a remodeling of the old that has died (except for the liberated few). It amounts to saying that Indian ontology is built on the reasoning of “faith” rather than in abstract reason itself. This point leads us to reflect on the vision of universe imbedded in Indian cultural tradition.

#### **INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION AND VISION OF THE UNIVERSE**

The famous and most significant hymn of *purushasukta* (Rg. Veda X.90) says: “With sacrifice the gods are sacrificed to the sacrifice.” This hymn projects the vision of the universe wherein everything is connected to everything. An individual thing does not exist by itself. The full identity of any thing is to be found only in its relationships to the total whole. Herein is founded the ontological rootedness of the interrelationship between individual and society, ethics and religion, spirituality and mysticism in the Hindu/Indian cultural tradition. Prof. McLean has underlined this basic philosophy in a different context in the following words:

It elaborates the distinction of the composite and differentiated from the incomposite and undifferentiated being, but avoids duality inasmuch as the very being or existing of the composite beings of the differentiated universe is nothing other than the participating – the sharing and manifesting – of That One. Further, it enters into the Absolute in order to learn more of that Wisdom and Love which is the Plenitude of perfection, unsublatable and creative.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. McLean, George F., *Plenitude and Participation: Sri L.D. Swamikannu Pillai Endowment Lectures, 1977-78*, Univ. of Madras, India. Cf. also McLean, George. F., *Reconstruction of the Person: Culture and Metaphysics*, Lectures delivered in Punjab University, Chandigarh through an invitation by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, as the *philosopher of the Year* in January, 2004.

The vision of the universe in which every reality is related to the other, brings to the fore the notions of *dharma* and harmony in the world-process, as envisaged in the Indian cultural tradition, to which we turn our attention now.

### **INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION AND THE CONCEPTS OF DHARMA AND HARMONY**

The concept of *yajna*, in Indian cultural tradition, is the world-process. If *rta* is the principle that ensures harmony and order in the process of *yajna*, then *dharma* is the unique ontological relationship that a thing has to the rest of the world of relationships in the world process. The harmony of the world-process is preserved when each thing remains true to its *dharma* and when we respect the *dharma* of every being. We may call the *dharma* of a thing its very nature. On such a background, one needs to respect the *dharma* of a particular thing because of its deeply religious (*dharmic*) nature. Accordingly, the practice of *dharma* consists in the awareness of the *dharma* of the universe and in a life that lives in consonance with this awareness. The above contentions obviate the necessity to appreciate and appropriate *dharma* with its two aspects: the cosmic connections and the sacrificial effects. Integration into the cosmic sacrificial process demands that one respects the *dharmic* relationships that are operative in the universe. To respect the complex *dharma* of the universe is to respect the law of cosmic harmony (*rta*) and to become part of the cosmic sacrificial process. It also presupposes the idea that one discovers oneself only by discovering one's relationship with the universe. The more one discovers the universe the more one discovers oneself.

Want of philosophical reflection and critical attitude and the influence of political, religious and cultural factors made the Indian society hierarchical in character. This, in turn, led to the confusion between two different conceptions of *dharma*: one corresponding to the nature of a thing as it is, relevant to the idea of physical laws (the way things are), and the other – the norm or standard things are required to achieve – relevant to the idea of social, political and religious laws (the way things ought to be). *Dharma*, when it functions as a natural or descriptive concept (the way things are) is quite different from *dharma* when it functions as a moral or prescriptive concept (the way things ought to be). However, both may be referred to as the nature of things particularly when it means the essential nature, not accidental properties, so that the distinction between nature and norm/standard disappears.

Accordingly, a calculated and intentional confusion between the two uses of this term *dharma* has been brought into in the history of Indian cultural tradition, which has accepted the purely descriptive as the prescriptive, that believes that something is *dharma* (morally commendable) because it is *dharma* (happens to be the way and hence its nature in the sense of what it is). This confusion has paved the way for the justification

of caste system and untouchability on the ground that it is part of *dharma*, implying that the irregularities of the system ought to be there as lawful, right and virtuous, because it is its nature. Since a religious and lawful sanction has been volitionally attached to it, the initial ideal is lost sight of and the system, instead, has developed fissiparous tendencies and has evolved the code of inequities, which have given it a bad name outside as well as inside India. Unfortunately, the desire to maintain the cultural and religious supremacy of the *brahmins*, has prompted them not to uphold the true meaning and worth of the doctrine of *dharma*. Instead they have identified it with *varna* and *jati* (caste) with privileges based on birth, which, in turn, prevented the concepts of rights and freedom to flourish in this country. The essential basis of the *varna* system metamorphosed later as the caste system is the development of groups of individuals in consonance with their qualifications in virtue and justice; the keystone of the structure is not detachment but union. The element of exclusiveness and untouchability is, otherwise, repugnant to the social philosophy and tradition of not only the Aryan race but also of their philosophy, which is rooted in the doctrine of *dharma*.

This distorted notion of *dharma* has exerted its influence not only in the social sphere of the Indian cultural tradition, but also in its political dimension as well. In the next section, we look into the consequences of this wrong perception of *dharma* in the political sphere of the life of the people of India.

#### *Indian Cultural Tradition in Its Political Aspect and Kautilya's Arthasasthra*

The Indian cultural tradition in its political aspect as articulated in its most important text on politics – Kautilya's Arthasasthra – facilitates the inner strength and growth of groups of people. Although the Kautilyan tradition of theory and political practice conceptualize a notion of society in which individual rights are not given adequate emphasis, yet participatory rights are accorded adequate weight and emphasis as it accommodates all *varnas* and *ashramas* in the system. In the political tradition of Kautilya, there is no significant place for God in the political system. However, Kautilyan political theory is subject to and implicated in practice through the mediation of *smrti* and *sadacara*. In other words, the Indian classical political tradition conceptualized the relation between theory and practice in such a way that neither theory nor practice exists and functions independent of some less time-bound, if not time-less category. One may, then, ask the question: under what structural conditions can such a theory function? The answer is that this is possible only in highly integrated communitarian societies in which the elite and the ordinary folks (*brahmins* and *sudras*) accept unquestioningly the authority, content and message of *smrti* and where the *sadacari* (exemplar) can be located and recognized without any conflict of interpretation and evaluation. The society in this political

tradition is a society that internalizes through disciplining one's disposition to perform his function and duties and the sum total of performances by all members of society lead to orderly community existence. In short, the classical Indian political tradition is society-centered as it subordinates state and government to the societal mandates. This is the idea of the active involvement and participation of a group of people as a community in the conduct of various institutions and organizations they belong to in their day-to-day living and this may exist in a system where the government at the centre is paternalistic and allows them to function in that manner.

The picture of the Indian society that one gets from the political treatises and the law books is that of a full-fledged caste society where all kinds of functions – intellectual, religious, political, military, commercial and manual – are carried out by hereditary caste groups. In accomplishing these tasks, each group functions according to its traditional rights/laws; according to rights/laws specially made by the group itself, such as a guild; or according to local customs and organizations, such as caste and village councils in interdependence with one another, but without much interference from outside agencies including the political authority and the government. The various caste groups of the society, thus, enjoy a large measure of internal autonomy, within their own limitations. The main functions of the society are carried on in a decentralized manner according to the customary laws of caste over which the king had no authority.

Such an idea of unity, plurality, and relativity, which is implied in India's social philosophy, views the society as an organism. Accordingly, the Indian conception of a society is not a collection of individuals loosely joined by self-interest, but an integral unit like an organism made up of many different but interrelated and mutually dependent parts. Thus, if *sudras* are required by the "sacred law" to be the servants of higher castes, the higher castes are ordained by the same law to look after *sudras* and their families as a matter of duty, and the infringement of which according to Kautilya, is a punishable offense. The interests of different groups are ameliorative and not antagonistic because they have basic needs and goals in common, and hence interdependence and harmony are natural. Each part or group contributes to and receives from the whole. The good of an individual is tied up with the good of all.

Such a social and political tradition in India accords more importance to the state of existence in society than the individual existences. Thus, the relations among groups and men are a moral problem rather than a legal one in India's intellectual tradition. Besides, this perception of the society and its relationship to man is supported by the Vedic concept of man, to which we turn our attention in the next section.



## INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION AND THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN SELF

According to the Vedas, man is an integrated whole made up of the physical body (*sarira*), sensitive mind (*manas*) rational intellect (*buddhi*) and enduring Self (*Atman*). Indian philosophy is unique in declaring “*yatha pinde tatha brahmande*”, i.e., “microcosm is macrocosm”. Such an outlook and conception when combined with its idea of society as an organism paves way for a conception of unity at the cost of individual rights and freedom. Consequently, if Universal Self (*Brahman*) is the Transcendent, the individual self (*jiva*) too is considered as Transcendent in this tradition. In other words, individual consciousness is not enclosed in itself, but constantly and progressively opens to the Reality, which is beyond it.

As mentioned above, Indian cultural tradition and its philosophy advance a fourfold nature to the human self that corresponds to *Brahman*, the Absolute Reality. Man’s Self is the infinite ground of his being. His intellectual/rational aspect is the cause of his personal being. However, in the case of man, body, mind and intellect are limited by time, space and causality. Man is not free at all these levels although he is endowed with the power of choice, freedom and volition. The integration, according to Indian ethics, goes a step further and is consummated when body, mind and intellect are centralized, harmonized and organized by the unitive *Atman*, thereby bringing about a unity in diversity and a harmony in discord. This is said to be an actual human existence in the various philosophies of India. The above considerations of the concept of man vis-à-vis the Supreme Person points to the fact that Indian philosophical thought is devoid of all absolute distinctions. Accordingly, Indian Philosophy generally maintains that all realms of existence – the physical, the vital, the mental and the spiritual – are continuous. Thus, there is no absolute barrier between the natural and the super-natural, the sentient and the insentient, the physical and the psychic, the sexual and the spiritual and, indeed, between God and man.

We move on, in the next section, to consider the impact of above-mentioned ideas regarding the political organization and the human person within the Indian cultural tradition, particularly in relation to individual human rights.

## INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION AND INDIVIDUAL HUMAN RIGHTS

The above-mentioned tantalizing experiential metaphysics of India’s philosophy is the worldview within which Indian cultural tradition has thrived and progressed. Such a world-view has hardly ever taken any interest in individual existences, but instead has catered only for the socio-community existences. Accordingly, unlike the western tradition, Indian cultural tradition could not develop the concept of social justice based on

the concept of social equality of man. Instead, Indian cultural tradition emphasizes the concept of compassion and is sensitive enough to the distress and pain of the people one personally has to deal with. Justice compared to compassion is an abstract virtue and it is less dependent on personal involvement. Compassion is best exercised in one's immediate circle, while justice refers to society at large. The Indian cultural tradition fosters a good deal of concern and affection for one's relatives, dependents and friends and even those who personally seek help. However, it is not concerned with social justice as the western cultural tradition.

The above considerations obviate the necessity to understand and thematize the issue of individual human rights, or what is known in today's world as "human rights", which is predominantly a western concept, which emerged in a different cultural context and from a different perspective of the society and individuals within it. An issue becomes a problem only when it is present in our awareness as a privation. The issue of individual rights had never been a problem for the Indian masses, as they have been leading an individual existence with the support, concern and care of their social existence. In view of the predominance of social existence over individual existence, conceptually and ontologically, the essential being of man is looked at as a part of the whole, the whole being the society or even the cosmos. Accordingly, it has generated a sense of compassion rather than social justice in man toward all beings.

#### **INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION AND THE UNIVERSAL UNITY AND HARMONY OF BEINGS**

The world-view, Indian cultural tradition has fostered and developed, is the universal unity and harmony of all beings. As a result, the issue of individual rights among men and the issue of *varna* or *jati* do not take the shape of a moral or social problem in the Indian cultural tradition. Hence, struggle for individual rights is not recognized as a legitimate moral activity. The philosophy of ideal unity has its beginnings from Rgvedic hymn *Purusasukta* and has built up the desire for cooperation among the people of different *varna*, rather than rebellion and the demand for individual rights. Even the philosophical trend does not encourage struggle for power, dominance or self-advancement. Given the philosophical background of the ideal of harmony and unity, and the conception of man as a part of the Cosmic *Purusha*, the issue of rights does not hold its status of a genuine and independent moral problem. The individual and the group grievances are sacrificed in relation to the value of universal unity. Hence, conceptually, not only are the actual experiences of human relations ignored, but also the issue of rights is never taken up as a problem. For example, the idea of justice has never been regarded in the Indian cultural tradition as the central idea while dealing with human relations. The harmony and the consequent equality of men are to be arrived at through compassion and the mutual conscious striving for harmony.

Such a line of thinking and philosophy characteristic of Indian cultural tradition gives birth to the distinctive ideas of social harmony and social democracy, which, in turn, is rooted in the concepts of *dharma*, *yajna*, *rta* and *varnashrama*. They are meant to make the individual realize that the performance of one's own good leads to the good of the society. Such a societal order, along with its required social, economic and political aspects, has to follow from *dharma* itself. Thus, the presence of *dharma* in the universe as directing the right functioning of things, sometimes thought of as their norm and sometimes simply as their nature, is taken for granted in India, not only by the Hindus but also by the Jains and Buddhists. Hence, the Indian social and religious philosophy does recognize an organic vision of society, where all functions are recognized as essential parts of one order.

The unity, which the Indian cultural tradition talks about, is openly acknowledged to transcend reason. To say, in this scheme, that the doctrine of the unity of all existence is not rational, is to utter a tautology, since it amounts to saying that unity cannot be comprehended by the use of a device, i.e., reason, which works through mutual exclusion of polarized oppositions, for doing the kind of job it is supposed to do, i.e., to discriminate differences. Hence, in Indian cultural tradition, the idea of the oneness of reality helps to develop characteristic attitudes in the phenomenal sphere too. It has made Hindu phenomenal ontology pluralistic and in turn, has led to the acceptance of a variety of conceptual schemas for phenomenal classification and explanation. The effect is that Indian cultural tradition does not demand that all beings should be capable of being packed into one beautifully coherent system. It has led to a relativistic epistemology, the doctrine which says that no one conceptual schema can claim to constitute the truth absolutely. Since every truth is relative to its proper frame of reference, it has also led to a pluralistic methodology. This methodology is: firstly it is empirical, based on perception and inference as used in the Nyaya System; secondly it is discriminative based on conceptual or rational clarification as is used in Samkhya (the term "*samkhya*" means "discrimination") System; and thirdly it is intuitive as is used in Vedanta System and others schools in different measures.

Unfortunately, Indian cultural tradition, which is rooted in *yajna*, *rta* and *dharma* is in danger now because Indian society in general and civil society in particular as the arena of *guru*-consciousness, which guarantees democratic dialogue and contestation, has not been appropriated by certain political parties and their ideologues. The votaries of this "cultural nationalism" do not provide any space for dialogue or compromise, contestation or mediation, which are the hallmark of any democratic polity. Though they claim to abide by all democratic norms, yet they are forming a counter civil society because their ideology provides privileges to religious affiliation over any other kind of identity. The ontological principles of *rta* and *dharma* as organizing principles can become a means of bringing social groups together in the Indian context and serve as criteria for evaluating specific practices. If civil society has to be appropriated properly in the

Indian socio-political and cultural arena, then the ontological principles of *yajna*, *rta* and *dharma* as organizational principles can provide thematic coherence in the sphere of civil society. The concept of *yajna* in the Indian cultural tradition is to be understood as a remembering of the dismembered *Purusha*, whose sacrifice is meant for not only the re-integration and interdependent nature of reality, but also for the interconnectedness of everything because *yajna* is meant as sacrifice wherefrom beings achieve their unmistakable identity and difference. The emphasis upon diversity and the privileging of differences can adequately legitimize and bring forward new forms of power and thereby levels down the existing norms of globalization with its peculiar ways of not tolerating any difference or variety. What we should look forward is not a uniformity of sameness, but a cosmic garden of unity and variety, identity and difference. Towards that end, the principles of *yajna*, *rta* and *dharma* harmonize and regulate our interconnectedness which otherwise defines the fundamental inviolability of persons in a civil society.

## CONCLUSION

Let us recapitulate the essentials of the historical and cultural factors, which have stimulated the rise of the issue of individual rights and freedom in the Indian cultural tradition. In the earliest period of this tradition, the idealism of the universal unity, based on an organic worldview, has dominated the social, political and philosophical scene of Indian life. Accordingly, man is said to have an ontological connection with the Universal Substance and attempts have been made to actualize the natural state of harmony with all beings, which have been expressed in the formulation of moral codes for both the ruler and the ruled. This organic world view always upheld that not only that all differences participate in a unity, but also that in their own way each reflects the totality of existence.

The idea of four ends of life (*purusharthas*) that has developed in the context of Indian cultural tradition is more religious in nature than philosophical or political. Yet it has undergirded the development of a cultural continuum based on the doctrine of *dharma*. The pursuit of four ends (*purusharthas*) by men through four stages of life (*ashrmadharmas*) is indeed the pursuit of every kind of possibility that is open to man: righteousness, material well being, pleasure, liberation, spiritual well-being and freedom. The achievement of all these by a man means that he realizes in his life the totality and unity of existence. Thus, the relations among men are a moral problem rather than a legal one. Accordingly, to be a sage or a gentleman, who wishes to perfect and transform himself is to pattern himself after the ideal of the compassionate man. This perspective on life, in fact, does not allow one to struggle for personal freedom as a genuine goal of morality, at the expense of other's happiness. In other words, the general view of life, for an Indian, is to submerge his/her ego, to disappear, and to be absorbed into the universal harmony.

Even during the period of rationalistic school of Indian Philosophy – Navya-Nyaya – and the reformation movement by many leaders – Dayananda to Gandhi – moral philosophies have assumed a predominant role in the creation of an ideal society. This ideal of harmony has persisted for a long time because there is no clear consciousness of the meaning of a person independent of the family and the society, where the individual freedom as understood in western philosophies is disvalued. Although there are many changes in the various communities and groups that have held political power the people have maintained the mentality of “accepting” whatever living conditions are thrust upon them.

We have been arguing that the core of traditional Indian philosophy is rooted in the metaphysics of the experience of *yajna*, *rta* and *dharma* which may be called as the cultural ontology of India that has been deduced from its mythological thinking and is expressed with a philosophical content. From this tantalizing metaphysic of experience, Indian philosophy has generated a special realm of unity that binds not only the sentient but also the insentient beings. Thus, the Indian cultural tradition, in its generic sense, has not underlined a notion of separation as expressed in the western metaphysics, but has highlighted the concept of unity. Accordingly, in its understanding of “being” Indian philosophy is radically different from western conception of being. In the western concept of being what we see is the necessary emphasis on the separation guaranteed by the necessity of opposition; in the Indian thought, the necessary opposition is not centered on the universals of philosophy, but on the origin of persons in terms of their caste and class, which is again a contestable issue.

In its understanding of being, the concept of *yajna* is predominant in Indian thought, which necessitates the possibility of meeting the other as a necessary part of oneself. On the other hand, in the western thought, this meeting of the other is not emphasized. In the western conception, the difficulty is centered on the understanding of the internal multiplicity of man, but in India’s philosophy and worldview, the emphasis is on the understanding of man’s unity. There is an inherent rationality that manifests in all of creation in Indian thought. It can be a potential resource and source for a new meaning of rationality. There is a specific Indian ontology whose understanding of being corresponds to a specific way of thinking. The crux of this specific way of thinking is given by different understanding of time. If Greeks have conceived time as the life of being, classical India has perceived time as the life breath of reality. Hence, classical Indian philosophers contend that it is time that “matures beings and encompasses things”. According to them, time is the “Lord who works change in beings; time created earth; in time is consciousness; and in a more explicit way, in time is life (*prana*)”. In the earliest experience of the Vedic Indians, time is described as the actual existence of beings. As a consequence, the word “*kala*” which designates time appears (only once) in the Rig Veda that speaks of “*ayu*” or “*ayus*” which means the vital force, the time of life, the long life, the existential span or duration of every being. Moreover,

according to the Vedic seers, time is born with sacrifice and it is by sacrifice that it is once again destroyed. This concept is rooted on the intimate relation between worship and time and provides us with a key to the understandings of the central place of sacrifice and man's participation in the unfolding of time. It amounts to saying that time and reality belong together and the experience of time amounts to the experience of reality.

**PART II**

**PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF  
INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITIONS:  
A TRADITIONAL APPROACH**





## CHAPTER III

# AN ITINERARY INTO THE METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN CULTURE

VEENA KAPOOR

### INTRODUCTION

Indian moral point of view is considered as an expression of an integrated whole of metaphysics, culture, psychology, spirituality and practical life. The strong tendency toward an idealistic monism in the Upanishads and their conception of Reality as a kind of spiritual animation paves the way for the conceptions of Ultimate Reality as *Brahman/Atman* in Indian culture and civilization. The idea of one all-powerful, all pervading, self-existent, eternal and incomprehensible Absolute as *Brahman*, in which all creatures originate and dissolve is the philosophy and worldview of Indian culture. Accordingly, Indian philosophy in general and the Upanishads in particular have sought to establish the goal of human life as Self-realization. The term “self-realization” means the awareness one’s true Self and awakening of Consciousness (*Atman*), the attainment of which is the goal of ethics and metaphysics in India’s worldview and philosophy. As a result, Indian cultural tradition is rooted in this ideal of Self-realization. Hence, Indian Philosophy implies the contemplation and the vision of the Absolute Reality (*Brahman*). All that exists and we perceive in the world of spatio-temporal order, as a matter of fact, is an illusion (*maya*) which disappears with the realization of Pure Consciousness. In other words, *maya*, the world of names and forms, is only an image of *Brahman* in its particular modes. Thus, world is neither absolutely unreal nor absolutely real; but is relatively real. It is just like a dream in which we see several things around which we do not find when we wake up from sleep; or like imaginary objects in which we might find certain queer combinations of such qualities which contradict each other and can never exist in material reality. Likewise, *maya*, the empirical and material existence, conceals reality and provides a deceptive account of the Ultimate Reality. Thus, *Brahman*, the Absolute Reality, is concealed by the illusory world of *maya*.

In this paper we attempt to explore the foundations of Indian cultural tradition from the metaphysical point-of-view. In accomplishing this task, we clarify the concept of Self-realization on which the metaphysical and moral points-of-view of Indian culture is founded. For, in the process of Self-realization of the human person the culture becomes the Self-expression of the Self-consciousness. Since Culture is the Self-expression of Self-consciousness, the evolution of culture takes place particularly in the context of the Self attaining freedom from its bondage. Then we take up for

our discussion the notion of four principal goals of human life (*purusharthas*) embedded in the Indian cultural tradition, because the freedom of the human person from his bondage to ignorance is brought about in the life of the human individual when he attempts to live the *purusharthas* in the context of his cultural existence. Of the three *purusharthas* leading one to attain *moksha* – *artha*, *kama* and *dharma* – *dharma* has the priority over the other two as *dharma* must guide both *artha* and *kama* in their actualization. Hence, *dharma* forms the metaphysical foundation of ethics in Indian culture. In this context, the synthetic doctrine of *dharma* expounded in Bhagavad-Gita is briefly considered. Then, we consider the relationship of the doctrine of *dharma* to the society and explore how it orders and guides every dimension of social life. Having looked into different dimensions of Indian cultural tradition, particularly its ethical nature by analyzing the doctrine of *dharma* the paper asserts that the Indian cultural tradition is, in fact, founded on metaphysics. The conclusion deals with the diverse interpretations of the doctrine of *dharma* in Indian cultural tradition and some of their consequences. Now let us move on to the concept of Self-realization.

#### INDIAN CULTURE AND THE CONCEPT OF SELF-REALIZATION

The term “Self-realization” should not be confused with any abstract theoretical conception based on an absolutistic philosophy. Self-realization, in the Indian context, stands for an actual state of human existence, which every human person can attain. This state of existence is called *jivanmukti*, i.e., the person attaining liberation while still living on this earth. The person who attains this state is called *jivanmukta*. The Absolute Reality is unveiled in the process of Self-realization and the person realizes his oneness with Absolute Consciousness. It is not a withdrawal from active life, but rather it is meant to lift an individual from the lower level of renunciation to the loftiest height, where all his desires, emotions and ambitions are harmoniously synthesized. This ideal is said to be the foundation and force behind Indian culture because this ideal is not based on the presuppositions of a subjective human aspiration, but on the universal intent and hope. It is neither physical nor material, but metaphysical and spiritual in character. Man might tend to identify himself with his body, wealth and material achievements in the process of growth and learn to socialize and acquire his subjective identity. The differences we find in the subjective nature of human beings at material plane are just appearances, which not only take us away from the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*), but also from the real understanding of Indian culture. Thus, Indian culture and worldview are based on the ideals and values practiced by individuals in their day to day life and action. It cannot be fully pronounced in scientific and technological terms, for such an attempt would be merely partial and superficial. Indian culture and moral point of view is rooted in the metaphysical reality of the Self (*Atman*).

The Bhagavad-Gita propounds this philosophical tradition and cultural view-point, and exhorts human beings to strive for attaining the real Self. Such an attainment of the real Self vis-à-vis Self-realization is possible through moral convictions, i.e., through a life of action based on moral duty, where one transcends from the empirical and material life to become one with *Brahman*. G. C. Pande asserts that Self-realization and Self-Consciousness are inescapable facts of everybody's life.<sup>1</sup> One realizes the real Self by rising above the levels of consciousness. According to him, "the world of culture is world of knowledge and experience evolved in the process of value-seeking."<sup>2</sup> Identifying oneself with body is a concrete fact which we overcome by socializing and then rise above the dimension to the ideal which is not subjective but based on a universal aspiration for the realization of the Self. Deliberating upon the concomitant relation between culture and the concept of Self-realization, G. C. Pande affirms that culture is the social expression of value-seeking in the historical processes. Differences with regard to cultural view-points arise due to the multifarious experiences, diverse attitudes and different levels of consciousness. Thus, "the expression and communication of value-experience gives a socio-historical activity to the ideal process and the cultural world is, thus, created as a historical tradition of human endeavor for Self-realization."<sup>3</sup> In this way, in the process of Self-realization of the human person, culture becomes the Self-expression of the Self-consciousness. In the next section, we make an attempt to expand this idea.

#### **CULTURE: THE SELF-EXPRESSION OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS**

The revelation of the Self follows an evolutionary process of conscious evaluative life. The Self is represented by multiform ideas and experiences that emerge from culture, and which, in turn, causes different points of view and ideals. The Self is universal, but appears to be subjective because of its partial representation through actions depending on time, space and situations. Therefore, the Self manifests itself in different orders and levels. The human subject, wherever he may be, seeks this goal of Self-realization, which is the freedom of the Self bound by material goals. The human life, as a whole, is certainly not just an adjustment to the environment, but rather it is value-oriented. The values of life are not determined by chance or by causal laws of nature. The volition of culture is the intelligible order of succession of ideals because it belongs to the nature of Self-experience/Self-consciousness of the human person. Hence, it would "be wrong to hold that these successive phases represent either randomness

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. C. Pande: *The Meaning and Process of Culture as Philosophy of History*, (Allahabad: Raka Prakashan, 1999), p.11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

or mechanical causality.”<sup>4</sup> There is no culture that is value-neutral; however, culture figures at different levels in the historical process, in the forms of events in spatio-temporal order. A culture is expressed in various social and historical dimensions of human values. The actual life of a human being can be analyzed in terms of culture to which he/she belongs. For, culture is the storehouse of human values. Culture is not a fact or a theory cited in books, but rather it is a way of life; it is the normative way of thinking and acting. Culture is not merely an association of events, which have occurred in the past. Culture is created in the process of the evolution of human Self-consciousness. This understanding leads us to know how culture originates and why it originates in a certain way. Since Culture is the Self-expression of Self-consciousness, the evolution of culture takes place particularly in the context of the Self attaining freedom from its bondage. In the next section, we make an attempt to elaborate on this point further.

#### **CULTURE AS SELF-EXPRESSION OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE**

The consideration of Indian philosophy regarding culture is related to the attainment of Self’s freedom from its bondage to ignorance. Therefore, the right frame of mind and action, that need to be adapted in relation to the universal ideal of Self-realization, is the path towards the liberation of the Self from its bondage. This amounts to saying that Indian cultural tradition is rooted in spirituality, which is the absolute ideal of human conduct. Thus, Indian culture is not subjective and empirical in nature, but rather it is divine and spiritual. The culture blossoms fully only in the application of intrinsic values and ideals of life, which are sought for their own sake. The Self-realization is such an ideal. Indian culture and its life can be best articulated in terms of this ideal. To the extent that culture is nothing else but lived values, it sustains itself and grows with their application. Indian culture has survived for thousands of years because of the universal values and the ideals it has adhered to. The metaphysical grounding of Indian culture is unshaken and it finds its meaning in the notion of the Universal Self, which has an intrinsic value. Not only the sphere of morality, but also the political, social and economic fields find their grounding in this ideal. Knowingly or unknowingly we pursue this ultimate goal of Self-realization. Hence, Indian cultural tradition is not merely a conglomeration of certain customs, rites and rituals. For, it cannot develop in anything less than the Self in its quest for ultimate realization.

In Indian cultural tradition the Universal Spiritual Self is prior to the society. A Hindu believes that he is a Spirit which cannot be pierced; fire cannot burn it and water cannot melt it. The universe seen through senses is *maya*, i.e., an imperfect vision of the real and an incomplete revelation of the Universal Self. “The change in time and causality is only a *maya*. It is

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

*maya* which makes one individual different from another; to get out of this riddle we will have to be conscious of the divinity within.”<sup>5</sup> Such a vision undergirds the idea that all evil is just the imperfect vision of goodness. Our search is not primarily goodness alone, but the perfect and real Self. Doing well is to break the bondage of slavery from our desires and lusts. By renouncing the worldly gains, we can be one with the Universal Self. The Self in bondage is called *jiva*, which comes to higher or lower levels. This is the law of reincarnation (*karma*), and this law binds all creation. The Self, in its various forms, is projected from the Universal Self – the *Brahman*. Spiritual and moral values ought to be executed in the society in order to conserve its culture. Accordingly, culture is based on the vision of the oneness of mankind within the limits of multiplicity of actions. Referring to Radhakrishnan’s interpretation of the supreme aim of social order, A. B. Barke emphasizes that it is meant to train human beings for a state of spiritual perfection and sanctity. According to him, its essential aim is the development of social conditions in such a way that it can enable every individual to the basic principles of *dharma*, i.e., “the realization of the dignity of the human spirit which is the dwelling place of the Supreme.”<sup>6</sup> To quote Barke on this point:

Lord of the Universe as regulating the world through his omnipotence attracted the authors of Puranas to suit their purpose of signifying religious principles through manifest (*vyakta*) form of the Supreme Reality. According to this theory, (i) the various incarnations (*avatars*) are manifestations of the same Reality, (ii) one *avatar* is followed by the next one and this theory is related to the theory of rebirth and (iii) the highest Lord manifests himself in different forms and different *yonis* so as to appeal to different kinds of people.”<sup>7</sup>

In such a worldview, what is explicitly evident is the idea that the human body is the locus of a series of changes. Man is conformed to a certain type of body according to his deeds in his previous life. One’s Self is enslaved in a particular body by the law of *karma*, as the consequence of one’s past *karmas*. Bhagavad-Gita explains this dimension of the human spirit by Krishna exhorting that the human body is transient in character. The Self alone remains the same. It manifests with body and undergoes various experiences in successive births. The experiences emerge with the

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<sup>5</sup> Swami Vivekananda: *Living at the Source: Yoga Teachings of Vivekananda*, eds. Ann Myren and Dorothy Madison, (London: Shambhala, 1993), p. 126.

<sup>6</sup> A. B. Baker: *Religion in Social Flux: As Seen in the Main Puranas*, (New Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1998), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

new birth as *samsaras* and *karmas* of the Self.<sup>8</sup> Human beings identify themselves with their bodies due to ignorance (*avidya*). This is the veil of *maya*, which may be removed by moral goodness and spiritual enhancement. The Self is pure and eternal whose realization is regarded as the supreme end of human existence. In reality, the Self is unchangeable, but it is covered with ignorance. Ego is the cause of all evil and misery. We remain unconscious of our spiritual strength in the world of *maya* because of the lack of faith in our true and eternal Self. Our weakness lies in our desires for sensuous objects, which do not let us raise our level of consciousness to the Infinity and the Absolute (*Brahman*).

However, the one who is able to control his senses can renounce the fruits of *karmas*, pursue perfection and thereby realize the true freedom of the Self. Vivekananda says: "I am neither man nor angel; I have no sex, nor limit; and I am knowledge itself. I am He. I have neither anger nor hatred. I have neither pleasure nor pain. Death or pleasure I never had. For, I am Knowledge, Absolute and Bliss Absolute. I am He, my soul, I am He!"<sup>9</sup> According to the Vedantins, the human subject cannot be other than his real nature, which is the Universal Self and which can be realized through the attainment of Pure Consciousness. Pure Consciousness cannot be defined in terms of passions and desires, which result in frustrations and miseries. We ignorantly identify ourselves with pains and pleasures of body. Vivekananda advocates this Vedantic view in the following way: "All our fears, all worries, anxieties, troubles, mistakes, weaknesses, evil, are from that one great blunder – that we are bodies. This is the ordinary person."<sup>10</sup>

The freedom of the human person from his bondage to ignorance is brought about in the life of the human individual when he attempts to live the four principal goals (*purusharthas*) of the human person in the context of his cultural existence. Hence, in the next section, we explain the notion of *purusharthas* and its relationship to Indian culture.

## INDIAN CULTURE AND THE *PURUSHARTHAS*

The social dimension of Indian cultural tradition posits four principal goals (*purusharthas*) of human existence, which a person is said to seek in his desire for Self-realization. They are the following: the economic goal (*artha*), the emotional goal (*kama*), the moral goal (*dharma*) and the spiritual goal (*moksha*). Of these four *purusharthas*, the spiritual goal (*moksha*) is the highest end of human life, which is attainable by the individual himself with the help and guidance, particularly of the moral goal

<sup>8</sup> Cf. H.C. Mathur: *The Essence of Gita*, (New Delhi: Shree Publications, 1997), p. 38.

<sup>9</sup> Swami Vivekananda: *Complete Works of Vivekananda*, vol. 8., pp. 228-229.

<sup>10</sup> Swami Vivekananda: *Living at the Source: Yoga Teachings of Vivekananda*, p. 56.

(*dharma*). The Dharmasastras speaks elaborately on different aspects of the four *purusharthas*. As in the case of *ashramas*, so in the case of the *purusharthas* too, only three are clearly spoken of. Hence, the person desirous of eternal salvation, after practicing them in the proper manner, is expected to renounce all these *purusharthas* (*artha-kama-dharma*) and to strive for perfect and eternal liberation (*moksha*). In later years this renunciation of the three *purusharthas* and the striving for liberation came to be recognized as the fourth *purushartha*, viz., *moksha*.

Indian culture is the outcome of the synthesis of physical, mental, moral and spiritual aspects of human life, and the Indian tradition has worked out these four *purusharthas* through which the highest ideal of *moksha* can be attained. Thus, "Indian ethics propounds the four *purusharthas*, or the ends of human life, which are the means, as well as ends, our duties as well as our goal of realization [of the Self]." <sup>11</sup> These four ideals, if practiced in a harmonious order can lead to a culture acceptable to all mankind. *Artha* is related to the economic dimension and livelihood of a person. *Kama* refers to the mental, passionate and emotional facet of a person. *Dharma* stands for moral and ethical element of a person's life. *Moksha* refers to the spiritual component of a person's existence, i.e., the liberation of a person from the state of *samsara*. These *purusharthas* are the attributes of a perfect life in order to realize one's true Self. The doctrine of *purusharthas* looks after the harmonious relation between man's wellbeing and the social order. Indian thinkers have been aware of the significance of *artha*, *kama* and *dharma*, as they enable us keep a sense of balance both in the individual human and in the society. According to Attrey, the ancient seers of Indian society found that:

...the acquisition of wealth and enjoyment of pleasures in order to remain healthy pursuits, have to be guided and controlled by moral principles such as truth, justice, honesty, sincerity, kindness, fellow-feeling, moderation, social propriety, self-restraint etc. They realized that observation of moral principles ensures greater individual happiness and social peace than unrestricted pursuit of wealth and pleasure. They know that there is a deeper joy in life which is more abiding and more native to the soul than that which possessions and enjoyments can yield. <sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I.C. Sharma: *Ethical Philosophies of India*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1965), p. 61.

<sup>12</sup> Pratibha Verma: *Social Philosophy of the Mahabharata and the Manu Smṛti*, (New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company, 1988,) p. 152.

## DOCTRINE OF DHARMA: THE METAPHYSICAL BASIS OF INDIAN ETHICS

Of the three *purusharthas* that lead a person to the attainment of *moksha* – *artha*, *kama* and *dharma* – the last of the three, viz., *dharma*, is indisputably the cardinal principle in the scheme of the *purusharthas*. This central notion has been projected at social, cosmic, spiritual and moral planes. It may be said that the notion of *dharma* has a teleological connotation as it strives for self-realization in spiritual and moral planes. Most of the ancient authorities on *dharma* consider these *purusharthas* as mutually exclusive. Elaborating on this point they say that in the society: there are some people who seek satisfaction of sensual pleasures (*kamas*) and they are called pleasure-seekers (*kamakamins*); there are others who amass wealth (*artha*) and they are called wealth-seekers (*arthins*); there are others who strive for performance of duty (*dharma*) and the merit (*punya*) associated with it, to be enjoyed in a terminable heaven (*svarga*) and they are called performers of duty (*dharmins*), and there are still others who renounce all three and apply themselves for liberation (*moksha*) and they are called liberated souls (*mumukus*). However, the modern trend is to group all these three *purusharthas* under the supremacy of *moksha*.<sup>13</sup> It is to be noted here that in the enumeration of the *purusharthas*, *dharma* is mentioned first, probably to emphasize the importance of *dharma* over *artha* and *kama*. There is also the implication that the satisfaction of *kama* and the acquisition of *artha* should be in accordance with *dharma*.<sup>14</sup> This doctrine of *dharma* is well synthesized in the Bhagavad-Gita. Let us, now, turn our attention to Gita-doctrine of *dharma*.

### *The Synthetic Doctrine of Dharma as Expounded in Bhagavad-Gita*

There is a logical view held by the Bhagavad-Gita, according to which, *moksha* is attained precisely through the right fulfillment of one's daily duties (*pravrttidharma*). *Moksha* is attained not through inaction, but

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jacob Kattackal: *Religion and Ethics in Advaita*, (Kottayam: C.M.S. Press, 1982), p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> The earlier conception of the *purusharthas* was parallel to the Samkhya conception of the three qualities (*gunas*), viz., goodness (*sattva*), action (*rajas*) and sluggishness (*tamas*). The Samkhyans considered the human body as the composite of the three *gunas* in various proportions. Those of whom the *tamas-guna* predominates lose the discrimination between good and evil, right and wrong; they are dull, stubborn and their actions are malicious. Those in whom the *rajas-guna* predominates are passionate, self-centred and feverishly active. Those in whom the *sattva-guna* is preponderant discern right from wrong; their activity is done with equanimity and without selfishness. The Samkhyan concept of the *gunas* is applied also to the classification of the castes and caste duties.



by action (*karma*) performed without attachment (*nissamga, nishkama*) and with the sole aim of pleasing God (*Isvara-samarpana-buddhya karoti karma*). Thus, the Bhagavad-Gita effects a reconciliation of two mutually conflicting doctrines, namely, the doctrine of salvation through action (*pravrttidharma* or *Karma-marga*) and the doctrine of salvation through knowledge (*nivrttidharma* or *jnana-marga*). The Gita teaches: “None can remain inactive even for one moment.”<sup>15</sup> Isvara himself is ever active for the upholding of the world.<sup>16</sup> Mere abstention from external action will not do any good, if one’s mind is always brooding over objects of sensual pleasures.<sup>17</sup> Hence, we must act; so let us act without egoism and without attachment because, egoism and attachment cause rebirth. On the contrary actions done without attachment and egoism will not produce fruits (*karma-phalas*) leading to rebirth.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Gita’s instruction is to perform one’s duty (*dharma* or *karma*) without *kama*, i.e., without attachment (*niskama-karma, ahamkara-abhisamdhirahitam karma*), and with the sole aim of pleasing God. Thus, the performance of *sva-dharma* as *niskama-karma* is in itself a self-sufficient and independent means to *moksha*. “Always do your work, your duty, without attachment; the person who acts without attachment attains the highest.”<sup>19</sup>

Hence, detachment is the key concept in the Gita. Even such religious acts as sacrifice and rituals are to be performed without attachment, without desire for reward; otherwise the doer is doomed to unpleasant consequences.<sup>20</sup> The Gita, thus synthesizes *pravrttidharma* (*karma-marga*) with *nivrttidharma* (*jnana-marga*) through its well-balancing doctrine: “Do your *dharma* (*karma, pravrtti*) with a renounced heart (*sannyasa, tyaga, nivrtti*) for the sake of *Isvara*. This is the basis of the path of devotion (*bhakti-marga*) too. Instead of working with personal motives, the Gita exhorts men to direct their affection towards God and to act with the sole aim of pleasing God.<sup>21</sup> Gita through its instruction on *karma* with renunciation (*tyaga*) harmonizes *pravrttidharma* with *nivrttidharma*, *dharma* with *moksha*, and action with contemplation. Modern Hindus, in general, follow the Gita doctrine irrespective of caste or *ashrama*. As a result, the traditional doctrine of *varnadharma* and *ashramadharm*a is beginning to lose its credibility in contemporary India. In the next section, we consider the doctrine of *dharma* as related to the society.

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<sup>15</sup> Bhagavad-Gita, 3.5.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ibid., 18.62

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Ibid., 3.6.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Ibid., 1.8. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 3.19. *Tasmad astaktah satatam karyam karma samacara/ asak to hyacaran karma param aponi purusha.*

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ibid, 2.43.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 18.62; 18.65-66.

*Doctrine of Dharma as Related to Society*

Speaking of the doctrine of *dharma* and its relation to the society, we must first consider the essential and universal character of *dharma*. The Chandogya Upanishad clearly states that along with the creation of diverse orders of human persons in the society – who are broadly classified into *brahmins*, *kshatriyas*, *vaishyas* and *sudras* – *dharma* is created for the purpose of binding them together into one whole living organism and leveling up their differences. The aim of *dharma*, thus, is to bring peace, harmony and unity among the diverse classes of persons endowed with diverse characteristics and varying degrees of intellectual, physical, political and economic powers. Therefore, the doctrine of *dharma* sustains, unifies, develops and strengthens the human society as one organic system. Hence, there arises the need to formulate the doctrine of *dharma* in accordance with the requirement of the common man in his different spheres of activity. Kautilya's Arthashastra is an attempt to take the doctrine of *dharma* into the sphere of polity and sociopolitical life of man. Manusmriti is an attempt to bring out the application of the doctrine of *dharma* in the ethical and religious spheres of human existence. The various Dharma Sutras concern themselves both with secular and religious laws. In most cases, they study man in relation to his society. We shall illustrate this by reference to the attempt made by Manusmriti.

The entire society as envisaged by Manu is classed under four groups, each with distinct spheres of duties and obligations. The basis of this classification is the "division of labor" or what is sometimes called "specialization of functions". The aim behind this classification is better service to the society as a whole. This is what is erroneously and often contemptuously called "caste system". According to this system the society is divided into four classes – *brahmins*, *kshatriyas*, *vaishyas* and *sudras*. Each class is expected to devote itself to the performance of duties specific to it: the *brahmins* to the intellectual and spiritual pursuits; the *kshatriyas* to soldiering and maintenance of law and order, and protection of the society from external threats and aggressions; the *vaishyas* to agriculture, commerce, trade, industry, animal husbandry and all sorts of commercial activities; and the *sudras* to the service of the above three classes. All these classes can ensure perfect coherence, justice and harmony only if they worked in close liaison with one another.<sup>22</sup> It is thought that such a division of labor will invariably result in greater degrees of specialization and acquisition of skills. However, in course of time, the entire scheme becomes so rigid. It gives rise to castes and sub-castes, one's birth in a group but not one's worth as determining one's status in the society, and the

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<sup>22</sup> Plato's division of society into philosopher-rulers, soldiers and producers of goods of common consumption, roughly correspond to the *brahmins*, the *kshatriyas* and the *vaishyas* of the Indian scheme of division of the society.

right to continue in one's ancestral group. A *brahmin's* son, for instance, will become a *brahmin* and will be so respected because of his birth. There is no corrective measure to this growing and governing rigidity. As a result, the emphasis is laid not on merit or quality (*guna*) but on birth (*janma*).<sup>23</sup>

Another classification mentioned in Manusmriti is based on the concept of *ashramadharmā*. Humanity is divided roughly into four stages – student stage (*brahmacharya*), married stage (*grihasta*), forest life (*vanaprastha*), and Stage of a Sage (*sannyasa*). A *brahmacharin* is a student who is expected to live and study under the guidance of a qualified teacher and observe the various norms. He is expected to study religious texts, to perform yajnas, to abstain from sense-enjoyment, to give faithful service to the teacher and to observe certain vows. *Grihasthin* is a householder who was enjoined to lead a married life. He is called to a sincere observance of all the duties of a householder, leading a happy and contented married life, extending charity and hospitality to all. A *vanaprasthin* is the one who seeks to develop strong spiritual motivation. He is required to perform the five great yajnas – as a token of love and affection towards the gods, of gratitude to the saints and the seers of the past and the present for showing others the path of peace and progress, of respect and remembrance towards the deceased ancestors, of seeking the welfare of all human beings, and, lastly, of all beings. The *sannyasin* is one who seeks renunciation of all that is worldly and strives for spiritual enlightenment by undergoing various austerities. With the explicit aim of preparing the individual for effectively discharging the various obligations, both towards him and the society, the early Hindus, thus, devised this fourfold scheme of life. Besides, the each of the four *ashramas* signifies a stage in one's life in order to prepare for the further journey to attain final liberation. The first is the student stage, the period of education in the theory of *dharma*. The second stage is the time for the practical application of *dharma* in the pursuit of *moksha*. The next two stages lead to the completion of one's *dharma* in this world so as to attain Self-realization. Each stage, therefore, goes with a dominant theme of social and individual duties with scripturally ordained "do's" and "don'ts". Therefore, it may be said that the system of *ashrama* is not merely theoretical and the duties mentioned against the four orders of life are not merely hollow precepts, but concrete acts that in the final analysis leads one's attainment of Self-realization.

Compared to the divergence between the ideal of *varnadharma* and the practice of caste, one may say that the *ashramadharmā* system, on the whole, has been applied and followed rather fruitfully, perhaps not so much in the consummate social realization of the various virtues of the four grades as according to the intention and spirit of the fourfold division of man's life. The fourfold division and systematization is practical and

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Pratima Bowes: *Hindu Intellectual Tradition*, (Allied Publishers Private Limited), chapter 4.

serviceable, but the standards vary according to the hierarchic place (*varna*) of a person.

It is universally recognized that *dharma* is a very complex concept and is therefore, variously interpreted. However, this does not amount to saying that this concept is vague or ill defined. As G.H. Meads suggests, *dharma*, like many of the conceptions of ancient cultures and like the modern word “law”, is indeterminate rather than vague. His reason for emphasizing on this distinction is that indeterminateness does not preclude inner clarity, whereas vagueness is the opposite of clarity. The ancient Hindus concede that the term “*dharma*” stands for various things not because of their failure to define it, but because their effort – to name an all embracing principle, which would cover all aspects of life – is inadequate and therefore quite naturally took different meanings in different contexts. Though it would be possible to distinguish between various aspects of *dharma*, let us not lose sight of the fact that in the ultimate analysis there could be only one *dharma* in essence – the fundamental law or order – though varying in manifestations and applications.

It seems that presence of *dharma* in the universe, underpinning the right functioning of things, sometimes is thought of as their norm and sometimes simply as their nature, is taken for granted in ancient India. This is so not only for the Hindus but also for the Buddhists and Jains, even if they interpreted *dharma* in different ways. Radhakrishnan says that *dharma* is the stable condition, capable of giving perfect satisfaction to man and of helping him in the attainment of happiness and salvation. Its end, according to him, is the welfare of all creation. Mahoney summarizes the whole content of *dharma* in the following way: “The aggregate connotation here suggests that in the south Asian cultures *dharma* represents ‘correctness’, both in a descriptive sense (the way things are) and in a prescriptive one (the way things should be), and reflects the inextricable connection in the religious thought of India between ontology, ritual ideology, social philosophy, ethics and canon law.”<sup>24</sup>

*Dharma*, as its etymology indicates, is that which preserves society from going to pieces. *Dharma*, in short, is the law of human progress. The concept of *dharma*, if understood in its collective aspect, is the foundation of all ideas of progress and social order. It is considered to be the foundational ideal of human life. All other ideals are based upon the ideal of *dharma*. In the Indian cultural tradition, man attains his goal through *dharma*. Sri Aurobindo has correctly pointed out the implications of *dharma* in the following way:

The *dharma*, at once religious law of action and deepest law of our nature, is not, as in the western idea, a creed, cult or ideal inspiring an ethical and social rule; it is the

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<sup>24</sup> William K. Mahoney: “*Dharma*”, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, vol. 4, (1987), p. 329.

right law of functioning of our life in all parts. The tendency of man to seek after a just and perfect law of his living finds its truth and its justification in the *dharma*. Everything indeed has its *dharma*, its law of life imposed on it by its nature...<sup>25</sup>

*Dharma* as rules of right conduct has evolved as a solution to the manifold problems arising out of the natural instincts of man. The great thinkers of ancient India have asserted that unless the desire (*kama*) to have all earthly pleasures and wealth (*artha*), and the desires emanating from anger, greed, passion, infatuation and enmity – the six fold enemies of every individual – are controlled by the rules *dharma*, incessant conflict, fight and consequential loss of happiness, peace and material pleasure itself, would be inevitable.

It is for this purpose that rules of *dharma* are expanded to cover all aspects of life. While the word “*dharma*” has a wide meaning, fundamental rules of *dharma* common to all human beings are the following: non-violence (*ahimsa*), truthfulness (*satya*), not acquiring illegitimate wealth or coveting the property of others (*asteya*), purity of mind and action (*shoucham*) and control of senses (*indriyanigraha*). Having laid down these rules of *dharma*, the doctrines of *trivarga* – *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* – are laid down. The injunction given to every individual who follows the doctrine of *trivarga* is that he/she rejects all desires and material wealth if they are contrary to *dharma*. According to J.S. McKenzie, the term “*dharma*” covers not only conduct, but the whole conglomeration of behavior patterns the society has established. *Dharma* protects those who protect it. Those who destroy *dharma* get destroyed. Therefore, *dharma* should not be destroyed so that we may not be destroyed as the consequence. The meaning it conveys is that an orderly society would be in existence if individuals act according to *dharma* and thereby protect it. Such an orderly society, that is an incarnation of *dharma*, in turn, protects the rights of individuals through the instrumentality of the state (*rajya*). A rule in conformity with *dharma* is, therefore, called the rule of law (*dharmarajya*). Radhakrishnan, in the course of his speech on the adoption of the constitution in the constituent assembly quoted that *dharma* has become the basic structure of our civilization, culture and of the constitutional law of ancient India to be obeyed by the Kings (*rajadhharma*). The mandate of *rajadhharma* consists in the king protecting all his subjects without discrimination just as the mother earth gives equal support for all living beings. Radhakrishnan opines that *dharma* is the stable condition that can give perfect satisfaction to man and help him in the attainment of happiness and salvation. Its end, according to him, is the welfare of all

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<sup>25</sup>Aurobindo: *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, (Pondicherry: Aurobindo Ashram, 1953), p.104.

creation.<sup>26</sup> These considerations suggest that *dharma* in the Indian cultural tradition is the law of human progress. Such metaphysics of *dharma* operates as the meaning-giving source of the rationality of a discourse on human rights and its praxis.

Practical life exercised as guided by *dharma* with an attitude of detachment (*nishkama*) keeps harmony in the conduct of man during the course of his life. The harmonious life is signified by the concept of *rta* primarily implies harmony of the world order of the cosmic reality of universe. However, *rta* also represents the harmonious conduct of individuals in their practical life. *Rta* here means the moral law having metaphysical and ethical basis. I. C. Sharma comments on this point as follows:

The concept of *rta* has great ethico-metaphysical significance. It represents the sublime moral order, which is inviolable. The inviolability of *rta* makes it superior to gods and cosmic ethics on the one hand, and individual beings, on the other, because *rta* works throughout the cosmos inevitably and justly. This fact implies that even in the case of individual's actions, *rta*, the eternal law, is responsible for the apportionment of reward and punishment... With reference to gods, it is metaphysical and with reference to human being it is purely ethical.<sup>27</sup>

Having looked into different dimensions of Indian cultural tradition, particularly its ethical nature by analyzing the doctrine of *dharma*, we must take up the question whether the Indian cultural tradition is, in fact, founded on metaphysics. We turn our attention to this topic in the next section.

### **INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION AND ITS METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Our enquiry into the metaphysical foundations of Indian cultural tradition, which is basically ethical in nature, vis-à-vis the *dharma* doctrine, suggests by analogy that ethics is some sort of a superstructure to be constructed only once the metaphysical foundations Indian cultural tradition is laid out. However, the Indian philosophies in general and the Dharmshastras in particular have, in a variety of ways, insisted that ethics ought to be an autonomous enterprise largely independent of the descriptive and explanatory accents of the sciences or metaphysics. As branches of philosophy, ethics and metaphysics are parts of a common critical and

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Radhakrishnan S.: *Indian Philosophy*, vol.1, (New Delhi. Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 505-506.

<sup>27</sup> I. C. Sharma: *Ethical Philosophies of India*, p. 72.

constructive enterprise that aims ultimately to be at once existentially adequate, analytically clear and rigorous, categorically general and speculatively comprehensive. However, ethics and metaphysics diverge in the central themes and the leading questions they pursue. Ethics is the philosophical attempt to articulate and evaluate human conduct, whereas, metaphysics is the systematic philosophical enquiry into the question of what there is and how the different categories of things are related to one another. It may be understood here that the Hindu ethical doctrines are implicit in Hindu metaphysics. Therefore, ethics and metaphysics are not totally independent of each other, but related to each other. Thus, Indian philosophers have always discussed ethical questions both from the subjective (ethical) and objective (metaphysical) standpoints.

The concept to *varnadharma*, for instance, constitutes the ideational nexus of a cultural continuum of Indians through the ages. Thus, throughout the ages, the Indians have believed that when actions are determined and controlled by *dharma*, it promotes Self-realization. The language of realization suggests that the Highest Good (*summum bonum*) is to be understood in terms of the realization of the potential. Realization of potential is inevitable and universal, if we understand the same from the *dharma* point of view. The governing potential of a living organism includes the capacities to be and do a variety of things. It is the task of normative ethics – *dharma* as objective value – to elaborate and justify the value categories of fullness of the potentials. The *varna* system enabled the Hindu society to survive instead of completely disappearing as many other societies have disappeared under similar conditions. Pratima Bowes argues on this point:

It happened because a society functioning on caste rules and regulations could somehow carry on under its own steam, so to say – albeit in a state of frowziness, and without any visible institutions, like churches, monasteries, and so on, and it thus proved to be virtually indestructible. Besides this there was of course the belief in timeless being which through changes of progress and degeneration remains essentially the same. And this made the Hindus believe that the Hindu religion, called ‘*Sanatana Dharma*’ had always existed and would always exist whatever the ups and downs brought about by time, and this enabled them to accept the reverse in their fortunes with a certain degree of philosophical calm, resulting in their capacity to wait patiently for the next phase of change when time would inevitably alter the picture.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Pratima Bowes: *Hindu Intellectual Tradition*, Chapter 4.

The frank acceptance of inequalities of various sorts in a society – status, need, function, and material wealth – where the *brahmin* would serve the *brahmin*, despite their status and capabilities, seems to be more relevant to present conditions in India than the doctrine of equality developed in the west. This doctrine, by extension, retains its importance in the ethical sphere too. Ethically, then, each individual is entitled to a fundamental consideration as a person who fulfills his purposes and not the purposes of other human beings, however, excellent they may be. Thus, each individual becomes a *purusha*, whose identities have achieved self-expression. It can happen if the society and its interdependence of privileges and responsibilities in a hierarchy of values are accepted in the present day society in place of the individualistic idea of sheer competition and its political component, the reservation for jobs on caste basis.

If the goal of ethics is Self-realization and culture is only an inward journey to the realization of Self, in the sense we have explained above, then law, righteousness, or duty (*dharma*) is not something authoritarian or imposed from above. If duty becomes the commandments forced on individuals either by society, by an organized institution or even by an external God, then it would be reduced to an external constraint on the human mind. Since every man is a *purusha* in the Indian context, a code of conduct imposed by an external authority is bound to get resented by him sooner or later for two reasons: firstly, such an imposition conflicts with individual freedom and the Self (*Atman*) of man; secondly, man's reason would lead him to ask: "Why should I be moral and conform to an external, authorization code of conduct"? In the west, the very inquiry about the utility of ethics has led to the controversy between rationalism and materialism, intuitionism and utilitarianism, and has brought about an annihilation of ethics. The controversy over the nature of an ethical judgment has been responsible for the confusion in contemporary western ethics. The eternal and anthropomorphic notion of God has given birth to radical theology, which declares the death of God. Similarly authoritarian ethics devoid of the goal of Self-realization has been responsible for the emergence of positive and emotive theories of ethics, which declare ethical judgments to be nonsensical and exclamatory respectively.

In the Indian context, we have suggested that ethics is not an autonomous science, totally independent of metaphysics. It is this metaphysical theme that we have been pursuing in this paper. In general, we can say that the concept of *dharma* attempts to answer the normative significance of human conduct; it presupposes a world of contingent values affected by human conduct. It is because values can be augmented and diminished, created and destroyed, and individuals can benefit and can be harmed because of these values, in the process giving human actions an ethical significance. Towards that end, the Indian thinkers have formulated the doctrine of *manavadharma* and *varnadharma*. It remains for a fuller exposition to explore, how divergent are the norms of a psychological valence that wired into our motivational springs of human actions generally



and ethical behavior in particular. *Dharma* has both descriptive and prescriptive contents: descriptive, the way things are and prescriptive, the way things ought to be. However, both may be referred to as the nature of things particularly when it means the essential nature, not accidental properties, so that the distinction between nature and norm disappear.<sup>29</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The above reflection suggests that Indian ethical theories are determined by certain metaphysical concepts. Value of an action is judged by the degree of personal sacrifice. An action is good and meritorious with renunciation on the doer's part. It implies that in the Indian cultural tradition, the moral use of the term "*dharma*" is a derivative of its natural use and ultimately something ought to be such and such because that will be the fulfillment of its nature. However, this moral use of the term "*dharma*" got intertwined with its natural use, so to say, that something, which ought to be moral is but natural to it. What is special about Indian cultural tradition is the wide acceptance of the idea of *dharma* as the basis of all functioning in the universe without the support of any philosophical reflection. As the result, there comes about ambiguities in the use of the concept of *dharma*, which, in turn, has hindered the development of a critical tradition in the sphere of social thinking. Whatever order happened to develop in the society through the natural process of interaction between various forces present therein is accepted as the working out of *dharma*.

As consequence, the four ends of human life, commonly known as *purusharthas*, underlie the Hindu attitude forwards life and daily conduct. The first of these, *dharma*, if characterized by righteousness, duty and virtue, there are other activities through which one seeks to gain something for oneself or to pursue one's own pleasure. When the object of this activity is some material gain, it is called *artha*; when it is love or pleasure, it is called *kama*. Finally, there is the renunciation of all these activities with the aim of attaining *moksha*.

Want of philosophical reflection and critical attitude has engineered the Indian society. Its political, religious and cultural factors have made the Indian social structure hierarchical in character. The above-mentioned factors, in turn, brought about the confusion regarding two different conceptions of *dharma*: one corresponding to the nature of a thing as it is, relevant to the idea of physical laws; and the other the norm things are required to achieve, relevant to the idea of social, political and religious laws. *Dharma*, when it functions as a natural or descriptive concept (the way things are) is quite different from *dharma* when it functions as a moral or prescriptive concept (the way things ought to be).

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Sebastian Velassery: *Casteism and Human Rights: Toward Ontology of the Social Order*, (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International – Academic, 2005), Chapter, 3.

However, both may be referred to as the nature of things particularly when it means the essential nature, not accidental properties, so that the distinction between nature and norm disappears. Accordingly, there is a calculated and intentional confusion between the two uses of the term “*dharma*” and took the purely descriptive as the prescriptive, that believes that something is *dharma* (morally commendable) because it is *dharma* (happens to be the way and hence its nature in the sense of what it is). This perception has paved way for the justification of caste system and untouchability on the ground that it is part of *dharma*, the implication being that the irregularities of the system ought to be there as lawful, right and virtuous, because it is its nature. Since a religious and lawful sanction has been volitionally attached to it, the initial ideal is lost sight of; the system has developed fissiparous tendencies and has evolved the code of inequities, which have given it a bad name outside as well as inside India.<sup>30</sup>

Unfortunately the cultural and religious supremacy of the *brahmins* has narrowed down the concept of *dharma* and is identified it with *varna* and *jati* with privileges based on birth and which has prevented the development of the concept of human rights in this country. The essential basis of the *varna* system, metamorphosed later as the caste system, is the development of groups of individuals in consonance with their qualifications in virtue and justice, the keystone of the structure is not detachment but union. The element of exclusiveness and untouchability – otherwise repugnant to the social philosophy, culture and tradition of not only the Aryan race – is rooted in this conception of *dharma*. Indian moral and cultural tradition pronounces compassion, sympathy, tolerance, forgiveness, purity of the soul, and good of the others, helping poor and taking care of animals as virtues. *Dharma* also means commitment in favor of humanity as a whole. My *dharma* to do “x” means I ought to do “x”, i.e., it is my duty to do “x”. We represent the part and parcel of Universal Self and it is our *dharma* to strive for the emergence of the individual Self in the former. One attains the highest goal by perfecting oneself by practicing one’s duty (*dharma*) in repeated births without desiring for effects of the actions. This ultimate goal of human life can be achieved in one’s social life through *purusharthas* at different stages (*ashramas*) of life. These considerations obviate the necessity to undergird that Indian social life is in the pursuit of perfection through practice, and is not only concerned with analysis of moral or spiritual concepts in their particular meaning and use. Ethics, in Indian society, besides explaining the nature of good, provides practical guidance towards attaining metaphysical goal of realizing perfection in one’s life (*moksha*), which may be regarded as the cultural tradition of India.

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

# YOGA SYSTEM OF PHILOSOPHY: GENERAL PRACTICE AND SYNTHESIS

U.A. VINAY KUMAR

### INTRODUCTION

The etymological meaning of the term “yoga” is “to unite” (*yuj bhavadau ghan kutvam*). There are several more meanings to this term, which are mostly contextual. However, the meaning “to unite” repeats itself many times over in modern treatises on Yoga; but seldom do these treatises provide logical explanation of the alleged unity involved. Normally unity can be cogently conceived only of two or more things. In this sense, the logical descriptions of the things that are to be united (*relata*) and the logical meaning of the specific unity have to be put forward, if a sense has to be made out of “unity”. The concerned *relata* could be “concepts”, “ideas”, or “entities”. The classical work, *Bhojavrtti to Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra*, defines the term “yoga” “concentration”. It comes from the root *yuj*, which means “to keep the mind fixed in abstract meditation”, and thus it stands for restraining the exercise of the mind, or concentration.<sup>1</sup> Different from etymology and the technical rendering of the term “yoga”, in normal parlance, it has been more often used to denote the practical discipline (*sadhanaa*) of attaining liberation.<sup>2</sup>

Yoga, as a practical discipline, is believed to achieve the ultimate goal of human life, *moksha*, as generally found in classical Indian Philosophy. Means to *moksha* is classified as primary and secondary. The primary means connotes the step that entails the attainment of the end in question immediately in succession after its fulfillment. The secondary means connotes a step that occurs prior to any other primary means that may just precede the goal that is to be attained. Yoga practice could be considered as primary or secondary means, as the case may be, depending

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. “Bhojavrtti to Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra”, in *Yoga Sutra of Patanjali with Bhojavrtti called Rajamartanda*, trans. J. R. Ballantyne and Shastri Govinda Deva, ed. S.B. Tailang, (Delhi: Pious Book Corporation, 1985), no. I.1.

<sup>2</sup> We propose to use two “a’s” in the Sanskrit word that denotes practical discipline – “*sadhanaa*”. Two “a’s” refer to the elongated pronunciation of sound “a”, as “a” in the term “blast”. This proposal is made to overtly exhibit the difference between “*sadhana*” and “*sadhanaa*” rather than by denoting it through a diacritical mark, which may be missed in thought, even if diacritical mark itself is not missed in script. However we have avoided using the term “*sadhanaa*” to a large extent.

on the technical recommendations of different schools of philosophy. Sometimes, one may even refuse to assign any status to Yoga practice as a means to *moksha*, as some seem to say in Advaita.<sup>3</sup> However, the Yogic-practice is almost indispensable as a means to *moksha* irrespective of the technically assigned status to it by different schools of thought.

Vedic tradition approves of the Yogic discipline. The word “*yoga*” is first found in Taittiriya Upanishad.<sup>4</sup> Even Katha, Brhadaranyaka,<sup>5</sup> Maitrayani<sup>6</sup> and Svetasvatara<sup>7</sup> Upanishads refer to various methods of Yogic discipline. Later, during the period of systematization in the schools, such as Nyaya, Vaisesika, and Samkhya we find explicit reference to the Yoga practice. Under what may be called as non-Vedic traditions, like Buddhism and Jainism, also we find an approval of Yoga-practice and prescription of the same in their religious order. All significant schools of Indian Philosophy, as referred earlier, have overtly or covertly prescribed Yoga- practice, as the/a means for attaining the ultimate goal of human life. The Carvakas may not have accepted *moksha*; nevertheless, it may not be logically impossible to defend a position that might characterize Carvakas as practitioners of Yoga – not merely with regard to its external limbs, such as *asana*, *pranayama* and others, but in what may be regarded as essential limb(s) of the Yoga-practice that is the last three limbs: *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. Discussion on this possibility would, of course, constitute a separate theme.

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<sup>3</sup> Although it may be possible that Yoga practice as means to *moksha* may be rejected, nevertheless the case of Advaita as an example seems to be definitely incorrect. Let us elaborate: Advaita in general and Sankara in particular, do not reject Yoga-practice. [Cf. Shankara: *Aparoksanubhuti or Self-Realization*, trans. Vimuktananda Swami, (Delhi: Advaita Ashrama, 1982), p. 54 - Verse 100 onwards for Shankara’s description of *pranayama*, which is a Yogic limb]. In this text, Sankara prescribes an “object” for the action involved in *pranayama*, such as the thought “I am *Brahman*” in the inhalation (*puraka*) of air. Similarly, in Brahma-Sutra-Bhasya, Sankara does not deny anywhere the practice of Yoga as means for *moksha*. On the contrary, what he has actually denied is the knowledge as laid down in Samkhya and the practice of Yoga as a means leading to *moksha* independently of the Vedas. Sankara says: “Samkhya and Yoga are well-known in the world as means for the achievement of the highest human goal (liberation), and they are accepted by the good people and are supported by Vedic indicatory marks. However, their ((Samkhya-Yoga)) refutation centers on this false claim that liberation can be attained through Samkhya knowledge or the path of Yoga independently of the Vedas...” This, in some sense, means that Sankara accepts the practice of Yoga, at least, as the secondary means to the attainment of *moksha*. Cf. Swami Saccidanendra Saraswati: *Brahma Sutra Bhasya of Sankara*, vol. I, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Holenarasipura: Adhyatma Prakash Karyalaya, 1998), no. II. I.2.3.407, pp. 671-672.

<sup>4</sup> “Yoga atma” Cf. T.U., no.II.4.1.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. B.U., no. I.5.23.; IV.6.23.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. M.U., no.IV.4.8.

The above discussion makes it clear that Yoga has been widely practiced for attaining what may be generically called as *moksha*, whatever it might have meant from time to time, for different philosophers/laymen. If so, then two curious questions crop up here: firstly, how has Yoga-practice – an apparently non-cognitive enterprise – come to occupy a role in the intellectual enterprise, which is a cognitive activity, such as philosophization?; secondly, how is that, almost all schools of Indian Philosophy have accepted Yoga as an indispensable means, (*sadhanaa*), for the attainment of *moksha* despite the possible technical difficulties? Alternatively, the points of concern are: firstly, the general interface between Yoga-practice and philosophy; and secondly, the essential quality or limb(s) of Yoga that is perceived as the logical link between Yoga-practice and philosophization, such that Yoga becomes indispensable to all schools of Indian Philosophy. The former point is of general nature and confines mainly to the first question. This point seems to presuppose a historical existence of some kind of general practice and also more than one covert/overt philosophical position; and also that they utilized each other to make their own point, as for example, philosophy prescribes practical ways to attain the goal of *moksha*. However, these facts stand in need of analytical networking without which the alleged interface would make little sense. We attempt to elaborate on this point of analytical networking involved in the general interface first and then take up the point concerning the essential aspect of Yoga.

### **GENERAL PRACTICE OF YOGA AND PHILOSOPHY: AN INTERFACE**

For an historical sort of explanation of the interface between general practice of Yoga and philosophical activity, one will have to go back to the concerned events in history. Such a project may also work out other related matters, such as the relevant sociology of the times in question.<sup>7</sup> However, our enterprise being purely conceptual, we shall indicate, in an analytical manner, the plausible link between them. As such, one could perhaps come up with very many different analytical ways in which general practice of Yoga may be related to philosophical activity. However, the most plausible way seems to be Yoga practice (action) to be a means for the cognitive realization of *moksha* (value), the end. This relation could be called the “Means and End relation” [M-E relation].

It may be appropriate here to explain some crucial concepts involved in this relation as specifically relevant to the case in hand: the relation between Yoga-practice and *moksha*, i.e., relation between action and value. Some of these concepts may be of central importance to other normal cases of M-E relation. We have to restrict ourselves in our discussion to its role in the Yoga-*moksha* duo because the topic of M-E Relation is too vast to be

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. S.U. no. II.8-9.

attempted at in this short article. Hence, we are primarily interested in the application-part of the said relation to the specific case in hand. It is possible to treat this case as a special case of the generic M-E Relation.<sup>8</sup> The generic M-E Relation always implies a causal link, to which we turn our attention in the next section.

### *Causal Link*

Under normal circumstances, a person would not put in conscious effort to do/perform an action without being aware, however vaguely or wrongly, of the end-result, i.e., the fruit of his action, which is the consequence of his effort. Thus, one would presume some kind of “causal link” – real or imaginary – between the two or more concerned things<sup>9</sup> consciously or otherwise. If no such causal link between “Means and End” is allowed, then no two things can stand in relation to “Means and End”. Causality here need not be denied on the grounds of a corresponding absence of ontological counterpart. For example, let us consider a case where money is a means and buying of goods is the end. In this case, there may not exist necessarily an ontological causality between the two. Nevertheless, so long as money is accepted as a means to buy goods, which is an end, a causal link between them, i.e., money and goods is, is surely conceived. We need not elaborate on this point as presumably our discussion would not have the occasion to question the ontological dimension of the *relata*, i.e., Yoga and *moksha*, in a direct manner as in the above example of money and goods. However, even in Yoga-*moksha* relationship, there involves an action, i.e., Yogic-practice, leading to the attainment of a value, i.e., *moksha*. Hence we turn to the analysis of the relationship between Yogic-practice (action) and *moksha* (value).

### *Yogic-Practice (Action) and Moksha (Value)*

The formal semantics of “Means and End” asserts that means are actions that bring about desired states of affairs or end in the world. Such a formal semantics, however, does not seem to encourage or promote the idea of an end-in-itself, i.e., a thing having only a pure or an intrinsic value. This is because a pure intrinsic value is conceived as an absolutely isolated thing without any relation, real or imaginary, to the rest of the entities, in the manner means are related to some other ends. The formal semantics is

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. J.H. Woods: *Yoga Sutra with Maniprabha of Ramananda Saraswati*, ed. Mohan Chand, (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1987), pp. ix- xi. Cf. also S.B. Tailang, “Introduction”, in *Yoga Sutra of Patanjali with Bhojavrtti called Rajamartanda*, trans. J. R. Ballantyne and Shastri Govinda Deva.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. For the analysis of a generic case of Semantics for Means and End Relations Cf. Jesse Hughes, Peter Kores and Sjoerd Zwart: “A Semantics for Means-End Relations”, taken from Web Page (2005).

interested in analyzing only those that are connected or connectible semantically both as a means and as an end, whereas a pure-intrinsic-value is an end-in-itself. An intrinsic value is a value or an end regardless of whether it is useful as a means to promote some other ends. This means that an intrinsic value can, in principle, both be considered as an end and a means, although the *relatum* has to be different in conceiving an intrinsic value as a means and an end. For example, one could hold, as in modern moral philosophy that a person *qua* person has an intrinsic value independently of his or her prospects of serving other ends.<sup>10</sup> At the same time a person can have instrumental value too, that is he/she can surely be conceived as a useful means to promote other ends. Therefore, to call a thing as having an intrinsic value is to say that the thing necessarily has both intrinsic value and instrumental value. Hence, we have things that have pure-intrinsic-value and things that have intrinsic value and instrumental value.

Similarly, regarding instrumental value we can say that something has instrumental value if it has a value as a means to promote some ends. In other words, certain things will be considered as having instrumental value so long as they are only instrumental in producing an end. Again, if the function of certain things is only to promote some or the other ends then it shall be called as having an instrumental value. Therefore, if something has an instrumental value, then it cannot have intrinsic value. For in the above-mentioned example of “money and goods”, money has only an instrumental value. This means that the value involved here is a pure-instrumental value, i.e., it is an instrument bereft of end-value-content. An instrument will become a discarded entity the moment its instrumentality ceases, i.e., the end has been achieved through it. On the contrary, if something has intrinsic value in addition to possessing instrumental value then we have things that have instrumental value and intrinsic value. Therefore, we have things that have pure-instrumental-value, and things that have both instrumental value and intrinsic value.<sup>11</sup>

By applying the result of the preceding discussion to Yoga-practice (action) and *moksha* (value), we get the following plausible relations between them:

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> The object or objects and also their relation have to be real if any fructification of an action into value has to take place. Patanjala Sutras speaks of three sources of valid ideas. They are *pratyaksa*, *anumana*, and *sabda*. Cf. “*Pratyaksanumanagamah Pramanani*”, in J.H. Woods: *Yoga Sutra with Maniprabha of Ramananda Saraswati*, ed. Mohan Chand, no.1.7; p. 11. Any source of valid ideas has the characteristic mark – “the causation of valid ideas”. This means that a source, in order to be accepted as a good source for ideas, it has to cause valid ideas. Besides, later in a different Sutra invalid sources are also explained.

- A (i) Yoga-practice, the action, as having pure instrumentalvalue  
 A (ii) Yoga, as having instrumental value and intrinsic value  
 [To be contextually determined]  
 A (iii) Yoga, as having pure intrinsic value – and  
 M (i) *Moksha*, the value, as having pure intrinsic value  
 M (ii) *Moksha*, as having intrinsic value and instrumental value  
 [To be contextually determined]  
 M (iii) *Moksha* as having pure instrumentalvalue

The resulting dyadic relations will be nine in number. They are:

1. A (i) ---- M (i); 2. A (i)----M (ii); 3. A (i) ----M (iii);
4. A (ii) ----M (i); 5. A (ii)----M (ii); 6. A (ii) ---- M (iii);
7. A (iii) ---M (i); 8. A (iii) ---M (ii); 9. A (iii) ---- M (iii).

Each and every one of these relations excepting “1” and “2”, seem to be not suited to understand the case in hand. Let us stretch our inquiry little further. “7” is ruled out because Yoga as a pure intrinsic value cannot act as a means to some other things, i.e., Yoga as a pure intrinsic value would be an end-in-itself. “2”, “5” and “8” are ruled out because *moksha* being an ultimate end cannot itself act as means to promote some other ends, unless *moksha* can be contextualized to yield some kind of instrumentality to itself. For the same reason “3”, “6”, and “9” are also ruled out. Relation “1” seems to be most suited for our purposes. In this relation Yoga would be pure instrumental value and *moksha* would be pure intrinsic value. Relation “2” may be acceptable if after the attainment of *moksha* certain further ends could be considered as promotable through *moksha* as means.<sup>12</sup>

The relationship between Yoga-practice (action) and the *moksha* (value) is established and justified by means of philosophical activity which is fundamentally intellectual and analytical nature. In the next section, we turn our attention to this important aspect of philosophical activity.

### *Philosophical Activity*

Philosophical activity is essentially analytical and intellectual in its essence. It continues to be so even when we consider as its subject matter non-cognitive contents of some basic Yogic activity, such as posture (*asana*). This activity is mental in so far as philosophy tries to analyze the situation logically. It would not permit anything if the same does not abide by the rules of conceptualization and logic. The end-product of any analytical activity is an analytical system, which is certainly subject to revisions because it cannot claim immunity to the developments outside of itself, even if the analytical system in itself constitutes a closed system and

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Jesse Hughes, Peter Kores and Sjoerd Zwart: “A Semantics for Means-End Relations”, taken from Web Page (2005).



appears logically unassailable. The only exception, in principle, to this is the most comprehensive system. So if there is a revision, in an analytical system, it implies that a discovery or recognition of hitherto hidden and non-recognized external fact(s) including some internal logical flaw have come to be recognized.

Philosophical or analytical activity generally attempts to restrict itself to the logical networking of the given system, though some people might choose and pick up only some items within the given system<sup>13</sup> leaving out some others which are within the relevant field of the given system. Such an analytical activity, in general, as said above is sensitive to the discovery of some non-recognized external facts. A discovery of this sort will always affect one or more items of the edifice. For this reason of the possible sensitivity of an analytical system, every initial analytical edifice may be likened to an apple-cart. The analytical edifice would come crashing down the moment some item in the edifice gets disturbed just as the apple-cart would when an item is recklessly removed unless it has greater explanatory potential to include the external data within itself as an integral part. Indeed, the magnitude of crash would depend on the location of the item that is affected in the totality of the edifice, and on the magnitude of the disturbance. Crash of a more foundational item will result in more serious harm to the analytical edifice as compared to a lesser foundational item.

The importance of this kind of an analytical enterprise, in the Indian context, lays in the fact that the object of knowledge morphs itself into a more fundamental object in its logically cognitive search for the same object, and through the process of search it becomes *moksha*-begetting. That is an object that is derived through analysis and analytical judgments that constitute the theoretical knowledge, and when the same is later known in a more fundamental manner leads to *moksha*. This later knowledge, in the Indian context, is the cognitive realization, which leads to the attainment of ultimate value, the *moksha*. Now, if the analytical edifice crumbles then the object crumbles, and if the object crumbles then *moksha* crumbles. For, the theoretical validity of *moksha* is dependent on the theoretical validity of the object.<sup>14</sup>

Philosophical activity or cognitiveness, though may not play a vital role in the grosser dimensions of Yoga-practice, it does play an important role, especially in the subtler stages of Yoga-practice. Now, we move on to consider the role of cognitive activity in the Yoga-practice (action).

#### *Yoga-Practice (Action) and Cognitive Activity*

Yoga-practice is primarily an action-concept and not a cognitive

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Joe Lau and Jonathan Chan: "Values- Intrinsic and Instrumental Values", Pages under Critical Thinking Web, (2006).

<sup>14</sup> Please note that an object of knowledge derived through analytical construction will be written in this paper as "object(s)".

concept. In other words, practice of Yoga at the grosser levels does not involve cognitivity. However, there is a subtler dimension to Yoga-practice, which involves cognitive activity. Thus, on the subtler planes of Yoga, such as *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi* directly involve mind and its modes for their practice. Mind and its modes try to apprehend the objective reality provided by the analytical enterprise. Therefore, due to the intervention of the mind for the cognitive realization of the object supplied by the analytical enterprise particularly in the subtler stages of Yoga, cognitivity or philosophical activity marks the Yogic-action. From what we have said, it is clear that philosophical activity does play a vital role in the actual practice of Yoga as a means to attain the goal of *moksha*.

Having clarified all the elements involved in the M-E Relations in the above sections, we move on to consider the briefly the resultant M-E Relation in the following section.

#### *Resultant Means-End Relation*

The main result of assimilation of the four concepts is twofold and reflects on both the theoretical activity of philosophy and the theorization involved in the cognitive action. The former is affected by the cognitive action, where so many more new inputs come rushing to the mind, which results in the revision of the existing philosophical theory; and in turn, a suitable object will be analytically arrived at by the new enterprise for the purpose of the new cognitive action. This interface between action and value need not necessarily lead to a unilinear analytical edifice, in the sense that there need not be only one system that should continuously develop, although the whole of Indian Philosophy could, perhaps, be considered as one unified whole. On the one hand, the objects of *moksha* or simply *moksha*-object, the knowledge of which may keep changing in the sense that more than one object could exist at a given time. The reasons for this are the following:

1. Not all proponents of a given system need to accept all discoveries of new things discovered anywhere either while grappling with the analytical enterprise or in cognitive action at any given time, to modify the concerned system. This is because interpretation is a handy tool to adjust the new one with the rest, rather than changing the whole system just because of the one. As such, normal tendency of any system-builder is to defend and interpret his position as far as possible against all odds.<sup>15</sup>
2. In some cases, overt affiliation to a school of thought may cease for historical reasons. Hence, although at present we have traditional Nyaya Philosophy, we do not have, as of today, Nyaya traditional philosophers, who could enlighten us upon their possible reaction to the developments or

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Joe Lau and Jonathan Chan: "Values- Intrinsic and Instrumental Values", Pages under Critical Thinking Web, (2006).

discoveries that have taken place within the tradition. It does not mean that there are no traditional Nyaya philosophers available today.

3. More importantly, if certain analytical systems have been built on rigid basics, without scope for incorporation of new discoveries, then it implies that they cannot be subsumed under a larger, more comprehensive system. This means that to that extent the system is closed for any external analytical modifications. In fact, no modification can be affected as such without violating its basics.

On the front of the Yogic activity, especially the cognitive one, modifications are affected in the ways of dealing with the object as per the need displayed by the object that is arrived at through philosophical analysis/analytical enterprise. The causality is required to link the means with its end, and at the same time the link itself has to ensure its disappearance once the end is realized, in the sense that the so-called cause or the means will have no locus to stand, once the special end, *moksha* is realized. *Moksha* is, after all, a no-man's land. In other words, Yoga-practice always and only has a pure instrumental value and *moksha*, by definition has pure intrinsic value, since it cannot be construed as means to promote any other ends. The M-E relation between them will always be of a "pure" sort. For this reason one will have to carefully examine the *moksha*-object derived in each school, and the suggested Yoga-practice in each case. Key to the whole matter seems to lay in understanding the essential Yogic concept(s) that may be running through all schools of Indian Philosophy.

Having looked into the general interface between Yoga-practice and philosophy, we move on to consider the essential limb(s) of Yoga that is perceived as the logical link between Yoga-practice and philosophization in the next section.

### **SYNTHESIS OF ACTION AND PHILOSOPHY: ESSENTIAL LIMB(S) OF YOGA**

Cognitive realization is a process that involves mind and action of the mind with an operative object. Therefore, it must have a valid object, the knowledge of which is derived through analytical construction. In this way, analytic construction takes precedence even over all the means of knowledge (*pramanas*). Obviously, all the objects presented by different *pramanas* themselves constitute some part of the total subject-matter dealt within the analytical enterprise. However, in this paper, we will not take up all objects of either a single system of philosophy or of all systems. Rather we will confine to the *moksha*-object as the same alone is connected to the content of *moksha* in a pure M-E Relation, where Yoga-practice is accepted as the means with pure instrumental value. In such an effort, we are not interested in the possibility of *moksha* as an unconnected happening, i.e., attaining *moksha* is unconnected to a systemic conception of *moksha*, as for

example, someone who has no philosophical knowledge regarding *moksha* attaining it. We are also not interested in considering the non-cognitive dimension, i.e., the external limbs of Yoga, such as *asana*. Rather our main effort is to explicate the contact point between cognitive enterprise of philosophization and the corresponding cognitive realization of the object of knowledge through cognitive-action of Yoga. This, if done, would establish the essential link to the limbs of Yoga, accepted by all schools of Indian Philosophy, as means to the end of *moksha* both overtly or covertly.<sup>16</sup>

In our endeavor to clarify the above topic we make extensive use of texts from Bhojavrtti. In Bhojavrtti, meditations are said to be possible both with and without an object. It should be at once noted that the object that Bhojavrtti speaks of and the object that we have spoken of earlier, which is a result of analytic construction are two different things, even though the former can in some sense be brought under the latter. In Bhojavrtti, the term “object” of meditation means an object that is distinctly recognized.<sup>17</sup> It is a meditation in which there is a distinct recognition (*samprajnata*) that is a kind of pondering (*bhavana*) whereby the nature of the object pondered is known thoroughly and without any doubt or error.<sup>18</sup> The term “pondering” means the taking into the mind again and again, to the exclusion of all other objects, that which is to be pondered. A suitable object is of two kinds: it can be either the Lord (*Isvara*) or one of the twenty-five principles. These twenty five principles also are of two kinds: senseless and not-senseless. Twenty four are senseless and that which is not-senseless is the soul.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly the meditation itself is called *samprajnata samadhi*, in which there is recognition (*prajna*) of the object involved. Thus, it is a concentration with distinct recognition of the object.

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<sup>16</sup> When a philosopher specifically makes a choice from among the given items and goes for an analytical system, for whatever reasons he deems fit, the end-product, that is his analytical system may or may not be fitted within a homogeneous and more comprehensive analytical system. If it can be fitted within the larger system then the one in question may be said to be good, as it permits a kind of subsuming under a broader and more comprehensive canvass. Such a system carries with it a greater explanatory power.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. “Bhojavrtti to Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra”, in *Yoga Sutra of Patanjali with Bhojavrtti called Rajamartanda*, trans. J. R. Ballantyne and Shastri Govinda Deva, no. I.17. Eric Loomis gives an excellent review of the Book *Classical Indian Metaphysics: Refutations of Realism and the Emergence of “New Logic”* by Philips Stephan. It sums up the arguments and counter-arguments between Sriharsa and Gamgesa on the topic “Distinctness”. The whole thing exhibits the dogged persistence with one’s own philosophical stand. Cf. Eric Loomis: “Book Review II”, in *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. XXVII No.3, (2000), pp. 355-363.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. “Bhojavrtti to Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra”, in *Yoga Sutra of Patanjali with Bhojavrtti called Rajamartanda*, trans. J. R. Ballantyne and Shastri Govinda Deva, no. I.17.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

The above-said “distinct recognition” has to be interpreted as knowledge, which one already possesses through analytic construction. If the cognitive action involved in *samprajnata samadhi* has to be predominantly a philosophical activity – rather than an action aimed at an experiential sort of understanding of an object that is already given – then there would have been no pre-knowledge of the object that is so emphatically said to be required for meditation. If this is so, one has to say that the philosophical introspection is still in progress, without arriving at an object as yet. Now, if an object is already derived in an analytical activity, and if the same is now looked into in *samprajnata samadhi*, then the difference between the “knowledge of the object” as derived in the analytical activity, and the “concentrated view of the same object in *samprajnata samadhi*”? The answer seems to lay in the need for total readjustment of our cognitive framework along with the change in relevant behavioral pattern consistent with the cognitive frame, which can perhaps be done only through cognitive realization of the object. However, one may further say that there is no need to do any such adjustment later to *moksha* since the pure intrinsic value has been attained already. To this it can be said that the readjustment itself constitutes *moksha*. Further, in claiming the requirement of pre-knowledge of the object for *samprajnata samadhi*, and not that *samprajnata Samadhi* itself invents a philosophical object, we can say as follows: even if in the process of meditation, as in *samprajnata Samadhi*, mind excludes modifications (*vrttis*) of all other things excepting that of the specific object of meditation, such meditation cannot include in it all types of objects that are derived in different analytic constructions. For example, the Advaita speaks of subject as the object of meditation. If this is the case, since such a subject cannot be distinctly recognized, unlike in the case of an ordinary object – recognition of which is a necessary precondition for the *samprajnata samadhi* to begin – *samprajnata samadhi* type of meditation cannot encompass within its fold such an object. After all, the *samprajnata samadhi* itself has to grow into the next stage of meditation, i.e., concentration without recognition of the object (*asamprajnata Samadhi*).

The *asamprajnata samadhi* is said to be a meditation without any object.<sup>20</sup> In *asamprajnata samadhi* not having an object does not really mean the negation of the philosophical object that is arrived at through analytic construction. Rather, here the specific meaning is the negation of all those objects that cause modifications (*vrttis*) of the mind. Due to the removal of all modification-causing *vrttis* in *asamprajnata samadhi* the subject who is meditating is totally at peace. This is because all objects that create *vrttis* have ceased. The subject is of course continuing to exist. Such a subject is said to be unmodifiable because it is without *vrttis*. In fact if, strictly speaking, meditation implies the “meditated upon” then the meditation itself in a way ceases because there is no object that is to be

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ibid.

meditated upon. It can even be said that the person has attained *moksha/kaivalya*.

The same thing follows when we take the ceasing of modification of the mind in a strict sense from the viewpoint of the object of analytic construction. The object is meditated upon irrespective of its object's cognitive (ontological) counterpart. In most cases of Indian Philosophy, particularly in Vedanta, the object does not access itself to a simple process of "removal of *vrttis* of the mind so that the object remains at the end". Yet it can be confidently asserted that some or the other *vrttis*, which are at present existing, either has to be modified or to be eliminated in entirety. This means that the *moksha*-object has to, of necessity, transform, as it were, itself into the finally experienced object. When this happens there would remain no awareness of distinctness of any object even if for argument's sake such difference still continues to exist. Such a view is held by the Dvaita School. In saying all these we are of course not making the distinction between permanent and impermanent states of *asamprajnata samadhi*.<sup>21</sup>

In *asamprajnata samadhi* the loss of distinct recognition simply means an object, as opposed to subject, is no more in the field of mental vision. As such, mind itself ceases in *asamprajnata samadhi*. The subject itself may be said to exist with or without apprehending itself. This state is characterized as meditation without object. However, the individual *purusa*, the subject, being a thing to be apprehended cannot be located outside the purview of meditation. Locating outside would necessarily imply an object. Furthermore, such a subject could very well be a suitable object as derived through the analytic construction, and which now calls for the cognitive realization. This means that the object becomes a cognitive object first through cognitive efforts of removing all that is inessential to retain only that is essential. After all what does not exist and given can never be apprehended. The *purusa*, therefore, must have to be in the domain of the given. In this process what remains as essential, which has been earlier an object and a cognitive object respectively, becomes entirely grasped as the subject at the end in specific context of Samkhya-Yoga systems. This would happen, as said already, only if the cognitive-subject is already in the field.<sup>22</sup>

The shedding of inessential and moving on to the essential can be called a "looping inward Yoga". Alternatively, a process that tries to comprehend the currently left out essentials can be called as a "looping outward Yoga". Finally, a "quantum leap" is the third type where, theoretically speaking, there would be no relation between the anterior and the posterior stage to the attainment of *moksha*. These are the three possible M-E Relations in our context. Having made these general comments, let us move on the consideration of the object of the analytic construction.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ibid., p.19.

*Object of Analytic Construction*

The analytic construction, which is basically philosophization, seeks to arrive at one or more objects as the fit things for cognitive realization leading to *moksha*. The analytic construction as a rule claims that valid objects, which are primarily presented through different *pramanas*, but which has to go through the analytic tests of the philosopher. He has the freedom to choose the *pramanas* he wants for the presentation of his world-view. He has to safeguard against misconceptions and error. The mind is central to the whole process because ultimately it is the mind that apprehends the *moksha*-object. A Yogically cognitive apprehension of the *moksha*-object is called “cognitive realization”. All recommended objects for meditation must be ontologically real, or else the alleged *moksha*-object would itself yield only an “illusory cognitive realization”. In fact, the ontological reality is important even for objects lesser than the *moksha*-objects, since they too have certain real ends in view.

The cognitive realization of the *moksha*-object begins by dealing with the mental fluctuations (*citta-vrttis*). This act of dealing with the *citta-vrttis* is the prerequisite for any meditation. This is what we usually call *samprajnata samadhi*. To say that *vrttis* of the mind are to be stopped is not to say that valid *vrttis* are not valid. It means rather that inessential mental *vrttis* are to be removed from the purview of the mind. Since valid mental *vrttis* alone can guide one to make further progress in cognitive realization, it is important to maintain and continue with the valid mental *vrttis*. In fact going along the teachings of Bhojavrtti, one notices that there is at least one essential mental *vrtti* at the end as may be found in *virama pratyaya* of *asamprajnata Samadhi*. This *vrtti* remains, but not as ordinary objectual *vrttis*, but as “in which recognition is lost.” Now that we discussed the object of the analytic construction, we must take up for our consideration the reality of error, which often occurs in such a cognitive endeavor.

*Error*

Almost all schools of Indian thought explain the error that takes place in our perception through what is generally known *khyativada*. Different schools of Indian philosophy propose different theories of error. To mention a few: Naiyayika system, particularly Kumarila proposes the *anyathakhyativada*; Samkhya system and Prabhakara put forward *akhyativada*; and Advaita system presents *anirvacaniyakhyativada*. Similarly theories of error are also presented by non-Vedic schools, such as Buddhism. Error occurs in the conceptual level, because ontologically speaking things are things and they remain what they are. It is the conceptual grasp of the ontological objects that matters. In grasping these objects one could commit mistakes. The question of how error takes place can be understood at two different levels. The first type of error takes place at the normal empirical level and we try to set right the wrong through

physical explanations. The second one, which is our concern here, is the error that occurs at the level of metaphysics. This kind of error occurs when some basic matter that we unquestioningly accept is challenged by the analytic construction. Thus, the error here consists in what is accepted to be true is shown as an error by the analytic construction. This type of error is made right by a subsequent explanation that is put forward about what the right thing is.

In fact, there is no easy method to decide about the correctness of different ontologies except through an analytical examination of the ontological view in question. What is important is that once a certain matter is held to be conceptually erroneous, it logically entails that cognitively some re-adjustment/relocating has to be effected in our cognitive framework. In this view, even the so-called purely conceptual category mistake, in order to be corrected, has to have a corresponding cognitive adjustment. Of course the analogy of “forest and trees” for category mistake may be too naïve a thing, to warrant meditation, for it is, even though cognitively significant, does not involve a radical revision of our understanding, either of the whole of *Weltanschauung* or some significant part of it thereof.

In concluding this point, we can say that error in its most generalized formulation is said to be “non-knowledge”. If something, i.e., a notion “X” constitutes knowledge, then not having the notion “X” is an error. This X may within it contain not only what is, but also what is not. We are of course using simplified version of field “X”, so that we can hasten to reach the meditation (*dhyana*) of Yoga-practice. In the attainment of cognitive realization in *dhyana* the object of *dhyana* plays a significant role. Hence, in the next section, we turn our attention to the role the object in the cognitive realization.

#### *Role of Object in Cognitive Realization*

The explication of the question of the possible types of objects involved in cognitive realization is very complex. In knowing a *moksha*-object “T”, someone knows “T+ nT”, where “nT” refers to something that is “not-T”, which has no real ontological location in the field “X”; or in knowing *mokshai-object* “T”, “T- t1”, where “t1” refers to an element of “X” having real ontological location in “X”, as a unitary whole (in both cases), then error is said to occur. The “unitary whole” simply means (T+ nT) or (T-t1) as the case may be, without differentiating between “T”, on the one hand and “nT” on the other; and not comprehending the totality of “T” by deducting “t1” in the second case. Obviously then, in the dissection/non-comprehension of totality of the unitary knowledge in case 1 and case 2 respectively “T” or “T-t1” will always be primary knowledge, which always represents the apprehended part of “T” (*dhyana*/meditation). Shankara calls *dhyana*, at some texts, as *nididhyasana* and considers it as



*upasana*.<sup>23</sup> Yet in *upasana* the object of meditation (*upasya*) has to be in consonance with the scriptures (*sastra*), and should be concentrated on it until it is obtained. According to Shankara “for *nididhyasana* the objective knowledge is the object, and the same has to be looked at in a concentrated manner... The non-self-thought should be left and mind should concentrate on Self. ... This *adhyatmayoga* [concentration on the Self] is not *cittavrttinirodha* [mere removal of mental fluctuations] but the *vaidikadhyana* [meditation on divine knowledge].”<sup>24</sup> It is clear from the above quotations that the most important difference between *dhyana* and *nididhyasana* seems to be one of *purusatantra* and *vastutantra* respectively.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we need to address the more important question: “how the mind, a lesser entity, can concentrate on the Self, a greater entity.” This is a real problem because being a lesser entity than the Self, mind cannot comprehend the Self. Therefore, Advaita seems to recommend a kind of “take off” from the *nididhyasana*. It is difficult to say whether the manifestation (*darsana*) of the Self (*moksha*) takes place on its own independent of *nididhyasana* or whether it is dependent on *nididhyasana* itself. Since there is no logically perceivable link between the two Advaitins consider the attainment of *moksha* as a “Quantum Leap M-E relation”, in which there would be no relation between the anterior and the posterior stage to the attainment of *moksha*. The means prepares the way for *moksha*; nevertheless, the end – *moksha* – is experienced independent of the means, as there is a “Quantum Leap” between the means and end.<sup>25</sup> However, Samkhya and Yoga systems would consider the attainment of *moksha* with the help of an “Inward Looping M-E Relation”. Isolation/alooofness of the *Purusha* (*kaivalya*) is the Samkhyan equivalent of *moksha*. *Purusa*, being a conscious principle – what I really am – has to attain isolation from nature (*prakrti*). Nature in this context primarily denotes the body. At the time of attainment of the *kaivalya*, the Yogi has fulfilled the four ends of life (*purusharthas*) and has transcended the *gunas* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Times and *gunas* return to their source, and Consciousness of the *purusha* (*citisakti*) is established in its own natural purity. In other words, all inessentials have been shed off permanently through an “Inward Looping M-E Relation”. The unity of the single reality, the *Purusha*, is attained.

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<sup>23</sup> The term “*uapasana*” in Sanskrit literally means “Sitting near” (*upa+asana*). *Upasana* is a systematic practice of a prescribed method of worship or practice of meditation upon some aspect of nature. Normally such prescription of meditation methods is taken from Hindu scriptures, Vedas or Puranas. Cf. Web Page, <http://www.answers.com/Upasana>.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Swami Saccidanendra Saraswati: *Brahma Sutra Bhasya of Samkara*, vol. II, pp. ix-x.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. xxiv-xxv.



## CHAPTER V

# SAIVA-SIDDHANTA PHILOSOPHY: SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

R. GOPALAKRISHNAN

### INTRODUCTION

The culture of a people gives expression to their conscious life in diverse dimensions, such as the realm of thought, aesthetics, morality and religion. Speaking on the sublime dimensions of a culture of a people Sri Aurobindo proclaims:

The culture of a people may be roughly described as the expression of a consciousness of life which formulates itself in three aspects: there is a side of thought, of ideal, of upward will and the soul's aspiration; there is a side of creative self-expression and appreciative aesthesis, intelligence and imagination; and there is a side of practical and outward formulation. A people's philosophy and higher thinking give us its mind's purest, largest and most general formulation of its consciousness of life and its dynamic view of existence. Its religion formulates the most intense form of its upward will and the soul's aspirations towards the fulfillment of its highest ideal and impulse. Its art, poetry, and literature provide for us the creative expression and impression of its intuition, imagination, vital turn and creative intelligence. Its society and politics provide in their forms an outward frame in which the more external life works out what it can of its inspiring ideal and of its special character and nature under the difficulties of the environment.<sup>1</sup>

Indian cultural heritage fits into the ideal of culture as proposed by Sri Aurobindo, because it is a synthetic conglomeration of philosophy, religion, spirituality and social values. The unique feature of Indian cultural tradition is that philosophy is not merely an intellectual exercise for the love of wisdom, but rather the pathway to perfection by way of self-illumination. As a vision of truth, philosophical exercise in India inculcates a distinctive way of looking at the world: it presents a worldview (*Weltanschauung*) with

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<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo: *Foundation of Indian Culture*, (Pondicherry: Aurobindo Ashram, 1953), p. 4.

its own ideas about the nature of Reality and the relationships that is obtained therein. Accordingly, the Indian worldview maintains that the cultural values of philosophy, religion, science, arts and other scriptures accrue only when they shape and enhance man's social establishment and cherish human values. Hence, in Indian cultural tradition, human life is to be elevated from the baser animal instinctive type of living towards the realization of the higher self through intuitive vision, which constitutes the cultural settings of mankind. Eulogizing the foundation and grandeur of Indian culture and civilization, Sri Aurobindo comments:

India's cultural conception is that of the Eternal, the spirit here encased in matter, involved and immanent in it and evolving on the material plane by rebirth of the individual of the scale of being till in mental man it enters the world of ideas and realm of conscious morality, *dharma*. This achievement, this victory over unconscious matter develops its lines, enlarges its scope, [and] elevates its levels until the increasing manifestation of the *sattvic* or spiritual portion of the vehicle of mind enables the individual mental being in man to identify himself with the pure spiritual consciousness beyond mind. India's social system is built upon this conception; her philosophy formulates it; her religion is an aspiration to the spiritual consciousness and its fruits; her art and literature have the same upward look; her whole *dharma* or law of being is bounded upon it.<sup>2</sup>

Having looked into cultural tradition of a people in general and Indian cultural tradition in particular, specifically as stated by Shri Aurobindo in the introduction, we move on to consider, in the next section, Saiva Siddhanta as a reflection Indian cultural tradition.

### **SAIVA SIDDHANTA: REFLECTION OF INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION**

If Indian philosophy as *Darsana* reflects the intellectual horizon of Indian cultural tradition, then Saiva Siddhanta – popularly known as the “choicest product of Dravidian intellect” – which is the southern School of Saivism, very well can be identified as a reflection of Indian culture. For, it contains the quintessence of the revelations of the renowned souls known as the “Nayanmars” who has gained the first-hand experience of the Divine which highlights the socio-religious as well as the cultural settings of the Tamil genius. Saiva Siddanta, as a school of philosophy takes shape in South India roughly in the period between 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It

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<sup>2</sup> Manickavacakar, *Tiruvacakam*, no. 31.5.

discards the acosmic monism of the later idealistic Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta. The Ultimate Spirit, Siva, is conceived as the Central Reality and a Personal Being in this system of philosophy. It is a well-knit philosophy and religion, wherein there is a balance of theory and practice, which avoids the two extremes of dry intellectualism or dogmatism and blind observances or superstitions. Since Siva is the Supreme Reality in this system of philosophy, the Ultimate God of worship is called as *Patti* and this system has the religious name Saivism. As an accomplished end – this system develops the doctrines based on the teachings of the “Agamas” especially the “Jnanapaada” and as the culmination of the *Siddha* one of the “Antahkaranas” – this system of thought is known as *Siddhanta*.

Having looked into Saiva Siddhanta as a reflection of Indian culture, we move on to consider Saiva perception of the individual self, in the next section.

### **SAIVA PERCEPTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL SELF**

Saiva siddhanta is a thorough-going realistic and pluralistic system encompassing all spheres of human existence. The souls (*pasus*) are tied up with a three stringed rope known as bonds (*paasa*), viz., *anava*, *karma* and *maya*. The benevolent Siva has created the body (*tanu*), the internal organs (*karana*), the world (*bhuvana*) and the objects of enjoyment (*bogha*) for the sake of the souls so that they may realize the truth that the engrossment in the phenomenal pleasures lead to perilous situations and, therefore, they must, in turn, prefer to enjoy the unalloyed bliss of Siva in this life on earth. Though happiness on this earth is followed by suffering, yet the divine joy is to be untainted by pain, which is the goal of life (*jivanmukti*) for a Saivite. The souls are sandwiched between the Divine Holiness and the fearful world. Though the world is real – as the products of *prakrti-maya* – it has the tendency to delude the souls. The natural disposition of the human mind is assertive in temperament and possessive in nature and, in turn, results in selfish actions.

Saiva Siddhanta, though a pure religious philosophy, is not without its social relevance. It has a serious concern for mankind as a whole. The saints – who have relinquished the onslaught of the impurities have realized the oneness of consciousness and established an intimate communion with the Divine Supreme – have made a clarion call that all people must join with them for enjoying the unalloyed bliss of Siva which results in final redemption. The saints are venerated on par with the Lord as the mobile shrines and the models for emulation. The Saiva Siddhantists do not experiment the existence of the Lord with logical argumentation, but experience Him as the divine effulgence incessantly in the depth of the soul every moment. Hence, their revelations are revered by the Saivites as the Statements of God Himself. They look at the people not on the basis of social strata, caste distinctions, and by the gender bias. According to them, every human being is potentially soaked with divinity, which is to be

manifested in due course so that each individual can be identified as a “person of Siva” than a person of himself.

As long as a person gives importance to himself based on affluence, opulence and such other extraneous criteria, these culminate in the discrimination of mankind and thereby causing division in existence resulting in cultural chaos. To avoid such unstable situations and social conflicts, Saivism insists that one should look at everything through Siva’s grace rather than on one’s personal dispositions. Since Saiva Siddhanta as a philosophical system and theory underlines cognition, conation and affection as God-centered in nature, this philosophy has not intended to promote self-centered thoughts, words and deeds. Accordingly, a true Saiva follower has to serve the fellowmen since service to mankind is service to God in this philosophy. Man gets his social recognition not only through the genuine service to God, but also through the service of his fellowmen. Casteism, a social menace in the cultural history of India, seldom can play a role in the life of a true devotee of Siva. In fact, the saints condemn the hierarchical stratification of the society on the basis of caste, class and race. The saints have been aware of the fact that castes have fostered a spirit of exclusiveness and a class pride in the society. They have narrowed the outlook and created wide gulfs between the various sections of the community. St. Appar, for instance, comes upon heavily on the people who patronize always the quotations that promote caste system as the vile people. He asks such people about the benefit obtained by them through their family and lineage. He requests them to bow to Siva as the one Supreme who is to be worshipped. In a trice the Lord dwelling at a temple Malperu will bestow His grace. St. Manickavacakar also is of the same opinion, but addresses message to his own self and intends that the same be the case with every devotee. He says: “I have been soaring and perplexed in the whirl of caste, clan and birth and have become like a vile helpless dog. Even to such a person, our benevolent Lord rooting out all the grief and made me His own. In this process He annihilated all my feelings such as alien forms, all thoughts of ‘I’ and ‘mine’. The Lord, the pure ambrosia dwells at Thillai and I have ‘beheld’ Him where the saints consort.”<sup>3</sup> When a child is born, it does not know its caste; when a person is carried by others as corpse, it does not know its caste, but in between – caste – the destabilizing factor has peeped in. It cannot be eliminated by debates, discussions, preaching, recommendations and legal measures. It can only be uprooted by one’s personal devotion to the Lord Siva. Unless a person enters into deep contemplation of the Supreme Lord Siva, he will not realize the fundamental truth that the Lord who lives in himself in the form of effulgence is also present in everybody’s soul. In him God’s manifestation has taken place due to divine propensities and his own personal efforts such

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<sup>3</sup> Conventionally the term “*andhanar*” is referred to the virtuous people. Since the priests or the *sivacharyas* are performing the routine rituals in the Siva temples, they are automatically regarded as virtuous persons.

as deep-rooted devotion, Yogic-practices and mystical intuition. Such a person stands as a model of emulation. The others, in whom divine manifestation has not taken place, must strive hard to gain the similar experience. Now, we take up for discussion the pathways through which a Saiva devotee attains his salvation.

### **SAIVA PATHWAYS TO SALVATION**

It is love that unites human beings and shows their identity. However, this diversified love, such as parental love, brotherly love, conjugal love and fraternal love are changeable and transient. For, the loves of these types have a material tinge, their durability will depend on the availability of matter and they change as situations change. The divine love, which is devotion to the Lord Siva, is intense, egoless and spirit-oriented. Hence, it is sustaining and everlasting. It is wisdom (*jnana*) that is essentially required to love the Lord for his own sake. In the absence of wisdom, even devotion becomes personalistic in character and desires are meant to satisfying the objects of desire than the soul's contentment. Therefore, Saiva Siddhanta treats divine wisdom, devotion and divine grace on an equal footing. By invoking the grace of Lord, the Saivite has to obtain wisdom and then love the Lord and adore Him through devotion. According to Saiva way of life, this is the true love because it is pure and does not expect anything in return. This love of God is gradually extended towards His creation as well. In the words of Tirumular, both Love and Siva are treated as two separate things by the illiterate people. It is difficult to comprehend that both love and Lord Siva are one and the same. The moment the Saiva aspirant realizes that divine love is centering on Siva only, he will become the very embodiment of love. Here mutual love prevails between Lord Siva and the devotee. The former loves the devotion of the latter. The devotee loves the Lord for the sake of love and nothing else. Hence the connotation of universal brotherhood is well ordained in Saiva philosophy since man's identity in society is viewed on the application of divine love than on other peripheral realities, such as caste, color, race, gender, nationality and language.

In Saiva philosophy, the devotional as well as philosophical literature is in chaste and cherished Tamil, which has a hoary tradition. The Saivites strongly believe that Tamil as a language is not a human invention, but has a divine origin. When the saint of the highest order enters into a mystic trance he feels a reverberation in himself and enjoys the elegant presence of God in the form of effulgence. When he intends to communicate his experience for the benefit of mankind, there is a natural flow of words through his mother tongue. At that stage, the linguistic expression transcends all semantic, syntactic, pragmatic and grammatical barriers. Hence, the spontaneous outpourings of the saints are rich with the revelations of their intimate rapport with God and with their inner transformations devoid of the pernicious nature of the worldly entanglements. Since these fall under the

legitimate province of the philosophers, they naturally endeavor to testify the revelations through reason and clarify the subtle nuances so that any inspired aspirant can enter into such similar experiences. While the languages of the world have grammar to letters and words only, but Tamil language has the grammar to life itself. Correspondingly, the saints have divided the landscape of the world into five regions: the hilly region (*kurinji*), the region of fertile land (*marutham*), the oceanic region (*neithal*), the forest region (*mullai*) and the desert region (*paalai*). These regions have their own respective deities of worship and hence the language and devotion have been synchronized in the Tamil tradition.

St. Tirujnanasambandar, an infant saint, expresses his social concern thus: let the virtuous people (*andhanar*) live for a long time; let the celestials and the class of cow live for a long time; let there be the downfall of copious rain; let the king flourish; let all the evils perish; let the name of Hara (Siva) flourish everywhere; let the whole world be free from disaster. The *andhanars* are the people belonging to the priestly class.<sup>4</sup> They are praised at first because it is they who unceasingly develop the rapport with Siva through their regular and routine performance of rituals. The celestials are praised for their good-will in extending all support to the devotees in particular and to the people in general. They are propitiated by the scripturally followed rituals and, in turn, they do not harm the people. The saint also praises the glory of the cows as they supply five products for Siva worship (*panca kavya*). Besides, the bull on which Lord Siva rides belongs to the clan of the cows. Rain is praised because in the absence of rain not even a grass will grow. As the devotees have to take bath before worship and as water is an essential commodity for the holy bathing (*abhisheka*) of the idols of Lord Siva, rain has been hailed. The king is the person venerated next to God. He rules his domain for the promotion of prosperity and for the elimination of adversity. The ruler has to protect his territory from external dangers and internal threats. Besides, the ruler has to safeguard the interest of the devotees. The ruler has to select the proper religion so that people will follow his path and ultimately the entire country will prosper. For the above reasons the king is praised. The saint condemns the evils to be perished. As long as evil persists, none will be happy. In Saiva philosophy, *anava*, *karma* and *maya* are the three recognized evils, which are to be annihilated by the grace of the Lord Siva. By invoking the bliss of Lord Siva through service, devotion, Yoga and wisdom, the egoism of the devotee is transformed into God-centered thinking, feeling and willing. When this happens *karma* is considered as the actions done in favor of God and His devotees than personalistic deed. *Maya* – the matter of the phenomenal world – will no longer be a bond since the devout souls look at it without attachment. i.e., the eyes are opened, while they would be blind to the objects. Once these three impurities are curtailed, then the souls with genuine wisdom and freedom enjoy the onset of Siva's grace. Hence, St.

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<sup>4</sup> Sivajnana Siddhiyar, no.12. 2.



Sambandhar praises the holy name of the Lord as Hara, Siva, and Namasivaya. The devotee has to see the flora and fauna of the earth as the manifestation of Siva. Eventually, the centrifugal point is Siva, and His names are not forgotten even during the twinkling of the eyes of the devotee. The moment the Lord becomes the center of activities – physical, mental and spiritual – the whole universe is freed from sorrows. This single verse of a staunch devotee of Lord Siva reveals the socio-cultural impact of Saiva religion and Philosophy.

In Saiva Siddhanta Lord Siva is worshipped as the static shrine while the saint is venerated as the mobile shrine. A saint is adored as the moving spirit and guiding star. His dynamism is beneficial to the fellow devotees. Only the magnitude of devotion is measured while the man-made peripheral factors like birth, color, race, strata and caste are ignored among the fellow devotees. The fellow devotee's requirements are fulfilled. Food, clothing, materials for worship and other necessities of life are to be given to them at any cost. Even if the concerned devotee goes penury, he seldom ceases himself from the divine oriented service and sacrifice. Similarly, even if physical and mental atrocities are inflicted upon a devotee, the fellow devotees take adequate measures to punish such evil-mongers and alleviate the grievance of the fellow devotee. From prince to peasant, from hunter to the ruler are equally treated in Saivism as the messengers of God to spread the message of universal love towards mankind as a whole.

Neither age nor gender comes to hamper the devotion to Siva as well as reverence to fellow devotees. St. Appar (St. Tirunavukkarasar), an elderly devotee has been carrying the palanquin of St. Sambandhar, an infant saint, since the latter gained divine grace easily and quicker than the former. The queen of Madurai St. Mangaiyarkkarasi treated St. Sambandhar as her child and expressed her love towards him in inviting to her palace to drive away the influence of the atheistic followers from her territory and to make the King switch over from atheistic temperaments and embrace Saivism. A devotee attempted to kill his spouse since she expressed disdain over divine service. As narrated in the Periyapuranam, Appudhi Adikal, a *brahmin* saint established several social service missions in the name of St. Appar, a non-*brahmin* saint. He named his sons after Tirunavukkarasu. Without revealing his identity St. Appar asked Appudhi Adikal as to why he has used the name of Tirunavukkarasu instead of using his own name. The latter is infuriated at once and when he comes to know the identity of the saint, he shows his reverence. This event reveals the surpassing love that existed between the saints of Saivism among themselves. Again St. Appar, by invoking the grace of Lord Siva, raised the eldest son of Appudhi Adikal who has died due to a snake-bite.

The devotion to Lord Siva went to the extent of not only to fellow devotees, but also to animals. The Saiva devotees revered the cow for more than one reason: firstly, Lord Siva is fond of enjoying the five products of the cow (*panca kavya*); and secondly cow belongs to the family of bull which is the vehicle of Lord Siva. A *brahmin* boy, who finds it difficult to

bear the torture inflicted upon the cows and he himself comes forward to breed them much against his family tradition, profession and culture, who later has been included as one of the sixty three saints known as Chandeswara Nayanar. He went to the extent of killing his father who disturbed his worship of Siva on sand and pouring out the excess milk given by the cows. The ecstatic state of the cowherd finds it hard to bear the disturbance to Siva worship. In another case, a sage who moves in the sky-path sees the cows shedding tears due to the death of the cow herd. He intends instantly to wipe out the woes of the cows. He transmigrates into the body of Mulan, the cowherd. The cows rejoiced at the re-appearance of their master. The body of the sage disappears due to Siva's will. The sage in Mulan's body lives for a long time and later he is recognized and revered as Tirumular and his renowned work is known as Tirumandiram. In this context it would be appropriate to quote a verse from the Sivajnana Siddhiyar:

Those who do not develop love towards Siva do not develop love towards fellow devotees. They do not love any living creature; rather they do not even love themselves. Since they, like the illiterate persons do not redeem themselves, there is no meaning in talking about them. If anyone has liking for them, such a person will be subjected to births and deaths and hence a true aspirant of Siva's grace must renounce the company of such human beings in bone and flesh. With increasing love, the devotee has to keep the company of genuine Siva devotees, perform their *karma* as his own *karma*; praise them highly and lowering himself in his utterance; he must be steadfast in the path of gracious wisdom and move with excessive joy by adoring, dancing and clapping the hands.<sup>5</sup>

Saiva Siddhanta categorically asserts that the enlightened sages have to consider the temple of Siva as well as the saints with Saiva emblems as Siva Himself. The *jivanmuktas* are expected to worship the Lord in the temples periodically and bow before the holy band of devotees with a view to curtailing the reinforcement of the impurities. This attitude enables the saints to promote the fellowship of devotion since they are recognized as the true messengers of Siva. If any harm is inflicted upon the Saiva devotees, the evildoers will not be spared for the simple reason that the devotees have been treated on par with Siva. In the words of Tirumular: "If the devotees of Siva are made to suffer, decay will be imminent to the glory of the state; the position of the celestial deity, viz., Indra will be tilted and the ruler on earth will be toppled. This is the decree of Nandi (Siva)."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Tirumular: *Tirumandiram*, trans. B. Natarajan, no. 517.

<sup>6</sup> Sri Ramalinga Swamikal: *Tiru Arutpa*, 6<sup>th</sup> Tirumurai, no.121.2.

While revering and adoring the fellow devotees, a Saiva devotee would consider the grandeur of devotion as the predominant as well as determinant factor than anything else. At a period when the society is subjected to diversification on the basis of clan, class and caste, the saints endeavor to establish a social order based on equality through their unflinching devotion, dedicated service and mystical experience. The statement of Tiruvalluvar that birth is equal to all living species is proved by these saints; if difference is found on the basis of profession, it may not be a grand thing. Sri Ramalinga Swamikal, a saint of the recent past puts the matter in the following way: “Without any discrimination whatsoever, few saints treat all other lives as their own and develop equanimity with rights and rejoice at their attitude. I realize that the heart of such noble souls is the place where Lord Siva willingly dances as *suddha cit* form. My intelligence prefers to serve such enlightened souls incessantly.”<sup>7</sup> The grammar of saintliness as envisaged by Sekkilar reveals the saints’ attitude towards Siva, about their own spiritual enhancement and about the world. The saints engage in their routine traditional or hereditary profession such as weaving, pottery, washing the clothes and hunting, but they contemplate sincerely and seriously on the lotus feet of Lord Siva.

The hearts of Saiva devotees with glowing affection are pure like the holy ashes that they smear all over the body. They make all quarters illuminative owing to the luster of their radiation. A true Saiva devotee has to develop abundant quantities of limitless consciousness, which enables him never to forget the dancing feet of Siva even if he stands, sits, lies down, walks, eats, sleeps, awakes and twinkles the eyelids. They become elated with joy due to the single-minded devotion to Lord Siva. As all the sense organs are channelized towards Siva worship, egoism is minimized; *karmas* are not accumulated and *maya* is annihilated. They, thus, triumph over the world due to their attainment of the oneness of consciousness; defects and deficiencies they have none; they stand firm in their exalted state; through their generic nature and divine service they shall cross the duality of consciousness. Even if every event of the cosmos goes against its stipulated course, they will never withdraw their unswerving devotion to the Lord and service of humanity. Their persistent path of steadfast devotion engenders in them virtues, noble traits, highest human values and not their opposite qualities.

As the Saiva devotees are expected to transcend the thoughts of wealth, affluence and luxuries, they are able to maintain a sense of balance and therefore, they never suffer from the calculations of loss or gain. As a result of this unequivocal determination, they treat both gold and pot shed as trifles. Their heroic mold is honored for their non-preference of liberation if they are destined to devote themselves for the cause of Siva and His devotees. As a result of this gesture, they prefer simplicity in their life-style and character, and seldom do they prefer pomposity. The main objective in

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<sup>7</sup> Sivajnana Siddhiyar, no. 113.

life, according to this philosophy and worldview, is to serve not only the cause of Siva, but His devotees as well. Their love towards the Lord and fellowmen are unfathomable. The grandeur of their spiritual valor and divine fervor cannot be adequately explained. Their reputation surpasses any boundary; we have to be content with praising their rapturous states, ecstatic experiences and mystic intuitions, which all ultimately culminate in social service and communal solidarity.

A staunch devotee of Saivism never aspires for mundane enjoyments or epicurean pleasures as he realizes that such enjoyments are ephemeral in nature. Hence, he longs for the abiding and everlasting bliss, which is obtained through his virtuous living and incessant devotion. Such a kind of joy finds no measure and is enduring. This attitude brings forth tremendous effect on him, such that he does not attach values to the earthly substances. Among the four major values of life – righteousness (*dharma*), wealth (*artha*), sensuous pleasure (*kama*) and attaining the lotus feet of Lord Siva (*moksha*) – wealth and sensuous pleasure are sublimated and treated as having lower values; righteousness is regarded as the higher value; and the attainment of the lotus feet of Lord Siva is the highest value. To achieve this ultimate goal of life a genuine Saivite has to be basically moral and virtuous. According to Saiva Siddhanta, morality does not exist independently of spirituality because moral principles are the commandments of Siva and, therefore, morality must be practiced in tune with spirituality. “Discipline, love, mercy, cleanliness, reverence, obedience, truthfulness, unblemished renunciation, subordination, adoration with adequate knowledge ... should be flawless moral values. Then naturally Lord Siva will descent for the well-being of the devotee.”<sup>8</sup>

In Saiva Siddhanta righteousness is regarded as the part (*anga*) and worship as the whole (*angi*). It also accepts the transcendental ethics. According to it, even the vices or evils become virtuous when the actions are performed with total love and dedication to Lord Siva. Virtues performed without love towards Siva become evils. The ritual (*yajna*) of Daksa is quoted as the suitable illustration. Daksa, as per the legendary narration, performs a huge *yajna* without inviting Lord Siva and provides a share in the oblation to Him. The whole *yajna* is destroyed and the invitees are put to several hardships. Though *yajna* is an auspicious act, yet the improper way of its conducting especially without love for the Lord Supreme will result in difficulties. Contrary to this event another incident is narrated in the Periyapuram. Chandesvara attempted to cut off his father’s leg since he tried to disturb his Siva Worship on sand, which is not regarded as evil but virtuous. Out of love Lord Siva accepts all the suitable and non-suitable deeds of his devotees and grants His grace to them. Just as the mother consumes medicine for the ailments of the baby, Lord Siva, in order to save the souls from peril suffers Himself by consuming poison and smearing holy ashes reveal His affection towards the souls. Thus, Saiva

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<sup>8</sup> Tirumular: *Tirumandiram*, trans. B. Natarajan, no. 2103.

Siddhanta emphasizes that all devotees of Siva without any exception should follow the righteous path. Tirumular has expressed this theme in the following way:

Think of Him as far as your thoughts go;  
Speak His truth as far as you can;  
'Lord', they may say, 'He is not', very much He is everywhere  
Seek the Holy Path of Hara that is ever good.<sup>9</sup>

As the highest in grandeur of thought as extra-ordinary modern in tone, Tirumular makes a universal appeal thus:

One the family, one the God,  
Thus intense hold, no more will death be,  
None other is refuge, with confidence you can seek,  
Think of Him and redeemed in your thoughts, holding Him  
steadfast."<sup>10</sup>

In the first "Tantra" of the Tirumandiram, Tirumular concentrates on the worldly perfection as a prelude to spiritual perfection and religious redemption: transitoriness of human body, wealth and youthfulness; disintegration of body and soul; non-violence; forbidden of meat; non-committing adultery, evil women is ignominy; in vain pursuit of accumulation; significance of sacrificial fire; *dharma* of *brahmins*; the path of the rulers; the glory of rains; the glory of giving; in praise of the charitable; way of the uncharitable; to be love-possessed; importance of education; listening and realization; non-learning; the middle path and abstaining from alcohol are the subtitles of this section which extensively delineate the significant features of empirical living. These sub-titles make one remember the sub-headings of the section on virtues "Arathuppal" of Thiruvalluvar who, without any leniency for spiritual or religious moorings, elucidates the primary concern for these basic human values at the worldly level. For Thiruvalluvar, it is quite natural to emphasize on empirical values to be adhered to sincerely and seriously because during his time, one section of the society has been over-emphasizing on rituals and another section is giving undue importance to renunciation and the life of recluse. Hence, Thiruvalluvar has been predominantly concerned with ordinary human beings and strives hard for elevating them to the dizzy-heights of perfection. For Tirumular, on the contrary, a Saivite in practice and a Siddhantin in thought, it is quite obvious to combine empirical morality with spiritual perfection and religious realization. The following verses express this point:

They who adore the Feet of the Lord realize the self;

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., no. 2103.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., no.2104.

They who give freely in charity realize the self;  
 They who cognize the Tativas realize the self;  
 The Lord is kin to those who realize the self.<sup>11</sup>

Earthly desires to worldly objects attached  
 No end know; but in charity's noble way,  
 Even the little things you give, sure props provide;  
 All the rest meekly take as the Lord's gift for the day.<sup>12</sup>

Charity denying they know not the Lord's Feet to praise,  
 Nor enter they the precincts of the city of Siva's Grace;  
 Their ears inclined to those who falsehoods preach,  
 They stand to sin enslaved, condemned to hell's hot embrace.<sup>13</sup>

There are two kinds of adoration in Saiva Philosophy. The first one is prior to enlightenment and the second may be named as post-enlightened worship. If selfishness and worldly attachment prevail in the former, pure devotion is the landmark and criterion for the latter. At the initial stage devotees praise the Lord for domestic prosperity and for saving them from perils. The moment wisdom emerges due to divine grace, the devotee worships through wisdom. This type of worship expects nothing in return. It is worship for the sake of worship. The saints of Saivism whose life-sketch has been portrayed in the Periyapuram have undertaken both kinds of worship. In the pre-enlightenment adoration, in order to test the perseverance as well as the steadfastness of devotion, the devotees have to undergo several trials and tribulations that have been launched by Siva Himself. The forbearance of the devotees is well ordained because of their unstinted love towards Siva and the efficacy of His grace. In the post-enlightenment state the saints have twofold functions: the first is the constant and consistent contemplation over the lotus Feet of Siva; and the second is though severing the connections of the luring worldly phenomena, the saints spent their time and spiritual training in serving the people in general and the fellow devotees in particular.

In the second stage the saints visualize the holy and vibrant presence of the Lord Supreme in every atom of the universe. Hence, there is no wonder in their endeavor to divinize humanity. The love towards the Lord will be gradually and virtually transmitted towards His creation. Hence, whenever and wherever people suffer due to natural calamities and turmoil as well as man-made causalities, the saints extend a helping-hand and alleviate their afflictions. For instance, when a particular place has been affected by acute famine St. Sambandhar and St. Appar have prayed to Lord Siva, collected gold coins and appeased their appetite. In another place

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., no. 251.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., no. 259.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., no. 262.

when the people suffered due to severe cold and fever, the saints with the grace of Lord Siva have alleviated their suffering.

## **CONCLUSION**

Saivism as a religion and Saiva Siddhanta as philosophy are meant for elevating the people to the level of spiritual perfection and religious redemption. The ultimate reality, Siva, conceived as the central reality is looked upon as personal and as a being rather than as the impersonal principle. Communion, adoration and surrender come to be adapted as the right approach to this supreme reality. He is not merely an object for contemplation but a living presence to be invoked in worship, a presence as infinite in love as in existence. In this process a Saivite is not at all selfish and cannot be so as this philosophy argues for the annihilation of egoism, which is said to be the pathway for the attainment of this objective. Hence it is natural for the Saiva Siddhantist to accommodate his fellow devotees and other people to accomplish the mission on earth. In this venture the peripheral man-made factors like caste, clan and class do not peep in. They are either ignored or not taken cognizance of. In other words, one of the singular effects of Saiva Siddhanta is the systematic belittling of caste distinctions in the realm of devotion. Based on pure love bestowed by divine wisdom and caused by divine grace the devotee enjoys the unalloyed bliss of Siva and invites his Saiva brethren to have such similar experience as well as enjoyment. It is remarkable that the concept of divine grace receives utmost valuation in Saiva Siddhanta and therefore this philosophy admitted the divine grace as the principal means of salvation. In this process of divine communion, personal aspirations and selfish motivations are switched over to divine-oriented actions and the phenomenal world will no longer be lucrative to them. As a totally purified person the devotee proclaims himself to be a "person of Siva" than a person of himself; he develops self-illumination with divine effulgence; and he undergoes rapturous experiences leading to the consummation of the soul with God, which takes place in total communion. In this stage of total communion, the Saiva devotee contemplates only on everybody's welfare and happiness. The last word in this journey to God is "compassion and grace" which is beautifully expressed in the Tamil term "*arul*". St. Thayumanavar, a saint of the recent past envisages this formula in the following way: "Other than the thought of everybody's happiness, I do not know anything. Oh! *Paraparam!*"





**CHAPTER VI**

**THE ONTO-GENESIS OF  
INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION**

*SEBASTIAN VELASSERY*

**INTRODUCTION**

This paper is attempted to examine the foundations of the cultural heritage of India as rooted in a tradition, which may be called the *guru*-tradition. It is our endeavor to rethink and reaffirm that this tradition has drawn upon its resources from the past, which has made its people to shape a consciousness that formed the foundations of a qualitative life. The goal is to understand the problems with which Indian consciousness is grappling. The task and promise of such an approach answers the question of human experience and culture, which are guided and anchored by a heritage that allows room for personal creativity. An understanding of Indian cultural tradition as *guru*-tradition means: firstly that the deepest identity of a person as *guru* is found precisely in transcending oneself and reaching out to others; and secondly that *gurus* are situated in communities and cultures that are the grounds upon which Indians have developed their identities as a people. Therefore, the foundations of the meaning and quality of life of the Indian people have centred on *gurus*, who are considered as the embodiment of the Absolute and Transcendent Reality.

The Sanskrit term “*guru*” is used to describe the most elevated spiritual teacher. It means heavy, weighty or with spiritual authority.<sup>1</sup> Its esoteric definition is derived from the Sanskrit roots “*gu*”, which means “darkness”, and “*ru*” which means “one who dispels”.<sup>2</sup> *Guru*, therefore, means the one who dispels the darkness and brings forth the light: he is the one who, by the weight of his own enlightenment, enlightens. The word “darkness” specifically refers to the ignorance regarding the true nature of the Self, *Brahman*, the Ultimate Reality, or the One Source and Essence of all existence. Under the influence of the ignorance of the Self, a person mistakes the body and mind to be his true reality. *Guru* is the one who assists in removing the ignorance regarding the Self, by introducing the aspirant to the Self-knowledge, or the knowledge that one is the indivisible whole.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. David Miller: “The Guru as the Centre of Sacredness”, *Studies in Religion* (1977), pp. 517-523.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sir Monier-Williams: *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), p. 359.

The *guru*-tradition in India is based on a sound heritage, stemming from its ancient civilization. It is the ancient and unbroken teaching system by which Self-knowledge is transmitted from the enlightened one to the one aspiring for it. Before we proceed further, we need to raise some fundamental questions regarding the *guru*-tradition: what does the Indian psyche<sup>3</sup> innately know about *gurus* and the *guru*-tradition?; what information has it inherited throughout generations of spiritual transmission about how the *guru* has been the vital force of the Indian Philosophical and cultural traditions?; how does he ensure a fresh and ongoing contribution to it?; how does he disseminates its ideas?; and how does he himself becomes the living embodiment of the philosophical ideas he teaches? This paper addresses these and other similar questions by documenting and analyzing the *guru* and the *guru*-tradition as it is reflected in the Upanishads and other scriptures. We shall focus particularly on three crucial questions on *guru* as the subject of a moral consciousness and, thus, of a cultural tradition:

1. Is the *guru* only a set of roles constituted entirely in function of a structure or system in which one plays a particular part? Or is the *guru* a subject in his or her own right, with one's proper dignity, heritage, goals and standards?
2. Is the *guru* merely a stream of consciousness, which achieves a certain level of self-transcendence? Or is the *guru* an essentially free and responsible psychophysical subject?
3. Is the *guru* a free subject and a creative centre, whose basic dynamism consists in realizing the unique inner harmony within him and providing the way for a harmonious life to the outer community?

We take up the task of discussing the major points that have been raised by the above three questions in the next three sections: in the first section we deal with the reality of the *guru*-tradition by exploring it in its historical beginnings and development. The second section deals with *guru*-tradition as the state of *Guru-Consciousness*, exploring its nature and attainment. In the third section we take up for our discussion the reality of *guru*-tradition as realized in the person of the *guru* in his vision of oneness.

### **GURU-TRADITION: ITS HISTORICAL BEGINNINGS AND DEVELOPMENT**

Ancient India presents an interesting series of parallels and differences with other southeastern societies. While ancient China has benefited by a cultural continuity between the ancient civic society and its

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<sup>3</sup> The word "psyche" is used in this paper as the word which in English comes closest to capturing the meaning of the Sanskrit word "*antah-karana*", which means "the mental mechanism comprising the ego, intellect, mind and emotions."

feudal period, India's cultural history is marked by major mutations. Historians suggest that there are no continuities between the early city literary groups and Vedic priests. The high development of writing testifies to the conclusion that there has been a schooled class of priest-scribes in India. The lack of logical evidence of royal or princely treasures does not suggest any differentiation in the Indus valley civilization between a secular and a priestly class. The point is that the Vedic priests are very different from literarily trained priest-scribes who are *gurus* in the vicinity they lived, particularly for the common man. In the following sections, let us unfold the development of *guru*-tradition and its consequences on Indian culture.

*Guru: The Vedic Priest*

According to the historians and scholars, a hereditary priesthood has not existed in the Vedic period.<sup>4</sup> There are apparent conflict of opinions among historians regarding the question whether the Vedic prototype of the later *brahmins* is priests or magicians, and whether their office is hereditary in nature. However, it may be noted here that the religion of the Indo-Europeans in the Vedic period is a matter of household observance.<sup>5</sup> Deshmukh writes on this point as follows:

The word "*brahmin*" which is considered by Schrader to have originally meant a magician in the Rig Veda, denotes at first a "poet", "sage", and then "officiating priest" or still later "a special class of priests" and this is not questioned by Sanskrit scholars. The authors of the Vedic Index think that the word does not mean merely "poet" or "sage" but can in the Rig Veda almost always be translated by the word "priest", 'since the priest was of course the singer'; but they do not say that the original meaning was a priest, and that it came to mean a "poet" or "sage" later on. Thus the meaning of the word undoubtedly shows that the *brahmin* was originally a singer of the hymns and probably also a composer, who was revered for these admirable virtues of his... Very soon after the community of these singers came to have a sort of vested interest in maintaining the hold of sacrifice on the popular mind, and also they believed in the

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. N. S. Subramanian, trans.: *Encyclopedia of the Upanishad* (Delhi: Sterling Publications, 1985), p. 385.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Max Weber: *The Religion of India*, trans. Hans Gerth and Don Martindale, (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1958), p. 58.

increased efficacy of the rites when performed by them.<sup>6</sup>

In the estimation of the composers of the Vedic hymns, the position of domestic priest (*purohita*) is the height of ambition. As Keith indicates, the Vedic *purohita* is the forerunner of the *brahmin* statesman.<sup>7</sup> He accompanies the king in battles, for his prayers and spells are thought to be essential for victory. In reward for his services, he receives generous gifts, at times a portion of the king's revenues. The sacrificial fee (*dakshina*) is originally a cow placed at the right hand of a singer.<sup>8</sup> In Vedic times, education tends to glide into the hands of *brahmins*. The student (*brahmacharin*) undergoes a three-day initiation ceremony during which he worships the fire and wears a *munja* girdle as a sign that he is twice-born boy. The initiation ceremony incorporates him into a teacher's family, the *guru* who stands in *loco parentis*. There are a number of types of teachers: the *achara* and *kulaguru* are in-charge of a number of pupils; *strotriyas* are teachers in whom the basic passions had been subdued by Vedic study; *tapsas* practice austerity; and *vatarasanas* are ascetics. A pupil is required to serve the *guru*: to do tasks that are menial and otherwise, such as begging for alms, tending the teacher's household chores and affairs. Studentship lasts from twelve to thirty-two years: *brahmins* begin their studies between eight and sixteen; *kshatriyas* eleven to twenty-two; and *vaishyas* twelve to twenty-four.<sup>9</sup> When the studentship is over, a ceremonial bath is taken, the vows taken as *brahmacharin* are terminated, and the teacher is given a substantial present. At the birth of his grandson, the *brahmin* is expected to retire from the household and become a forest dweller.

#### *Guru: The Priest-Intellectual*

The role of the priest-intellectuals has changed with the transformation of northern India from a land of semi-feudal manorial communities to one of patrimonial kingdoms. The conflict between semi-feudal nobles and their priests on the one hand and the kings and their priests on the other is a major factor in the crystallization into endogamous groups by the *kshatriyas* and *brahmins*. However, the rise of the kingdoms had far more extensive bearing on the role of the intellectuals than forcing of traditional-priest intellectuals toward endogamous closure. Among the classes of teachers are the spiritual teachers of the highest grade who accepted no fees (*arharya*); those who also taught *gratis*, particularly in

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<sup>6</sup> P.S. Deshmukh: *Religion in the Vedic Literature*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p.156.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. A.B. Keith: *The Age of the Rig Veda*, in *Oxford History of India*, vol.1, p. 95.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Cf. S. V. Venkateshwara: *Indian Culture through the Ages*, vol. I, (London: Longmans Green, 1928), p. 81.

moral matters (*guru*); those who demanded pay and gave instruction in some particular subject (*upadhya*); those who gave instruction in arts, such as dancing (*sikshaka*); and the teachers who has given up the world, such as the Buddhist Bhikkus, the Jain Nirgranthas and the Ajivikas.<sup>10</sup> The school is usually in teacher's home. According to great Indian grammarian, Panini, the various classes of subject-matter included are in the curriculum are the Vedic texts, works of original thinkers and system-makers, ancient tales, and works of fiction dealing with mythological subjects.

During the patrimonial and civic period, many forces have been at work in the field of education, which have led to the separation of education from the household of the *guru*, which, in turn, has brought about the formation of specialized schools. Accordingly, the Indian social system gets transformed from once the semi-feudal manorial communities to the loosely-knit kingdoms comprising a series of forms varying from peasant villages to thriving cities. Historians testify that at this period of time the *brahmins* get a strategic position to monopolize their intellectual role as *gurus*. Weber observes that during this period of Indian history, the *brahmins* infiltrated the whole realm of learned occupations, particularly administrative posts, which demanded writing skill and education, just as the clerics of the middle-ages have done in the western world.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Guru and the Caste System*

The bloody persecution of Buddhists under the Sunga dynasty, which followed the Maurya, has signaled the beginning of a counter-attack on the heterodoxies. This period gives rise to the caste system and the attendant close of India's most creative period. With the rise and hardening of the caste system, the place of the *brahmin* intellectuals comes to be epitomized by the *guru*.<sup>12</sup> From the time of *brahmanical* restoration the position of the *guru* is modeled after the relation of the Vedic teacher to the student of the Vedas. In early times, the kings and nobles as house Chaplin's and tutors have employed experts in Vedic lore. However, in the course of the restoration of Hinduism, plebeian mystagogues and soul-helpers are often aliterary interpenetrated their ranks.<sup>13</sup> They are, in fact, instrumental in helping the restoration of Hinduism. They have established religious orders and have achieved spiritual domination over the masses. The majority of the mendicant *gurus* of the time are *brahmins*. They are not the bearers of a new religious interpretation, but of a new kind of religious authority. The apotheosis of the *guru* is dramatically illustrated by the fact that even religious reformers who turned every effort toward the destruction

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Max Weber: *The Religion of India*, trans. Hans Gerth and Don Martindale, p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ibid., pp. 380-342.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ibid, p.319.

of idolatry have been deified in their turn. Weber observes the following: “The leading *guru* in a territory is similar to a Bishop of a western Church, visiting his diocese accompanied by his following. He had power to excommunicate individuals in the case of grosser sins. He bestowed absolution for penitence, placed a tax on believers.”<sup>14</sup> As a living savior, the *guru*, by this time, replaces all transcendent objects of worship. Hence, Weber insists that adoration of the living savior is the final stage in Hindu religious development.

In brief, the transformative development of *guru* in the cultural and social life of the Indians obviate the necessity to understand this tradition as a tradition which is based on *gurus*, who are the embodiments of values and virtues and, therefore, are regarded as chieftains of the public masses. Accordingly, they are held in great esteem by their followers or a sect of people who followed them as disciples (*sishyas*). In the period of the orthodox restoration, Hinduism itself is transformed from an aristocratic and intellectual religion to a religion adapted for the salvation needs of the Indian masses. The key intellectuals of the Neo-Hindu restoration are no longer the Chaplains of royal and noble households, but apotheosized leaders of mass salvation cults, namely the *gurus*.

#### **GURU-TRADITION: THE STATE OF GURU-CONSCIOUSNESS**

The historical and cultural development of *guru*-tradition as the living force has been evolved and present in Indian tradition, culture and life for thousands of years. Though scriptures, such as the Rig Veda, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Ramayana advocate devotion and respect of the people from all strata of Indian society throughout the ages, yet the presence of the *guru* – the one who is enlightened as to the truth of the scriptures, and who is, thus, the living scripture – continues to be the central force in Indian philosophy, spirituality, and culture. The *guru* is the spirit of Indian philosophy and culture, which has as its basis and goal the consciousness that has directly realized the essence of the scriptures – the *Guru-Consciousness*. The dynamic sacred centre of Hinduism is, in fact, the enlightened *guru*, whose charismatic leadership creates the institution for philosophical, religious, and social change.<sup>15</sup> From ancient to modern times, the *guru* has continued to be the Indian philosophical tradition’s very source, and the insurance of its vital maintenance and growth. In the following sections, let us elaborate on *guru*-tradition as the state of *Guru-Consciousness*.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. David Miller, “The Guru as the Centre of Sacredness”, *Studies in Religion*, (1977) pp. 517-523.

*Guru-Consciousness as Brahma-Cetana*

The term “*guru*” represents not only the enlightened teacher, but also the state of *Guru-Consciousness*. *Guru-Consciousness* is synonymous with *Brahman*, a term first used in the Upanishads to represent the Universal Self, the One Essential Reality.<sup>16</sup> That person, who transforms his or her dualistic consciousness by which he or she sees him or herself as a subject to an object and realizes the one indivisible reality of *Brahman*, becomes the embodiment of *Guru-Consciousness*. In this respect, the state and the person who has attained the state are one and the same. Although *Brahman*'s nature is essentially ineffable (*anirvacaniya*) it is realizable through direct experience (*atma-saksatkara*). The one who realizes it is *Brahman* himself. Thus, as *Brahman* is defined by such epithets as immortality (*amra*), freedom (*svatantra*), perfection (*purna*), infinity (*ananta*), eternal existence (*sat*), pure consciousness (*cit*), indivisible bliss (*ananda*), so also the *guru*, who has realized *Brahman*, can be defined by the very same epithets. It is on this premise that the *guru* is qualified as fearless (*abhaya*), free (*mukta*), fulfilled (*trista*), the knower (*jnata*) of the unchanging knowledge (*Jnana*), encompassing all those attributes, which reflects the height of spiritual attainment.

The *guru* is the one who is fully united with the *Guru-Consciousness* and never turned away from it. As a result, he is noble in his very presence, in his very knowledge, and in his power to transmit this consciousness to remove the darkness for those aspiring to live the state of Oneness. By association with the *guru*, who is the living embodiment of *Brahman*, as well as by the *guru*'s teachings about *Brahman*, the aspirant is able to reunite himself with his or her true Self – the *Guru-Consciousness* – the state of Oneness.<sup>17</sup> This truth is authenticated by none other than the Upanishadic traditions, to which we turn our attention in the next section.

*Upanishads: The Source of Guru-Tradition/ Guru-Consciousness*

Though Indian legends claim the existence of *gurus* for thousands of years, the first scriptural evidence for the *guru*-tradition as *Guru-Consciousness* is the Upanishads.<sup>18</sup> For this reason Upanishads are regarded

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<sup>16</sup> Here it may be noted that while the Upanishads have several orthodox (*astika*) systems acceptable to the wide array of Indian philosophical tradition. However, this paper is founded primarily on Advaita Vedanta.

<sup>17</sup> The person of the *guru* is referred to throughout this paper with the male pronoun only as the *gurus* we have discussed are males and not because women *gurus* do not exist in contrast. The aspirant or disciple (*sisya*) is referred to with both male and female pronouns as traditionally both have been admitted into the *gurukulas*, and thus are part of the *guru*-tradition.

<sup>18</sup> The Upanishads are a body of scriptures which contain the esoteric knowledge of the Vedas. Traditionally, they are explained to be the Vedanta,

as the primary source material for the greater understanding of the sublime reality of the *Guru-Consciousness* in the ancient *guru*-tradition. In this scripture, which contains the metaphysical knowledge of India, there are countless instances of the *guru-disciple-tradition* (*guru-sisya-parampara*) in the context of which *Guru-Consciousness* is attained. There are examples of disciple seeking a *guru* for instruction in Self-knowledge; instances of aspirants engaging in years of preparation for receiving Self-knowledge from an enlightened *guru*; and countless examples of dialogue between *guru* and his disciple (*guru-sisya-samvada*), in which the *guru* unfolds in the aspiring disciple the knowledge of the Self (*Brahma-vidhya*).<sup>19</sup> Now, we move on to consider the attainment of Self-knowledge in the *guru*-tradition.

#### *Attainment of Self-Knowledge in Guru-Tradition/ Guru-Consciousness*

The subject of Self-knowledge is the central theme of the Upanishads and of the *guru*- tradition, both in ancient and modern times. The Self-knowledge is the state or condition of awareness attained by one who has become enlightened and liberated. It is the original consciousness, prior to any state of consciousness that is affected by duality or ignorance. The nature of Self-knowledge is Oneness; hence, it is the pure or unadulterated knowledge of Oneness. When the subject of Self-knowledge is introduced in the Upanishads, it is termed as “*Brahma-Vidya*” – “*Brahman*” means the “Self” and “*vidya*” means “knowledge” – and is presented as both the original and the final knowledge, the realized Knowledge, which is not subject to change or improvement. It is the unchanging knowledge because it uninterruptedly knows the unchanging and unmodifiable reality, the Self (*Brahman*). Hence, in the *guru*-tradition/*Guru-Consciousness*, the subject

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literally the end of the Vedas, or the final compendium of the Vedas, in which the essential knowledge of the Self (*Brahman*), as revealed by the Vedic *guru* has been recorded. The Sanskrit word “*upanishad*” is literally translated into “sit down near” (*sat+ni+upa*) the *guru* to receive the esoteric teachings. More specifically and esoterically in the Upanishads the word “*upanishad*” is defined as a “secret” (*rahasya*) to indicate that these mystical teachings should be secret because their content is too elevated for the one who is not trained to receive them. In total there are proximately 108 Upanishads, with the oldest, the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, dating as far back as the ninth century B.C., and newer Upanishads, dating as the late fifteenth century A.D. The common ground of all the Upanishads is their exposition of the Self (*Brahman*), and Self-knowledge (*brahma-vidya*).

<sup>19</sup> For example, in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad *guru* Yajnavalkya engages in teaching the disciple king Janaka; in the Chandogya Upanishad *guru* Uddalaka Aruni enlightens his disciple, Svetaketu; in the Katha Upanishad Yama instructs Naciketa; in the Maitri Upanishad *guru* Sakayanaya appears to king Brhadratha after his thousand days of austerities, performed with the wish to receive Self-knowledge from a *guru*.



and nature of Self-knowledge remains unchanged whether it is in the ancient, the medieval and the modern periods because Self-knowledge is a knowledge that is independent of time and is eternal. Therefore, the *guru*-tradition is not a tradition of accumulative knowledge, but belongs to the realm of realized knowledge, which is both timeless and universal.

The Self-knowledge is expounded in the Upanishads with the sole purpose of engaging the aspirant in a process of learning through which he or she will evolve into the consciousness of *Brahma-vidya* and, thus become liberated from the dualistic nature of the mind. Therefore, the central purpose of life – liberation (*moksha*) – is repeatedly described by the Upanishads as being attained by the *gurus*. The Self-knowledge is meant to explain the removal of the root of the ignorance of the Self and the aspirant becoming a liberated person. Liberation precipitates a unique state of consciousness in which only Self-knowledge shines forth. All notions of duality and the existence of anything as separated from the Self are transformed into the knowledge of Self alone. The unfoldment of this transformation from the state of ignorance (*avidya*) – which is translated as “nescience” or “lack of knowledge” – to the state of enlightenment is the purpose (*telos*) of the *guru*-tradition/*Guru-Consciousness*, both in the ancient and the modern periods. With this ultimate purpose fulfilled, the *guru*-tradition/*Guru-Consciousness* is perpetuated as a living embodiment of cultural creativity, and not simply as a scriptural tradition that speaks only of enlightenment.

However, in the Upanishads – the scriptures referred to as “end of the Vedas” (Vedanta) – the *guru* is repeatedly defined as a being, who has transformed the divided human consciousness back into its original state of Oneness (*Brahman*). Here, *guru* is presented not as a deity, a priest, a poet or a teacher, but as a *Guru-Consciousness* or *Guru-Cetana* – a Transcendent Consciousness identical with the Ultimate Reality, *Brahman* or *Brahma-Cetana*. The one who has transformed his human nature as a result of directly realizing this *Brahma-Cetana* becomes its embodiment and is, therefore entitled to be called *guru* and enact the role of the liberated teacher. According to the Upanishadic teachers, *Brahman* is indefinable. Though indefinable they have attempted to describe its characteristics in order to offer a glimpse into the nature of the Absolute Reality. However, to limit *Brahman* to certain characteristics would be to define the indefinable. The descriptions of these characteristics are simply an attempt by the Upanishadic teachers to make the nature of *Brahman* understandable to the aspirants seeking to attain the emancipated state of *Guru-Consciousness*. *Brahman* is described as the original light ( *jyoti*), the original creation (*hiranyagarbha*), immortal (*amra*), indestructible (*aksara*), truth (*satya*), pure knowledge (*jnana*), infinite (*ananta*), bliss (*ananda*), fearlessness (*abhaya*), freedom (*mukti*), pure substance and the Self (*atman*). The *guru*, having realized *Brahman-Consciousness*, exhibits these qualities. *Guru-Consciousness* is birthless (*ajara*) deathless (*amara*), pure (*nirmala*), true (*sat*), and so forth. The Maitri Upanishad describes these

conditions of the Self in the following way: “He is the Self, which is free from evil (*apapa*), agelss (*ajara*), deathless (*amrtyu*), sorrowless (*asoka*), and free from uncertainty, free from fetters, whose conception is the real, whose desire is the real. He is the supreme Lord, he is the ruler of beings, and he is the protector of beings.”<sup>20</sup>

The *Guru-Consciousness* is said to be uninfluenced by the pair of opposites (*nirdvandva*). This implies that anger or joy, hatred or love, heat or cold, good or evil, birth or death does not affect the *Guru-Consciousness*. It remains unmoved because it is permanently established in its original, unchanging state. It is free from all conditions because it is its own condition: Self-luminous (*Brahma-jyoti*). The *Guru-consciousness* is *Brahman-Consciousness* and it remains ever full (*pūrna*). In discussing *Brahman-Consciousness* the language of contradiction is inevitably encountered, yet in the *Guru-Consciousness* there exists no contradiction because all elements are included in it. The Kathopanishad describes these apparent contradictions in the following way: “Sitting, he moves far; lying he goes everywhere who, save myself, is fit to know that God who rejoices and rejoices not? Knowing the Self who is bodiless among bodies, the stable among the unstable, the great, the all-pervading, and the wise man does not grieve.”<sup>21</sup> The one, who has attained the state of liberation (*Brahmavid*), lives these qualities continuously. The possibility of descending into the state of darkness, death, destructibility, untruth, ignorance, limitation, suffering, fear, and bondage is no more present. Reaching the height of *Guru-Consciousness*, there is no return to the realm of duality. The transformation from ignorance (*avidya*) to knowledge (*vidya*) has materialized in the being of the *guru*. Thus, the *Guru-Consciousness* is permanently one with *Brahman*.

It is this leap from the human consciousness to the Ultimate Consciousness that evokes the sense of *mysterium* in the unenlightened mind as it attempts with a sense of fascination to comprehend how the Enlightened Mind perceives consciousness (*cetana*), infinity (*ananta*), bliss (*ananda*) and even things of names and forms (*nama-rupa*). This fascination with the Enlightened Consciousness encourages an ontological, epistemological and soteriological investigation into the Ultimate Reality. This is that and thus unenlightened mind recognizes the ineffable Supreme Bliss. “How then may I come to know this?” “Does it shine (of itself) or does it shine (in reflection)?” “The sunshines not there, nor the moon and the stars, these lightning shine not, where then could this fire be?”

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<sup>20</sup> Maitri Upanishad, no.VII, 7. Radhakrishnan S.: *The Principal Upanishads*, 3<sup>rd</sup> impression, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1969, p. 854.

<sup>21</sup> Kathopanishad, nos. 1, 2, 21-22. Radhakrishnan S.: *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 618.

Everything shines only after that shining light. His shining illumines this entire world.<sup>22</sup>

The Upanishadic description of the embodiment of *Guru-Consciousness* is twofold. The first aspect discusses the human characteristics of the *guru* that have transformed through *sadhana* and which have resulted in the attainment of the Undivided State of Consciousness. These human characteristics are desire, fear, sorrow, anger, happiness, worry, possessiveness, envy, jealousy, ambition, and so forth. Since the *guru* is transformed of these limited characteristics and is transcended human emotions and qualities, there arises the question regarding the manner in which the *guru* communicates through the *guru-mind* and *guru-ego*; the way in which he operates through the human vehicle; and the means through which he relate to the environment, to society, and to the world at large. The second part of the discussion investigates the relationship that the *guru* as the embodiment of *Guru-Consciousness*, has with human existence. Clarifying the link between the *Guru-Consciousness* and the human manifestation of this consciousness will dispel the mass mysteries and misconceptions held about the nature and manifestation of the authentic *guru* and will offer an understanding of the *guru* and the *guru-tradition/Guru-Consciousness* that will be comprehensible to the developed intelligence of our time. We attempt to do this task in the next sections.

### **GURU-TRADITION: THE PERSON OF THE GURU IN HIS VISION OF ONENESS**

The *Guru-Consciousness*, expressed through the vehicle of an Enlightened Human Being, is the Unchanging State of Oneness (*ekatva*), whose nature is indivisibility. The Chandogya Upanishad says that “Pure Existence/ Being as one without a second (*ekam evadvitryam*).”<sup>23</sup> There exists no duality (*dvitiya*) and all the appellations of the *Guru-Consciousness* are synonymous with Oneness (*ekatva*) of vision (*darsana*). This vision of the Self (*atma-darsana*) is attained upon the successful removal of ignorance (*avidya*) regarding the true nature of the Self. The nature of *avidya* is dualistic consciousness or vision (*bheda-darsana*). The *guru*, having permanently annihilated the very seed of duality from the cave of his heart (*hrdaya-guhya*), has opened the scope of his vision to the vista of the Self. The term “*hrdaya-guhya*” – translated as the “cave of the heart” – is an expression adopted throughout the Upanishads to represent the innermost centre of the individual person (*jivatman*). When a person has attained the state of de-identification from the ego-consciousness at this deepest place, then, the Upanishads explain, liberation has been attained.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ibid., nos. II, 2, 14-15. Radhakrishnan S.: *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 641.

<sup>23</sup> Chandogya Upanishad, no.VI, 2, 1.

In the next three sections we try to understand the *guru*-tradition as the person of the *guru* as expounded in the Upanishadic literature, Post-Upanishadic literature and in the literature of the Bhakti Movement.

*Guru as the Guru-Tradition: An Upanishadic Perspective*

In clarifying the perspective of the Upanishads on *guru* as the *guru*-tradition we first consider the characteristic features of the *guru*, who has attained the state of de-identification from ego-consciousness and in the state of *Guru-Consciousness*. Then we take up for discussion two other important dimensions of the *guru* as the deified person and *guru* as the delivering-self from the perspective of the Upanishads.

Characteristic Features of the Guru:

The one who embodies *Guru-Consciousness* is considered to be unique not only because this attainment is so rare among the multitudes of unrealized beings, but also because *Brahman* is the source of all originality and genius; thus the *guru* emanates special qualities. The Upanishads teach that the attainment of this consciousness and the qualities associated with it is feasible only when the elements of earth, fire, water, air and ether (*tattvas*) have been mastered in the mental and physical bodies of the enlightened one. The elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether are described in Taittiriya Upanishad as the fundamental elements comprising the entire creation. To quote: "From this Self verily ether arose; from ether air; from air fire; from fire water; from water the earth."<sup>24</sup> Mastery over the *tattvas* is accomplished at the different levels of mind and body, referred to in the Taittiriya Upanishad as sheaths.<sup>25</sup> The first sheath is the self which consists of the essence of food (*anna-rasa-maya*);<sup>26</sup> within the first sheath is found the second, the self which consists of the life-force (*atma-pranayama*);<sup>27</sup> the third sheath, existing within the second, is the self which consists of mind (*atma-manomaya*);<sup>28</sup> within that lies the fourth sheath, the self consisting of intellect (*atma-vijnanamaya*);<sup>29</sup> and within that lies the

<sup>24</sup>Taittiriya Upanishad, no.II, 1, 1. Radhakrishnan S.: *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 542.

<sup>25</sup> The concept of "sheaths" or "*mayas*" is first introduced in Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, no.IV, 4, 5 and then in the Chandogya Upanishad, no.III, 14, 2. It is most fully elaborated in the Taittiriya Upanishad, in the form that Sankaracarya later incorporated into his Viveka-Cudamani, where he defines them as *kosas* or sheaths. The Sarvasar Upanishad of the Krishna Yajurveda speaks clearly of the five *kosas* and their mechanisms.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Taittiriya Upanishad, no.II, 1, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ibid., no.II, 2, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Ibid, no.II, 3, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ibid., no.II, 4, 1.

fifth, the self-consisting of bliss (*atma-anandamaya*).<sup>30</sup> This mastery of the *tattvas* at the level of the sheaths is the foundation for a host of special qualities for which the authentic *guru* is recognized: He attains self-rule. He attains to the lord of *manas*, the lord of speech, the lord of sight, the lord of hearing, the lord of intelligence – this and more he becomes, even *Brahman* whose body is space, whose Self is the real, whose delight is life, whose mind is bliss, who abounds in tranquility, who is immortal.<sup>31</sup>

Having become the master of the mind, the intelligence, the senses and their functions, and so on, the *guru* is no longer the victim of the weaknesses of any of those faculties. Speaking on this point, the Svetasvatara Upanishad exclaims that when the fivefold quality of Yoga is produced, as earth, water, fire, air and ether, arises there is no longer sickness, no old age, no death to him who has obtained a body made of the fire of Yoga.<sup>32</sup> Acquiring “a body made of the fire of Yoga,” the *guru* achieves the capacity to bear with physical discomfort and still remain at ease. The pairs of opposites have been conquered and, thus, the *guru* has surmounted heat, cold, hunger, loneliness, fear, anger, lust, and pain. If a teacher of *Brahma-vidya* has not transcended any of these emotions, then the title of *guru* is not merited. With the removal of the cumbersome barrier of duality, the *guru* is no longer bound by the confines of time and space. Consequently, many powers are said to be at his command. Because he is the very Ultimate Self, he can see clearly the nature of all manifestation and into the heart of matter: “But he, ever blissful, with all penetrating power, omnipresent, glows through his own light as pure, enlightened, eternal, spotless and calm.”<sup>33</sup>

The disciples surrounding many powerful *gurus* have often claimed that their preceptor has possessed the power of omniscience. This conviction has led some devotees to perceive their *guru* as a god. However, to people who are not devotees of these *gurus*, the power of omniscience has seemed like that of an outstanding magician. Though such powers (*siddhis*) are conceivable to be present in the enlightened one, and are guaranteed by the scriptures,<sup>34</sup> it is not this meaning of “omniscience” that is intended by the words of the Chandogya Upanishad: “Through the eye of

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ibid., no.II, 5, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ibid., no.I, 6, 2. Radhakrishnan S.: *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 534  
Cf. Svetasvatara Upanishad, no.II, 12. Radhakrishnan S.: *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 722.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Svetasvatara Upanishad, no. II, 12. Radhakrishnan S.: *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 722.

<sup>33</sup> Hamsa Upanishad, no. 11. Paul Deussen: *Sixty Upanishads of the Veda*, vol. II, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), p. 721.

<sup>34</sup> The Patanjali Yoga Sutras dedicates a whole chapter to the discussion of the powers (*siddhis*) attained by the practicant and the realized one. It is even entitled Vibhuti Pada, i.e., the chapter denoting the powers attained through the practice of Yoga.

knowledge the *Brahmanas* (knowers of *Brahman*) see the one alone extending throughout, from *Brahman* down to the world of plants.”<sup>35</sup> By omniscience is meant perceiving *Brahman* in all existence as all existence. The *Katha Upanishad* states about this vision of the Self and about the one perceiving it in the following way:

In all beings, dwells this (*Purusa*)  
As *Atman*, invisible, concealed from view,  
He is only seen by the keenest thought,  
By the subtlest (intelligence) of those thinkers  
Who see into the subtle?<sup>36</sup>

The one who sees into the subtlest of realities (*suksmati-suksma*) actually sees that which is inherent in the being and not separate from one's Self. The Ultimate Reality is the source of all manifestation, the quintessence in all creation, and this original reality here is defined as *Atman/Brahman*. The above verse also indicates that the point of separation between the Realized-Consciousness and the non-realized consciousness is the power of vision. This vision is not simply the outer faculty of sight, but relates to the root power of seeing, which is attached to the power of thought: the person who has developed his or her thought has, at the same time, developed the inner vision, where the source of the gross, material world is perceived. The realized person (*brahmavid*), who has cultivated and developed the spiritual thought has at the same time opened the spiritual vision and sees the *Atman*, the subtlest of all realities and the source of all. Thus, it is said that the *guru* has opened the third eye (*dyoya-drsti*) and is, therefore, a Seer. It is in this sense that the *guru* is said to be omniscient: he sees all because he is all.

The realized being has often been referred to as a perfect master (*siddha*) because all the elements are at his command. The purpose and role of the *guru* is simply to eliminate darkness by bringing the light of *Brahma-vidya*. Any master who sees powers (*siddhis*) for any purpose other than illumination of the Self is not living the realized state and such a person is not perfected, for he hasn't conquered greed, the need for personal power and the desire for fame. The archetypal *guru* has no need for ego-gratification and no desire for a large following. The only refuge and shelter for the *guru* is the Self. The *Tejobindu Upanishad* describes this condition in the following way:

Essentially associating with the lonely –  
He who is God, sure knows the highest –

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<sup>35</sup> Chandogya Upanishad, no. 16. Paul Deussen: *Sixty Upanishads of the Veda*, vol. II, p. 681.

<sup>36</sup> *Katha Upanishad*, no. I, 3, 12. Paul Deussen: *Sixty Upanishads of the Veda*, vol. I, p. 288.

Greed, delusion, fear, pride,  
Anger, love, sin renouncing,  
Cold and warm, hunger and thirst,  
And intentions, whichever change,  
Not proud of the Brahmana descent,  
Not have the rubbish of liberation texts,  
Knowing no fear, nor lust, nor pain  
Nor respect, nor disrespect anymore –  
Because from all these is free  
*Brahman*, the highest goal of all endeavors!  
*Brahman*, the highest goal of all endeavors!<sup>37</sup>

The nature of the *guru* is replete with the power of attraction. Because of his vision of Oneness, all life is attracted to the warmth of this person. Oneness attracts and creates Oneness. He exudes the qualities of “lightness, healthiness, steadiness, and clearness of complexion, pleasantness of voice and sweetness of odor.”<sup>38</sup> For this reason the Enlightened Being is always sought out by others. The Chandogya Upanishad states the following: “One who knows this becomes one beautiful to see and heart of in renown; yes, one who knows this.”<sup>39</sup>

Guru as the Deified Person:

In attaining the perfection of enlightenment, the *guru* has attained the state of immortality (*amrta*) and is, thus, said to be unborn (*ajara*) and undying (*amara*). Brhadaranyaka Upanishad says: “Knowing that immortal *Brahman* I am immortal (*vidvan brahma ‘mrto’ mrtam*).”<sup>40</sup> The sublime meaning of this teaching is that the realized one is no longer subject to the changes caused by birth and death. He has crossed the threshold of human consciousness where birth and death are fixed realities. Now, birth and death are but motions occurring to the body and not to the *Guru-Consciousness*. Though such a declaration seems unimaginable to the realized one it is the truth. Katha Upanishad expounds: “The knowing Self is never born: nor does he die at any time. He sprang from nothing and nothing sprang from him. He is unborn, eternal, abiding and primeval. He is

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<sup>37</sup> Tejobindu Upanishad, nos. 12-14. , Paul Deussen: *Sixty Upanishads of the Veda*, vol. II, p. 707.

<sup>38</sup> Svetasvatara Upanishad, no.II, 13. Radhakrishnan S.: *The Principal Upanishads*, p.723.

<sup>39</sup> Chandogya Upanishad, no.III, 13, 8. Radhakrishnan S.: *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 390.

<sup>40</sup> Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, no.IV, 4, 17. Radhakrishnan S.: *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 277.

not slain when the body is slain.”<sup>41</sup> The enlightened author of the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad has attempted to define this state thus: “When all the desire that dwell in the heart are cast away, then does the mortal become immortal, then he attains *Brahman* here (in this very body). Just as the slough of a snake lies on an anthill, dead, cast off, even so lays this body. But this disembodied immortal life is *Brahman* only, is light indeed, Your Majesty.”<sup>42</sup>

The above verse clears any misconception about death not occurring to the body of the realized one. His body, like any other, undergoes death, and his body also experiences pain as any other body does; however, the consciousness of the *guru* is absorbed in the state of deathlessness and painlessness. Hearing the claims about deathlessness, bodylessness, and painlessness, someone who does not understand these states may interpret them literally, and think that the *guru* does not experience death, if killed or tortured. The voluntary self-mortification to authenticate the experience of bodylessness and painlessness advocated and practiced by some pseudo-enlightened teachers and sects is not the intended meaning of this Upanishadic definition. The Upanishadic *guru* neither subjects himself to unnecessary physical tests to substantiate the claim to bodylessness nor does he commit suicide to prove his deathlessness; for his concern is to attain the state of immortal consciousness. The Upanishadic *guru* understands the value of the body as the instrument for the attainment of the realized state. Therefore, he advocates proper treatment and conditions for the vehicle that enables one to conduct practices for the attainment of *Brahma-vidya*, the very knowledge which liberates one from the sense of death. Katha Upanishad says: “[By knowing] that which is inaudible, intangible, invisible and changeless; [that which is] unperceivable by the sense of taste, and of smell; [that which is] indestructible and perennial beginningless, endless, greater than the great, remaining eternal. He, who knows it, becomes free from the jaws of death.”<sup>43</sup>

#### Guru as the Delivering-Self:

The Upanishads resound with descriptions of the ultimate reality, *Brahman*. Each passage of the Upanishad intends only to lead the disciple (*sisya*) to an understanding of the unchanging, immortal substance that is *Brahman*. The significance of this is the context of a definition of *guru* is that the Upanishads reiterate that the one who undertakes spiritual practices and identifies with *Brahman* will transform into that Ultimate Reality, the

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<sup>41</sup> Katha Upanishad, no.I, 2, 18. Radhakrishnan S.: *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 616.

<sup>42</sup> Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, no.IV, 4, 7. Radhakrishnan S.: *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 273.

<sup>43</sup> Katha Upanishad, no.I, 3, 15. Paul Deussen: *Sixty Upanishads of the Veda*, vol. I, p. 289.



source of all existence. The one who completes the spiritual path of transformation into the Ultimate Reality becomes the embodiment of that Reality. Such a one becomes the *guru* – the enlightened one, the liberated one – gifted with the eponymous power to dispel the darkness of ignorance. By virtue of having conquered ignorance (*avidya*), the *guru* – who has become the absolute light of consciousness – is empowered to remove *avidya* from the vision of the devotees by shedding the light of knowledge.

The *guru*'s role is to exhibit freedom and affect freedom in those souls aspiring to perfect freedom. The aspirant has reached a point of disillusionment with what he or she perceives as his or her world and him or herself and initiates a spiritual search. The emancipated being, the *guru*, is the only one who can guide the soul to its own perfection, for the *guru* is the one who has travelled the path and reached the destination. Thus, *guru* is the only one who can create another *guru*. The scriptures (*sastras*) may describe the ultimate Reality, and inspire the students about that Reality, but they cannot serve as living teachers to guide the soul through the unexpected obstacles and doubts, which arise in the life of the person undergoing the process of transformation. Having attained the height of Self-knowledge, the enlightened being is no longer engaged in actions to become free. Freedom is the nature of the *guru*. Thought and activity is known as the knowingness of the Self. Relaxed in the knowledge of the all-permeating nature of the *Atman*, the *guru* is not a vehicle for revealing Self-knowledge. Though ignorance does not exist as a reality for the enlightened one, still the *guru* acts for the liberation of all, removing the darkness of ignorance by shedding the continuous light of the Self. In the Yoga-Tattva Upanishad it is concisely expressed thus: "At an unprohibited, far off, place. Calm and quiet, undisturbed, The Yogin guarantees protection to all beings, as to his own self."<sup>44</sup>

#### *Guru as the Guru-Tradition: Post-Upanishadic Perspective*

The metaphysical culture of the Upanishads is the fertile ground from which other cultural traditions have arisen in India. Thus, the descriptions of the person of the *guru* in the Kularnava Tantra and the Shri Guru Gita – from the Skanda Purana, Astavakra Gita, Tripura Rakasya, Uddhava Gita, Avadhuta Gita and many other scriptures – are extensions of the Upanishadic archetype. It is essential for this examination of the concept of *guru* to refer, though briefly, to other scriptures within the philosophical and spiritual tradition of the Upanishads because these reveal the impact of the Upanishadic *guru*-tradition in Post-Upanishadic times. We take up for our examination the two representative scriptures – the Kularnava Tantra and the Shri Guru Gita.

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<sup>44</sup> Yoga-Tattva Upanishad, no.15. Paul Deussen: *Sixty Upanishads of the Veda*, vol. II, p. 716.

## Guru: The Perspective of Kularnava Tantra:

One of the most thorough descriptions of the nature, role and qualities of the *guru* is found in the Kularnava Tantra.<sup>45</sup> This scripture describes the rarity of the enlightened being by the example of light, stating that many are those teachers who radiate light equivalent to lamps, but rare is the one whose reflection is comparable to the sun.<sup>46</sup> According to the Kularnava Tantra, the *guru* has the following qualities: he is charming (*manohara*); endowed with all attributes (*sarvalaksana-sampanna*), the knower of all the *agamas* (*sarvagamartha-tattvajna*); the knower of the application of all the *mantras* (*mantra-vidhanavid*); the bewitcher of the world (*loka-sammohanakara*); of happy countenance (*sumukha*); the embodiment of cleanliness (*svaccha*); easily accessible (*sulabha*); the dissipater of doubt and delusion (*bhrama-samsayanasak*); the perceiver of the world with an inner vision (*antarlaksya-bahirdsti*); all knowing (*sarvajna*); the knower of the mysteries of time and place (*desakalavid*); the knower of the meaning of gestures (*ingitakaravid*); the knower of past, present, and future (*trikalajna*); capable of penetrating to the inner depths of the devotee's being (*vedhaka*); the illuminator (*bodhaka*); radiator of peacefulness (*santa*); compassionate to all creatures (*sarvajivadayapara*); the controller of the movement of the organs (*svadhinendriya-sancara*); the conqueror of the six enemies – desire, anger, greed, delusion, jealousy, and pride (*sadvargavidjayaksama*); the one capable of distinguishing between the fit and unfit disciple (*patrapatravisesavid*); stainless (*nirmala*); ever content (*nityasantusta*); independent (*svatantra*); endowed with the power of *mantra* (*mantrasaktimana*); the lover of genuine devotees (*sadbhaktavatsala*); steadfast (*dhira*); merciful (*kṛpalu*); the one who speaks with a smile (*smitapurnavak*); the one dear to devotees (*bhaktapriya*); ever generous (*sadodara*); profound (*gambhira*); the excellent practicant of the spiritual sciences (*sistasadhaka*); free from attachment, hate, fear, pain and ostentation (*dambha*); the one who can distinguish between what is good and what is evil (*gunadosavibhedaka*); the one who is unattached to the opposite sex and wealth, and dislikes bad company and other vices (*anasakta*); the one who possess a feeling of Oneness with all (*sarvahambhavasanyukta*); the one who has the power to be silent (*mauni*); the one who is free of preferences (*nirapeksa*); and the one who is unaffected by praise or criticism (*tulyuaninidatuti*).<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> The charismatic presence of the *guru* is central to the pure tradition of *Tantra*, a rigorous sect of Hinduism which, contrary to modern western portrayal, aims at attaining *moksha* through complete mastery of the senses. Inauthentic teachers, posing as *gurus* have advocated indulging in the senses.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ram Kumar Roy, trans.: *Kularnava Tantra*, (Varanasi: Prachya Prakashan, 1983), no. XIII, 104; p. 257.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, no. XIII, 36; pp. 38-50: 247-248. The list of qualities of the *guru* given above is a selection from a much larger list.

Having stated the list of the *guru*'s qualities, the Kularnava Tantra suggests methods for assessing the aptness of the *guru*. It first proposes that the disciple examines the competence of the *guru* by analyzing his capacity for the transmission of knowledge, perfection in the science of *mantra*, and the ability to make a subtle impact.<sup>48</sup> Only if the *guru* possesses these abilities, one should consider becoming his disciple. If in studying with a *guru*, one does not experience a subtle transformation of consciousness, then such a teacher should not be considered a *guru*. A *guru* is expected to be endowed with the power to assist the student to transform – slowly or quickly depending upon the capacity of the student – from a dualistic vision to the vision of the Oneness of the Self. Secondly, the Kularnava Tantra, describing the consciousness of the *guru* states that it is infused with bliss (*ananda*). Therefore, when the student comes into contact with the *guru*, he must experience bliss, happiness, joy or peace.<sup>49</sup> If irritation or agitation ensues in the presence of the *guru*, one should not choose tutelage under that particular teacher. Thirdly, the Kularnava Tantra warns that if a *guru* imparts teachings contrary to the essence of those enunciated in the Vedas particularly the Upanishads, then both teacher and student are doomed to great suffering.<sup>50</sup> “He who imparts an instruction that is not sanctified is a sinner; his *mantra* is lost like paddy-seed in the sands.”<sup>51</sup> Hence, no disciple must choose to be a disciple of such a *guru*.

The above-mentioned injunction presents an interesting question regarding the relationship of the enlightened consciousness to the scripture. It leads us to raise the following questions: “Does the enlightened consciousness live and reflect the accepted scriptural teachings?” “Can the enlightened consciousness authorize a scripture whose knowledge differs from that of the Upanishads?” “Can the enlightened consciousness teach a dogma, philosophy or a practice not advocated in the Upanishads?” The above-mentioned injunction explicitly denounces those teachers profess to be *gurus* and propagate spiritual teachings contrary to the accepted and honored Vedic scriptures. It emphasizes that a new message or philosophy that is rooted in a dualistic intellect cannot entirely absorb and expound the Absolute Reality. *Brahman*, as has been quoted from the Upanishads, it is only the purified intellect, transformed into Self-Consciousness, which perceives the *suddha-cetana*, the basis of enlightened consciousness, the *guru*. Only a person transformed into the state of unconditional realization is entitled to interpret and transmit the ancient teachings because he has become the living Upanishad. In the same stance, the Kularnava Tantra warns that the spiritual knowledge of *mantra* cannot take root in a student who is devoid of potential for such a study. Therefore, the *guru* also must test the applicant, before being accepted as a student. If a *guru* imparts

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Ibid., nos. XIV, 25-26; p. 266

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Ibid., no. XIII, 110.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Ibid., no. XIV, 12.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., no. XIV, 13; p. 264.

knowledge without testing the capacity of the student and if the student proves to be an unfit vehicle, both teacher and student will suffer.<sup>52</sup>

Guru: The Perspective of Shri Guru Gita:

The Shri Guru Gita, a significant section of the Skanda Purana and an authoritative scripture about the guru, states that unless one has understood the guru-principle (*guru-tattva*), the Vedas, sastras, puranas, smrtis, mantras, yantras, vows, penances and pilgrimages do not bring any benefit to the person. Those who attempt the study of the sacred texts without comprehending the *guru-tattva* cannot penetrate the essential meaning of its teachings, and the person is prone to misinterpret them. Those who practice vows, penances and charity do them as fools, unless they are guided by the *guru*.<sup>53</sup> According to Shri Guru Gita, the *guru* is the foundation of scripture and contact with the *guru* is fundamental to scriptural interpretation. Self-proclaimed teachers who have not trained under a *guru* and who attempt to discern the more esoteric scriptures, such as the Saiva Treatises, can lead one into great errors and the person can meet with his downfall because according to Shri Guru Gita, his intellect is fundamentally deluded.<sup>54</sup> Misconceptions can lead to the founding of sects, which do not uphold the intended precepts of the scriptural texts, to forge ideologies equipped with religious observances and to establish ordinances that guide people's lives based on the misconceptions of an unrealized intellect – all happening in the name of truth and realized perception. Such teachers can malign the purity of the knowledge of the tradition conveyed in the texts and cause severe damage in the lives of innocent seekers. Thus, Shri Guru Gita cautions that only the initiates of an authentic *guru* should represent the *guru*-tradition and lend commentary (*bhasya*) to the revered scriptures.

The Shri Guru Gita identifies the *guru* as the bearer of light and states: “He by whose light (true knowledge) arises is known by the word *guru*.”<sup>55</sup> The enlightened intellect is the instrument by which an *avidya*-ridden intellect can be illumined just as a lit candle can be used to light an unlit one. This process of enlightenment cannot take place without the flame contacting the wick. In this respect the *guru*'s very presence is potent with knowledge and contact with it transforms the disciple into *guru*. The Shri Guru Gita claims that even by remembering the *guru* knowledge spontaneously arises in the devotee.<sup>56</sup> The power of the *guru* to illumine the devotee is so heightened that even through the subtlety of thought, illumination can be attained.

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Ibid., no.XIV, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Swami Muktananda, trans.: *Shri Guru Gita*, nos. 6-8, p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Ibid., no. 7, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., no.10, p. 10.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Ibid., no. 69, p. 26.

*Guru as Guru-Tradition: The Perspective of the Bhakti Movement*

In the development of the Hindu tradition not only during the time of Upanishads, but also later in the time of the Bhakti movement, the model that has come into prominence is centred on *gurus*. The two Upanishadic concepts characteristic of the Indian cultural tradition and centred on the *guru*-concept are *tapas* – austerity, penance and asceticism, and *nyasa* – renunciation. The reason for Indian culture paying great respect to *sannyasins* and consider them as *gurus* is that the Indian tradition holds in high esteem the life that is characterized by *tapas* and *nyasa*.<sup>57</sup> Even the Bhakti Movement gives significant place to these values and sees them as the most characteristics of the *guru*. In fact, *tapas* and *nyasa* are the two leading doctrines of the Upanishads. Ascetical life (*tapas*) is raised to a special vocation (*dharma-skandha*) in the Chandogya Upanishad.<sup>58</sup> In the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, we find men like Yajnavalkya departing to the solitude of wilderness for doing *tapas* and contemplation of the *Atman*.<sup>59</sup> The Chandogya Upanishad describes the *tapas* of Upakosala, the *brahmacari*.<sup>60</sup> The same Upanishad, again, speaks of *tapas* as the most important (*prathamam tapa eva*).<sup>61</sup> Yajnavalkya instructs Gargi that one wins a temporary heaven (*svarga*) if one performs *tapas*, sacrifice and worship even though one has not known the *Atman*.<sup>62</sup> The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad imparts the noble idea that the patient bearing with sickness (*vyadhi*), taking part in a funeral procession and cremation ceremony is the best sort of *tapas* (*paraman-tapas*).<sup>63</sup> The Mahanarayanoparishad regards the renunciation of all (*sannyasa*) as superior to all forms of *tapas*.<sup>64</sup> The Kathopanisad speaks of *tapas* as the foundation, basis and prerequisite (*pratistha*) of *Brahma-vidya*. The Svetasvatara Upanishad declares that *paramatman* is intuited through *tapas*;<sup>65</sup> *Atmavidya* is rooted in *tapas*;<sup>66</sup> *Brahman* is known through *tapas* and the grace of God.<sup>67</sup> According to Mundakopanisad, the performers of *tapas* and knowers of *Brahman* attain the “imperishable person.”<sup>68</sup> The Prasna Upanishads exhorts us that “those

<sup>57</sup> It is observed that probably *tapas* in the forest (*vanaprastha*) is the forerunner of renunciation and renunciation is the forerunner of *sannyasa-asrama*.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Chandogya Upanishad, no.II, 2, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, no.II, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Chandogya Upanishad, no.IV, 10.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Ibid., no.II, 2, 3.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, no.III, 8, 10.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Ibid., no.V, 11, 1.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Mahanarayanoparishad, no. 62, 1.

<sup>65</sup> *Enam tapasa anupasyati ...* Cf. Svetasvatara Upanishad, no.I.15.

<sup>66</sup> *“Atma-vidya tapo-mulam”* Cf. Svetasvatara Upanishad, no. I.16.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Ibid., no. I, 17.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Mundakopanisad, no. I, 2, 11.

who practice *tapas* along with virtues of chastity, faith and knowledge win eternal goal.<sup>69</sup> Paul Deussen maintains that it is *tapas* that later assumed the form of the *vanaprastha-asrama* and *nyasa* became later the *sannyasa-ashrama*.<sup>70</sup>

Following the teachings of the Upanishads on *tapas* and *nyasa*, the Bhakti Movement gives significance to these values, the attainment of which depends to a great extent on the guidance of the *guru*. *Gurus* are those enlightened beings, who possess these values and can assist the aspirants to acquire them. Thus, like the Upanishadic literature and the Post-Upanishadic literature, the literature of Bhakti Movement is also *guru*-centred. True devotion to the Lord, which calls for *tapas* and *nyasa*, takes place in the devotee only in relation to the *guru*, who leads and guides the devotee on his way to the union with the Lord.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, in terms of its own valuation, the Indian cultural tradition must be considered as a tradition based on *guru-cetana*, whose foundations are built on *tapas* and *nyasa*, the characteristic qualities of an enlightened *guru*. Accordingly Indian cultural tradition rejects all absolute distinctions as it is rooted in the idea of an underlying unity that sustains all differences. Hence, Indian cultural tradition is able to postulate and maintain that all realms of existence are continuous – the physical, the vital, the mental and the spiritual – and it is perfectly possible for one order of being to be transformed into another. In such worldview, in which the pattern of life events is interdependent, *guru* is seen as Unitary Consciousness – variously called *Brahma-jnani*, *Brahma-saksatkari* and *Brahma-anubhavi*. What Indian cultural tradition undergirds, therefore, is the experiential realization, where the *guru-cetana* is the *Brahma-cetana*. *Guru*, therefore, in the Indian cultural tradition is not merely a person from the western perspective, but a Unitary Consciousness whose identities have achieved self-expression.

This positive notion of the *guru* has always had an identical or unchanging meaning in both the Indian philosophical tradition as well as culture. More than by mere accretion, the notion has managed to incorporate the great achievements of human self-discovery for which, in turn, it has been both the stimulus and the goal. Having looked into this cultural tradition as based on the *Guru-Consciousness vis-à-vis Brahma-cetana*, we have examined the nature of the *guru* through reflection on a series of paired and progressively deeper dimensions: firstly, as a role and as the one who lives out this role; secondly, as free Self-consciousness that realizes itself as the identity and as the subject of that freedom; and thirdly, as moral agent who fulfils that plenitude of consciousness. Accordingly, a

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<sup>69</sup> Prasna Upanishad, no.I, 10.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Paul Deussen: *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1966), p. 367.

philosophical and cultural tradition, which is rooted in *Guru-Consciousness* as an image of the transcendent principle transforms and sensitizes its culture. *Guru* remains part of nature, but rather than being a subject thereto as a mere producer or consumer, he is a creative and transforming centre. This is an affirmation of existence as sharing in *sat*, *cit* and *ananda* and reflects the meaning of the Transcendent for man and of man in the Transcendent.

It would seem, therefore, that the *guru-power/Guru-Consciousness* is a creative stance reflecting the content not only of the past but also of the time in which one stands and of the life project in which one is engaged. It is a creative unveiling of the content of the tradition as this comes progressively and historically into the present and through the present passes into the future. Conversely it is this sense of the good or of value, which emerges through the concrete, lived experience of a *guru* throughout his history and constitutes his cultural heritage as the rich cumulative expression of meaning evolved through the times to the point of normative and classical perfection. It is embodied personally in a Ramakrishna or a Vivekananda; an Aurobindo or a Gandhi, a Sankara or a Ramanuja. Variousy termed charismatic personalities, paradigmatic individuals or characters that meld role and personality in providing a cultural, epistemic, political or moral ideal, they supersede mere historical facts. As concrete universals, they express the harmony and fullness of perfection, which is at once classical and historical, ideal and personal, uplifting and dynamizing – in a word, liberating.





**PART III**

**SOCIOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF INDIAN  
CULTURAL TRADITIONS:  
A CRITICAL-CREATIVE APPROACH**



## CHAPTER VII

# THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COLLECTIVE IN INDIAN CULTURE

*DHARMENDRA GOEL*

### INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we are concerned with facts, history, beliefs, tradition, ideology, as well as interacting processes of individuation, education, socialization and cultural integration of a very composite civilizational experience that seems to have spread over Indian sub-continent for several eons. The cultural and civilizational experience of the "Indian" is marked by self-perpetuating ancient convictions, traditions, social practices, as well as ideologies that have often brought by outside interventions from the times of Alexander, Scythians, Huns, Arabs, Persians and Central Asians in different epochs. Each of these incursions has been built into the kaleidoscopic configurations of ever-changing patterns of various cultural and social heritages of India's diverse strands of cultural groups. Besides, these historical mainstream social groups which have dominated the economic and political space of India, there are the large groups of simpler arrested animists and non-literate oral communities which have lingered in vast expanses of the sub-continent including the valleys, inaccessible deep rain forests, reverine hills and snow laden heights. As such, it is important to take note of the empirical diversity of Indian culture as an indubitable reality, irrespective of the *a priori* theories and the ideology of one self-same Absolute that is believed to unfold the traditional acosmic doctrines of abiding *rta*, *dharma*, *sat*, *cit*, *sad*, *shubh*, *sattva*, *satya* and *ananda* as the beginning, the middle and the end of all cultures. These doctrines and their deeper levels of emotional states may be regarded as dissimilar episodic multitudes of bewildering representations.

Indian tradition supposedly could sit pretty with all these many incompatible and contrary practices, without much identity crisis, through its multi-tiered frameworks of varied *swadharmas*, *adhikars*, *varnas*, *swabhavas* and *purusharthas* in consonance to such differences, yet allegedly embodying the cosmic rhythm of Transcendent Being. That is how the allegory of the Dancing Nataraj or the Cosmic Reptile swallowing its own tail embodies in this cultural tradition. In this sort of metaphysical doctrine, there are ground realities which are short-changed, and the cultural tradition deliberating side-steps setting domain of strife and real oppositions into smug retreat of a stylized substitute of anti-historical spiritualism and its attendant other-worldly *ethos* of the Indian culture. This is a Myth. It

should be critically dismissed and rejected if we want a proper insight into the ever-changing rebirth of Indian cultural experience.

### **INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION'S NEED FOR A REVIEW**

In this paper, it is our endeavor to examine, review and reject the very persistent monistic culture theory either of extreme idealism such as the ancient reflections of Hindus and Buddhists on the one side and more materialistic-dialectics of the Marxist theory of man and his class consciousness on the other. They are nothing short of a realistic and empiricist analysis of culture and its polymorphous representations. We also do not subscribe the Freudian interpretation of culture, its origin, and creativity as valid despite its specious airs of probing analogies of dream work, exposure of vast caverns of unconscious repressions and articulation of Individual's *praxis*. Its air of clinical objective science as psycho-analysis is now, however, practically refuted. As we proceed to deal with creativity, especially in the Indian cultural tradition, we put forward our arguments against their major hypothesis that creativity is sublimated by pathology of unconscious appetites, seeking vicarious gratifications through transference. In attempting at a review of Indian cultural tradition, we take up the preliminary question of the *locus* of culture and then consider nature of cultural activity and its analysis, and its consequences.

#### *Locus of Indian Culture*

At this stage of preliminary clarifications, we need to answer some issues relating to the *locus* of culture. We can raise several questions, such as the following: What is culture? Who is cultured – a person, an age, a class, a community, a country or the mankind? Do all such carriers of culture embody (beings) ontology of created elements in certain particular and identical ways? Do symbols are ascriptive and invocative in functions of language? Is culture an episodic event of a psychic content, or subjective disposition to enjoy, create, transform and evaluate its medium through sustained artifacts? Is it an educated inculcation and capacity for judgment? Can one visualize a particular master paradigm of the culture that pervades in such diverse constituents as poetry, art objects, moral codes, institutions, ideology, facilities – houses, implements, technologies – basic organizations of family, community, market, polity and their laws? It is our firm conviction that perhaps no culture is ever fully consolidated. Does culture always accumulate and consolidate into a heritage or a tradition that later generations must repeat and live by, without altering lest they are alienated from their traditions?

In writings, speeches, thoughts, books – sacred and profane – man's mysterious powers of cultural creativity are preserved, stored and held over ephemeral of most human activity and its glows and valences. Tradition and culture are recurrently re-generated through education; it presupposes the

transmission, diffusion and identity through various generations by adherence to easily noted primordial canons of non-material symbols by some sacred spokesmen who are authorized interpreters to discipline any slackness or heresy. As such, the cultures everywhere have to be supposedly led by elite custodians of several primary keepers of "meanings" and only certain variations are allowed in the course of their multi-generational reincarnations, but within the well articulated boundaries, and the rest of others are sternly proscribed. This is the role of tradition to sustain its ideology of practices and opinions, and save them from deviance and rebellion of disorderly descendants. Tradition, while it perpetuates these invested multi-tiered structures of culture, can enable its enrichment and variations too. But too wide latitude has often been taken by later generations living in ever changing physical, social and economic environments which often generate strong disapproval of the custodian of the purists' perception of such an inheritance. Since, it is inevitable, such passage of forms of living do not survive in the original state, there are, from time to time, conflicts between traditionalists and innovators in all transitions from orthodoxy of old ideology to newer shifts of creativity. In all societies, such questions lead to what we witness an emergence of modernity from the shadow of old practices, beliefs and ideals. In a society like India where greater premium is claimed for absolutist transcendentalism, the struggle can be even more devastating. Having clarified the *locus* of Indian culture, we move on to consider the nature of cultural activity and its analysis in Indian society.

*Nature of Cultural Activity and Its Analysis in Indian Society*

In a multi-cultural and complex society like contemporary Indian society, where there are several juxtapositions of "others" at different stages of unequal civilizations – in local community, region and pan-continental space – the constant fear of losing one's contested identity and defining traditions, dogmas and sectarian practices, lend support to traditionalism in transience against any secular modernization. The Individual is subjected to a greater but rigid conformity by traditionalists, lest their group may lose their struggle to uphold their specific group identities.

In ecological scenarios of economic scarcities – where perceived clashes of interests, exclusively incompatible worldviews, mythology and sectarian symbols are predominant factors – every form of traditionalism invests highest esteem to uphold one's conventional styles, rituals and ceremonies. It alone provides a feeling of collective bonding and security in the face of threats of secular rejection of all traditions as vestiges of irrational medieval religiosity. In emerging conditions of cultural nationalism as of now in India and the likelihood of political domination by the rule of majority, minorities, creed, race, culture and speech are bound to produce most raucous conflicts among such juxtaposed fragments of human populations occupying a single territory. Cases of such conflicts as of

Israel, Chechnya, Yugoslavia and within India's different primordial tribes of its North East, Ladakh, even Central India highlight the failure of rational reconciliation of perceived incompatibilities of such cultural identities and their antagonisms. Caste, tribe, creed and oral community along with joint family has been distinctly the defining identity of Indian culture and civilization over much of world process of barbarism, medieval despotism and industrial revolution.

Despite its phenomenal sweep over entire Asia, colonialism and its far-reaching transformations that it brought in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, tradition-bound Indians hardly are touched by any of these essentially. Even after Ghadar of middle 19<sup>th</sup> century on the coming of British Raj by Empress Victoria found it easier to serve its industrial and imperial hegemony or other agenda to let masses here is ruled by traditions and native ideologies. While successive Viceroys shrewdly embodied them and assimilating these feudal legends, the native Indian Princes with their newly crafted landed gentry of British Provinces have transformed themselves as integrated colonial elite. It was found less costly with the assimilation of old feudal remnants as the new country acquired the subaltern authorities of the British Raj. It remains true, despite some initial liberal social reforms like the abolition of *sati* and imposition of British Common law, which have been administered under the force of imperial *imprimatur*. The tall talk of white-man's civilizing mission as effusively given expression by radical liberals like Macaulay and his Council colleagues, while carrying out white-man's burden, is disproved by the considerations that most of our grass-root oral communities till the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century have been dominated by village autonomy and cultural practices of *homo-hierarchicus*. This has happened despite earlier conversions to Islam, Sikhism and even baptism by Christian Churches during the period of later Moguls and the spread of East India Company's Rule of India by the early nineteenth century. Except for a few Renaissance liberals – like Raja Rammohan Roy, the founder of Brahma Samaj, and other few elite Indians like Dadabhai Naoroji, Prince Dwarkanath Tagore and his illustrious descendants – most Indian renaissance savants could not look upon the putrid state of Indian cultural fossilization as deftly underlined by Marx in his critique of agrarian autarky. Accordingly, Indian culture has sustained a low equilibrium that gloated on rude primordial mode of miserable but indifferent agriculture, which is incapable of bringing any growth potentials for technological innovations. It is further riddled with uncritical myths of caste, *varna*, and the legitimization of disparities by clever philosophies of predetermination by speculative dogmas of *karma* and rebirth. It is undoubtedly and supposedly a clever, if not a genuine rationalization of its unjust polity.

In such an arrogant cultural ideology – which is fully shared by most conservative Indians of various sects and even philosophical seers – any attempt to question the “self-evident” truths about man's place in the universe or the religious agenda of transcendent liberation, centering on

family rituals and caste hierarchy seemed to disown India's cultural tradition and her much prized collective identity. Thus, pursuing science is misidentified with losing roots in one's cultural ecology, to act as slaves of the glitter of western materialism and gloat in the hegemony of western Christianity. The above-said misunderstanding – coupled with insensitive contempt that later day British Raj-elite showered on any *babus* trying to emulate civility, modernity and western technology – made these doctrines of cultural revivalism as preached by men like Dayananda Saraswathi, Lokmanya Tilak, Shri Aurobindo, Bankim Chatterji and to a lesser degree by Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore seem as the right agenda to act on for the younger generations. Consequently, there is no possibility of getting an opportunity to gain a scientific worldview and to acquire the necessary skills that can liberate their lives from imposed humiliations of the white-hegemony or the poverty of his fellow-countrymen. They bartered their own freedom for old dogmas: unfortunate indeed.

*Consequences of the Analysis of the Cultural Activity in Indian Society*

The above-mentioned analysis of cultural activity in Indian society has blocked any form of creative and critical approach in understanding different dimensions of Indian cultural tradition. The message of human equality and newer cultural institutions seeking women's liberation from joint family which is the hallmark of western science appeared dangerous to the collectivists' spirit of the ancient Indian society and becomes subversive in character and approach. In such an analysis that concentrates only on historical processes of the rise of the individual agency, the notions of creativity and concrete free choices of the makers of ideas, artifacts and social institutions in our decidedly collectivist folk and communitarian practices of production, consumption, and religious celebrations, has been identified only from the stand-point of the finished "creation" i.e., the gallery. It is important to underline that this applied equally to music, dance and theatre and arts – verbal, plastic, graphic or performative. The turmoil of the creators' inner intentions and their ecstasy have been supplanted by collectivist canons – that are always to be strictly adhered as sacred rituals – and enjoined by classics and genre's mentors. Hence, the artist and the studio – the crucible of imagination – have experienced the emotional losses of the creators and their cultural agenda has been always neglected. Consequently, only conformity to classical canons and scriptures (*sastras*) have acted as standard of judging or apportioning the value of any such enterprise. Strictly speaking, artists as well as poets are never expected to give vent to their personal and psychological affections, and to do so in Indian cultural history is generally seen as churlish weaknesses.

Resultantly, there is little flavor of truly felt emotive history of the creative process in Indian cultural tradition. On the contrary, arts very often demonstrate only the cold drill of observing these ritualized practices and their standardized grammar. These remarks apply to poetry, paintings,

sculpture, and architecture, and even to dance, drama and music. Unfortunately, in order to perpetuate the eternal rhythm of an unchanging cosmic Natraj, Indian civilization had swallowed the subjective glow of the creative urge and its dynamic quest for novel experience into perpetual replication of classic canons and sacerdotal traditions. These acts have represented the stoutest bulwark of traditionalism in Indian culture. Nevertheless, despite these restrictions in practice creativity may seep through fissures sometimes. However, theorists would not admit this reality.

### **HISTORICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF INDIAN CULTURAL LIFE: A REVIEW**

Since the Indian cultural tradition is in need of a re-examination, now we attempt at such a review. However, before coming to review the historical representations of our contemporary Indian cultural life in last few generations, let us briefly clarify the idea of “tradition” in the articulation of personhood itself. We turn to this point in the next section.

#### *The Idea of Tradition in the Articulation of Personhood*

The truth is that self-sculpture of the creative persons and the carvings of artifacts are not mechanical practices, guidelines, norms, and implementation of procedures and symbolic devices as inherited in tradition. It remodels, glows and is valorized by bringing the subjective viewpoint of the creator despite her own avowed intention to uphold her place in the cavalcade of overwhelming past paradigms and the pressure of the collectivist symbolism of the overarching tradition. We often miss these minute reconstructions of usage, symbols, motifs, and myths that accommodate newer quests and objectives of our ever-flowing drifts as it calls upon the psyche of the person and thereby seeking the meaning of her newer *Weltschmerz* against stereotyped old dogmas.

To probe this point further on the hermeneutic of “tradition”, we need to re-look the notions of “tradition” and “heritage”. Instead of one unchanging turgid tradition straitjacketing the individual’s own self-imaging in stereotypes, often the reverse is true. A person – who is struggling to find her own bearings – very often selects, trims, grafts and transfers various nebulous strands in the collectivist oceanic matrix, and install an identity for her “tradition”. It is shoring up newer finds from the deep oblivion of the amorphous totality of the assemblage of life. In other words, it is a sort of deep churning of our collectivist memory or encapsulated oceanic inheritance that intends to rediscover one’s identity. Newly recovered function is performed once again when a community or a polity refashions its sprawling hangover of public domain and its institutions in order to meet the freshly emerging needs and pressures of ever transient world-kaleidoscope. The self-directed mentors of such transition have to visualize



institutions in order to redefine and reiterate deftly what is “their Tradition”, most conducive to newer apperceptions of history. All history, thus, becomes contemporary history. This is a paradox, but a deep Truth. Thus, an artist’s creation and his identity run parallel.

Likewise, the critic of cultural semiotics and their theories should recognize that the lexicon of critical standards and rules of appreciation are capable of evaluating every new manifestation. Cultural event, creation, and experience are a novel happening that recasts the existing canon of “Tradition” and its attendant evaluating methods. Now, we delve into such a critique of culture.

#### *A Critique of Cultural Semiotics and Theories*

It is often argued that the individual artist or the culture-maker embodies only the cultural horizons that comprise of his material and non-material worlds. It has been believed that the genesis of the artist invariably comes from the bosom of life and spirit as marked by the historical languages, artistic conventions, paradigms, motifs and modes of treatment relevant to his choice. However, it is wrong to suggest that it amounts to be a mirror image of pre-existing fragments of culture inherited in accumulating stocks of such traditions over historical times. Decidedly, cultural horizons, training, structure of applying devices of media preserved over old run of specific culture, create the possible limits of newer but creative engagements. To sociologize and to interpret every single cultural enterprise as merely the reproduction of some selective pre-existent motifs is to make the background horizon of human agency into its constraining cause. It is true that Icelanders do not have sensibilities of sand dunes, camels, oasis, and delusions of mirage. Similarly, the camel drivers of Sahara desert do not visualize reindeers and sledges. Nevertheless to think poetic and artistic creativity as merely selective recycling of impressions that are most frequently brought on the sensibilities of the creators is to ignore the complex crucible of imagery, its fusion, interpretation and reforming by deep heightening in association and transfer, parallel to strange conscious dream works. Mankind’s cultural creations display neither formidable novelties nor decipherable from the unfoldment of past stocks, nor contemporary social nexuses. Creativity does not represent the drill of old symbols that are frequently met in the finished stocks in our museums, galleries, libraries, institutional ceremonies of families or festivals of religion and community interactions. A creator can over-reach and transform all these, but culture is not nature’s shadow, even if cannot violate it.

Radical Marxists, postmodernists, psychoanalysts and the old transcendental theorists of Absolute Spirit equally tend to denigrate the real mode of going about by culture creators and their inner mortifications. Her struggles are expressed in experiments, fuses, recycling of the old expressions, symbols and themes. The idealistic interpretations hypostatize

the extravagant Divinity, Demiurge, or Spirit, as surreptitiously guiding the painter's brush, the sculptor's chisel and the poet's words. Marxists reify theoretical class-consciousness, ideology or forces and relations of production. Freud deflates quest of the artist to inhibitions and sexual repressions by seeking sly gratifications through subtle displacement and transfers. We do not deny that such cultural critics have some truth to offer. However, singling out a relevant particular element from the multi-tiered on-going feed-backs of creative processes is tantamount to reductionism. There is no justification for such a reductive analysis as implied in their models of "culture" and the processes of its creation.

One can easily see that one needs brushes, canvases, styles, paints, and prior themes to provide materials to a painter, but what she is going to paint is neither any permutative recycle of these, nor is it controlled by some or all of them taken together. There is genuine novelty to be recognized in the process of artistic creation, even though there are not some shoddy imitative works, reiterations or fakes as well. Likewise, the sculptor or a poet may have some personal fixation or infatuations, but psychopaths alone do not lead to raise cultural achievements. We must underwrite the value addition that is registered in fabricating artifacts like a poem, which can be noted in Dryden by history. He is a poet of formative English tongue and has found the old English BRICK and left it as marble by his use of diction and supple imagery. It amounts to saying that birth of culture is the celebration of the unique births. A great Hindi writer Pandit Hazari Prasadji Dwivedi argues that when one genuine literary work is cast, the entire system and hitherto existing interpretation and tradition are reappraised in the light of its multi-dimensional being. In other words, we reconstruct the tradition with the onset of creativity moving older times in the cultural saga.

### **INDIAN CULTURAL CAVALCADE IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES**

We hope to illustrate the issues of creativity and cultural modernization in contemporary India following the earlier theoretical observations, which are relevant to the agency of the self-conscious cultural-makers. It is submitted that the review of creative agency in the ideology of the *ethos* of Hinduism has not been broadly disposed to promote a historical free agent. Briefly, the person, the agent, who is the culture-creator, must be ruled by her/his own righteousness (*swadharma*) and character (*swabhava*), which are the accumulated *samsaras* of endless cycles of his individuation in any creative single life, and is consequently but imperceptivity guided by her/his innate deep, oceanic self, that carves her/his striving towards specific designs of any historical flushing. She may, in nescience, pursue rag-tag impulses, or incorrectly seek realization of some specific affection, but such tinsel strivings of the ego represents nothing more than ephemera. Even such dispositions – in which the person fails to realize herself – are said to be the manifestations of the eternal

*chaitanya* that underlies the shadow of her cosmic *Atman* and gets warped into pseudo-identity of her agency, *praxis* and intentions. In one word, *vivarta*<sup>1</sup> whose slave she is. A sorry puppet!

Consequently, Indian worldview insists that all strivings for culture must be a struggle to be finally merged in the Divine Trinity of *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ananda* beyond evanescent, name and form (*nama-rupa* or *prapancha*) of merely “here and now”. The latter is only an issue from the tissue of *samsaras* that fetter the inborn Witness (*sakshi*), i.e., the *Atman*: There is no end to it. In such a worldview, the historical cultures are mere *ASAT* and shadows of the dreams of man’s “false-consciousness”. However, the individual practitioners of her created art or work must firmly root herself in the time-tested tradition of her calling and hope to join the *sanatana parampara* – the temporal expression of the perennial dance of Natraj, in its threefold aspects, viz., *satyam*, *shivam* and *sundaram*. This has been the line of argument by Indian artists, spiritualists, poets and mystics since ages and they have completely refused the nitty-gritty of hard realities of Indian’s historical reality. We do not simply find any use for this self-delusion, particularly for this paper, which is anchored on concrete mortal coils of authentic culture-makers and their ethereal philosophical mentors like Shri Aurobindo and Anand K. Coomaraswamy, who among the latest writers on Indian culture has been universally regarded as most incisive and educative. We accuse their works as those of distorting the reality of history of society into a journey for the subjectivity of cosmic consciousnesses. This is our evaluation of their highly erudite forays on culture-creativity.

We can now begin to see that no culture is a flight of “alone to alone”, as the penchant of the Indian seekers had been arguing and whose paradigm did Buddha himself set. Thinking of his seminal spiritual quest, western biographers have noted thus: “They saw the legions thunder past and plunged in thought again.”<sup>2</sup> He may have been a great Prophet, a mentor of suffering mankind, but, he is not living in the foot-falls of real time of their agonies, his way is to make still, all choices of all living and explode into Nirvana! Culture to our way of seeing is very much this side of “the timeless”. Another heuristic device that we have found crucial is formulated by structural anthropology as enunciated by Claude-Lévy-Strauss (structural anthropology) that every cultural novelty and its

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<sup>1</sup> *Vivartavada* is a theory advocated by the Advaita Vedantins. According to this theory, the essence of an effect is identical with its cause. The manifold world of different forms and names are not the result or the real modification of *Brahman*, but only an appearance generated by the beginningless *avidya/maysa*. The Vedantins hold that the visible world is an illusion and what is real is *Brahman* alone. As man is in eternal ignorance or nescience, *Brahman* appears as this world.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. R. P. Anschutz: *The Philosophy of J.S. Mill*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

transition are carried out in history by the following exchanges: goods and services, ideas and women.

All these has been quickened over and over various epochs in India's hoary past, unknowingly and without ever being acknowledged, but has consummated once the western imperialism swayed the sub-continent after Ghadar (1857). Accordingly, the contemporary Indian culture is no fossil residue of those warped fragments of consciousness as stuck into chapters, verses, manuscripts, and displayed in museums representing the archaeology of the bygone past. We would review only the lives, times and impulses of the living self-conscious Indian culture-makers in the last few generations. Rabindranath Tagore is one of the very notable creative phenomena. In the popular mass-culture, the Indian cinema is equally pervasive. Between these two poles, representations of Indian's lives between family, rituals, faith, thralldom, misery, and ecstasy are adequately recovered, defined and enunciated. We make our submissions in the following way.

Let us start our observations by indicating certain facts initially. Indian society despite its few urban elite writers, poets, scientists, cinema directors and musicians are still very much stuck in their locality. Speech community, caste, and community life have restrained the free flow of rituals, family ties, concrete diversities or practices of food, dress, and world perspectives. This can be best proved by knowing the way the global Indian Diaspora clubs themselves even now as Bengalis, Gujratis, Bhaiyyas, Punjabis, Parsis, Anglo-Indians, Muslims, or Indian Christians who, always remain mutually in communities whether it is in Paris, New York, Silicon Valley, Dubai or in Hong Kong. Even Muslims and Christians have been no less indoctrinated by their localities like Biharis, Punjabis, Sindhis, South Indians or the Tribal belts of the North East. Christians or Muslims from regions other than their own local village communities are no different and as impervious to all comers as the followers of the Great Umbrella Culture of Hinduism see as to how Khans of West Pakistani army treated Bangladeshi women. Similarly cruel ways meet the asylum seeking of Buddhists Chakma from Chittagong Hills who are hunted by Buddhist tribes of Monpahs and Apothems of Siang and Subansri of Appathins of Nefa even today. No *karuna* of Amitabha lessens such alienation from their tribal brothers of these newer homes. Likewise, the great proponents of Hinduism like the Shiva Sena whose lumpen myrmidons of Thakre's Mumbai ostracize Bhaiyyas from northern India and Lungiwallahs of southern Uduppi who are small time peddlers in the commercial metro of India – Mumbai. It amounts to saying that Hinduism hardly generated any compassionate solidarity for "Hindu wretched" of this scorched sub-continent.

What has been starkly underlined in the above contentions demonstrate that liaison between groups and co-residents continue to be restricted amongst most Indian people on the lines of caste, speech, creed, and localities even after more than hundred years of our western contacts.

This situation has not been altered even though we have been forced to work in urban, metropolitan or industrial systems and governments, namely, capitalistic set-up. This shows reason for the incorporation of middle-classes into the then colonial discourse did not automatically led to the evolution of the dreamt “Brown Indian” about whom Macaulay visualized way back in 1835 when he wrote his well known minutes on education for his Council.

Indian middle-class elite had never fused its exclusive localisms; rather they have been able to rejoice in indigenous proud moorings while seeking material gains by pursuing science, commerce, administering law or education. *Babus* nurture their castes, locality, and hard insularities almost as much as those indentured *coolies* who had been loaded on cargo vessels to slog for imperialists across the oceans to Jamaica, Trinidad, Mauritius, Fiji, Uganda or Natal. Even after ten generations, their progeny out there in those rehabilitated farmlands live the frozen speech communities’ mores, which their agonized fore-bearers had taken with them on the boat about two hundred years back. The same holds true of Tamils in South East Asia, Sri Lanka, or Gypsies of Central Europe and Balkans, who may have been dragged as slaves for services by medieval invaders and dispersed them in their home territories several hundred years back. Indians, thus, dispersed through vicissitudes of world-scrambles, are merely objects of historical wars and rapine, and hardly ever became its makers.

Now, let us get back to the Indian societies of recent generations. The culture, modernization, westernization and secularization have been witnessed predominantly among college-going and schooled middle-classes. The impact, lately of mass-media, films and television, has been far out-reaching for the common man. The typefaces, newspapers, and other book-centric culture of earliest period are confined to only about one fourth of Indian masses. The awareness of cultural movements, before technocratic global media in later sixties, has been confined to urban-oriented white-color middle-classes who have immersed in their own regional speech communities. Consequently, the sensibilities of the highly westernized Indian educated classes suffered all these generations of colonial hegemony and have doubled their alienations. The original Metropolitan avant-garde initiatives that they have mimicked and have wistfully wished to be identified with, but have been contemptuously derided as pretenders, *Babus* and flunkies have often led them to opposite pole of chauvinistic hatred and politics of apotheosis of glorious Indian Civilization and Worship of Mother India leading to the political movement of decolonization.

Another facet of alienation is with the working classes who have been carted from deep countryside to few urban metropolitan centers of colonial power and its widespread commercial and industrial enterprises. Consequently, the middle-class Indians withdrew to themselves with their old casteist disdain into a unique fanonian colonial mark (and vanity’s shells) designed for them by Macaulay’s cultural and educational initiatives of unloading *Babucracy* in Mofussil and cities of the empire. This deep

dissociation of Indian middle-classes from the numerous “small people” (*chotta lok* or *daridra narayan*) could truly never be healed even during the high tide of Gandhiji’s mass-*satyagraha* messages and its wide acceptance by the common man till he passed away, is a disappointing truth. He has been witnessing complete abandonment of his own outlook of identification with the last man out, even by those who most mischievously have encashed their apprenticeship under Gandhi for popular mandate in India’s mass-democracy after illiterate electorate has been gifted universal adult franchise under Nehru’s leadership. Since then, in the last half a century or so, caste, creed, localism and mafias have packaged power and culture progressively in the socio-political spheres and minority liberal book-culture of the period of Raj has practically beaten a hasty retreat under the upsurge of mass television, film and gangster lumping mobilization of totems and myths of all sects, castes, creeds and legends of the earthy country folks.

In the name of the common people, the integral complex of conscious relations constituted and favored the subversion of refined arts and creativity and have sought response from Indians’ old traditions of religious epics and their varied interpretations by regional speech communities in the form of Dharma Yuddhas, Yatras, T. V. version of Ramayana, Mahabharata, Nautankis, Ras Lilas and erotic late night shows. These additions have stamped out the old middle-class, book-reading elite and the theatre cultures. Bhangras, Giddas, Garbas, Tamashas and lewd passionate sexy dances dominate the urban Bars as well as Mofussil itinerant notch shows. Their recrudescence medieval contents are fused with the glitter of latest audio-visual devices. These are sure to wipe out the possible occasion of refining our majority of working masses’ tastes to contribute to modernization. Bad coins always drive out a few genuine good ones, not only in fiscal channels, but equally in CD version too. Channel changing through instant excitements, euphoria aroused by commercial film and late night sex shows remain additions for the “Indian” as it has formed and structured his life-world too. There is lot of fusion of rustic lewdness that has given wind to eulogize popular folk traditions and crude themes. This is the mass upheaval of cinema, which has gained popular box office success. The art cinema of Satyajit Ray or avant-garde creativity of Tagore has lost voices in the metallic, Jazzy drum beats of latest hybrids of Hollywood with Bollywood. Methods and *persona* are getting fused in the emerging world economic capitalist market of India.

Global advertising, book-trade and journalism are likely to stamp out local clientele of small middle-class cases of old Indian Raj and its *Babu*-culture. Craze for beauty contests, modeling and late night entertainment as lustily patronized by global technologists are wiping out traditional inhibitions of our old middle-class people. In the first flush of globalization such as the Mall-Plaza, the cabaret and the sleaze-shows have knocked out Gutenberg’s type-face. Nobody reads classics but only witnesses chat shows on popular T.V. night after night. Emerging commercial unification of world sex-tourism and exotica are going to strip the veil of mystery over

few remaining Shangri-La spots in the obscure corners of the world. A flat mediocrity, endless but sensuous excitement as sustained by crime, violence, terror, spying and sexual perversion, is what popular universal mass-culture serves for the younger impressionable generations. It is a far cry from reading, writing and nourishing refinements to old world-book-cultures of yester-generations. Perversion in art is the maxim that the post-modernists envisage today in India.

Willy nilly, despite diversities peculiar to us as a conglomerate of fossilized old cultures and medieval living orthodoxies of different speech communities who have expressed their denominational identities which sought their constituencies to stay unsurped, the hectic pace of media and commercial crazes of later capitalism, have sought difficult challenges for survival. Inner grit and its inwardness are eroded, to be sure, even among old elites. In the current scenarios of global post-industrial multiple cultures, struggle for marketability of creativity and the media-crazy dispositions which rule the roost of the civilizational crisis for an old society have riddled with such violent multi-culturalism and other-worldly weird traditions as the assimilated modernization seems almost impossible to get started. Often we are watching the bewildering spectacle of the state of art mass-media and its instant reach which are being dragged to buttress the medieval warped religiosities and their often decadent mindless irrationalities that uphold specific cultural traditions, so to say, Hindutva, Sufism, Tantra, Khalsa or Wahabi Islamic Talibanism. There are no sprouts of creative illuminations, but only the latest means of dissemination being put to serve the stunted primordial sensibilities. They are, indeed, the expressions of various kinds of unnatural hubrises. Old world reflective meditative book-culture and detached representation of life's multi-forms that are seen in the personal narratives of Rabindranath Tagore of last century could save us from this simulated fundamentalist craziness, which are visible in our surcharged techno-tonic Yatras either of Talibans or of Khalsas in our generation lately. Reflective and contemplative *gravitas* are lacking even in entertainments and mass cinema. The hope lies in cultivating those genuine seekers who can stand outside the onrush of such instant rages, prompted by global cultural-trade to which unfortunately, libraries, academics and art-societies also often become easy prey. It is nostalgic to see the craze of Indian Art being put to the global auctioning and publication trades. To sum up, creativity, as I believe, resides in the first person singular, right from the beginning, in the middle and at the end.

## **CONCLUSION**

We reiterate that creativity is neither any distorted autobiography, nor a catalogue of items of social structure, power relations, or ideological dogmas. Nothing is more incorrect than to say that the cliché in all verbal narratives are mirrors of the ongoing practices of the class, group, or speech community. We have already rejected such frivolous facile innuendos.

Creators are living persons, but are gifted with wonderful *gravitas* to declass themselves, or go in possession as in Plato's "Phaedrus" has vividly visualized. Artist, as *bhratrhari*, in the classical tradition has so evocatively portrayed, sits on the burning pyre while holds the luscious beloved in his lap. Likewise, the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad lays down the minimum prerequisites of a true poet: she goes down a dark cavernous pit, lowered by a sliding chord being gnawed constantly by the Rodents (could make her) to menacing hungry vipers at the bottom, to smother her; yet as she looks on a crannied blossom shooting through stone walls, she goes in ecstatic trance, forgetting her own deadly fate. Accordingly, neither the deafness of Beethoven stops the sonorous symphonies of the composer, nor the blindness of Milton lessens the recovered glories of the "Paradise Lost". No personal infatuation of Dante (for Beatrice) should make anyone insinuate the rhythms of "Divine Comedy"! Or Goethe's "Gretchen" as the model for Iphigenia!

Somewhere, the poet side-steps living, as Bhavabhuti did when jilted by his age he trusted his imagination hoping that somewhere in some other time his Sahadharmi will share his work. In that sense, any true creativity transcends time, history and its epochs. T. S. Eliot suggests that there is always a big chasm between the agonies of the creative writer and the values that he incarnates in the art. Rabindranath Tagore's "Peasant" is the allegorical creator in his (Golden Boat-Sonar Tori) poem, who on the edge of the water-front with his golden harvest (paddy) waits (long while) and a boat comes; it only has room for the harvest; the Peasant should fend alone high and dry on the edge! That is what all cultural history is about. This is the fate of most creators everywhere whether they are revolutionaries, poets or old longing parents.



## CHAPTER VIII

# MULTI-CULTURALISM AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN INDIA: PAST AND PRESENT

A. RAGHURAMARAJU

### INTRODUCTION

Elucidating of some structural features that have constituted multi-culturalism in classical/traditional India and have sustained its stoma like maze, this essay purports to examine and discuss certain threats to its ongoing survival. India is multi-cultural in languages, sub-languages, arts, literature, music, and many other dimensions. It has several languages and within a language there are several sub-languages. Its literature ranges from the folk to the classical. Indian society is multi-cultural not only in terms of its nature and religion, but also in terms of the social patterns, such as food, clothing, and a variety of societal organizations. This happens more prominently at the cultural spheres, such as music, architecture, visual arts and paintings. More specifically, there are important emotional extensions, which include music, drama, and varieties of other sources of leisure and creativity in work. In a more systematized level there are nine *rasas* – *sringara*, *hasya*, *karuna*, *roudra*, *veera*, *bhayanaka*, *bheebhatsha* and *santa* – constituting the aesthetic domain. Pushing further this domain we come across erotic texts such as Kamasutra by Vatsayana and Ananda Ranga of Kalyana Malla. In a more abstract level, i.e., at the level of thought, there are different philosophical systems, which are conventionally classified as Vedic (*astika*) and non-Vedic (*nastika*). The former consists of Nyaya-Vaisesika (realists), Samkhya-Yoga, Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta – Advaita, Vishistadvaita and Dvaita – and the latter consists of Buddhism, Jainism, and Lokayata (Charvaka). One can go on listing the pluralistic nature of Indian cultural direction. However, it is our intention here to re-examine some of the structural and functional aspects that sustain multi-culturalism in India and those outlooks or perspectives that attempt to destroy multi-cultural nature of the Indian society. In the next section, we unfold those factors that sustain multi-culturalism.

### MULTI-CULTURALISM IN INDIA: STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL SUPPORTS

We would like to enlist the following structural and functional aspects that sustain and support multi-culturalism in India. Firstly, multi-culturalism in India consists of both vertical and horizontal dimensions and displays both inward depth and upward transcendence. However, it must be

noted that, if not all the time, often it is shrouded by layers of hierarchy and amounted to some of the social evils like untouchability. Secondly, another important structural feature that has sustained multiculturalism in India is centred on its spacial distance and temporal multiplicity. This has, in contrast to the modern phenomena of overcoming such distances, engineered in constituting multi-culturalism. Referring to the attempt at destroying this distance, Gandhi says: "I whole heartedly detest this mad desire to destroy distance and time increase animal appetites and go to the ends of the earth in search of their satisfaction."<sup>1</sup>

The third structural feature of Indian multi-culturalism is conditioned by the fact that it is not a society with static idea on multi-culturalism as suggested through the formulation, the "unity in diversity". Rather, multi-culturalism in India is sustained through a dynamic interaction between unity and diversity. Here it may be noted that too much of unity is perhaps detrimental to the idea of diversity. At the same time, the bizarre diversity can throw open the craving for unity from the civil society at the times of crisis like in political war or natural calamities, which once completed might outlast its temporary use. The existence of difference and unity in varying degrees, sometime tending towards this or that side, sustains multi-culturalism in India. In other words, multi-culturalism in India is sustained by the pull and push of unity and diversity.<sup>2</sup> Elucidating the characteristic features of pluralism in India, M. K. Gandhi says:

We are one nation before they [British] came to India.... I do not wish to suggest that because we were one nation we had no differences, but it is submitted that our leading men travelled throughout India either on foot or in bullock-carts. They learned one another's language and there was no aloofness between them ... They say that India was one undivided land so made by nature. They, therefore, argued that it must be one nation.<sup>3</sup>

### **MULTI-CULTURALISM IN INDIA: THREATS TO ITS EXISTENCE**

The above-said line of thinking – while supporting the idea of multi-culturalism in India and sustaining it by the structural features of space and time with its horizontal and vertical differences – also houses and sustains social evils, such as untouchability. Herein, originates the threats to multi-culturalism in India. There are three sources of these threats: the first is the

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<sup>1</sup> M.K. Gandhi: *Young India*, 17 March, (1927), p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. M.K. Gandhi: *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi: Civilization, Politics and Religion*, ed. Raghavan Iyer, vol. I. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

project of modernity; the second is the high-culture of classical period; and the third is the ideology of Hindutva, which in the contemporary times threatens the cultural diversity through its slogan “politicizing religion and militarizing Hinduism.”<sup>4</sup> The ideology of Hindutva, though not necessarily related to the high-culture of classical period in India, it may perhaps incorporate elements from the project of modernity, which presents some threats to multi-culturalism. Let us, in the next three sections, discuss these threats to multi-culturalism, as they correspond to the special needs of understanding Indian multi-cultural tradition.

### *The Project of Modernity*

The project of modernity – given its adherence to instrumental rationality and abstract homogenized individualism – has either dismissed the reality of cultural differences or critical of them. Within the social contract theory there is no place for pluralism. Its overriding normativity is bereft of the description of plural social institutions. In fact, all three social contract philosophers – Hobbes, Rousseau and Locke – have positively rejected natural communities and the “intermediary natural social institutions”. Commenting on the idea of state and power in Hobbesian philosophy, Ebenstein says that Hobbes “... vehemently opposes to the division of powers or mixed government ... [and] to keep the authority of the state strong, Hobbes advises the sovereign not to allow the growth of groups and institutions that intervene between state and individual.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, Hobbes not only rejects the division of political power but also rejects anything that mediates between the state and the individual. Therefore, the notion of rationalism in the political philosophy of contract-philosophers is positively against pluralism and multi-culturalism.

Such hostility towards pluralism – though neither absolutist nor majoritarian from contract philosophers’ point of view – continues to prevail even in the later enlightenment schools, such as those of the liberal utilitarians. In the writings of liberals, such as Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill, are obsessed with toning down of the unity dimension. J. S. Mill, in fact, rejects the majoritarianism advocated by contract-philosophers in his onslaught against the tyranny of the majority. He highlights the right to dissent, nevertheless, the fact remains that liberals, given their normative project of individualism and liberty, do not positively promote community differences. In fact, the difference that the liberals concede and even bolster is only the different individual preferences, and not community difference; but what pluralism is crying for is the community difference.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. V.D. Savarkar: “Essentials of Hindutva,” in *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya*, (Poona: Maharashtra Prantic Hindusabha, 1964).

<sup>5</sup> William Ebenstein: *Great Political Thinkers*, (Calcutta: Oxford and IBM, 1972), p. 361.

All these make many aspects of the enlightenment tradition not being favourable towards pluralism. In contrast, they tend to homogenize individuals. Notwithstanding this threat, we should, however, mention here that there are many in India, who sees the project of modernity as liberating – even though it rejects or eventually tends to reject pluralism – because it advocates the removal of social evils, such as untouchability, oppression of women, female infanticide and the like. In the next section we take up for discussion the high-culture of classical period in India and see how it is a threat to multi-culturalism.

#### *High-Culture Classical Tradition in India*

As stated above, one way of understanding multi-culturalism in India is neither by romanticizing this concept as syncretism or conflict free, nor by denouncing it as completely treacherous as these attitudes facilitate their re-emergence in a crude form. Instead, we want to see them largely as governed by the pull and push of unity and diversity. In this section, we discuss one such attempt towards this unity that has advocated against multi-culturalism, namely the high-culture classical period in Indian history. Referring to the many gods in the Vedic pantheon, Hiriyanra says that they include not only the two pre-Indian periods, but also several others whose conceptions the Aryan settlers form in their new home, such as the river-deities like the Saraswati. To quote on this point:

The number of these gods – old and new – is indefinite. Sometimes they are reckoned at thirty-three and classified into three groups of eleven each according to their abode, viz.: (i) gods of the sky, like Mitra and Varuna; (ii) gods of the mid-air, like Indra and Maruts; and (iii) gods of the earth, like Agni and Soma – a classification which, by the way, indicates a desire to discover the interrelations of the gods and arrange them systematically.<sup>6</sup>

Though numerous, Hiriyanra remarks that all of them have co-ordinate power and no single god is designated as the “Supreme God”, even though some of them are more imposing than others. For instance, Indra and Varuna, the gods respectively of the warrior and the pious devotee are more imposing than others.<sup>7</sup> However, there has been, says Hiriyanra, a move to erase this diversity and institute unity. He elucidates this idea through the instance where Varuna replaces Indra. Varuna is described as having fixed the laws of the physical universe, which no one can violate. Through his power he makes the rivers flow into the ocean without over-filling it.

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<sup>6</sup> H. Hiriyanra: *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967), p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

According to Hirianna, this conception of Varuna is soon superseded in Vedic mythology by that of Indra who is a god of battles rather than of righteousness. Such a shift has occurred not because of the lapse in the moral standards of the Indians, but is necessitated by the peculiar circumstances in which the conception of Indra comes into prominence. Hirianna adds on this point as follows:

The immigrant Aryans had to subdue the numerous indigenous tribes; and it was in the process of this subjugation in which Varuna – essentially a god of peace – could not well be invoked that the idea of this warrior-god as known to the Rgveda was developed ... We may grant that during the period of Indra's supremacy the self-assertion and violence, which distinguish him. Indra's supremacy, however, did not last long and he did not become the supreme God of the Indians, but had to yield place to others who were ethically more lofty so that it does not seem justifiable to conclude that the Indian view might once for all replaced right.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to this tendency, there is also the tendency at the philosophical level to move towards unity in the form of monotheism. This belief in the plural gods, a hall-mark of early Vedic religion, has lost its attraction gradually. They are no longer content to refer the observed phenomena to the multiplicity of gods, but strive to discover the one God that controls and rules over them all.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, there is another craving towards monism, which traces the whole of existence to a single source, i.e., the *Brahman*. It is fully worked out in the Upanishads.<sup>10</sup>

Notwithstanding this craving for unity, there are internal aspects of diversity even within the high-cultural domain. For instance, it is said that the number of Upanishads that have come down to us is very large – over two hundred being reckoned, though all are not equally old.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the purview of this domain or its extent is not very large. It does not extend beyond the general recognition of the unity of Upanishadic teaching. Moreover, about the exact nature of Upanishadic teaching, they widely differ from each other.<sup>12</sup> About the extent of the impact of Upanishads, Hirianna observes the following:

It should not be thought that ritualism in this extreme form was in any sense the creed of the people at large. The

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 33-34.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 53.

*Mantras* of the Rgveda and the Brahmanas, which have so far been the basis of our conclusions, were the compositions of poet-priests who had developed a cult of their own, and unfold but an aristocratic religion.... The creed of the common people continued to be simple and consisted, in addition to the more primitive forms of nature-worship alluded to above, in various practices such as incarnations and charms intended to ward off evil and appease the dark spirits of the air and of the earth. We get an idea of these folk-practices from the Atharva-Veda which, though somewhat later than the Rgveda, records in certain respects a more ancient phase of religious belief.<sup>13</sup>

Such a line of thinking and argument obviate the necessity to believe that the non-conforming of ordinary people to these high cultural inputs have sustained and provided an adequate structural basis not only for multi-culturalism of the civil society, but also for the pluralism within the high-cultural sphere notwithstanding the sophistication of the rituals. These purviews, which are outside the high Vedic sphere, though not exhibiting its powers all the time but definitely warning the excesses of the high and also proving the ground for the antidotes to those excesses that have emerged. When there is too much diversity, an urge for unity is placed as a requirement and when there is excessive unity then the need that arises is that of plurality. It is our claim that this difference between the high and the low, which is otherwise active, are an important distinction.

Hence, there are two dominant spheres – one threatens to unify and the other defies and asserts the diversity – have predominantly surfaced in the multi-cultural arena of Indian societies. Survival of multi-culturalism is largely happens from the structural features of pre-modern is still a reality unlike in the west. Moreover, unlike being a passive reality it continues to thrive despite the hegemony from the top against it to be an active and functioning reality. It incorporates, resists, deceives and debunks. The civil society has survived so far without surrendering completely. Once it surrenders either because of the lack of internal resources or because of its willingness, then that will be considered as the doom for difference.

#### *The Ideology of Hindutva*

There is yet another danger posed to the multi-culturalism in India, which is from the Hindutva forces that homogenize the plural cultural-networks through politicizing religion and installing a monolithic pan-Hindu identity. The Hindutva project is dangerous to multi-culturalism as it continues to function within the prescribed parameters of active political life. Savarkar, who has been the ideologue of the doctrine of Hindutva, sets

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

his main concern to politicize religion by militarizing Hinduism. To begin with, he developed his theory of political unity as embodied in Hindutva by transforming Hinduism. Distinguishing Hinduism from Hindutva he says:

“Hinduism” ... means the school or system of religions the Hindus follow... “Hindutva” is far more comprehensive and refers not only to the religious aspect of the Hindu people as the word “Hinduism” does, but comprehends even their cultural, linguistic, social and political aspects as well. It is more or less akin to “Hindu polity”, and its nearly exact translation would be “Hinduness”. The third word, “Hindudom” means the Hindu people spoken of collectively. It is a collective name for the Hindu world, just as Islam and Moslem world or Christandom denotes the Christian world.<sup>14</sup>

The most important idea that lurks behind Savarkar’s political views is the slogan that he often repeats, namely: “Hinduisse all politics and Militarize Hindudom.”<sup>15</sup>

It would be appropriate here to elaborate various aspects of this recommended strategy. For Savarkar, Hindu philosophy is not to be considered as a mere religious order confining itself to the spiritual and the ritualistic activities. He condemns the ritualistic aspect of Hindu religion/Hinduism. In this context, he distinguishes Hinduism from Hindutva. A Hindu need not necessarily accept the authority of Vedas, as "a man can be truly Hindu as any without believing even in the Vedas as an independent religious authority..."<sup>16</sup> Hinduism that is usually identified with Vedanta philosophy is not central to a Hindu; rather, it is for Savarkar a "contingent, derivative, a fraction,[and] a part of Hindutva."<sup>17</sup> For him, the "... concept of Hindutva is an idea embodying ... principle of unity."<sup>18</sup> It is " ... not [just] a word but a history,"<sup>19</sup> consisting of one language (Hindi); one name (Hindu); a common culture and law; all are pre-British and pre-Islamic for him. Hindu is one for whom Hindustan is not only a fatherland but also a holy land.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> V. D. Savarkar: “Some of the Basic Principles and Tenets of the Hindu Movement,” in *Hindu Rashtra Darshan*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Bombay: Veer Savarkar Prakashan 1984), p. 77.

<sup>15</sup> V. D. Savarkar and G.M. Joshi, eds.: *Historical Statements*, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1967), p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> V.D. Savarkar: “Essentials of Hindutva,” in *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya*, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ibid., pp. 2, 46, 76.

Savarkar sought to stockpile into Hinduism these elements of politics and thereby transforming it into Hindutva. This opening would remain a mere theoretical formulation if not followed by its practical contingencies. Thus, he provides flesh to this ideology by his second statement namely, militarizing Hinduism. Here we can say that the passage from Hinduism to Hindutva is a journey where religious elements are rejected, or radically transformed into an invigoration of politics by injecting into it the desired political elements of militancy, power and a closed unity. Thus, the ideology of Hindutva is not merely religious in character nor is it an expression of the revival of tradition, but a new phenomenon, which purports to recast Hinduism within the cultural frame of a re-worked militant nationalism. Hindutva does refer to the religious symbols, but not without radically transforming these symbols as agents of politics. The political ideology of Hindutva needs an exposition not because that it is too traditional in its approach and character but because of the fact that it is the contemporary partaking of everything in the modern world. The violent Rama and the revengeful Lord who is resurrected by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajarang Dal during their camp for Ram Mandir at Ayodhya is an illustration on this point. The metamorphosis from Hinduism to Hindutva has provided a variety of techniques which have shut the doors of criticality in public discourse and thus requires a serious note of its modificatory nature. What they sought to modify in this process is the alleged transformation of the multi-cultural fabric of India, which they want to make it as a homogenized Hindu community/state.

## **CONCLUSION**

Discussion on these three important sources that threaten multi-culturalism in India should make us to be cautious and work to the desirable aspects of multi-culturalism. While accepting that modernity is homogenizing Indian society and its ensuing path towards unity, we must not forget the limits of this process. There are many spaces in India which are not homogenized either by the forces within high-classical tradition in India, the project of modernity, or even by Hindutva. This sociological feature, however, should not make us wholeheartedly celebrate multi-culturalism, but as aids to shape and work upon the elimination of the social evils in them.



## CHAPTER IX

# THE CATEGORIZATION OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

*D. BALA GANAPATHY*

### INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to articulate certain problematic that are involved in the traditional ways of categorizing Indian philosophy as Orthodox Systems (*Astika Darsana*) and Heterodox systems (*Nastika Darsana*) and explores an alternative approach, which otherwise is not explicitly seen in the treatises of the history of Indian philosophies. By “categorization” we mean classifying Indian philosophy into different streams. For instance, traditional historians of Indian philosophy have categorized Indian philosophy into two streams – the *Astika* and the *Nastika* systems. The *Astika Darsana* comprises of six schools: Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta. The *Nastika Darsana* includes three schools: Carvaka, Buddhism and Jainism. It is our endeavor, in this paper, to critically analyze the traditional *Astika-Nastika* categorization of Indian philosophy with its six and three schools respectively, so as to find out the rationale behind this categorization. Hence, this paper contests and questions the general agreement on the traditional categorization of Indian philosophy. What we intend to do for such a critical analysis and exploration is to discuss these systems of Indian philosophy within the general intellectual milieu of Indian cultural tradition, its orientations, presuppositions and preferences. In order to carry out such a task, we take recourse to different scholars, both traditional and modern, approach and appropriate Indian Philosophy from different perspectives and scrutinize their critical-creative approaches. The traditional categorization of Indian philosophy wrongly assumes, as Dayakrishna states, that the story of Indian Philosophy comes to an end a long time ago and that it is frozen into a definite mould with its own distinctive doctrines which have remained the same since time immemorial with no changes in them.<sup>1</sup> We, in this paper, contest this assumption and thereby show that the categorization of Indian philosophy into *Astika-Nastika* systems is inappropriate, if not discordant.

We begin this study with the preliminary analysis of the term “*darsana*” which refers to a school or system of thought. Then we unfold historically the *astika-nastika* categorization of Indian philosophy by citing

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dayakrishna: *Indian Philosophy: A New Approach*, (Delhi. Sri Satguru Publications, 1997), p. ix.

the opinions of classical and contemporary authors. Having done this task, we take up the question of the validity of the classification of *Astika Darsana* into six schools and *Nastika Darsana* into three schools. Since there are 36 schools of Indian philosophy, the traditional categorization of Indian philosophy into just nine schools is based on some intellectual bias and, therefore, the Indian cultural tradition has not accorded due importance to the other 27 schools both in the works of commentators and historians. Hence, next we take up for our consideration the issue of developing an alternative categorization of Indian philosophical systems that would give due importance all schools. In this attempt, we highlight the efforts made by both classical and contemporary thinkers in this regard, thereby show the inadequacy of *astika-nastika* categorization of Indian philosophy into 6+3 systems of thought to explain the whole of Indian philosophical systems. In the conclusion, we point to the necessary to view different systems of Indian philosophy as different attempts to grasp the ultimate reality. This view will lead us to see similarities and differences among all the systems in addressing the problems of life – empirical, metaphysical, religious and spiritual – from different points of view basing on their historical background.

Before we present the problem by stating generally accepted and advocated categorization of Indian philosophy, we need to analyze the meaning of the term “*darsana*” to which we turn our attention in the next section.

#### ETYMOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM “DARSANA”

The consideration of the etymology of the term “*darsana*” will provide a preliminary orientation with respect to its internal meaning. Philosophy in India is called “*Darsana Sastra*,”<sup>2</sup> which is etymologically related to the term “*darsan*” which means “to see”. To see is to perceive the Reality. According to the Indian philosophers, it is not just seeing the obvious that is given to the senses, but the inner insights and implied depths of the objects of knowledge, which are believed to be offering the truth about the nature of Reality. Hence, the term “*darsana*” comes to mean not only perceptual observation, but also conceptual knowledge and intuitional experiences. However, it is not just observation, experience and knowledge, but reason plays a predominant role in patterning and structuring the basis of “*darsana*” in Indian cultural tradition. Accordingly, it is argued that a system of thought based on reason alone should be recognized as *Darsana Sastra*. However, *Darsana Sastras* in India emphasize the idea that reason must be transcended by intuition. It does not mean that Indian philosophies do not accept reason. What they point out is the ultimate insufficiency of reason in the human intellectual categories. Thus, Radhakrishnan explains

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sundara Ramaiah G.: *Philosophical Essays*, (Vizag: Andhra University Press, 1982), p. 1.

*Darsana Sastra* as an attempt “to gather the floating conceptions of world into some great general ideas.”<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the systematic presentation of floating ideas on the basis of reason into general ideas can be a proper understanding of *Darsana Sastra*. As mentioned earlier, it is of general agreement that different systems of Indian philosophy is classified into two streams of thought such as *Astika* and *Nastika* systems, on the basis of their acceptance or the rejection of the authority of the Vedas. Let us look into this distinction carefully by looking at the history of Indian philosophy. Historically we do not know anything about the thinker, who has made this distinction first; the reason behind this categorization; the date when this classification is made; and the basis on which this grouping is made. Though these questions may look naïve, an attempt to answer these questions is of crucial importance in understanding the problems that are involved in the traditional categorization of Indian philosophy. Let us, now, begin our analysis with *astika-nastika* categorization of Indian philosophical systems from the historical point of view.

#### **ASTIKA-NASTIKA CATEGORIZATION OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

In the western intellectual and cultural tradition, an atheist is one who does not believe in God, but in the Indian cultural tradition, an atheist (*nastika*) is one who does not accept the authority of the Vedas. However, one can doubt the English translation of the term “*nastika*” as an atheist. Let us look into history and find out how the terms “*astika*” and “*nastika*” are defined by different scholars. Manu’s definition clearly states that *nastika* is the one who despises the Vedas (*nastika vedanindakah*). This definition of *nastika* implies that *astika* is the one who believes in and follows Vedas. Here we find the basis for defining the *astika-nastika* distinction as the acceptance or rejection of the Vedas. Bhimacharya’s definition of *astika* differs from Manu and addresses a new portent. He describes *astika*, in his *Nyayakosa*, as the one who accepts the existence of the other world (*paralokaadyastitva vadi*). Although the basis of this definition is difficult to understand, yet what is explicitly evident is that the focus of attention here is shifted from Vedas to the other world (*paraloka*). Nevertheless, Bhimacharya’s definition of *nastika* goes hand in hand with that of Manu. According to him, *nastika* is the one who does not follow the path prescribed by the Vedas (*vedamaargam ananurundhanah*). Bhimacharya’s definition is significant in the sense that the basis of *astika-nastika* distinction, for him, is not Vedas as it is with Manu. However, Bhimacharya has postulated two distinct and separate categories – the other world and Veda – as the defining features of *Astika* and *Nastika Darsanas* respectively. Based on the above criteria, he excludes Samkhya and the

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<sup>3</sup> Radhakrishnan S.: *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2, (New Delhi. Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 18.

Advaita Vedanta from the *Astika Darsana*, since they do not accept the existence of other world (*mayavadi vedanti api nastica eva paryavasane sampadyate*).

Interestingly, Radhakrishnan mentions the distinction that Panini made between *astika*, *nastika* and *daistika*. According to Radhakrishnan, an *astika* is the one who believes in a transcendental world (*asti paralokah*); a *nastika* is the one who does not believe in it (*nasti paralokah*); and a *daistika* is a sort of fatalist.<sup>4</sup> In the Tamil work *Manimekhalai*, the systems, such as Lokayata, Baudha, Samkhya, Nyaya, Vaisesika and Mimamsa are regarded as *Astika Darsanas*.<sup>5</sup> Further, Kumarila Bhatta, a proponent of Mimamsa system, who lived during seventh century A.D., in his *Tantravaartica* – a commentary on Sabara’s commentary of Mimamsa Sutras of Jaimini – regards the Samkhya, the Yoga, the Pancharatra and the Pasupata systems as being opposed to the Veda as much as Buddhism.<sup>6</sup> This implies that Samkhya, Yoga, Pancharatra, and Pasupata systems, which are normally regarded as *Astika Darsanas*, are also *Nastika Darsanas* like Buddhism. In contrast with this view, Vijnana Bhikshu, the great expounder of Samkhya system, who lived during 16<sup>th</sup> century, considers that Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Vedanta, Pasupata and Pancharatra systems have their roots in the Vedas. Madhusudana Saraswati, an Advaitin of early 16<sup>th</sup> century, uses the term “*nastika*” to refer to the one who denies the soul and after life.<sup>7</sup> What we see here is the shift from “Vedas” to “soul and after-life” as the basis of *astika-nastika* distinction. Based on this schema, he includes Nyaya, Vaisesika, Karma Mimamsa, Sariraka Mimamsa, Patanjala, Pancaratra and Pasupati in the *Astika Darsana* and Four schools of Buddhism, Digambara school of Jainism and Carvaka in the *Nastika Darsana*.

Therefore, the task of understanding the basis of the *astika-nastika* distinction is a difficult one keeping in view of the philosophical crystallization and rational formulations of the systems and view-points explained by the commentators of Indian philosophical systems. Moreover, even in recent times attempts have been made to show the inadequacy of *astika-nastika* categorization of Indian philosophy, as they are purely based on Vedic authority. Dayakrishna, for instance, calls the notion of Vedic authority as the criterion of *astika-nastika* distinction as a myth.<sup>8</sup> According to him, the bulk of the tenets of Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisesika schools are not based on the teachings of the Vedas, which makes the very

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 783.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar: *Manimekhalai*, p. xxi.

<sup>6</sup> Kumarila Bhatta: *Tantravaartica*, i.3.4.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. K. S. Murty: *Philosophy in India*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publications, 1991), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Dayakrishna: “Three Myths about Indian Philosophy”, *Indian Philosophy: A Collection of Readings*, ed. Roy W. Perrot, (New York: Garland Series, 2000), pp. 369-383.

notion of the authority of the Vedas a difficult one to reckon with in the usual categorization of Indian philosophy as *Aastika* and *Nastika Darsanas*. It may be noted here that few systems of Indian philosophy accept certain portions of the Vedas and few others accept the remaining parts, which are rejected by the earlier systems. Sutras – which form the foundation of the Orthodox schools (*Astika Darsanas*) – are viewed by scholars to have higher authority than the non-Upanishadic parts of the Vedas.<sup>9</sup> However, it is contestable that the admissibility of the notions of superiority or inferiority in the meaningful inquiry into the categorization of the schools of Indian philosophy.

Now, that we have elaborated on the problems involved in *astika-nastika* categorization of Indian philosophy and, therefore, its validity, let us, now, turn our attention to the critical consideration of the classification of *Astika Darsana* into six schools and *Nastika Darsana* into three schools.

### **SIX SCHOOLS OF ASTIKA DARSANA AND THREE SCHOOLS OF NASTIKA DARSANA: A CRITIQUE**

In the context of understanding Indian philosophy outside the *astika-nastika* categorization, it is necessary to undertake a critical consideration of the classification of *Astika Darsana* into six schools and *Nastika Darsana* into three schools. There are certain questions that require our attention regarding the 6+3 (6 orthodox systems and 3 heterodox systems) classification of Indian Philosophy. Where does the present day version of 6+3 categorization originate? Are there other schools of philosophy along with the 6+3 in Indian philosophy? These questions obviate the necessity to have a re-look at the *astika-nastika* categorization of Indian philosophy from the olden times. The distinction between *Astika* and *Nastika Darsanas* is absent before the advent of Christian era. Kautilya, the author of *Arthasasthra*, who belong to 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., broadly classified sciences into four: the first is the metaphysical science of philosophy (*anvikshiki*); the teachings of the three Vedas (*trayi* – Rg, Yajur and Sama); the science of agriculture (*varta*); and the science of government (*dandaniti*). Thus, Kautilya considers philosophy as one of the four sciences and includes in philosophy only Samkhya, Yoga and Lokayata.<sup>10</sup> He excludes other four

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<sup>9</sup> Dayakrishna, *Indian Philosophy: Counter Perspective*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 7-12.

<sup>10</sup> “*Anvikshiki trayi varta dandanitisceti vidyah 1 sankhyam yogah Lokayatamceti anvikshiki 11.*” “*Dhamadhaman trayyam. Arthanarthan vartayam. Nayaapanayam dandanityam. Balaabale chaitasam hetubhiranvikshamana anvikshiki lokasyopakaroti, vyasane abhyudaye ca budhi mavasthapayati, prajnavakyakriyaavaisaradyam ca karoti.*” What does *anvikshiki* do? It helps people by testing the strengths of *trayi*, *varta* and *dandaniti* on the touchstone of reason. It stabilizes the mind both in good and

orthodox systems and two heterodox schools from the realm of philosophy. It seems hardly sensible to think that Kautilya has been ignorant of these schools, since Mimamsa and Vedanta systems are written between second century B.C. and second century A.D. Nyaya and Viseshika would have become fully developed systems when Arthasasthra is written. Therefore, the exclusion of these systems of philosophy by Kautilya in his Arthasasthra seems to be difficult to understand.<sup>11</sup>

Haribhadra,<sup>12</sup> a Jaina monk, who lived in 8<sup>th</sup> century A. D., is the first one to use the term “*darsana*” to signify a philosophical system. He, in his work, *Saddarsana Samuchchaya*, considers Buddhism, Nyaya, Samkhya, the Jaina, the Vaisesika and the Jaiminiya systems as *Darsanas*. He excludes Carvaka, Yoga and Uttara-Mimamsa from the list of *Darsana*. The *Sarvadaršana Siddhanta Sangraha* – the epitome of the doctrine of all the *Darsanas*, a 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century text book, whose author is not known, probably from the school of Advaita of Sankara – discusses the views of the Lokayakas, Jainas, four schools of Buddhism – Madhyamika, Yogachara, Sautrantika and Vaibhashika; Vaisesika; Nyaya; Purva-Mimamsa – Kumarila Bhatta and Prabhakara schools; Samkhya; Yoga; Vedanta of Sankara; and the philosophy of Vedavyasa – the philosophy of the Mahabharata. Interestingly, this list of 13 schools for the first time includes philosophy of Mahabharata which was written by Vyasa as one of the philosophical schools of Indian philosophy. A similarly particularistic but more inclusive view of Mallinadha, a Brahmanical writer, in his commentary on Prataparudra Ysobhushana of Vidydhara, states Panini, Jaimini, Vyasa, Kapila, Akshapada and Kanada as the advocates of *Shaddarsanas*.<sup>13</sup> Jayanta Bhatta, who lived in 11 century A.D., in his *Nyaya Manjari* lists Mimamsa, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Baudha and Carvaka as *Saddarsanas*.<sup>14</sup> The compiler of *Sarvamata Samgraha* classifies the

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bad times. It sharpens the skills of mind, speech and deeds. Cf. Kautilya: *Arthasasthra*, Chapter 1.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Radhakrishnan states that Samantabhadra, a Digambara Jain of 6<sup>th</sup> century is said to have written a work called *Aptamimamsa*, which contains a review of the various philosophical schools. A Madhyamika Buddhist by name Bhavaviveka is reputed to be the author of a work called *Tarkajvala* a criticism of the Mimamsa, Samkhya, Vaisesika and Vedanta schools leaving out Nyaya and Vaisesika. A Digambara Jain by name Vidyananda (8<sup>th</sup> century A. D.) in his *Ashtasaahasri* and another Digambara by name Merutunga in his work on *Saddarsana Vichara* (1300AD) said to have criticized the Hindu systems. *Prasthanabheda* by Madhusudana Saraswati (16<sup>th</sup> century), contain useful accounts of the different philosophies.

<sup>13</sup> “*Baudham naiyanikam sankhyam jainam vaiseshikam tatha I jaiminiyanca namani darsana nama munayoh II.*” Mallinadha: *Commentary on Prataparudra Ysobhushana of Vidydhara*, 1.3.

<sup>14</sup> “*Paniner Jaiminescaiva Vyasaya Kapilasya ca Akshapadasya Kanadasya...*” Sundara Ramaiah: *History of Indian Logic*, (1982)

schools of Indian Philosophy into *vaidika* and *avaidika*. He includes Mimamsa, Samkhya and Tarka in the former and Baudha, Arhata and Lokayata in the latter. Pushpadanta argues that there are only four schools of philosophy viz., Samkhya, Yoga, Pasupatamata and Vaishnava.

The Sarvasiddhanta Samgraha attributed to Shri Sankaracarya seems to be accepting the 6+3 classification of Indian philosophical schools. It mentions also about other schools, such as Lokayata, Arhata, four Schools of Buddhism, Vaisesika, Nyaya, two Schools of Purva-Mimamsa, Samkhya, Patanjali and Veda Vyasa Vedanta. Jinadatta Surin (1220),<sup>15</sup> a Jaina philosopher, includes Jaina, Mimamsa, Baudha, Samkhya, Saiva and Nastica under six *Darsanas*. Rajasekhara Surin (1348), another Jaina philosopher mentions Jaina, Samkhya, Jaiminiya Mimamsa, Yoga, Vaisesika and Sangala school of thought in the list of *Shaddarsanas*. Madhavacharya, an Advaita Vedantin, who belonged to 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D., in his Sarvadarsana Sangraha mentions 16 *Darsanas*. They are: Carvaka, Baudha, Arhata, Ramanuja, Madhva with the name of Purana Prajna, Panini's Grammatical System, Four Saivate schools, Nakulisa, Saiva Siddhanta, Pratyabhijna and Raseswara, Akshapada, Aulukhya, Jaimini, Samkhya, Patanjala and Sankara.

In the light of the above analyses and explanations, we may be able to sum up that, for Kautilya, there are only three systems of philosophy, whereas Haribhadra speaks of six systems, which includes both *Nastika* and *Astika Darsanas*. Sarvadarsana Siddhanta Sangraha, the anonymous work, lists 13 *Darsanas* and Madhvacharya mentions 16 *Darsanas*. On the whole we do not find any form of unanimity among the authors with regard to the number of *Darsanas* and the basis on which the schools are listed in a particular classification. It is also noteworthy to mention here that the basis on which different schools are put together by Madhva, Haribhadra and Rajasekhara is not historical. Madhva arranged the systems in a logical order. His presentation of a following system is prefaced with a criticism of the preceding one. One may, however, accept the basis of Haribhadra's classification as an out-growth of religion, the essential nature and means of liberation and the categories.<sup>16</sup> According to him, the difference of one system from another is either due to the deity by whom it is revealed or the conception of the categories that are involved therein. We may also note here that the historical background of the author plays a significant role in his explication of different schools and exposition of their theories.

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p.147."Jainam, mainam mimamsakam baudham samkhyam saivamca nastikam svasvatarkavibhedena janiyaddarsanani sat." Sundara Ramaiah: *History of Indian Logic*, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> "Jainam, mainam mimamsakam baudham samkhyam saivamca nastikam svasvatarkavibhedena janiyaddarsanani sat." Sundara Ramaiah: *History of Indian Logic*, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. K. C. Pandey: *An Outline of the History of Saiva Philosophy*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publications, 1999), p. 10.

Seen in the light of above facts, it is clear that there are more than nine – six *Astika* and three *Nastika* – *Darsanas* of philosophy in India. Gopal R. Stavig's analysis of Indian Philosophy on the basis of the textbooks enumerates 36 systems. Stavig has examined 12 standard textbooks of history of Indian Philosophy in order to get a better idea of regarding the number of the systems of Indian philosophy. The findings of his "empirical inductive scientific techniques" are significant in the present context. One of the disclosures of his study is that the classical ninefold – six *Astika* and three *Nastika* – enumeration of Indian systems of thought serves as a norm for the authors of the textbooks. However, it is doubtful if this ninefold enumeration is classical, especially in the context of the above discussion. Despite the doubt regarding the classical nature this ninefold categorization of Indian philosophy, it is deplorable that it is taught to the students of Indian philosophy, at the cost of neglecting the other systems of Indian philosophy we have expounded in the above-sections. According to Stavig, the traditional listing of nine schools of philosophy is far too limited to encompass the wide range of Indian doctrines. It amounts to saying that this nine-fold listing is a narrow way of presenting Indian philosophy. It is remarkable to point out that there are only two text books out of twelve, which find it relevant to discuss all the thirty-six schools of Indian philosophy reviewed by Stavig. This shows again how narrow our representation of Indian philosophy is. If philosophy is an indication of the intellectual bias of a culture, then we must admit that Indian philosophical and cultural tradition has not accorded due importance to other schools of Indian philosophy both in the works of her commentators and historians.<sup>17</sup>

Since there are 36 systems of Indian philosophy, its traditional ninefold classification of six *Astika Darsanas* and three *Nastika Darsanas* does not do justice to all the other schools of Indian philosophy. Hence there is the need to develop an alternative categorization that would give due importance all schools. In the next section, we take up this topic for our discussion.

### **THE NEED FOR AN ALTERNATIVE CATEGORIZATION OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY**

As a matter of fact, the traditional classification and categorization of Indian philosophy into nine schools is not accepted as absolute by the scholars of Indian Philosophy. There were attempts by different scholars not only to criticize the existing classification but also to emphasize the need to reflect over Indian Philosophy by going beyond this classification. However, these attempts have not received due prominence and follow up. There have been attempts by the historians of Indian philosophy to suggest that all systems of Indian philosophy are but different viewpoints of

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Gopal R. Stavig: "How many systems of Indian Philosophy are there?" *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, (1999), pp. 83-92.



understanding the same ultimate reality from different points-of-view and frameworks. Such an understanding tacitly acknowledges the fact that the human world is a pluralistic world and that there are multiple points of departure from which understanding of human experience can be approached. Vachaspati Misra of 9<sup>th</sup> century A. D, one of the most versatile of Indian philosophers, who has written commentaries on each of the viewpoints except Mimamsa. His commentaries include the Samkhya, Yoga, and Nyaya systems, despite the fact that his predominant interest is Vedantic. He provides an objective analysis without getting prejudiced by any of the systems. According to Prabhodha Chandrodaya, a philosophical drama, the six systems of Hindu philosophy are not mutually exclusive, but intended to establish the glory of God from different points of view. Max Mueller, while supporting the view that there is one fundamental basis for all the schools of Indian Philosophy, states that “the longer I have studied the various systems, the more have I become impressed with the truth of the view taken by Vijnana Bhikshu and others that there is behind the variety of the six systems a common fund of what may be called national or popular philosophy ... from which each thinker is allowed to draw for his own purpose.”<sup>18</sup>

Vijnana Bhikshu, the 16<sup>th</sup> century theologian and thinker, in his Sarvaagama Pramanya, states that all systems are authoritative in character and reconcile them by distinguishing metaphysical truths from practical truths and uphold Samkhya as the ultimate expression of truth. Madhusudana Saraswati, in his Prasthanabheda, attempts to reconcile all systems of Indian philosophy by stating that the ultimate scope of all the authors of different systems are to establish the existence of one supreme God, who is said to be the sole essence of the universe. The reasons that can be advanced for the explication of manifold theories are meant to help humanity, which is addicted to the pursuit of external objects, from falling into atheism. Such an outlook and argument is based on the view that truth is many-sided and different viewpoints contain different aspects of truth, which no one could fully express. The rationale and arguments between different viewpoints are inspired by the desire to make others see the world from one’s own point of view. It implies the idea that multiplicity of viewpoints about ultimate reality is accepted to be a legitimate activity by the seers and philosophers of India.

Ganganath Jha argues that the expression “six systems of Indian Philosophy” is a misnomer. According to him, there is only one system in Indian philosophy, which is the philosophy of Vedanta. Since all the six systems of Indian philosophy are based on the Vedas and interpret the Vedas from their perspectives, all these systems can be categorized as the philosophy of Vedanta. Nevertheless, such a viewpoint has its own limitations and problems, as system, such as Purva-Mimamsa propagate the part that deals with sacrificial action (*karmakanda*) part of the Vedas than

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<sup>18</sup> Max Mueller: *Six systems of Philosophy*, p. xvii.

the Upanishadic portion – which is usually named as Vedanta. Further, Vedanta is generally understood as the single system of thought in Indian philosophy comprising the schools of Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhva. What is required is a quest for an objective understanding of the systems of Indian philosophy without getting prejudiced towards a particular system. Only then, shall we be able to reconcile the systems of philosophy in a more fruitful way.

Few western scholars of Indian philosophy made an attempt to approach Indian philosophy outside the *astika-nasitka* categorization, by evaluating these systems on the principle of similarity and difference. Ninian Smart (1964) for instance, while abstracting nine essential doctrines from 13 philosophical systems, made a valuable contribution to Indian philosophy by looking for the similarities and differences among the philosophical systems on the basis of their essential doctrines.<sup>19</sup> Karl Potter (1961) has analyzed the degree of correspondence between fifteen philosophical groups using thereby seven variables have made a significant attempt of the similar kind.<sup>20</sup> Another attempt, that drew inspiration from the west and developed in India by Debiprasad Chattopadyaya (1975), is especially noteworthy, which is called the Dialectico-historical Materialist approach. Chattopadhyaya's approach restores the view that philosophy cannot develop in a vacuum or in isolation from the material conditions of its existence. Suman gupta<sup>21</sup> summarizes the contentions in the following way:

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<sup>19</sup> Thirteen philosophical systems listed by Ninian Smart are: nine classical systems (combining Nyaya with Viseshica), three Vedanta schools, three Buddhist schools (Thevaravada, Yogachara and Madhyamica), and Saivism. Nine essential doctrines are; acceptance or denial of an Absolute, a Personal God, reincarnation, liberation, meditative knowledge, the reality of the world, an eternal individual self and the efficacy of the path of devotion to bring liberation.

<sup>20</sup> Fifteen philosophical groups of Karl Potter are: five Vedantic, three Buddhist and two Mimamsa schools, Nyaya-Vaisesika, Samkhya, Jainism, Carvaka and Ajivikas systems. Seven variables used are: continuity and discontinuity in the path to liberation; theory of causation; relation between unity and diversity; the relation between the whole and its parts; nominalism, conceptualism and universalism; theory of negation; and the various explanations of perceptual error.

<sup>21</sup> Suman Gupta (1986) mentions two basic methodological approaches from which Indian Philosophy can be studied. One is Dialectico-Historical-Materialist Approach, which follows the Marxist outlook and another one is Metaphysical Approach, which abstracts an aspect of reality and absolutises it and sees it in a static form. Metaphysical approach is the traditional approach that the present paper is discussing with Orthodox (*Astika*) and Heterodox (*Nastika*) distinctions. Suman Gupta argued that metaphysical approach is one-sided and thus its application gives a distorted view of reality; and the application of dialectico-historical-materialistic methodology helps in

According to the above approach philosophy can be studied only in terms of its social origin. In other words, it is not an abstract thought; on the contrary, it reflects the cumulative effect of social development, which carries within itself contradictions insoluble at these particular levels. Philosophy is totality of systematized views and traditions of a society in a particular epoch of history.<sup>22</sup>

Chattopadhyaya applied the dialecto-historical-materialist laws of development in order to show the transition of Indian society from primitive communism – with its pre-spiritual, proto-materialism – to a class divided society led to the development of an idealistic philosophy. Following this view, the classification of Indian Philosophy into *Astika* and *Nastika Darsanas* cannot be correct because due to change in objective conditions, the various schools of Indian Philosophy underwent change and development.<sup>23</sup>

Following the above line of thought, Dayakrishna (1987) argues that one should not try to understand the classical tradition on the basis of different systems of Indian philosophy as it is projected in the usual textbooks; but rather, we should try “to see if there is an implicit conceptual structure in the Indian tradition which can be brought to the surface and stated in modern terms.”<sup>24</sup> Hence, Dayakrishna suggests that dealing the traditional problems in the light of modern philosophy can make the tradition active and alive and can understand the immense complexity of the different schools. Dayakrishna in his later book *Indian Philosophy: A New Approach* emphasizes the need to concentrate on the individual philosophers who held the well-known philosophical positions and also to study the historical development that have occurred during the two millennia or more of their existence.<sup>25</sup> He says:

The contribution of successive thinkers to the development of each position over a period of time and the changes that successively occurred in the position itself needs to be

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comprehending the objective reality in terms of real objective casual relations among various aspects of reality. Cf. Suman Gupta: “Some Aspects of Methodology in the Context of Indian Philosophy”, in *Studies in Indian Culture Sahitya Siromani Professor S. Ramachandra Rao Felicitation Volume*, ed. G. Ramakrishna, (Bangalore: Professor S. Ramachandra Rao Felicitation Committee, 1986).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>24</sup> Dayakrishna, ed.: *India's Intellectual Traditions: Attempts at Conceptual Reconstructions*, (New Delhi: ICPR, 1987), p. xxiv.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Dayakrishna: *Indian Philosophy: A New Approach*, p. 3.

formulated in greater detail than has been done until now. ... The field defined by the problems that were engaging the philosophical mind of India from at least the sixth century B.C., if not earlier, needs to be articulated independently of the different schools of Indian philosophy as they should rather be seen as taking different positions in regard to the way these problems ought to be solved in their view.<sup>26</sup>

In other words, a re-look of our tradition and philosophy can help us to appreciate how earlier systems of Indian philosophy and individual philosophers have generated different positions, which are relevant, indicative and directive of our lives in the present circumstances.

These are some of the few attempts, which laid emphasis on the necessity of viewing Indian Philosophy from a non-Orthodox-Heterodox perspective. All these attempts implicitly point to the inadequacy of *astika-nastika* categorization of Indian philosophy into 6+3 systems of thought.

## CONCLUSION

Our discussion so far has been centered on the necessity to view Indian philosophy outside the *astika-nastika* distinctions and their 6+3 categorization. It has been our endeavor to argue that the traditional way of presenting Indian philosophy is inadequate to represent the great antiquarian philosophical wisdom of India. There is ambiguity involved in understanding the traditional *astika-nastika* distinction as the existence of more than 9 (6+3) schools of philosophy proves this ambiguity. It is necessary to view different systems of Indian philosophy as different attempts to grasp the ultimate reality. This view will lead us to see similarities and differences among all the systems in addressing the problems of life (empirical, metaphysical, religious and spiritual) from different points of view basing on their historical background. Innovative methods of Ninian Smart and Karl Potter must be continued to conceive Indian philosophy in a different perspective.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. ix.

**PART IV**

**INTIMATIONS OF CULTURE AND RELIGIONS  
IN BUILDING UP MODERN INDIA: A  
PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH**



**CHAPTER X**  
**INDIAN CULTURE AND JAINISM**

*KAMAL CHAND SOGANI*

**INTRODUCTION**

It is an acknowledged fact that Indian culture is the result of an interaction between two streams of Indian thought: the Vedic (*brahmana*) and the non-Vedic (*sramana*) traditions. The relationship of the Harappan to the Vedic civilization has remained a puzzle. Nevertheless, recent records tend to favor their close relationship, though there is a difference of opinion on the exact nature of this relationship. The issue here is the manner in which Vedic and non-Vedic cultures gradually fused in the post-Vedic age to form the classical culture of India.<sup>1</sup> It requires to be noted that the dominant phase of Indian culture is the dissemination of the everlasting ethico-spiritual values without any diversion. This has been practiced by the great personalities of India “from the Vedic seers and the *sramanic* sages to the medieval saints and modern savants.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is the ethico-spiritual truth, which has been tenaciously held in Indian culture through its vicissitudes as the essential and consistent tradition. In the context of this ethico-spiritual outlook, Jainism has emerged as the *sramanic* tradition, to which we turn our attention now.

**THE ORIGINS OF JAINISM AS SRAMANIC TRADITION**

In consonance with the ethico-spiritual adherence of the Indian saints and sages, non-Vedic, *sramanic*, *kshatriya* or Jaina tradition of twenty-four *Tirthankaras* of whom Rsabhanatha or Adinatha, the first Jaina *Tirthankara*, has been responsible for the rise and development of Jainism in the history of Indian culture. The symbol of Rsabhanatha is the bull. This reminds us of the Mohenjo-Daro seals wherein the bull has played a prominent part in the cult of the Indus people. “A large number of seals have been found bearing the figure of a bull and it is an undeniable fact that such seals are far greater in number those bearing the figures of other animals.”<sup>3</sup> Along with the bull, the figure of the deity has been represented as naked and he has adopted standing meditative posture (*kayotsarga*). The presence of bull in the large number of seals, the adoption of nudity and the standing meditative posture seem to be sufficient to identify that the figure on the seals as Rsabhanatha,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. G.C. Pande, ed.: *The Dawn of Indian Civilization up to 600 B.C.*, (Delhi: PHISPC/Center for Studies in Civilizations, 1999), p.13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 388.

the first *Tirthankara* of the Jains. “Since in the seals from the Indus Valley we have the earliest evidence of a Yogic posture and since Yoga as a system of self-realization is foreign to the earlier Vedic texts, we are to conclude that the Vedic people learnt about meditation and its technique from the Indus Valley people.”<sup>4</sup>

On the basis of the Rsabhanatha cult it may be said that Jainism represents the continuation of *sramanic* culture, which is as old as the Vedas though the archaeological evidence takes *sramanism* back to Harappan civilization, which is predominantly a Yoga-based non-Vedic culture. According to G.C. Pande<sup>5</sup> the anti-ritualistic tendency within the Vedic fold, is itself due to the impact of an asceticism, which antedates the Vedas. It is recognized that “some of the relics, recovered from the excavations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa are related to *sramana* or Jaina tradition. Even after the destruction of the Indus civilization, the struggling culture of the *sramanas*, most probably going back to pre-Vedic times, continued during the Vedic period as is indicated by some such terms as *vatarasana*, *muni*, *yati*, *sramana*, *kesi*, *vratyā*, *arhan* and *sisnadeva*.”<sup>6</sup> In the Rgveda, the term “*arhan*” has been used for a *sramana* leader.<sup>7</sup> “The mention of *sisnadevas* (naked gods) in the Rgveda is also noteworthy.”<sup>8</sup> All these speak of Jainism as a pre-Vedic religion and Rsabhanatha as its founder.

Varthamana Mahavira (598 B.C.-527 B.C.) is the twenty-fourth *Tirthankara*, who has attained omniscience (*kevalajnana*). It is not an exaggeration to point out that after attaining supreme knowledge known as *kevalajnana*, Mahavira has visited different parts of country for full thirty years especially the important centres in eastern and northern India and has promulgated socio-spiritual values. Owing to the magnetic personality of Mahavira and his metaphysical, ethical and spiritual teachings, number of kings, queens, princes, princesses, ministers and merchants has accepted him as their teacher. Thus, males and females of all castes and classes have become the ardent followers of Mahavira, and a fourfold order of male ascetics (*sadhus*), female ascetics (*sahvi*), male householders (*sravakas*) and female householders (*sravikas*) have come into existence. In view of the all-embracing character of Mahavira’s principles, the Jaina Acarya Smantabhadra, as early as second century A. D. calls the religion of Mahavira a *Sarvodaya-Tirtha*<sup>9</sup> – a term which is so commonly used after the time of Gandhiji. Thus, Mahavira is one of those few towering personalities who have fought for individual liberty in the context of social

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 387.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. G.C. Pande: *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, (Allahabad: 1957), p. 317.

<sup>6</sup> Kailash Chand Jain: *Lord Mahavira and His Times*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991), p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 9

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Samantabhadra: *Yuktyanusasana*, (Delhi: Vira Seva Manira), no.61.



life. He has revolted against the socio-religious exploitation and oppression of man and introduced vigorous innovations in the then-existing social order. He does not confine himself to individual upliftment, rather dedicates himself to the development of a new creative social order for the healthiest orientation of the individual. Though he is a man of contemplative values, yet social values get his fullest attention. Those who regard Mahavira only as an apostle of spiritual message do great injustice to him. In fact, he serves as an illustration both of spiritual realization and social reconstruction. Mahavira has attained liberation (*nirvana*) at Pava in Bihar at the age of seventy-two on Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> October, 527 B.C. This day is celebrated as the festival of lamps (*dipavali*) throughout India. Besides, Mahavira's day of *nirvana* marks the beginning of *vira nirvana samvat*. This *samvat* is the oldest *samvat* followed in India. Having looked into the origins of Jainism and the *sramanic* culture, we can move on to consider the contributions of Jainism to Indian cultural tradition.

### CONTRIBUTIONS OF JAINISM TO INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION

Let us enumerate and briefly discuss the unprecedented contributions which Jainism made to Indian culture, by virtue of which Indian cultural tradition has been enriched and adorned: firstly, the classification of empirical selves as the basis of socio-spiritual principles of non-injury (*ahimsa*) and the dissemination of the doctrine of *aparigraha*; secondly the inclusion of the notion of modification or change (*pariyaya*) in the definition of substance (*dravya*) and its spiritual implication; thirdly, the theory of metaphysico-axiological *anekanta* along with the doctrine of view-point (*naya*); fourthly, device of *syadvada* as the key to the pointed communicability of knowledge; fifthly, the doctrine of *karma* as an explanation of the cognitive, conative and affective differences existing in the world at large; sixthly, the mystical journey of the Self from darkness to light, from slumberness to perfect spiritual awakening; seventhly the composite *sadhana* of *Tri-ratna* – *samyagdarsana*, *samyagjnana* and *samyakcaritra* – leading to emancipation (*moksha*); eighthly the religious freedom to women and the down-trodden people; ninthly, accepting *sallekhana* as the spiritual welcome to death without any fear and perturbation; and finally contribution of Jainism in the fields of art and literature. We briefly consider the above-enumerated contributions of Jainism in great detail in the following sections.

#### *Doctrine of Ahimsa and the Dissemination of the Doctrine of Aparigraha*

In this section, we make an attempt to consider the doctrine of *ahimsa* in its various dimensions, both as a social value and a spiritual value. We also consider the propagation of the doctrine of *aparigraha* by the leaders and followers of Jainism.

*Doctrine of Ahimsa*

The doctrine of *ahimsa* is the be-all and end-all of the Jainist way of life and living. The oldest Jaina *agama* Ayaro remarkably pronounces that none of the living beings ought to be killed, ought to be ruled, ought to be enslaved or possessed, ought to be distressed and ought to be put to disquiet.<sup>10</sup> The socio-political organizations and the capitalistic set up can easily derive inspiration from this ethico-social statement. For Jainism, the doctrine of *ahimsa* is both a social doctrine and a spiritual doctrine, and so it views the doctrine of *ahimsa* both from the social perspective and the spiritual perspective. Now let us consider the doctrine of *ahimsa* in these twofold aspects.

Doctrine of *Ahimsa*: The Social Perspective:

The social perspective of the doctrine of *ahimsa* regards *ahimsa* as other-oriented and is concerned with the wellbeing, progress and development of the other. The Jaina *agama* Ayaro (Acaranga) conclusively pronounces that after understanding the importance of kindness to beings, the enlightened person should preach, disseminate and applaud it at all places in east-west and north-south directions.<sup>11</sup> The Prasnavyakarana Sutra designates social *ahimsa* as kindness, security, salutariness and fearlessness.<sup>12</sup> The Acaranga gives us twofold arguments to renounce injury (*himsa*) towards creatures: sociopolitical argument and psychological argument. The first argument against *himsa* is the sociopolitical argument. This argument condemns *himsa* by saying that its operation is without any stop, cessation and discontinuance and it goes on increasing to the extent possible with the political consequences that the race of armaments becomes unarrestable and continues to grow without any check. In contrast it eulogizes *ahimsa* by saying that its observance is total and not piece-meal, with the result that the armament race discontinues and comes to a stop.<sup>13</sup> The second argument against *himsa* is the psychological argument. After comprehending and beholding the significance of peacefulness of beings, one should renounce *himsa*, inasmuch as *himsa* causes, suffering to beings. Human suffering – caused by theft, hoarding, falsehood, slavery, economic exploitation, social oppression, curtailment of legitimate freedoms and the like – is a great mental disturbance, dreadful and is associated with unbearable pain and affliction. Since life is dear to all beings, pleasures are

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Muni Jambuvijayaji, ed.: *Acaranga Sutra*, (Bombay: Sri Mahavira Jaina Vidyalaya, 1976), no. 132.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ibid., no. 196.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Muni Nathmal (Angasuttani), ed.: *Prasnavyakarana Sutra*, (Ladnun: Jaina Vishva Bharati, 1974), no. 6, 1, 3; pp.683, 684.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Muni Jambuvijayaji, ed.: *Acaranga Sutra*, no. 129.

desirable and pain is undesirable for them, being ought not to be killed, ruled, possessed and distressed.<sup>14</sup>

It may be pointed out that the talk of *ahimsa* as a social value is not possible without a world of living beings. Social *ahimsa* begins with the awareness of the other. Like one's own existence, it recognizes the existence of other beings. In fact, to negate the existence of other beings is tantamount to negating one's own existence. Since one's own existence cannot be negated, the existence of other beings also cannot be negated. Thus, there exists the universe of beings in general and that of human beings in particular.<sup>15</sup> Now, let us consider the classification of beings as found in the Jaina scriptures.

The Jaina *agama* classifies living beings (*jivas*) into five kinds, namely, one-sensed to five sensed beings.<sup>16</sup> The minimum number of living breath (*pranas*) possessed by the empirical self are four – one sense, one *bala*, life-limit and breathing, and the maximum number is ten – five senses, three *balas*, life-limit, and breathing. The lowest in the grade of existence are the one-sensed *jivas*, which possess only the sense of touch and they have only the *bala* of body, and besides they hold life-limit and breathing. These one-sensed *jivas* admit of five-fold classification: the earth-bodied (*prthivakayika*) water-bodied (*jalakayika*) fire-bodied (*agnikayika*) air-bodied and lastly, vegetable-bodied (*vanaspatikayika*) souls. The two sensed Jivas possess six *pranas*, i.e., in addition to the four *pranas* of one-sensed souls, they have two *pranas* more; namely, the sense of taste, and the *bala* of speech; the three-sensed souls have the sense of smell additionally; the four-sensed souls have the sense of color besides the above; and lastly, the five-sensed souls which are mindless are endowed with the sense of hearing in addition; and those with mind possess all the ten *pranas*. Thus, the number of *pranas* possessed by one-sensed to five-sensed souls is four, six, seven, eight, nine and ten respectively. This classification of *jivas* into five kinds is used for the measurement of the degree of *ahimsa*. If a living being possesses more senses then it possesses more evolved consciousness. As for example, two-sensed *jivas* are more evolved than the one-sensed beings, five sensed beings are more evolved than the one, two, three and four-sensed beings. Thus, *ahimsa* will be directly proportionate to the *ahimsa* of the beings (*jivas*) classified.<sup>17</sup> Having considered *ahimsa* as a social value, we proceed to consider *ahimsa* as a spiritual value.

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ibid., nos. 49, 78.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ibid., no. 22.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Pancastikaya*, (Agasa: Srimad Rayacandra Asrama, 986), nos. 112-117.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Ibid., no. 110.

Doctrines of *Ahimsa*: The Spiritual Perspective:

Besides being a social value, *ahimsa* is also a spiritual value according to the *agamas* of Jainism. The Purusarthasiddhupaya moves in the direction of the spiritual interpretation of the doctrine of *ahimsa* when it unambiguously expresses that the non-emergence of attachment and aversion on the surface of self as fundamental to the practice of *ahimsa*.<sup>18</sup> This pronouncement has a deep inward reference and regards *ahimsa* as a spiritual value. This method of dealing with *ahimsa* obliges us to peep into one's own inner life, so that attachment and aversion along with their ramifications, such as anger, pride, deceit and greed are got rid of in the life of a person completely. The Prasnavyakarana Sutra designates *ahimsa* as *nirvana*, *samadhi*, supreme tranquility, happiness, super satisfaction, and purity.<sup>19</sup> In other words, we may say that even the slightest fall from complete self-realization is to be regarded as *himsa*. Thus, *himsa* commences with the appearance of passions on the ground of self.

The Jaina *agamas* also propose a spiritual argument against the practice of *himsa* in the life of a person. Since all the selves are transcendently alike, killing the other is killing one's own self, ruling the other is ruling one's own self, enslaving the other is enslaving one's own self, distressing the other is distressing one's own self, and disquieting the other is disquieting one's own self. For this reason *himsa* towards all the living beings has to be abandoned by those desirous of Self-realisation.<sup>20</sup> True Self-realization is not possible as long as one is opened towards *himsa* in his life. In the next section, we briefly consider the dissemination of the doctrine of *aparigraha*.

*Dissemination of the Doctrine of Aparigraha*

Mahavira has been well aware of the fact that economic inequality and the hoarding of essential commodities disturb the society and its social living. These acts lead to the exploitation and enslavement of man. Owing to this, life in society is endangered. Consequently, Mahavira pronounces that the remedy for the ill of economic inequality is *aparigraha*. The method of *aparigraha* tells us that one should keep with oneself that which is necessary for one's living and the rest should be returned to society for its wellbeing. Limit of wealth and essential commodities are indispensable for the development of healthy social life. In a way wealth is the basis of our social structure and if its flow is obstructed because of its accumulation in few hands, large segments of society will remain undeveloped. The

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Purusarthasiddhupaya*, (Agasa: Srimad Rayacandra Asrama, 1986), no. 44.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Muni Nathmal (Angasuttani), ed.: *Prasnavyakarana Sutra*, no. 6.1.3.; pp. 683, 684.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Muni Jambuvijayaji, ed.: *Acaranga Sutra*, no. 170.

hoarding of essential commodities creates a situation of social scarcity which perils social life. In order to resist such inhuman tendency, Mahavira incessantly endeavors to establish the social value of *aparigraha*.

### *Notion of Substance*

Here, we attempt to understand the notion of the substance by clarifying its meaning and definition. We also delve into the question of the modifications of the substance. Besides, we unravel the spiritual implication of the notion of the modification (*pariyaya*) of the substance (*dravya*).

### Meaning of Substance:

In consonance with the perspective adopted by the Jainas in their metaphysical speculation, substance (*dravya*) is that which exists by itself; that which is characterized by simultaneous origination, destruction and persistence; and which is the *substratum* of attributes (*guna*) and modifications (*pariyaya*).<sup>21</sup> Permanence signifies persistence of substance along with its attributes while change refers to fluctuating modifications along with the emergence of the new ones and the disappearance of the old ones at one and the same time. To illustrate, gold as a substance exists with its modifications and qualities. Now after making an ornament, gold as a substance is existent along with its attributes and the modifications change. Thus, existence – which is inseparably bound up with substance, in the above example gold, accompanied by its attributes and modifications – necessitates the production of a new form, the cessation of the old one, and continuation of gold as such simultaneously.<sup>22</sup> In other words, the denial of the different aspects of the Jaina view of substance will lead us either to the Buddhist philosophy of universal change which disregards the underlying permanent being, or to the Vedantic monism which declares the accompanying change as appearance or illusory. Now, we turn our attention to the notion of the modifications of the substance.

### Modifications of Substance:

The notion of modifications (*pariyaya*) of the substance (*dravya*) is peculiar to the Jaina school of thought.<sup>23</sup> In conformity with the nature of substance as permanence in change *pariyaya* alludes to the changing aspect of a thing. Every quality changes its state every moment; and this mode of being is called *pariyaya*, which is incessantly transforming itself into the

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Pancastikaya*, no. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. KamalChand Sogani: *Ethical Doctrines in Jainism*, (Sholapur: Jaina Samskriti Samrakshaka Samgha, 1967), p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. A. N. Upadhye, ed.: *Pravacanasara*, (Agasa: Srimad Rayacandra Asrama), p. lxvi.

next, though the quality as such is never abrogated. It is on this account that substance is in a state of perpetual flux. However, incessant and infinite the transformations may be, the underlying substantiality and permanency can never part with existence. Substance and its modifications are not to be distinguished like two different things, for it is the substance with its qualities, which because of its flowing nature attains the qualification of modifications. Therefore, substance and its modifications are neither exclusively identical nor exclusively different, but the relation between them is one of identity-in-difference. Thus, origination and destruction are applicable to modifications while persistence to the qualities along with substance. Hence, there is no substance without modification and modification is inconceivable without substance.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, permanence is not the denial of change, but includes in it as its necessary aspect. Now we move on to consider the spiritual implications of notion of *pariyaya*.

#### Spiritual Implication of the Modification of the Substance:

Kundakunda, the great philosopher of the first century A.D. discusses the spiritual implications of modifications (*pariyaya*) of spiritual substance, the Self. According to him, the Self, as an ontologically underived fact, is one of the six substances subsisting independently of anything else. Consciousness is the essential quality of the Self. It manifests itself at the mundane stage of existence in auspicious and inauspicious psychical modifications. Whenever the auspicious mode of kindness originates, inauspicious mode of cruelty ceases and the quality of consciousness continues simultaneously. Thus, Self as a substance exists with its modifications and qualities.

Kundakunda speaks of two types of the modifications of the Self: essential modifications (*svabhava pariyayas*) and non-essential modifications (*vibhava pariyayas*). He holds that the empirical-self has been associated with the non-essential modifications (*vibhava pariyayas*) since it has an indeterminable past and thereby it has identified itself with attachment and aversion. We may point out in passing that the Transcendental-Self occupies itself with essential modifications (*svabhava pariyayas*) and goes beyond the quality of attachment and aversion and is the doer of detached actions and the enjoyer of pure knowledge and bliss. The empirical-self is potentially transcendental, though this transcendental state of existence is not actualized at present; hence the distinction is incontrovertible. The worldly human beings have identified themselves with the non-essential modifications (*vibhava pariyayas*) from beginningless past. Kundakunda, therefore, draws our attention to the essential modifications (*svabhava pariyayas*) of Transcendental-Self. He advises us to relinquish the working of *vibhava pariyayas* after turning to *svabhava pariyayas* of the Self. No doubt that we are in the empirical form of

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Pancastikaya*, 12.

existence from beginningless past, but his theory of *svabhava paryayas* reminds us of our spiritual magnificence and glory. The doctrine of *svabhava paryayas* does not assert that the Self is at present perfect, but simply affirms that the self ought to attain the height illumined by it. It has been the force of “ought” and not of “is”, but the force is valid for empirical-selves having *vibhava paryayas*. Kundakunda regards the attainment of knowledge-consciousness (*jnana-cetana*), which is the full-fledged and legitimate manifestation of consciousness. The *Arhat* or *Siddha* state is the state of knowledge-consciousness, the state of omniscience and bliss.<sup>25</sup>

#### *Doctrine of Metaphysical-Axiological Anekanta and the Doctrine of Point-of-View*

Here we attempt to explore the doctrine of metaphysical *anekanta* describing nature of reality/substance, thereby clarify the metaphysical problem of unity, duality and plurality in the universe. Similarly, we also unfold the doctrine of axiological *anekanta* which pertains to the moral and spiritual dimension of the reality/substance. We also expound the way we attain knowledge of the metaphysical *anekantic* reality and axiological *anekantic reality* by considering the corresponding doctrine of point-of-view (*pramana* and *naya*).

#### Doctrine of Metaphysical *Anekanta* and Corresponding Doctrine of Point-of-View:

It is incontrovertible that metaphysics deals with the problem of reality/substance. For Jaina thinkers, reality is constituted of apparent contradictions, such as existence and non-existence, oneness and manyness, universality and particularity. Because of this complexity, reality/substance is styled as “*anekantic*”. It is, thus, multi-dimensional in character and possessing antagonistic dimensions of permanence and change, one and many. These antagonistic dimensions are infinite in number, of which we know only a few of them. Thus, the Jaina philosophers do not hold for any form of absolutism in their approach to the unfolding of the inner nature of reality. The Jaina thinkers advocate change to be as much ontologically real as permanence. Being implies becoming and vice versa. It may be said that if the Upanishadic thinkers have found the immutable reality behind the world of phenomena and plurality, and the Buddha denounced everything as fleeting, then Mahavira has found no contradiction between permanence and change, and is free from all forms of absolutism. While discussing the nature of substance we have already said that permanence signifies persistence of substance along with attributes, and change refers to fluctuating modifications along with the emergence of the new

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Pancastikaya*, Commentary by Amrtachandra, p. 38.

modifications and the disappearance of the old ones at one and the same time.

Thus, Jainism divides the whole universe of beings into two everlasting, un-created, co-existing, but independent categories: living beings (*jiva*) and non-living beings (*ajiva*). The *ajiva* is further classified into matter (*pudgala*), principle of motion (*dharmā*), principle of rest (*adharma*), space (*akasa*) and time (*kala*). Hence reality is dualistic as well as pluralistic. However, according to the Jaina thinkers, plurality – considered from the point of view of one existence – entails unity as well. According to Kundakunda, despite the unique characteristics possessed by different substances, existence has been regarded as an all-comprising characteristic of reality, which ends all distinctions.<sup>26</sup> Samantabhadra also endorses this view by affirming that in view of the conception of one universal existence all are one, but from the point of view of substance distinctions arise. In his *Saptabhangi-Tarangini*, Vimaladasa concludes that both the postulation of existential identity and the articulation of differences from the stand-point of different substances are logically necessary and justifiable.<sup>27</sup> Thus, Jainism gives credence to the recognition of existential oneness but not exclusively, since it is always bound up with plurality. This is quite consistent with the *anekantatmaka* view of reality propounded by the Jaina philosophers. Hence unity, duality, and plurality are inseparably and inevitably involved in the structure of reality. This is the metaphysical *anekantic* view of reality. Having looked into the metaphysical *anekantic* view of reality, let us consider the way we attain the knowledge of this reality by elaborating on the doctrine of point-of-view (*pramana* and *naya*)

According to Jainism reality/substance is cognized by *pramana* and *naya*.<sup>28</sup> *Pramana* refers to the grasping of reality in its wholeness, while *naya* points to an aspect of infinitely-phased reality illuminated by *pramana*. Thus the *naya* takes into consideration only a fragment of the totality by considering it in a particular aspect or point-of-view.<sup>29</sup> A substance embellishes itself with apparent antagonisms. The emphasis on the one and the cancellation of the other would irresistibly lead us to the biased estimation and an *ekantic* view of reality. *Pramana* assimilates all the characteristics at once without any contribution and animosity between one characteristic and the other, as for instance, between one and many, existent and non-existent. Of the unfathomable characteristics, *naya* chooses one at one moment, but keeps in view the other characteristics also. Though the Jaina thinker has made critical estimation of the philosophical assumptions of other schools of thought, he has paid proper respect to them and accept their truth-value on the basis of different points-of-view

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Pavacanasara*, Commentary by Amrtacandra, no.II. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Saptabhangitarangini*, (Agasa: Srimad Rajacandra Asrama) p. 78.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Sarvarthasiddhi (Tattvarthasutra)*, (Delhi: Bharatiya Jnana Pitha), no. I. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Ibid*



(*nayas*).<sup>30</sup> We can, thus, say that both *pramana* and *naya* are essential for the proper understanding of the nature of reality. Reality being the repository of infinite attributes, the apprehension of it from a particular angle of vision, i.e., *naya*, which is objectivity given and not subjectively contemplated, does not exhaust the whole of the multi-phased reality. However, summarily speaking, all the *nayas* from the metaphysical point of view can be summed up into two kinds: *dravyarthika naya* and *pariyarthika naya*. These two types of *nayas* can very well expound the nature of reality/substance. The former refers to the permanent aspect of a substance/reality, while the latter refers to the changing aspect of a substance/reality. In this way we have metaphysical knowledge of substance/reality. Now, we turn our attention to the doctrine of axiological *anekanta* and the corresponding doctrine of *naya*.

Doctrine of Axiological Anekanta and Corresponding Doctrine of Point-of-View:

The intelligibility and the comprehension of the *anekantic* reality – attained as the result of the *dravyarthika naya* and *pariyarthika naya* corresponding to the permanent and changing aspects of reality respectively – though yields intellectual satisfaction, does not show us the way to spiritual growth; neither does it give us spiritual satisfaction nor help us to attain Self-realization. Axiological consciousness is very much different from descriptive consciousness produced by metaphysical curiosity of the human mind. Thus, we can speak of the axiological *anekanta* as different from the metaphysical *anekanta*. The axiological *anekanta* is concerned with the spiritual substance, the attainment of spiritual satisfaction and arriving at the final goal of Self-realization. The above-said tasks cannot be achieved by the means of metaphysical knowledge, namely the *dravyarthika naya* and the *pariyarthika naya*. So the Jaina *acaryas* have propounded two axiological *nayas*, namely *niscaya naya* and *vyavahara naya* for properly evaluating the manifested and unmanifested modifications (*pariyayas*) of Self. We briefly consider these both now.

The *niscaya naya* grasps the Self in its undefiled state of existence in contradistinction to the *vyavahara naya*, which describes the Self as bound, impure and being caught up in the state of *samsara*. No doubt, we are in the defiled form of existence from beginningless past, but the *niscaya naya* reminds us of our spiritual magnificence and glory. It prompts the sullied Self to behold its spiritual heritage. It endeavours to infuse and instill into our minds the imperativeness of pure attitudes (*suddha bhavas*) after abundantly showing us the empirical and evanescent character of impure attitudes (*subha-asubha bhavas*) that bind the Self to mundane existence. It

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. K. Satchidananda Murty, ed.: *Life, Thought and Culture in India – 300 A.D. to 100 A.D.*, vol. II, (New Delhi: PHISPC/Centre for Studies in Civilizations, 2002), p. 318.

does not assert that the Self is at present perfect, but simply affirms that the Self ought to attain the height illuminated by it. It has the force of “ought” and not of “is”, but this force is valid for empirical-selves. *Niscaya naya* points to the potentiality of the empirical-self to become pure and enjoy its unalloyed status. Briefly, we may say that just as to make *anekantic* reality intelligible from the metaphysical perspective, *dravyarthika* and *paryayarthika nayas* are necessary, so also to make an axiological assessment of *anekantic* reality from the spiritual perspective *niscaya* and *vyavahara nayas* cannot be dispensed with.

#### *Syadvada and Saptabhangivada*

The most important aspect knowledge is that it is expressed with clarity and communicated. The two logical and philosophical devices that can help one to communicate with clarity, according to Jaina thinkers are *syadvada* and *saptabhangivada*. In the next two sections, we consider each of them and see how they assist as to communicate knowledge with clarity.

*Syadvada*: The Key to the Pointed-Communicability of Knowledge:

The significant fact about knowledge is its communicability. When knowledge is for one’s own self, the question of communicability can be dispensed with; but when it is for the other, the question needs serious consideration. Communicability is accomplished through properly worded propositions and formulation of propositions is dependent on the content of knowledge. If there is discordance between the content of knowledge and formulation of propositions, serious misunderstandings are bound to arise. *Syadvada* is the linguistic device to represent the content of knowledge without any omission and distortion. Thus, *syadvada* and knowledge become the obverse and the converse of the same coin. The Jaina thinkers propound that the object has infinite antagonistic characteristics – some are known; some are in the process of being discovered; and many are yet unknown. This is known as the doctrine of *anekantavada*. *Syadvada* is the method of communicating the manifold characteristics of a thing to the other. Thus, *syadvada* is the expression of *anekantavada* in language. If *anekantavada* is the mode of cognition, *syadvada* is the mode of expression.

The significant point to be comprehended with regard to *anekantavada* is that every characteristic of a multi-phased thing is maintaining its identity through the existence of its opposite as its aspect.<sup>31</sup> In fact, a thing cannot be the same thing without the negation of other things in it. For example, a color cannot remain a color without the negation of other characteristics, such as taste or smell in it. Thus, non-existence is as much an essential aspect of the real as existence is. Negative propositions cannot be asserted without accepting non-existence as an element in the

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<sup>31</sup> Kamal Chand Sogani: *Ethical Doctrines in Jainism*, p. 36.

constitution of the real. Similarly, the characteristics of one and many, permanence and change, generality and particularity are reconciled in a thing without any incongruity. Thus, when the Jainist is faced with the problem of expressing the complex content of knowledge in language, which can communicate to the other the knowledge as such, he had to devise the method of *syadvada*. Thus, *syadvada* is the custodian of clarity, the doctrine of unambiguity in the field of philosophy. It is by no means the doctrine of doubt and uncertainty, but one of clarity and certainty.

*Saptabhangivada*: Doctrine of Sevenfold Proposition:

Although an existent is possessed of infinite attributes, yet the process of knowing is not a simple affair. The question we need to raise is: "What is it to know a thing and how many propositions are required to express the content of knowledge?" The conviction of the Jaina thinkers is that the seven distinct propositions are needed to express the content of knowledge with regard to an existent. The doctrine which says that we need sevenfold proposition to express the content of knowledge of a given existent reality is called *saptabhangivada*. Let us now illustrate the doctrine of sevenfold proposition by taking an example of the attribute "existence" in respect of to the given object – a pen.<sup>32</sup>

The first proposition is: "Syat pen exists." This means that the existence of pen is contextual, the context being its own substance (*dravya*), space (*ksetra*), time (*kala*) and state (*bhava*).

The second proposition is: "Syat pen does not exist." It states the non-existence of pen in respect of other *dravya*, *i*, *i* and *bhava*. Thus, the second proposition strengthens the first proposition rather than cancels it. The pen is pen only because it is not a non-pen. Thus, both existence and non-existence is co-present in the pen without any contradiction. According to the Jaina thinkers, non-existence is as much constitutive of the nature of thing as existence.

The third proposition is: "Syat pen exists and does not exist."

The fourth proposition is: "Syat pen is inexpressible." In this proposition the two attributes of existence and non-existence instead of being asserted successively as in the third proposition, are asserted

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<sup>32</sup> The Sanskrit word "syat" when added to a proposition is indicative of the presence of multiple characteristics in a thing in addition to the characteristic referred to in the proposition under considerations. In the proposition "syat ghata is colorful", the word "syat" implies that the subject *ghata* has a manifold of attributes, of which the attribute of "being colorful" referred to in the proposition is there in the *ghata* as a matter of fact. This should not be understood, as it is generally done, to mean "the existence of color in the *ghata* is doubtful". In other words, certainty of color along with the manifoldness of characteristics is indicated by the word "syat".

simultaneously. Since words are incapable of expressing this apprehension of pen, the pen is inexpressible.

The fifth proposition is “*Syat* pen exists and is inexpressible.”

The sixth proposition is “*Syat* pen does not exist and is inexpressible.”

The seventh proposition is “*Syat* pen exists, does not exist and is inexpressible.”

All these propositions, according to the Jaina thinkers, represent a new aspect of the real. As the result of the cumulative effect of the all the seven propositions one can arrive at genuine clarity in the realm of knowledge.

### *Doctrine of Karma*

The empirical-selves differ from one another in respect of cognition, conation and affection. Now the question arises regarding the cause of this difference and the way we can account for these perceptible distinctions among empirical-selves. The answer of the Jaina thinkers is that it is the beginningless material subtle principle known as *karma* that is responsible for the differences among the empirical-selves. The *karma* has been exercising its limiting and crippling influence on the empirical-consciousness from the beginningless past. This material subtle principle is known as *dravya-karma*, and its physical counterpart in terms of *raga* and *dvesa* is called *bhava-karma*.

The *karmas* are of varied nature, but the fundamental kinds of *karma* are eight in number. They are the following: knowledge-obscuring (*jnanavaraniya-karma*), intuition-obscuring (*darsanavaraniya-karma*), feeling-producing (*vedaniya-karma*), delusion-producing (*mohaniya-karma*), longevity-determining (*ayu-karma*), body-making (*nama-karma*), status-determining (*gotra-karma*) and obstruction-generating (*antaraya-karma*). We briefly consider the function of each of these *karmas*. Just as the curtain obstructs the knowledge of things inside the room, so also the knowledge-obscuring *karma* obstructs the expression of knowledge. Just as a door-keeper does not allow persons to meet the king in his room, so also the intuition-obscuring *karma* does not allow apprehension of things. Just as on licking honey from the sharp edge of a sword, the person enjoys honey as well as suffers pain, so also the feeling-producing *karma* produces pleasure and pain in man. Just as wine stupefies a person, so also the delusion-producing *karma* perverts the person. Just as wooden fetters stop the movement of a person, so also the longevity-determining *karma* obliges the soul to stay in a particular body. Just as the painter produces different pictures, so also the body-making *karma* makes different bodies. Just as a potter makes earthen pots of different sizes, so also the status-determining *karma* determines status in society. Just as a treasurer generates obstructions

in giving money to others, so also the obstruction-generating *karma* causes handicaps in charity, in gains and in self-power.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, there is no doubt that *karmas* bind the Self to mundane existence. Now the question arises as to the manner in which the Self is bound by *karmas* and the cause of *karmic* bondage in the Self. The answer of the Jaina thinkers is that it is actions – mental, bodily and vocal – polluted by passions that cause empirical bondage to the Self.<sup>34</sup> The passion-free actions do not bring about any mundane bondage whatsoever. When there are no passions, there is no bondage (*bandha*). It is passions that mar the spiritual career of an aspirant.

### *Mystical Journey of the Self*

The equivalent expressions in Jainism for the English word “mysticism” are “*suddhopayoga*”, “*arhat state*”, “*siddha state*”, “*pandita-pandita marana paramatmanhood*”, “*atmasamahita state*”, “*samatva state*”, “*paradrsti state*” and “*ahimsa state*”.<sup>35</sup> All these expressions convey identical meaning of realizing the Transcendental Self. In traditional understanding, the Jaina mysticism consists in the attainment of *arhat*-hood or *siddha*-hood through the medium of spiritual-awakening (*samyagdarsana*), value-knowledge (*samyagnana*), and ethico-spiritual conduct (*samyakcaritra*) after dispelling spiritual-perversion (*mithyadarsana*), perverted value-knowledge (*mithyajnana*) and perverted ethico-spiritual conduct (*mithyacaritra*). Kundakunda, who lived in the first century A. D., records a departure from this terminology when he says that mysticism consists in realizing the Transcendental-Self (*paramatman*), through the Internal-Self (*antaratman*) after renouncing the external-self (*bahiratman*).<sup>36</sup> Thus, we may say that the attainment of the Transcendental-Self (*paramatman*) is the true goal of the mystic quest. The whole of mystic journey has the following steps: the awakening of the Self, the purgation, the illumination, the dark-night of the soul and the transcendental life. According to the Jaina tradition the above-said five steps of the mystic journey is achieved in the fourteen stages of spiritual evolution, technically known as *gunasthanas*. They are in the following order starting from the first to the fourteenth: *mithyatva gunasthana*, *sasadana gunasthana*, *misra gunasthana*, *aviratasamyagdrsti gunasthana*, *viratavirata gunasthana*, *pramattavirata gunasthana*, *apramattavrata gunasthana*, *apurvakarana gunasthana*, *nivrttikarana gunasthana*,

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Sarvarthasiddh (Tattvarthasutra)*, no.VIII. 4

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Kamal Chand Sogani: *Ethical Doctrines in Jainism*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Rayacandra: *Pravacanasara*, no. I. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Patani Digambara Jaina Granthamala Marotha (Asta Pahuda): *Moksa Pahuda*, no 4.7.

*suksmasamparaya gunasthana, upasantakasaya gunasthana, ksinakasaya gunasthana, sayogakevali gunasthana and ayogakevali gunasthana.*<sup>37</sup>

*Spiritual Awakening, Value-Knowledge and Ethico-Spiritual Conduct: Means to Liberation*

Jainism regards spiritual emancipation (*moksha*) as the highest objective of human life and for the attainment of which it has prescribed the composite *sadhana* of *Tri-ratna* known as spiritual-awakening (*samyagdarsana*), value-knowledge (*samyagjnana*) and ethico-spiritual conduct (*samyakcaritra*). Jainism regards spiritual-awakening (*samyagdarsana*) as the beginning of the spiritual pilgrimage, and it is the foundation of the magnificent edifice of liberation. Spiritual perversion acts as a barricade to soul's true life. Hence, spiritual awakening is to be attained, which, in turn, will make knowledge and conduct conducive to the attainment of *moksha*. Persons devoid of spiritual awakening do not attain spiritual wisdom in thousands of years though they perform severe austerities. Value-knowledge (*samyagjnana*) is acquired through spiritual-awakening. The spiritually-awakened person considers his own Self as his genuine abode and regards the outward dwelling places as artificial. He renounces all identification with the animate and inanimate objects of the world, and properly weights them in the balance of his awakened-spirit. Thus, he develops a unique attitude towards himself and the world around him. The person having value knowledge becomes free from worldly attachment. Knowledge becomes the cause of spiritual unfoldment only after spiritual awakening is kindled and stirred up. With regard to ethico-spiritual conduct (*samyakcaritra*), Jainism recognizes that the person who is devoid of all attachments and who is engrossed in the Self apprehends and experiences the Self as its basic nature. He should devote his energies to meditation on the Self, perform devotion to *arhat* and *siddha* and engage himself in *svadhyaya* of ethico-spiritual literature along with the performance of other spiritual exercises. Before taking up these spiritual practices, he resorts to moral disciplines in the form of small vows (*anuvratas*) and great vows (*mahavratas*). It may be noted here that *mahavratas* give utmost importance to the practice of meditation (*dhyana*), since it is directly related to the actualization of the aspirant's divine potentialities.<sup>38</sup>

*Religious Freedom to Women and the Down-Trodden*

Mahavira gives complete religious freedom to women. They are

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Kamal Chand Sogani: *Jaina Mysticism and other Essays*, (Jaipur: Prakrta Bharati Acedemy), pp. 1-13.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Handiqui: *Yasastilaka and Indian Culture*, (Sholapur: Jivaraja Granthamala), p. 248.

allowed to accept the life of asceticism like men. Mahavira himself initiated Candana into the ascetic order. In the *samgha* of Mahavira thirty-six thousand religious women (*sadhvis*) have been following religious observances. We hear of large number of women in the history of Jainas who have distinguished themselves as teachers and preachers. The followers of Jaina religion have been divided into four categories, viz., monks (*sadhus*), nuns (*sadhvis*), laymen (*sravakas*) and laywomen (*sravikas*). *Sadhvis* are female ascetics who follow the five great vows in a very strict manner. This shows that complete freedom is given to women to enter the ascetic order. Belonging to the female sex is no bar to the practice of asceticism. The Jaina *acaryas* have been extremely sympathetic in their attitude towards women and have admitted them freely into their order, no matter whether the candidates for admission are royal consorts, members of the aristocracy, and women belonging to the common run of society.<sup>39</sup>

Religious freedom given to women has enhanced their prestige in society. They are imparted education like men. The first *Tirthankara*, Rsabhadeva, has realized the utmost importance of imparting education to females and advises his two young daughters, Brahmi and Sundari saying that only when they adorn themselves with education, their life would be fruitful, because just as a learned man is held in high esteem by educated persons, a learned lady also occupies the highest position in the female world. Both the girls are first initiated to writing by their father and later on with the help of teachers they have studied all branches of knowledge to such an extent that they have been regarded as incarnations of Saraswati, the goddess of learning.<sup>40</sup> The greatest name among Jaina women in Kannada literature is Kanti who, along with Abhinava Pampa, is one of the gems that adorned the Court of Hoyasala King Ballala, who ruled the kingdom from 1100-1106 A.D. She is a redoubtable orator and a poet who completed the unfinished poems of Abhinava Pampa in the open court of that ruler. Similarly, a Jaina lady Avvaiyara, the venerable matron, is one of the most admired amongst the Tamil poets.

In times of need, women have rose to the occasion and held important positions in the political sphere as well. In the first quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. figures a remarkable Jaina woman administrator, Jakkiyabbe, who is skilled in ability for good governance, and protected the city of Nagarakhanda. It is recorded that a Jaina lady Saviyabbe has accompanied her husband on horse-back to the battle-field and fell fighting in the battle of Bagiyur.<sup>41</sup> It appears from Epigraphia Carnatica that the office of Nadagauda, an important rural official, is held by a Jaina woman. An inscription dated 918 A. D. shows that a Jaina widow has been a Nadagauda and is distinguished for the skill and ability of management. It states that though a woman, she protected her charge with pride in her own

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

heroic bravery. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. when the Jaina queen Bhairavadevi, while ruling over the kingdom of Gerosoppe, is attacked by the neighboring Saiva Saradara, she faces the enemy bravely and defeats him in the battle.

Mahavira bases the fourfold division of society on activities and not on birth. He accords full freedom to one and all including women and the down-trodden people to perform religious practices and admitted them into the order of ascetics.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the doors of Jainism are thrown open to all and equal opportunity is given to everybody so as to practice religion according to his/her capacity. Those who follow religion as house-holders are known as *sravakas* and *sravikas* and those who observed it fully by leaving their houses are called as *sadhhus* and *sadhvis*. The Uttaradhyayana says that Harikesa who is born in a family of the untouchables attained saintly character owing to the performance of austerities. In Jainism, good conduct and not caste is the object of reverence. Merit is the basis of caste and the pride of caste destroys right living.<sup>43</sup>

It is significant to point out that Mahavira's social mind has exhorted that *ahimsa* consists in recognizing the dignity of man irrespective of caste, color and creed. Man has to be recognized as such without any hesitation. The dignity of man is sacred and it is our duty to honor this dignity. Every individual, whether man or woman, should enjoy freedom without any distinction. A non-violent society cannot subscribe to class exploitation and social oppression of man. Mahavira bestowed social prestige upon the down-trodden individuals. This has led to the development of self-respect in them. Thus, he has showed that no man or woman should be deprived of availing himself of the opportunities of socio-spiritual advancement.

#### *Sallekhana: The Spiritual Welcome to Death*

*Sallekhana* implies the enervation of external body and internal passions in a legitimate way by the gradual removal of the causes of their nourishment, so that one may renounce the present body with a view to having a new bodily modification. *Sallekhana* is performed on the occasion when the time of natural death has been known in all probability. No doubt the body which is the medium of upliftment of the soul is to be properly nourished and cared for, and the diseases are to be seriously treated. However, if the body refuses to respond to our earnest endeavours, we should not falter to forsake it in the interest of saving the peace of mind. Thus, if one is encountered with the termination of duration of the present life one should resort to the performance of the process of *sallekhana*, which is the spiritual welcome to death. This is not yielding to death, but a way of meeting the challenge of death undauntedly and adequately. Self-restraint, study, austerities, worship, and charity – all become useless if the

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Kamal Chand Sogani: *Jaina Mysticism and Other Essays*, p. 273.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Kailash Chand Jain: *Lord Mahavira and His Times*, pp. 140-141.



mind is not pure at the last hour of life, just as the training of a king who has learnt the use of weapons for twelve years, becomes useless if he faints on the battle-field. The person performing *sallenkhana* should observe self-control, and fix his mind in the *Atman*, when the vital forces depart from the body. The process of *sallenkhana* needs be distinguished from suicide. *Sallekhana* is undertaken only when the inevitability of death is a matter of undisputed certainty, while suicide may be committed at any time in the life under the spell of emotional disturbances or passionate attitude of mind.

The person performing *sallekhana* should make his earnest request to the members of his family and others around him to pardon him for the vicious deeds committed by him, which affected them wittingly and unwittingly. He should also forgive them from the bottom of his heart for troubling them on certain occasions. Nourishment is to be renounced gradually, so that mental disturbances may be avoided. The persistence of equanimous mental state is the prime necessity. For this the person should devote himself to meditation (*dhyana*) and bid farewell to his body. It is not be out of place to mention that Acariya Vinoba Bhave, the spiritual successor of Mahatma Gandhi, adopted the method of *sallekhana* in order to renounce the body and thereby attain equanimity and tranquility of mind.

#### *Jaina Art and Literature*

The contributions of Jainism in the fields of art and literature are immense. Indian cultural tradition owes a great deal to Jaina art and literature. In the next two sections, we make an attempt to highlight some of the significant Jaina contributions to the Indian cultural tradition in the fields of art and literature.

#### Jaina Contribution in the Field of Art:

At the outset, it must be noted that Jainism does not subscribe to the philosophy of art for the sake of art. Jaina *acaryas* have always exhibited their concern for the ethico-spiritual development of man. In conformity with this view, art must give ethico-spiritual message to mankind. This means that, for Jainism, art is purposive and its purpose is to inspire people to translate into action the ideals of life and living. Thus, Jaina art has been essentially religious with ethical predominance. However this does not obstruct the manifestation of aesthetic consciousness of an artist dedicated to the Jaina values of life. Jaina art expresses itself in diverse forms, important of which are caves, temples, pillars and towers, and paintings.

Jainas built cave-dwellings for monks, so that they may get secluded places for their religious practice (*sadhana*). A large number of rock-cut caves, belonging to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., have been identified in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri Hills in Orissa. The picturesqueness of their forms, the character of their sculptures and architectural details combined with their great antiquity, render them one of the most important groups of

caves in India. The other caves are found at Junagadha in Gujarat belonging to 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., Rajagiri in Bihar belonging to the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., Udayagiri in Madhyapradesh belonging to 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Candragiri at Sravanabelagola in Mysore belonging to 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Ellora and Usmanabada in Maharashtra belonging to 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D., and Sittanavasal in Tamilnadu belonging to 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. By far the most interesting cave-temples of the Jainas, from the artistic point of view, are, however, the Indrasabha and Jagannathasabha groups at Ellora. According to Percy Brown, no other temple at Ellora is so complete in its arrangements and finished in its workmanship as the upper storey of the Inrasabha.<sup>44</sup>

It is of capital importance to note that since Jaina religion regards the construction of temples as an auspicious act, Jainas have constructed a large number of temples throughout India. The two temple complexes, known as the Delavada temples at Mt. Abu and built in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., by the minister of the kings of Gujarat are regarded as the minor wonders of the world. According to Henry Cousens, the amount of beautiful ornamental detail spread over these temples in the minutely carved decoration of ceilings, pillars, doorways, panels and niches, is simply marvelous.<sup>45</sup> The Jaina temple at Ranakapura in Mevada, belonging to 1440 A.D., is the most complicated and extensive Jaina temple in India. Fergusson remarks that no two pillars in the whole building are exactly alike – the grace with which they are arranged, the tasteful admixture of domes of different heights with flat ceilings, and the mode in which the light is introduced, combine to produce an excellent effect.<sup>46</sup> The other temples of such superb character are the temples of Parsvanatha at Khajarahi in Bundelakhanda belonging to 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the temple at Lakkundi in Karnataka belonging to 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the Jinanathapura temple near Sravanabelagola in Mysore belonging to 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., and Hosa Basti at Mudabidri in South Kanara belonging to 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Besides, the grouping together of temples into what may be called “temple-cities” is a peculiarity which the Jainas have practiced to a greater extent than the followers of any other religion in India. Such notable temple-cities are found, among other places, at Satrunjaya/Palitana and Giranara in Gujarat, at Samedia Sikhara in Bihar, at Sonagiri in Bundelakhanda, at Muktagiri in Maharashtra, at Kuntahalgiri in the Deccan, at Sravanabelagola in Mysore and at Mudabidri in South Kanara.<sup>47</sup>

Another remarkable contribution of the Jainas to the whole of Indian art is the free standing pillars found in front of almost every Jaina temple in south India.<sup>48</sup> There are more than twenty such pillars in the district of South Kanara alone. Nothing can surpass the grace of these beautiful

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 372

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Vilas. A. Sangve, *Jaina Community: A Social Survey*, p. 373.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Kailash Chand Jain: *Lord Mahavira and His Times*, p. 135.

pillars. During the past one hundred years numerous such pillars have been erected in different parts of the country. The Jainas generally call these pillars *manastambhas*. Apart from pillars, a tower known as *kirtistambha* in Cittoda, Rajasthan has been constructed in 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and it is dedicated to Adinatha.<sup>49</sup>

It may be noted here that the most distinctive contribution of Jainism to art is in the realm of icon-making. Innumerable Jaina images made of stone, metal – including gold, silver and bronze – wood, terracotta, and even precious stones, are available.<sup>50</sup> On the basis of the Hathigumpha inscription/ Kharevela of 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., the history of Jaina iconography takes us back at least to 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The Mathura School of Art speaks of the development of Jaina icons from 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. to 12<sup>th</sup> cent. A.D. Statues of *Tirthankaras* are made by Jainas in good number. In the Mathura School, Adinatha/Rsabhanatha is shown with hair falling on his shoulders, Parsvanatha has a snake canopy over his head and 22<sup>nd</sup> *Tirthankara*, Neminatha, is presented as flanked by Balarama and Krishna. The image of Saraswati – which assumed many forms in the evolution of Indian culture – shows that Saraswati is worshipped in Jaina tradition. Undoubtedly the most remarkable of the Jaina statutes is the statue of Bahubali situated at Sravanabelagola in Mysore, constructed in 983 A.D. by Camundaraya. It is 56½ foot in height. It is the largest free standing statue in Asia.

Another significant element of Jain art is the painting on walls, palm-leaves and paper. The earliest example of wall paintings is found in Sittanavasal cave in Tamilnadu and they belong to 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The temple of Tirumalai, belonging to 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., presents beautiful wall paintings.<sup>51</sup> Paintings on palm-leaves have its beginning in 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The palm-leaves paintings are found at Mudabidri in the south and at Patana in Gujarat. Paintings on paper developed later. The earliest of the paper-paintings, the Kalpasutra, belonging to 1427 A.D, is preserved in London. Paintings on cloth and wood are also preserved in Jaina Sastra Bhandaras of various places.

It is of capital importance to note that Jainas have carefully maintained manuscript libraries throughout India. These libraries possess not only Jaina literature but also preserve non-Jaina literary works. In Rajasthan, Madhyapradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra, a large number of manuscript libraries preserve vast and varied literature, both religious and secular.

#### Jaina Contribution in the Field of Literature:

According to Jainism, a *Tirthankara* is a realized being and he propagates socio-spiritual values for the benefit of mankind. Mahavira, the

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. BSJDY, pp 72-34.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. AEP, p. 44.

twenty-fourth *Tirthankara* preached in the language of the masses, which was known as Prakṛta. Thus, the Jaina scriptures (*agamas*) are in Prakṛta language. These *agamas* form the holy scriptures of the Jainas. These cover a wide variety of subjects. It is of capital importance to note that the Jaina *acaryas* continued to compose works in Prakṛta up to 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Some of their works are: the *agamic* commentaries, the metaphysico-spiritual works of Kundakunda, logical works of Siddhasena and Devasena, Tiloyapannati of Yativrsabha, Trilokasara of Nemicandra, Brhatsangrahani of Candrasuri, Vicarasara Prakarana of Pradyumnasuri, Bhagavati Aradhana of Sivarya, Mulacara of Vattakera, Pravacanasaroddhara of Nemicandra, Mulacara of Vattakera, Pravacanasaroddhara of Nemicandra, Savayapannatti, Yogasataka and Dhurtakhyana of Haribhadra, Kattigeyanuvekkha of Svamikumara Paumacariya of Vimalasuri and Caupannamahapurisa-Cariya of Silankacarya.<sup>52</sup>

There are numerous historical writings (*caritras*) in Prakṛta, which describes the life of individual *Tirthankaras*, such as Rsabha, Santinatha, Neminatha, Parsva and Mahavira. Jainas own abundant narrative literature in Prakṛta. The Jainas has composed Vasudeva-Hindi of Samghadasagani, Samaraicca-kaha of Haribhadra, Kuvalayamala of Uddyotanasuri and many Katha-kosas. All these show that Jainas have to their credit voluminous Prakṛta literature, but unfortunately the study of Prakṛta language has practically disappeared from India. What will be its consequence is a matter of great concern for the custodians of Indian culture.

Apart from the vast Prakṛta literature Jaina authors adopted various languages such as Apabhramsa, Kannada, and Tamil for their compositions. The credit of inaugurating an Augustan age in the Apabhramsa, Tamil and Kannada literature unquestionably goes to the Jainas. Jaina authors have nourished Apabhramsa, which enjoyed the credit of being the national language of Northern India for a very long time. From 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the cultivators of Pushpadanta belonging to 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Dhanapala belonging to 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Vira belonging to 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Nayanandi belonging to 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Harideva belonging to 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D., and Raidhy belonging to 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. are the immortal literary figures of India. Joindu, Muni, Ramasingha and Devasena are the prominent ethico-spiritual writers, who have been recognized as the precursors of Kabir, Tulasi Dhas and other mystic poet-saints of India.<sup>53</sup> It may be pointed out that the present national language of India, Hindi, owes a great deal to Apabhramsa. Hindi has inherited its literary forms from Apabhramsa. The regional languages such as Sindhi, Punjabi, Marathi, Gujarati, Rajasthani, Bihari, Udiya, Bangali, Asami and the like have grown from the soil of Apabhramsa language and literature.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Ibid., pp. 19, 129-131.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Ibid., p.165.

As regards Jaina literature in Tamil, it is not a mere accident that the best literature known as the Sangam literature of the ancient Tamil country is the creation of the Jaina scholars. The two great works, Kural and Naladiyar are the compositions of Jaina authors. Of the five major Kavyas, the three – namely, Jivaka Cintamani, Silappadikaram and Valaiyapati – are by Jaina writers. Jivaka Cintamani is the greatest existing Tamil literary monument. Besides, all the five minor Kavyas are also composed by Jaina authors. Tolkappiyam, the earliest Tamil grammar, Nannul, the most popular grammar in Tamil language and the works on Tamil lexicography – all these are written by Jaina authors.<sup>55</sup> We may conclude by saying that Jainism prevailed in the south of India even before the Sangama period (350 BC to 20 A.D.) of Tamil literary history.

Regarding the Kannada language, we may say that the Jainas have undoubtedly been the foremost cultivators of the Kannada language from the inception of its literary history which is traced back to the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. By the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, they had made it a well established literary language. Professor R. Narsimhachari observes: “The earliest cultivators of the language were Jainas. The oldest works of any extent and value that have come down to us are all from the pen of the Jainas.”<sup>56</sup> Jaina authors in Kannada are far numerous than in Tamil. To name only a few, we have, Pampa, Ponna, Ranna, Gunavarma Nagacandra, Nayasena, Nagavarma, Agala, Nemicandra, Janna and Madhura whose works are admired as excellent specimens of poetic composition. Besides poems (*kavyas*) written by Jaina authors we have numerous works by them dealing with subjects, such as grammar, medicine, veterinary science, cookery and so forth. Altogether the number of Jaina authors in Kannada is nearly two hundred.

In addition to the Prakṛta, Apabhraṃsa, Kannada and Tamil literature Jainas started writing in Sanskrit as well as early as 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. The Tattvarthasūtra of Umasvati is the compendium of Jainism in Sanskrit. Puṅgyapada belonging to 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and Akalanka belonging to 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. have written commentaries on it. Works on Jaina logic have been written from 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. to 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Some of the great logicians are Siddhasena, Samantabhadra, Akalanka, Vidyanandi, Haribhadra, Manikyanandi, Hemacandra, Prabhacandra, Vadidevasuri, Mallisena, Vimaladasa and Yasovijaya. Jaina Puranas, Mahakavyas, devotional literature, grammar, Campukavyas and large number of ethico-spiritual works have also enriched the Sanskrit literature. Besides, Jaina scholars wrote treatises on politics, mathematics, lexicon, poetics, medicine, astronomy, geography and astrology. Jainas recognized the genius of Kalidasa so much so that the Jaina writer Mallinatha wrote commentaries on

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Ibid.

the works of Kalidasa and, thus, paid homage to this great luminary of Sanskrit literature.<sup>57</sup>

## CONCLUSION

From the above exposition of Jaina system of thought and practice we can conclude that Jainism has contributed greatly to socio-cultural spheres of Indian life. Jainism as a religion and a movement against *Brahminic* and Vedic traditions and has generated a remarkable social and cultural upliftment in Indian society. In fact, Jainism is noted for its three major concepts/ practices – *ahimsa*, asceticism and *anekantavada*. The doctrine of *ahimsa* is central to Jain ethical thought and the uniqueness of Jainism lies in the urgency with which it extended the practice of *ahimsa* to all forms of life. *Anekantavada* is the basic metaphysical and epistemological view of Jainism. It is a view of reality being pluralistic, many-sided or expressing itself in multiple forms. The result is that no absolute predication of reality is valid. Jaina thinkers extend the notion of *anekantavada* also to the axiological and spiritual life. Thus, there is a stress not only in the metaphysical dimension, but also in the moral and spiritual dimension. Jainism also contributed by stressing the equality of all men and women in the social structure. The contribution of the Jainas in the field of art and literature is monumental. Thus, we can say that in the field of socio-spiritual values, logico-metaphysical pronouncements, diverse Indian languages and meaningful artistic, scientific and secular consciousness, Jainism has enormously contributed to Indian Cultural tradition.

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

**CHAPTER XI**

**CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO  
THE BUILDING UP OF MODERN INDIA**

*AUGUSTINE PERUMALIL*

**INTRODUCTION**

Christians constitute an ancient, tiny, fragmented and diminishing community scattered all over India. With regard to the origin of the Christians in India there are several views among scholars. At the St. Thomas celebration in New Delhi on Dec. 18, 1955, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then President of India, made the following observation in his speech: "Remember, St. Thomas came to India when many of the countries of Europe had not yet become Christian, and so those Indians who trace their Christianity to him have a longer history and a higher ancestry than that of Christians of many of the European countries. And it is really a matter of pride to us that it so happened..."<sup>1</sup> Rajendra Prasad has given voice to a very strong view that is shared by many scholars that Christianity reached India in the first century after Christ and that it is brought to this country by St. Thomas, one of the Apostles of Christ, if not also by another apostle, St. Bartholomew.

This view of the scholars is based on historical evidences which include: the apocryphal work *Acts of Judas Thomas*, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.; fragmentary passages in other writings of the third, fourth and the following centuries; the unanimous witnessing of the major Churches from the fourth century onwards; the tradition handed down from generation to generation among the Indian Christians of St. Thomas which identifies Mylapore, Chennai, as the place of his death and burial; and finally, the finding and excavation of the Portuguese of the alleged tomb of St. Thomas in 1523.<sup>2</sup> Though these evidences are impressive, there are scholars who consider them inadequate to establish conclusively the Indian mission of St Thomas and make it a matter of dispute. Yet no serious scholar would dispute the antiquity of Christianity in India. Based on historical evidences and on strong traditions, they admit that the Syrian Orthodox Church called the Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala has had a continuous life of at least fourteen

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in A.M. Mundadan: "St. Thomas and St. Thomas Christians", *Indian Christian Directory*, ed. Joseph Panthaplamthottiyil (Kottayam: Rashtra Deepika, 2000), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> For a brief history of St. Thomas Christians of Kerala: Cf. A.M. Mundadan: "St. Thomas and St. Thomas Christians", pp. 54-56.

centuries.<sup>3</sup> Having made these introductory comments, let us move on to consider some other facts regarding the Christian community in India in the next section.

### THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN INDIA

Despite its ancient origin, contrary to the propaganda by the Hindu right-wing advocates that Christians are growing fast by converting Hindus by fraud, force and incentives, the census of India tell us that the Christian community remains a small, fragmented and declining minority in India. According to the census, the percentage of Christians in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century constitutes merely 2.18 percent of the total population of India. This figure shows a decline in the percentage of Christians in India – from the 2.6 percent in 1971 to the present 2.18. The census also shows a low decadal growth rate of Christians (16.89 percent) compared to Hindus (22.78 percent), Muslims (32.76 percent), Sikhs (25.48 percent), and Buddhists (35.98 percent).<sup>4</sup>

This tiny and declining community – contrary to what appears to a casual observer – is a fragmented community. *The Indian Christian Directory* published in the year 2000 by Rashtra Deepika lists twenty organized Churches, in addition to numerous smaller communities and assemblies. Though they share a common name “Christians”, a common faith in Jesus and hold the Bible as the word of God, they differ in their theology, liturgy, lifestyle and approach to the society outside. The interrelationship among these various groups is often less than cordial, frequently exhibiting indifference, rivalry and at times even hostility. Despite its fragmented nature, this small Christian community has taken firm roots in the Indian soil and has become totally indigenous. The life of many generations of Christians has mingled with the soil, air and life-blood of the Indian subcontinent and has become, in the words of Nehru, “part and parcel of Indian life.”<sup>5</sup> Christian Indians have no home or geographical-political loyalties different from that of their fellow citizens of India. They are totally dedicated to their homeland. Their dedication to God makes the Christians committed to the service of their neighbors, in whom they see the image of God. Such dedication to God and commitment to the service of neighbors, whom they regard as God’s children and hence their brothers and sisters, make their contributions disproportionate to its numerical strength. Without their dedicated service to fellow Indians, India would have been a

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. C.P. Thankaraj: *Whither Indian Christianity* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1990), p. 46. For a detailed discussion on the origin of Christianity in India: Cf. A.C. Perumalil: *Apostles in India*, 2<sup>nd</sup> enl. ed., (Patna: XTTI, 1971).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Indian Christian Directory*, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> George Thomas: “Christianity and the Modern Indian Civilization,” *Indian Christian Directory*, p. 70.



less developed country, living in many superstitions and practicing inhuman customs and traditions. Christians and Christianity has played a major role in humanizing India and making it a unified, progressive, egalitarian, secular, democratic state, proud of its heritage and looking towards the future.

This essay attempts to document the contributions of the Christian community to modern India. This documentation is done not out of an inferiority feeling, seeking to prove that Christians have made some contributions to the life of the nation. Christians have been in India from the very beginning of Christianity and the Christian community has integrated itself with the culture and philosophy of the land. As part of the Indian community, they have added some specific creative contributions coming from their historically inherited diverse background to the fermentation process that has fashioned modern India. This essay tries to assess realistically the contribution of the Christian community to the growth and development of modern Indian society, and to give a reply to the lie cultivated by the Sangh Parivar<sup>6</sup> and given to the perception in the popular mind that the missionaries are out to forcefully proselytize Hindus and destroy Indian culture and civilization, and that the Christians are aliens, whose loyalty to India cannot be taken for granted.<sup>7</sup> The Christian contribution to the betterment of the nation spans many different areas. We can name any field affecting social life – such as education, health-care, social service, social transformation, development of commerce and art, material and human resources, language and culture, empowering the weaker section of society, fighting social evils, research, publishing, public administration – and we find Christians are doing an outstanding work and are making their mark. A full treatment of the subject requires a more elaborate consideration. Therefore, what we intend to do is to give a sketch of some of the major contributions of the Christian community to the socio-political and religio-cultural life of India. We make one exception in treating the contribution of the Church to the liberation of the depressed classes, such as the *dalits* – the people of lower strata of the society, from lower castes and the outcasts of the Hindu society – the tribals and women.

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<sup>6</sup> Sangh Parivar is a consortium of Hindu right-wing organizations which includes the RSS, the BJP, the VHP, the Bajrang Dal and a few other odd fanatic Hindu groups.

<sup>7</sup>This view was taught by M. S. Golwalker, the founder and ideologue of the RSS, a Hindu right-wing organization. Golwalker taught that only Hindus can be loyal to India, since it is their holy land; Christians and Muslims cannot be patriotic, because they have their holy-land elsewhere. The Sangh Parivar, who are the ideological heirs of Golwalkar continue to hold and propagate this view with the help of their political clout and social outreach. The fact that the accusation of Christians being aliens was publicly voiced by none less than Devi Lal, former Deputy Prime Minister, who was not a member of the Sangh Parivar, shows the sway of this belief.

This exception is made not only because it is the new thrust of the Church in India, but also because, in our view, the contribution of the Church in this area had been unique, substantial, decisive, and unmatched. In the next sections, we can briefly consider the above-mentioned contributions of the Christian community in building up the modern Indian society in greater detail.

### **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO MODERN INDIAN SOCIETY: AN OVERVIEW**

Since Christianity has taken firm roots in the Indian soil and has become totally indigenous, it comes as no surprise that it has actively participated in the nation building and made great contributions to the emergence of modern India. In the fields of education, health care, works of mercy, service to the poor and the abandoned, and empowerment of the downtrodden the Christian community stands out for its contribution to the nation. Mother Teresa, the most visible face of the Church in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is not an isolated phenomenon, but just one, albeit the most known, of the thousands of dedicated Christians in India and around the world. Hidden behind the story of her success is the story of the dedicated hard work of thousands of men and women belonging to the religious congregation called Missionaries of Charity who live and carry out the mandate of Christ to serve the poorest of the poor.

If Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity have made their mark in the field of service to the poor and the abandoned, there are hundreds of similar Christian men and women doing commendable service in the fields of education, research, social service, study of language and culture, care of the sick and the abandoned and the liberation of the depressed classes. In these fields, the network of Christian service is very large. According to the recently published *Indian Christian Directory*<sup>8</sup> the Church in India runs 28,098 public institutions by means of which the Christian community gives humanitarian service to millions of fellow citizens. In addition there are numerous individuals who extend Christian service to their neighbors without institutional framework. An overview of their contribution to Indian society can prepare the ground for a deeper appreciation of the Christian worldview which makes them great lovers of God and servants of their neighbors, and of the role of the Christian community in the life of the nation. To present this overview in a systematic manner, we shall divide the Christian services offered by Christian community into two groups: institutional services and non-institutional services. We elaborate on these twofold services in the sections below.

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph Panthaplamthottiyil, ed.: *Indian Christian Directory* (Kottayam: Rashtra Deepika, 2000).

### *Institutional Services*

Institutional services are carried out by formally established public institutions run by the Christian community. They include formal education given in and through Christian schools, and colleges; works of mercy given to the poor and needy through centres that care of such people; the social work done for the upliftment of different strata of the Indian society; the health-care work done through hospitals, dispensaries and other health-care centres; and the works done through other institutions, such as orphanages, hostels, publication centres and the like. We briefly consider some of such services rendered by Christians here below.

#### Formal Education:

Formal education is a field where the Church has made impressive contributions and where its contributions are most visible and significant. The statistics published in *Indian Christian Directory 2000* lists 590 colleges, 1073 higher secondary schools, 3328 high schools, 3392 upper primary schools, 5855 lower primary schools, 3870 nursery schools, 844 training schools, 1024 technical schools, 187 professional colleges run by the Church. These institutions maintain high quality of education and render highly valued service to the country. It is worth noting that a good number of colleges listed by the yearly A.C. NIELSEN-ORG-MARG survey of colleges as the best in the country are run by Church organizations. In the listing of the aforesaid agency of the top ten colleges four are Christian colleges. Thus, the Christian contributions to formal education stand-out in both quantity and quality.

The education program of the Church is significant because of two reasons. Firstly, it is the introduction of western education that brought about a mighty transformation over the traditional Indian society. Eminent historians like R.C. Majumdar, K. K. Datta and V.N. Datta concur with this view saying: "If we have to choose one single factor which helped more than others in bringing about the great transformation in India in the 19th century, we can without any hesitation point to the English higher education."<sup>9</sup> Secondly, education is a foundational contribution, since many other contributions of the Church to Indian society is made possible because of it. In regions, such as Kerala and West Bengal, where the indices of development – health-care, low child-mortality, high life-expectancy, efficient administration, sanitation, successful family-planning, comfortable living conditions, protection of human rights, and equality among citizens are high – we find a correspondingly high rate of education. Conversely, in those regions of the country where the indices of development are low, we also notice low levels of education. We also notice that those regions in

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Sundar Raj Manickam: "Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu," *Indian Christian Directory*, p. 123.

today's India which lead in literacy and education and in corresponding human and social development are the earliest and most impressive fields of missionary activity in the country. These observations help us to establish education as foundational to human, social, cultural and economic development.

Though the Church has been in the forefront of spreading education, we must not assume that the missionaries are the first to introduce education in India. Long before the arrival of the missionaries there have been schools in India, but they are "both few in number and poor in quality."<sup>10</sup> The mixed and impure castes seldom went to school. The *brahmins* kept all learning and teaching for themselves. Under these circumstances the Christian educationists<sup>11</sup> looked upon schools and colleges as a powerful medium for the diffusion of Christian teachings and influence and for transforming individuals and society. They considered the leavening of the society with Christian thought and ideals more important than the conversion of a few caste Hindus. This view led the Church to establish schools and colleges all over the India and open the horizons of knowledge to all.

Modernization and all-round development are the most significant effects of the new system of education on western lines. In addition it has many other beneficent results. It has opened, in the words of Henry Whitehead, "the door to the thought, the politics, the religion of the Western world and [has] brought India new knowledge and the possibility of a new life."<sup>12</sup> Sunder Raj Manickam, professor of Medieval History, Madurai Kamaraj University, enumerates other benefits: It has produced an educated leadership and created a progressive intelligentsia. This new system of education through the medium of English also has made its effect felt in modernizing Indian languages, in creating the spirit of inquiry and in introducing sciences to India. Thus, in the modernization of India the missionary education, which is primarily western and Christian in character, has played a decisive role.<sup>13</sup> Thus, of all the contributions of the Church to the modern Indian society, education is foundational and most significant. The transformation of the traditional Indian society in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century is brought about the introduction of western education which the missionaries championed.

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<sup>10</sup> Sunder Raj Manickam: "Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu", p. 123.

<sup>11</sup> For example: William Miller of the Madras Christian College and the William Hare Findlay of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society of Negapatnam.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Sunder Raj Manickam: "Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu," p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Sunder Raj Manickam: "Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu", p. 123.

Works of Mercy:

After education, it is in the works of mercy that the face of the Indian Church is most visible. The works of mercy draws its inspiration from the life of Jesus who is compassionate to the poor and suffering and spent much of his time and energy attending to them. In the field of works of mercy – service to the poor, the suffering and the abandoned – the contribution of the Church is unmatched. According to the *Indian Christian Directory* the Church runs 1909 orphanages, 2922 hostels and 2749 hospitals where the poor are given special consideration. In addition, there are institutions where great attention is given to the blind, the deaf and the dumb. There are also numerous homes for the destitute, the aged, the mentally challenged and the dying. The Church has also many rehabilitation centers for patients suffering from stigmatized, communicable diseases, such as leprosy, tuberculosis and AIDS. At the time of calamities like war, floods and earthquakes the Church responds quickly, reaching food, medicine and shelter to the affected people, exemplifying the Church's concern and love for the poor and the suffering.

No discussion on the works of mercy carried out by the Church will be complete without making reference to the works of Mother Teresa and the religious congregation she founded in Calcutta on Oct. 7, 1950 – the Congregation of the Missionaries of Charity. Struggling against all odds and strong opposition from the influential people in Kolkata, she opens homes for the destitute, the dying and orphans in and around Kolkata. The missionaries belonging to the religious community can be seen in railway stations, bus-stands and market places, reaching out to the abandoned, helpless people who are seriously sick and dying. Their activities include running of dispensaries, leprosy clinics, rehabilitation centers, and homes for the abandoned, the handicapped and destitute. Even after the Mother Theresa's death, this mission still continues, proclaiming the compassion of Christ for the suffering humanity.

Social Work:

Social work, with the aim of developing human potential and material resources, is another major concern of the Church. In addition to education and the works of mercy, Christian workers are engaged in massive social work. The Church's development schemes consist not only in providing food, clothing and shelter to the needy, but also helping people toward the achievement of self-reliance and personal dignity. The schemes are made people-oriented and the participation of the people is ensured to help people to realize their self-worth. The aim of the development work, like any other missionary work is to make present in the world the salvation Jesus came to offer to humanity; in other words, to establish the Kingdom of God, which Jesus came to establish. The Church does it by improving the living conditions of the masses and by bringing about social

transformation which will result in the creation of a just and egalitarian society. To achieve these ends, Christian workers have started many rural cooperative banks, milk cooperatives and seed cooperatives in backward areas where neither the government nor other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have reached. Hundreds of Christian workers are engaged in helping out the villagers in water management and land development. There are also innumerable tuition-centers for poor children, *balwadies*, adult literacy-centers and social research-centers. Large number of Christian technical and nursing schools, distributed all over the country ensure not only a pool of skilled workers for society, but also employment for the poorer section of the society.

#### Health-Care:

Another essential aspect of Christian missionary work is the mission of healing. The contribution of the Church in the area of health services has been well appreciated by the people as well as by the government. Quite a few Church personnel are fully involved in public health services. The *Indian Christian Directory* lists 2749 hospitals run by the Church in India. There are also mobile clinics, nutritional programs, and hygiene and sanitation programs run by the missionaries. Many awareness programs are also conducted to prevent life-threatening diseases.

The health apostolate of the Church draws inspiration from the healing ministry of Jesus, and expresses the Christian community's holistic understanding of salvation. The work of Jesus consisted in caring for the body as much as caring for the soul. Stories of Jesus healing the sick, the lame, the blind and the deaf are aplenty in the Bible. Following the example of Jesus, the Church attaches great importance to the healing ministry. Both Catholics and Protestants have made laudable contribution in the medical field.

In the field of health-care Christians have done pioneering work. In this context the work of the Methodist missionaries in Bengal needs to be mentioned. They first recognized the need for the medical care of the neglected and socially ostracized leprosy patients. With the cooperation of the Mission to Lepers, a home and a hospital for these patients have been established in 1901. The Leprosy Eradication and Control Programs that is started have grown, reaching out to a population of 250,000. Besides, to create the awareness about this disease, Mobile Health Education Program is regularly carried on. Another pioneer in health-care program is Abbe Dubious. In 1803 he has successfully introduced and has popularized in Mysore region vaccination against smallpox. Then in 1906 he has opened a leper-asylum in Mangalore and a small hospital at Uduppi in 1923. Soon people of all sections and categories have benefited from the work of the mission. Several doctors like Dr. Eva Lombard and Dr. Marianne Pflugfelder have rendered yeoman service especially to the less privileged

sections of the society. T.B. patients have come to be accommodated in the newly opened Christian Sevakiya Ashram at Parpale.

Augustus Mueller's contribution to health ministry is also memorable. A Jesuit priest of German origin, Mueller has begun his work with a cigar-box full of Homeopathic medicines! In course of time, he has started the Homeopathic Poor Dispensary in 1880 and St. Joseph's Leper Asylum in 1890. Five years later Mueller has opened two large hospitals – one in 1895 and the other in 1901, one for men and the other for women. These hospitals have done splendid service when Bubonic Plague smote the State in 1902-1904. They continue to train health workers in affordable, but effective Homeopathic medicines. For the outstanding service he has rendered he is presented with Kaiser-i-Hind Silver Medal.

Three other significant ventures of the Church in the field of health-care are Christian Medical College, Ludhiana; Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore, Tamil Nadu; and St. John's Medical College and Hospital, Bangalore. The former two are Protestant ventures, whereas the last is a Catholic venture. In addition to providing affordable and quality health-care, these institutions are well sought after by aspiring medical students.

#### Other Institutions:

Besides the above-said institutions, there are other institutions, such as 1909 orphanages, 2922 hostels, and 255 publication-centres and the total number of institutions run by the Church in India, as listed in the *Indian Christian Directory* would add up to 28,098. The *Directory*, however, leaves out the less organized centers catering to works of mercy, social and human development, media education, study of culture, promotion of dialogue among religions and so on. When we add the number of these institutions to what is already listed, the beneficiaries of these institutions add up to millions of Indians—Hindus, Muslims and Christians, rich and poor, young and old, upper casts and lower casts, city dwellers and villagers. The institutional network of Christian service to the Indian population is large, and the quality of the service they render is admirable. When we consider that the power behind such a massive network is a minority community comprising 2.18 percent of the total population, the figures become truly impressive.

#### *Non-Institutional Services*

Non-institutional services include the great works done by different intellectuals for the preservation and development of Indian culture in various fields. In the following sections, let us consider some of the non-institutional services given to Indian cultural tradition.

### Preservation and Development of Indian Culture:

In modern times, India herself and the world at large has “discovered” the real India and Indian culture chiefly through the efforts of Christian establishments, organizations and persons. Far from destroying Indian culture, as accused by the Hindu right-wing, Christian workers and Christian institutions are in the forefront of rediscovering, studying, preserving and propagating Indian culture in India and abroad. The great religions and languages of India; the books, the teachers and leaders of the past; arts, customs and manners of India – all became more exactly known through the efforts of Christian writers. The research and studies undertaken in connection with the Vedas, the Tirukural and the other Great Books of the East are just one example of this initiative. The study of the Asoka Pillar inscriptions and the excavations and studies connected with the Indus Valley are other initiatives in this category.

Some of the missionaries are great scholars and thinkers, hailing from world-renowned universities and colleges. Sunder Raj Manickam writes: “In such scholar missionaries, the wisdom of the East and achievements of the west [has] blossomed to the full.”<sup>14</sup> In the field of linguistics, literacy, translation and book-printing they have made early and original contribution. Missionary scholars like Robert de Nobili, Constantius Joseph Beschi, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, G. U. Pope, Robert Caldwell, Winslow and Philipp Fabricius have genuine love for scientific study on intricate and abstruse themes such as the philological analysis of the Dravidian dialects, Saiva Siddhanta philosophy and Tamil *bhakti* cult. They have shown keen interest also in reading native works on sciences and in exploring the ethical systems of the land. One of the aims of the early missionaries is to make a thorough study of the Indian languages, religions and culture and communicate their findings to the world-outside. They consider this task as an essential part of their missionary program. To accomplish this task, many scholarly missionaries have mastered Indian languages, have done extensive research in Indian languages and culture and have translated Indian texts to European languages. Max Mueller’s massive multivolume study, *The Sacred Books of the East*, and the works of Robert Caldwell, G.U. Pope and Constant Beschi in Tamil are some of the examples of the missionary effort to preserve, develop and propagate Indian culture.

The works of Robert Caldwell and G.U. Pope are still considered authoritative in the study of Dravidian culture, and history and languages. Both of them have pioneered the study of Dravidian history and culture. In fact, the two SPG missionaries, Pope and Caldwell, rank first among all Tamil scholars. For them Tamil is the method of understanding the history, religion and culture of the people of south India. Their research and hypothesis have provided the conceptual base for south Indian historical

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 125.



scholarship which has traced its history back to the days of former power and glory. The Dravidian movement remains grateful to the missionaries for recovering the cultural heritage. Their work has made a great impact on the consciousness of the Tamils, both Christians and non-Christians.

The works of these scholar-missionaries must perhaps be considered one of the most valuable contributions of Christianity to Indian culture in general and in particular to Indian religions, art, architecture history, music, dance and literature.

#### Development of Indian Languages and Literature:

Another area of missionary contribution to modern India is the development of language and literature. The Christian missionaries are the first ones to compile dictionaries and to write grammar books in several Indian languages. Ziegenbalg's *Grammatica Tamulica* of 1715 is a great work which is used as a guide-book by later missionaries. In the national language, Hindi, the contributions of Fr. Camil Bulke is well acknowledged. Though he was not the first one to compile a dictionary in Hindi, his dictionary from English to Hindi is one of the best known and most widely used dictionary. The grammatical works and dictionaries of Arnos Patiri, Anjelo Francis, Father Clement, Benjamin Bailey and Richard Collins are notable. The most celebrated of the dictionaries in Malayalam compiled under Christian missionary auspices is the *Malayalam-English Nighantu* by Hermann Gundert. These works have undoubtedly enriched the development of the Malayalam language.

The two eminent Maharashtra Christian literary figures who have made significant contribution to the growth of Marathi literature are Baba Padmanji and Narayan Vaman Tilak. Padmanji is the pioneer of Marathi novel and autobiography, while Tilak has broken new ground as a poet of nature. No history of Marathi literature can be written without acknowledging their contribution. In Kannada literature, Hermann Moegling is well-known. A pioneering journalist, Moegling's book, *Esraru Patrike*, which is based on the conversion of *Anandarao Kaundinya*, a *brahmin* convert from Mangalore, is considered to be the first Kannada work in the form of a letter. Moegling also translated the *Dasa Songs* into German and had it printed. His other works include the *Coorg Memoirs* in English. His *Jathi Vicharane* and *Deva Nicharane* are original treatises and the first literary essays in modern Kannada.

Early Christian missionaries in Kerala made valuable services to the development of the Malayalam language. Angelo Francis, Hermann Gundert, N. Garthwaite, Robert Caldwell, Joseph Pitt, Robert Drummond, George Mathan, I. C. Chacko, Arnos Padri, Benjamin Bailey, and Richard Collins are well known for their contribution to the development of Malayalam. Works, such as the *Samkshepa Vedartham* of Father Clement, *Vadatartham* by Kariyattil Ouseph Kathanar, *Vairhamana Pusthakam* by Paremakkel Thomas Kathanar are notable contributions to the development

of the Malayalam language. The English missionaries who came to Kerala in large numbers toward the close of the 18th century and in the early decades of the 19th century also made substantial contributions to the development of the Malayalam language. The establishment of C.M.S. Press at Kottayam in 1821 by Bailey has given a great fillip to the publication of books in Malayalam. In addition to his celebrated *Malayalam-English Nighantu*, Gundert has nineteen other scholarly works in Malayalam to his credit dealing with such diverse subjects as language, grammar, history and theology. The *Deepika*, a newspaper published by Christians (*nazaranis*) in Kerala has played an important role in the development of Malayalam literature. It comes into being when prose fiction is just budding in Malayalam. Several young novelists, short-story writers and humor writers found in *Deepika* a generous patron. Some of them later did make their mark in Malayalam literature.

In the development of Bengali literature, William Carey's and his associates' role is important. Carey is the first Baptist missionary to arrive at Serampore in Bengal in 1793. He has left his mark in manifold fields, such as literature, translation and social reforms. The contributions of Carey's associates, Ward and Manshman, in these spheres are also notable. The translation of the Bible into Bengali by Carey and the manifold publications from the Serampore Mission Press, which is founded by him, helped the development of Bengali literature. Julian Vinson Dupuis, Robert Caldwell Clayton, M. Winslow, Mousset, M.A. Lap, and G.U. Pope are remembered for their contribution to the development of Tamil. Caldwell and Pope rank first among all Tamil scholars. Their works are still considered authoritative in the study of history and languages. The first Christian Tamil poet H.A. Krishna Pillai and novelist Mayavaram Vedanayagam Pillai are greatly influenced by the missionaries' scholarship in Tamilology. Christianity also has its impact on other novelists, such as A. Madavaiah who tried to promote social change in the Hindu *brahmanical* society through his writings.<sup>15</sup>

C.P. Brown and C.D. Campbell have done pioneering work in consolidating Telugu language. For its development Kannada language owes much to F. Kittel, T. Hodson, H. Spencer, F. Ziegler Reeve, Sanderson, F. Ziegler, and J. Bucher, J. Brigel and A. Manner. They are also remembered for their contribution to Tulu. F. Max Mueller, Monier-Williams and H. H. Wilson have contributed for the development of Sanskrit. Edwin Greaves has helped Hindi to develop. Xavier Maffei and S.R. Dalgado are remembered for their contribution to Konkani. J. T. Molesworth and T. Candy have helped for the development of Marathi. Geo P. Taylor and Tisdal have contributed for the development of Gujarati. William Carey has helped Bengali in its development. T. J. Maltby's contribution for development of Oriya language is outstanding. Ernest Trumpp's contribution to Sindhi is notable. D. C. Phillott, S. W. Fallon and

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

Forbes have assisted in the development of Hindustani. Captain H. G. Raverty has helped in the development of Pushto language.

Not only the development of Indian languages and literature but their propagation abroad through translation is also high on the agenda of the missionaries. In this area, the German missionaries have done admirable work. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, the first Protestant missionary to India, has been named the "icebreaker" in this venture. He is said to be the first European to translate a Tamil text into a European language. He had translated into German *Neethi Venpa* and *Kondrei Vendan*, two didactical poems of considerable merit. The most notable venture in this field is the work of Max Mueller who mastered Sanskrit and translated many sacred books of the East for the western readers.

Many missionaries are publicly honored for their contribution to the development of language. The contributions of Beschi to Tamil language have earned him a place in Tamil literature. A statue of Beschi is erected on the Marina beach in Chennai in remembrance of his place in the history of Tamil Nadu. Standing next to the statues of the great epic poet Thiruvalluvar and other cultural heroes of Tamil Nadu, this statue reminds us of Beschi's contributions to Tamil culture and literature. Carlos Valles, a Spaniard missionary – whose books in Gujarati have received State Government awards – is one of the most respected scholars in Gujarat. If Camil Bulke is a well-known name in Hindi literature, R. P. Sah, a less known writer, too, is recognized by the Government of Bihar for his contribution to Hindi literature. This list is not exhaustive, but it indicates how much the Indian languages owe to the work of the missionaries. True, the primary purpose of the missionaries in the development of Indian languages is to make Christian literature available to the natives in their own language. Having developed the Indian languages, with the help of the printing press, which they brought to the country for the first time, they published books in various Indian languages. Their publications have included not only translations but also original works. The fact that their pioneering work is geared to evangelization should not tempt us to downplay the importance of their work, because the Indian languages have gained immensely by their pioneering study of language and the introduction of the printing press. Their contribution to the development of Indian languages is so significant that any book dealing with the history of Indian languages will be considered incomplete without a chapter on the Contribution of Christian Missionaries to the development of Indian languages.

#### Christian Contribution to Indian Philosophy:

Being in India for centuries, the Christian community has integrated itself with the culture and philosophy of the land. During its long history it has produced many creative thinkers who have added to the philosophical deposit of the country. A recent publication in German language entitled

*History of Theology in the Third World: India*<sup>16</sup> lists twenty-one Christian thinkers beginning with Abraham Malpan (1796-1843) and ending with E.V. Mathew (1917-1971). The list includes, among others, the names of K.T. Paul (1876-1931), Venkal Chakkarai (1880-1958), Pandippedi Chenchiah (1886-1959), Sadhu Sunder Singh (1889-1929), A. J. Appasamy (1891-1975) and Paul Devanandan (1901-1962). To this list we may add the names of some of the Protestant western missionaries in India: William Miller (1838-1923), A.G. Hogg (1890-1954), Bernard Lucas (1860-1920), T.E. Salter of the London Missionary Society, J.N. Farquhar (1861-1929) and C.F. Andrews (1871-1940). There is another group of Indian thinkers – all from Maharashtra – who are learned pundits and who have come under the influence of Christian message. As thinkers, they articulate in the defense of their newly found religious loyalty in the Indian context. They are Nehemia Goreh (1825-1895), Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922), Narayan Vaman Tilak (1862-1919) and Manilal Parekh (1885-1967).

Among the contemporary Catholic thinkers who have contributed as theologians/ philosophers, the following names are to be mentioned: Raimundo Panikkar (b. 1918), Sebastian Kappan (1924-1994), Samuel Rayan (b. 1920), George M. Soares-Prabhu (b.1929), D. S. Amalorpavadass (1932-1990), Michael Amaladoss (b.1936), Joseph Neuner (b.1908), Gispert-Sauch (b.1930), Sara Grant, Vandana and others. In the Protestant circles names like Bishop Lesslie Newbiggin, Robin Boyd, Bas Wielenga and his wife Gabricele Dietrich are well-known. There are other Protestant and orthodox theologians who are working as professors in different colleges and have made a name for themselves by their writings. J. R. Chandran, Stanley J. Samartha, V. C. Samuel, Mar Osthathios, Paulos Mar Gregorios, Surjit Singh, Herbert Jai Singh, Gnana Robinson, Christopher Dural Singh, Somen Das, C.E. Abraham, T.M. Philip and Nirmal Minj, who has done pioneering work among the tribals. The list of Christian thinkers in India will not be complete if one does not mention the present day Christian activists who stand for the *dalits* in the country. Notable among them are A.P. Nirmal from Gurukul College in Chennai and Abraham Ayrookuzhiel from Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore.

This is obviously a sketchy presentation of the Christian thinkers. It is neither a comprehensive list nor does it indicate the specific contribution of these thinkers. It merely indicates some of the important names in the history of Christian thinkers in India.

It must also be acknowledged that not all these thinkers are philosophers in the western sense of the term. Many of them are theologians trying to articulate their Christian faith and experience in the context of India. In the process some have made contributions to philosophy as well.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Theologiegeschichte der dritten Welt: Indien*, (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1992).

Their contributions can be grouped under three headings.<sup>17</sup> Firstly, what the Christian thinkers have contributed through their research and publications to the traditional Indian systems of philosophy, such as Nyaya, Vaisesikha, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta. Coming from another religious tradition, these thinkers have attempted to enter into another worldview and as scholars and seekers of truth interpreted and assimilated the basic concepts of Indian philosophy. Secondly, the contribution of thinkers who reflect on some basic social issues such as social justice and human dignity, inter-religious dialogue and harmony of religion, and so on. Though in their thinking they draw inspiration from the biblical sources and Christian traditions, they are obviously not uninfluenced by Indian philosophy and religions. Their reflections are perhaps the result of a cross-cultural fecundation between the two major religious traditions—Hindu and Christian. Thirdly, there is the contribution of thinkers – who attempt to build bridges between Indian religions and Christianity – by drawing from the wealth of the other traditions. While remaining faithful to their traditions, they remain open to the other traditions, thus preparing the intellectual backdrop for a positive encounter of religions.

It is in this third category that Indian Christian thinkers have made positive and creative contribution to Indian philosophy. It began with the initiative of a handful of learned orientalist, who took a descriptive or neutral attitude to the Indian scriptures and translated them with a view of understanding them. The foundation for this approach is laid by Robert de Nobili who pioneered the study of Sanskrit and Tamil and initiated the task of evolving a Christian theological vocabulary for Indian languages. Though some of de Nobili's successors, especially Constant Beschi, tried to carry the work forward, the missionaries as a whole remained unconcerned about the need of developing an Indian Christian theology. Even when the need for an Indian Christian theology has been recognized, it is generally thought of in terms of translation or restating of western doctrine using Indian languages or categories. There has been little recognition of the fact that Hinduism itself would help a new understanding of the Gospel.

However, toward the close of the 19th century attitudes have begun to change. With the emergence of the national awakening and Indian Renaissance many missionaries and Indian Christians have come forward as champions of indigenous movements. The Calcutta Christo Samaj and the National Church of Madras are two examples of this change in thinking. This has given great impetus to the development of a new stream of theology and spirituality. Thinkers on both sides realize the potential of the other religion in helping them to better understand teachings of their own religion. The pioneering work in this field is done by K. M. Banerjee,

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<sup>17</sup> Anand Amaladass in his Editor's Introduction groups the contribution of the Christian thinkers under the first two headings only. Cf. Anand Amaladass: *Christian Contribution to Indian Philosophy* (Chennai: Christian Literature Society, 1995), p. xi.

Parani Andi and A. S. Appasamy Pillai. Banerjee has published in 1875 his *Arian Witness*, the purpose of which is to bring out the striking parallels between the Old Testament – particularly the Book of Genesis – and the Vedas, and thus prove that Christianity, far from being a foreign religion, is in fact the fulfillment of original Hinduism. By publishing in 1889 a less scholarly work entitled *Are We Not Hindus?* Parani Andi's objective is not different from this. A. S. Appasamy Pillai finds in the Rig Veda an unmistakable proclamation of the one God “behind the many” and he is able to point out clear predictions of Christ in the Vedas. Raymundo Panikkar's path-breaking reflection, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, tries to look at Krishna as unknown Christ. What these writers have been trying to do is to enrich Christian theology with the help of Indian categories, and thus make it more appealing to the Indian intelligentsia.

Sadhu Sundar Singh is another prophetic Christian who has tried to enrich Christianity with religious elements from Hinduism. This Sadhu has adopted the *Bhakti Marga* and Yogic vision and has made a tremendous worldwide appeal as the prophet of Indian Christian mysticism. It is the mysticism of the Sadhu that the versatile scholar and Churchman, A. J. Appasamy, has promoted through his scholarly writings. Other Christian thinkers who have tried to bring about a wedding between Hinduism and Christianity include Slater and Farquhar who is of the view that Christianity is the “Crown of Hinduism”. W. Miller and Bernard Lucas have taught simultaneous evolution of religions. The Bengali Catholic nationalist, Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, has tried to lay the foundations for a Vedanta-based Christian theology. P. Johanns and G. Dandoy who have developed the work of Upadhyaya and attempt to approach Christ through Vedanta. M.C. Parekh has intended to establish a “Churchless Hindu Christianity.”

This attempt at cross-cultural studies is not confined to Christian thinkers. Hindu thinkers of the time too have realized the potential of the study of Christianity to enrich Hindu faith. For example, Ram Mohan Roy has recognized in the moral reforming Christ of the west an inspiration for the reform movement in India. K. C. Sen has made an attempt to reform Hinduism with Christ as centre. P. C. Mozoomdar, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda have advocated an Advaitic experience of the *avatara* of Christ. Mahatma Gandhi has seen in Christ the exemplification of a *karmayogi*, offering himself for others, and has drawn inspiration for his political movements. S. Radhakrishnan has tried to subject Christianity to Advaitic world religion. Subha Rao has tried to develop a Christ-centered Hinduism.

In the contemporary period the concern for a positive encounter with Indian religions has produced a new type of literature. This new literature reflects various currents and undercurrents, different trends and approaches. However, three major trends or approaches stand out: the spiritual-contemplative – encounter at the level of spirituality; the philosophical-theological – encounter at the level of philosophy and doctrines; and the socio-political – encounter at the level of social praxis of Christianity and

Hinduism. The late Swami Abhishiktananda, Fr. Le Saux O.S.B., is the pioneer of the first of these three trends. Monchanin, Bede Griffiths, Sisters Vandana and Sara Grant, even Amalorpavadass to a large extent, and the Ashram Movement as a whole, have contributed immensely to this particular aspect of Indian theology. Raymundo Panikkar seems to take the lead in the second approach, the philosophical-theological approach. Paul Devanandan and the Christian Institute of the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS) which he has founded most powerfully support and represent the third approach. M.M. Thomas and Sebastian Kappen are powerful prophets of this third trend. The number of Christian thinkers who follow this approach is on the increase. The inter-religious context makes their thinking unique. The attempt is to articulate the Christian faith in the context of Indian philosophy and religions. It needs to be emphasized that in their work the Christian thinkers are not merely contributing to Christian theology in the Indian context, but their thinking has also become part of thinking process in Indian philosophy, adding variety and bringing new insights.

#### Contribution to the Development of Journals and Newspapers:

The Church in India has made both direct and indirect contribution, as part of its work of evangelization and education, to the commencement and development of journals and newspapers in India. Introduction of the printing press is the first step towards the development of journalism. Indian journalism has its beginning in the initiatives of the missionaries of Serampore. When Christian missionaries of Serampore have started the first printing presses, magazines and journals have been published from there. In 1818 they begin to publish a weekly newspaper in Bengali and English. Soon, following their example, Indians take up the profession in earnest. With regard to other languages and regions, too, the Christian contribution to journalism has been outstanding.

In Kerala the beginning is made by the Basel Mission. Gundert's (of Basel Mission) *Rajyasamacharam* (June 1847) is the first such newspaper in Malayalam. *Paschimodayam* followed in October. The Kottayam C.M.S. Press begins publishing *Jnana Nikshepam* in 1848. The *Nazrani Deepika* (1887) and the *Malayala Manorama* (1898) follow. In the world of Indian newspaper publishing, the various records established by the *Nazrani Deepika* and the *Malayala Manorama* are still unsurpassed. The role of the Malayalam newspaper *Nazrani Deepika* – meaning “torch-bearer of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, hence, of Christians – needs special mention in this context. The *Deepika* is born as early as the time when Tolbert Lanston, an American, introduced the monotype in printing technology (1887). It had been a trend-setter in Malayalam journalism and has kept pace with time, imbibing fresh trends and styles in journalism and state-of-the-art technology. It is the first Malayalam daily to go online in Sept 1997 and according to the rating of Netscape Corporation, in 2000 *deepika.com* is

adjudged number one among Malayalam newspaper websites. With moral fervor, Christian zeal, concern for people's issues, human freedom and a sense of social responsibility the *Deepika* continues its experiments in journalism, setting trend for other newspapers to emulate.<sup>18</sup> In Kannada language, Hermann Moegling is a pioneer journalist. Under the moving spirit of Moegling the Basel Mission has started various newspapers – *Mangalore Samachara* (1842), *Kannada Samachara* (1844), the *Kannada Varthika* and the *Sabhapatra* – though all of them have been discontinued later. Moegling also has started the *Mangalore Almanac* and has been the joint editor of the *Sabha Patra* which has been published from Uduppi in 1868.

Today the secular press has outdone these early missionary ventures. Except for the two Malayalam dailies, *Malayala Manorama* and *Deepika*, the Christian community does not have any newspaper or journal of high standing, though there are many Christians working in renowned newspapers organizations. Yet the missionaries are remembered as pioneers and trendsetters in this field.

#### Christian Contribution to Indian Renaissance:

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the traditional India has been steeped in casteism, untouchability, oppression of women and superstitious practices. However, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century feudalism has become extinct, untouchability is abolished and temples and village wells have been open to the lower castes, caste-oriented segregation in schools or public offices has been made a punishable offence, *sati* is made a thing of the past, widow-marriages have become routine happenings, the womenfolk has come out of the kitchens to the center of sociopolitical and religious action. The 19<sup>th</sup> century India has gone through radical changes in both the social and religious spheres.

The radical social and religious revival, reformation and regeneration that we notice in Indian society in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is sometimes called Indian Renaissance. The chief factors that have unleashed these changes are the establishment of the British Raj and the arrival of the Christian missionaries from the west. While, the British Raj gave political patronage and moral support to the missionaries, the latter, believing in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood/sisterhood of all humans, have entered the Indian social life and through their works have started a process of fermentation that the traditional Indian society could not contain. Though Hindu leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ambedkar, and Gandhi are the foot-soldiers of the reformation and revival of Indian society and religion, the inspiration for and orientation of the reform movements have come from Christian

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<sup>18</sup> For more on this topic: Cf. Aykara: "The Deepika," *Indian Christian Directory*, pp. 90-93.



missionaries, who through extensive western education and programs for the wellbeing of the depressed classes have opened the eyes of enlightened citizens to the inhuman situation prevalent in the Indian society at that time. Extensive western education which the Christian missionaries have spearheaded, the gospel values they have lived and taught as well as the philanthropic work they have taken up awakened in the Indian mind a new consciousness.

The contact with the Christian missionaries has kindled in the minds of the dominant class an awareness of the degeneration that has taken place in Hinduism and in Indian social order. In the hearts of the depressed classes it produced an aspiration and a hope for liberation. Western education has opened the Indian minds; the gospel values have challenged the Indian socio-religious order and Christian philanthropic works have inspired Indian hearts to listen to the cry of the suffering and the marginalized sections of the society. Thus the work of the Christian missionaries has unleashed a series of changes, which have produced far reaching consequences in Indian social life. After the arrival of the missionaries, traditional India can no more be the same. Someone has rightly called the effect of the missionary activity on Indian society “a bloodless revolution,” because it has brought in radical, revolutionary changes in Indian society without taking the sword or firing a shot.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century when western Christian missionaries have arrived India in large numbers, India is an oppressive, caste-ridden society, steeped in superstition and immoral practices. Troubled in conscience, the missionaries have undertaken, on the one hand, a socio-religious criticism of the Indian society, and on the other, various welfare programs aimed at the amelioration of the evils that are found in Indian society. Bengal is the epicenter of their activity and the names of William Carey, a Baptist missionary, and Alexander Duff, a Scottish missionary, are inseparably associated with it. Carey's contribution as a social reformer is unforgettable. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's name is closely associated with the abolition of the inhuman practice of *sati*. However, already in the beginning of the nineteenth century Carey has pioneered the movement that has led to its abolition. He has relentlessly fought against other social evils such as infanticide and caste system, which has inspired later reformers.

The chief factor that has led to Indian Renaissance is the introduction western education. Duff's name is associated with the spread of western education. Duff has arrived in Calcutta in 1830. It is a period, characterized by social reforms, and religious and philosophical enquiries. Everything traditional is questioned. Ram Mohan Roy, the great rationalist, thinker and social reformer of contemporary Bengal, profoundly has influenced and enlightened the young minds burdened with orthodoxy, and irrational traditional practices in the society. Duff enters this scene as an educationist. He founds a college in Calcutta in 1830. Apart from teaching in the college, he daily meets the young inquirers and discusses religious problems. In the adoption of the famous Educational Dispatch of 1854 by the government,

and later in the foundation of the Calcutta University, Duff has played a very important role. Besides Duff's College, other institutions are started by other Christian Societies or individuals. St. Xavier's College is founded in 1835; La Martiniers in 1836; Deveton College is started in the same year. In 1841, the Irish Nuns of Loreto House have arrived in Calcutta. Subsequently, other institutions like Scottish Church College, St. Paul's College, Scottish Church School, St. Paul's School and other institutions are opened. Apart from teaching English, mathematics and science, these institutions have opened the Indian mind to a different value system, the western value system which is predominantly Christian, and act as boiling pots of the great intellectual fermentation that India witnessed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The eradication of the evils of the caste system has always been one of the top priorities of the Christian schools. The schools of the missionaries have studiously avoided all forms of discrimination, admitting into their institutions boys and girls irrespective of caste and class affiliations. This has helped to bring about awareness of gender and social equality paving the way for female emancipation and the removal of untouchability.

Through their institutions, especially schools; research studies; and publications the Christian missionaries have created a new awareness among a sizable number of the intellectuals as well as untouchables. While the intellectuals have become aware of the unjust social structures, the untouchables have become conscious of their humanity and dignity, which in turn generates in them a longing for emancipation. There are two responses to this new awareness: mass conversion and efforts at reformation. Large numbers of untouchables have decided to become Christian as Christianity seemed to offer the depressed people a sense of identity and dignity. Some others have sought to reform the Indian society. Their efforts results in reform movements of the Hindu society in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the formulation of an egalitarian Constitution of modern India. Thus, the mighty changes we notice in the Indian society in the last century are not in small measure the influence of this Christian missionary activity. The awareness of the unjust social structures, the inspiration to work for the welfare of the downtrodden and the worldview to work towards a scientific, secular, egalitarian, modern society have come from Christian missionaries.

This is a good summary of the social revolution set into motion by missionary activity, especially by western education and social awareness programs. However, unlike other bloody revolutions, for most part, it remained hidden from the public eye, because it is revolution of a different kind. S. V. Thomas describes well the nature this revolution set in motion by Christianity as follows: "Not in tempests and earthquakes only, not in fire and lightning only, but also in the majesty of silence does Christ's religion speak to the heart of man with its still small voice. The superficial

observer perceives no change. But the mighty revolution is steadily going on.”<sup>19</sup>

Providing the Blueprint for the Construction of Modern India:

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Keshub Chandra Sen (1838-1884) Pratap C. Mozoomdar (1840-1905), Mohader Govind Ranade (1842-1901), Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1834-1886) and his disciple Vivekananda (1863 -1902), the founder of Ramakrishna Mission in Bengal, the poet Rabindranath Tagore (1817-1905) Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and finally Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) are counted among the chief architects of modern India. However, the blueprint each one of followed while trying to construct modern India is drawn in the workshop of Christianity. Each of these leaders is in some way or other touched by the greatness and dynamism of Christ: Roy and Gandhi are fascinated by the Sermon on the Mount; “the divine humanity” of Christ inspired Keshub Chandra Sen; the “oriental Christ” moves Mozoomdar; Ramakrishna and Vivekananda see in Jesus a type of *jivanmukta*. Thus, being touched by the life and value systems of Christ, they all take part, each in his own way, in the encounter of Indian spirit with western culture and Christian faith. This encounter forms their personalities, determines their worldview, sets their values and determines the direction of the reform they have carried out.

The influence of Christ and Christian values is probably best noticeable in the life of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the great reformer; Gandhi, who is the chief architect of modern India; and Pandita Ramabai, who is the first woman reformer of the Indian Renaissance. The non-violent movement which Gandhi has started is due to the impact of the words of Jesus Christ, “If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also” (Mt. 5:39) as much as the influence of the idea of *ahimsa* in Jainism and Buddhism. He has read the Bible cover to cover and is highly inspired by the Sermon on the Mount. He is so impressed by the teaching of Christ that at one point in his life he has entertained the thought of becoming a Christian.<sup>20</sup> It is this love for Christianity and Islam that prevents him from siding with a one-sided Hindutva ideology and makes him give a secular character to the independence movement and the post-independent India. Just as in the life of Gandhi, the influence of Christ and Christianity is clearly visible in the life Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the greatest reformer of Indian society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He manifests a spirit of emancipation from social and religious bondages. He wants to transform Hinduism into an instrument for social regeneration. In his desire for transformation of Hinduism Roy has felt the irresistible attraction towards Christianity. “The doctrines of Christ,” affirms

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas Srinivasan: “Beschi, the Tamil Scholar and Poet,” *Tamil Culture*, vol. III, (Sept 1954), p. 336. Quoted in Sundar Raj Manickam: “Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu”, p.124.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Indian Express*, October 2, 1998.

Roy, "are more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted for the use of rational beings than any others."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, he has sought for a synthesis between *Upanishadic* monotheism and Christian ethics. In 1820, he has published the book entitled *The Precepts of Jesus: The Guide to Peace and Happiness*, which contains extracts mainly from the first three Gospels covering the ethical teachings of Christ. Thus, in Roy, Jesus Christ begins to be acknowledged and affirmed as part of the spiritual foundation of the modern Indian civilization.

A strong advocate of the right of women to participate in national politics, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati is the first woman reformer of the Indian Renaissance. An active member of the Indian National Congress in its earlier days, she has stirred the participants by her eloquence and influences the policies of the Congress. It is during her search for adequate spiritual resources for the liberation of her sisters that she is confronted by the challenge of Christianity. She became a Christian in 1883 and when she spoke about her conversion to the new faith she says that she is comparatively happy to think that she has found a religion which gives its privileges equally to men and women and in which there is no distinction of caste, color or sex.<sup>22</sup> It is this ideal of equality of all humans Christianity preaches and practices that she seeks for future of India.

There are also other leaders whose lives have been touched by Christ and his values. They believed that Christ is vital for the fulfillment of the Indian search for a new identity. Due to this belief Christianity becomes a part of the Indian Renaissance and nationalism. K.M. Banerjee, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, N. V. Tilak and others find in Christ and Christianity the fulfillment of their social visions for India. Banerjee's allegiance to Christianity is partly due to his conviction that Christianity is able to bring about the regeneration of India. Lal Behari Day, who is involved in the social and religious renaissance of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal, has looked for the spread of Christianity in India because it is a "regenerating force" that can bring about the social, moral and religious reformation of the Indian people. Thus, for many Indian leaders, Christ and Christianity is a segment of the new civilizational and social self-image they envisaged for their nation.

#### Christian Contribution to the Freedom Movement:

The Indian Christian community has played an influential role in the nationalist movement, though the part it has played is gone unacknowledged to the most part. Many Christians have been active members of the Indian National Congress which is founded in 1885, as the main instrument of

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted in George Thomas: "Christianity and the Modern Indian Civilization", *Indian Christian Directory*, p. 71.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. George Thomas: "Christians and the Freedom Movement", *Indian Christian Directory*, p. 63.

political nationalism and freedom movement in India. In the third annual session of the Congress (1887) the dominant presence of Christians is evident. Out of the 607 participants in this session 15 are Christian Indians. Christian delegates like Madhu Sudhan Das and N. Subramaniam actively contributed to the deliberations. The participation of Christian Indians in the activities of the Congress has continued to be impressive in terms of number and influence in the four subsequent sessions of the Congress as well. Pandita Ramabai Saraswati (1858-1922), Triumbuck Nikambe and Kali Charan Banerjee (1847-1907), all Christian Indians, have made immense contributions in the early phase of the Congress to the shaping of the policies and decisions of the Indian National Congress.<sup>23</sup>

Even after the polarization of the nationalist movement on communal basis from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the support of the Christian community to the activities of the Congress continues, though in a diminished manner. Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya (1861-1907), a "Hindu Catholic," *sadhu* and theologian, has played a leading role in the Swadeshi Movement. He is also instrumental in conceiving the Non-cooperation Movement, in which many Christians has taken part, initiating a debate whether a follower of Jesus Christ can adopt the method of non-cooperation as it has been defined by the National Congress and is advocated by Mahatma Gandhi and others. Responding to this question, a conference of leading Christians from all over India, is held in Ranchi in 1923 and which declares: "Swaraj, nationalism, or self-determination helps the self-realization of a people that it is consistent with the Christian religion and helpful to the Christian life."<sup>24</sup> The conference also affirms that it is the duty of the Christian Church in India to enrich the aspirations of India toward *swaraj* with the spirit of Christ. The resolution of the conference clearly underscores Indian Christian community's solidarity with the national movement.

Christian presence is also evident in other movements as well. Among those who have followed Gandhi on his Salt March to Dandi is a young disciple of Gandhi, Thevarthundiyil Titus. Titus is a member of a Thomas Christian family in Travancore. He becomes attracted to the life and work of Gandhi, and lives in the Gandhian community taking care of the Ashram dairy farm. When the British Government responded to the Non-Cooperation Movement by imprisoning the agitationists and imposing severe censorship on the press, the Indian Christian Association of Bengal and a conference of Christians in Bombay declare their complete sympathy with the national aspirations. Again, in 1942, when the Congress has started the Quit India Movement, major Christian organizations in India, such as All India Conference of Indian Christians, the National Christian Council of India, the United Theological College (Bangalore), Serampore College

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. George Thomas: "Christianity and the Modern Indian Civilization", p. 63.

<sup>24</sup> George Thomas: "Christians and the Freedom Movement", pp. 64-65.

(Bengal), the Youth Christian Council of Action (Kerala) and the Student Christian Movement of India declare their support to the national goal of complete independence for India at once. Observing the national spirit of Indian Christians, C. Rajagopalachari in December 1944 made this complimentary statement: "Does not the nationalist world in India know that the Indian Christian community has distinguished itself at every conference by giving the fullest support to the Nationalist Movement and by never giving support to antinationalist trends?"<sup>25</sup> This tribute is a sincere acknowledgement by one of the eminent leaders of the Freedom Movement of the role that is played by Indian Christians in the freedom movement.

#### Contribution to Fine Arts:

The fine arts of modern India owe much to the Church. Church music in Goa, Tamilnadu Karnataka and Kerala has developed its own style which has passed into the common secular life of those parts. The Anglican, Protestant and Pentecostal denominations have popularized their own music forms in the country which have been widely imitated. There are also a number of orchestras and institutions for music-training run by Church related groups. The Church has also made popular a large number of musical instruments such as the drum (*nakaram*), the violin and viola (*revekka*), the stringed instrument like guitar (*tumbouru*), the triangle, the harmonium, the piano and, above all, the organ. Many types of dances have also been introduced, developed, and promoted by the Church. Performing arts like *margam kali*, *chavittunatakam* and *parichamuttukali* are being organized by many Church groups in Kerala. Writing on the influence of Christianity on the fine arts of India in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, George Menacherry writes:

The new awareness of the importance of even the lowest individual combined with the sense of pride in the country's past, both helped and encouraged by the work of Christians in India, especially during the closing centuries of the millennium, found expression in the literature produced at this time, in music and drama, in the renaissance of Indian art, in the study of science and in the pursuit of organized amusements. In all these activities Indians often followed the footsteps of the Westerners and the missionaries.<sup>26</sup>

A discussion on the Church's contribution to fine arts must make references to the various Church-sponsored institutions established for

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<sup>25</sup> George Thomas: "Christianity and the Modern Indian Civilization", p. 65.

<sup>26</sup> George Menacherry: "Cultural Contributions of the Indian Church", *Indian Christian Directory*, p.87.

promoting – production as well as training – fine arts. Kalabhavan, which is started at Kochi, Kerala, as a cultural center in the mid 1960s under the guidance of the poet-priest Fr. Abel, CMI, is one of the earliest ventures. Kalabhavan has excelled in songs, dances, mimicry, comic, dramas and other various popular art forms and contributed many stars to the Malayalam film screen. After the success of Kalabhavan regional centers for promoting fine arts mushroomed rapidly in the early 1970s. Amruthvani (Secundrabad), Ravi Bharati (Patna), Santhome Communication Center (Chennai) Satprakashan (Indore), Sandesha (Mangalore) KCBC Media Commission (Kochi), Vikas Sanchar (Jharsuguda) and Nav Sanchar (Varanasi), Media Center (Bangalore), Gurjarvani (Ahmedabad), Nitika (Kolkata), Ishvani (Pune), Tejprasarini (Mumbai), Chetana (Trissur), Notre Dame Communications (Patna), Nav Chetana (Bhopal), Kalai Kaveri (Trichi), Satangai (Madurai) Nanjil Natham (Kanyakumari), Neelavani (Ooty), Tejas (Calicut), Sandesh (Changanacherry), CACS (Kochi), Viswadarshan (Kollam), Vinimaya (Trivandrum), Maitri Sadan (Udaypur) Canara Communications (Mangalore) ACC (Bangalore) Deepti Prasarini (Berhampur), Sanjeevani (Krishnanagar), and Pradeepti (Khandwa) are some of the well-known media centers belonging to the Catholic Church. These centers have strong thrusts in art forms like drama, music and dances.

Some of these centers have concentrated on folk art from various part of India with a view of developing these cultural forms. Along with the folk art forms of the *dalits* and the tribals, some of these centers have also shown much interest in *brahmanical* arts, such as Bharatanatyam, and Kathak. Centers, such as Kalai Kaveri, Gyan Ashram, Sangeet-Abhinay Academy, Utkal Vani and Nav Sadhana have contributed much to the development of these art forms.

#### Pioneering Research:

Just as in the field of cultural and linguistic studies, Christian missionaries from the west have been interested in other fields of cultural importance such as anthropology, history, botany, archaeology and geography. In these fields too they have done meritorious research, both quantitatively and qualitatively. James Burgess after he becomes the head of the Geography Institute in Bombay in 1868, has made extensive explorations in south west India. He is the founder of the journal *Indian Antiquary*, which declares the temples of Belur and Halebid to be archaeologically the "most remarkable in India." He also has made exhaustive note on the Muslim tombs in Bidar, Raichur and Gulbarga besides making a thorough study of the ancient inscriptions of northern Karnataka. Like James Burgess, George Buchler too minutely examines the entire archaeological relics and inscriptions of the districts of northern Karnataka and has written elaborate reports on them. He has also written articles and books on the Karnatic Cave Temples and Buddhist monasteries. He is also a noted scholar on Jainism.

Edward Hultzsch has studied and deciphered a large number of ancient writings of the time of the Rashtrakutas, Chalukyas and of the Vijayanagar period. He also has serialized the *Epigraphia Indica*. John F. Fleet has done pioneering work in old Kannada inscriptions, and on the dynasties of the Kannada districts of the Bombay Presidency. These works are indicative of his mastery of both history and linguistics. B. C. Rice, the Director of Archaeology of the former State of Mysore, has written on the Chalukya, Rastrakuta and Mudavanur Grants, Ganga and Nelamangala inscriptions and on the Konga and Chera Grants. His discovery of the Sravanabelgola inscriptions, his commentaries on the same, his studies on the Madikeri Plates, Mahavali Dynasty and the Siddapur Edicts of Ashoka are of much significance. He also has made a vast collection of ancient manuscripts, copper plates, stone inscriptions and relics. He is also one of the compilers of the multi-volume *Epigraphia Carnatica*, the first three volumes of which are done by him. His publication of the ancient Jain inscriptions and the Ganga, Rashtrakuta and Ratta histories have been ground-breaking as till then no one has deciphered these inscriptions. He also collected 2944 Sanskrit inscriptions mainly from the states of Mysore and Coorg. Successful foreign explorers Robert Sewell has studied the Vijayanagar ruins and has written the unforgettable *Forgotten Empire*. John Kelsel has published his *Archaeology of Bellary*; George Pope and Ravenshaw have made archaeological surveys and have collaborated to publish the illustrated volumes on the ruins by about 1885.

Botanical studies have been conducted by the great missionary in south Canara, F. Metz. He is in fact the first to begin the collection of plants from this district. His publication of the book entitled *Five Hundred Indian Plants and Their Use in Medicine and the Arts* written in Kannada (1881) is a great contribution to medicine. Another great botanist is John Leydon who in 1820s does extensive botanical research in Bangalore, Tumkur, Hassan, and Mysore regions. These studies show the interest of the missionaries in the geography and history of India. In their studies ancient India comes alive. Needless to say their studies have helped to embellish the pool of knowledge about India's past, besides generating a genuine appreciation of her heritage.

#### Pioneering Subaltern Studies:

The Christian missionaries have been pioneers also in creating a new genre of scholarship, namely, Subaltern Studies. It is the study of the life and culture of social groups at the margins of the society. Ranajit Guba and his associates are widely acknowledged as people who have established subaltern studies as an important aspect of social research. However, even before they popularized subaltern studies during the last twenty years or so, this subject has been studied by the Christian missionaries. As early as the 17th century the missionaries working in India has studied the problems of subaltern groups like the *adivasis*, the *dalits* and women, and drawn the



attention of the public, scholars and the government to the pestering problems of these marginalized people. Because of their close association with these people, the missionaries are able to study their lives at close quarters and in minute details. Their scholarly and authoritative writings and research findings have immensely enriched anthropological, historical, religious and linguistic studies. In this respect, the illustrious names of Robert Caldwell, Henry Whitehead, Gustav Oppert, Abbe Dubois, Hutton, Francis Buchanan, Edgar Thurston, A. C. Clayton, William Goudie, Abraham Andrew, W. Little and a host of others deserve special mention. They have concentrated much on the socioeconomic and religious problems of the people at the grass-root level. In fact they are the ideal pioneers in writings people's history or "history from below," which is very much in vogue today. Titles, such as *Tinnevely Shanars, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, On the Original Inhabitants, Bharathavarsha or India, The Village Gods of South India, Village India, Slavery and Agricultural Bondage in South India in the Nineteenth Century* and *Some Customs and Ceremonies of the Karuru and Dharapuram Areas, The Breast Cloth Controversy, The Pariahs and the Land, The Wrongs of the Pariah, The Pariah Question, The Disabilities of the Pariah, The Panchama Education and Outcaste Progress in South India* vouch for their abiding interest in such burning problems as the those titles indicate.

In addition, missionary magazines like *The Harvest Field, International Review of Missions, The Madras Christian College Magazine, The Foreign Field, The Kingdom Overseas, Work and Workers of the Mission Field* and *The Guardian* always devoted much time and space for highlighting such socioeconomic issues. These studies and publications have helped in drawing the attention of the public and of the decision making bodies to take decisions and implement them to ameliorate the ills suffered by the marginalized people, thereby laying the foundation of an egalitarian society in India.

#### Christian Contribution to Art and Architecture:

We must take into account the architecture and art objects Christianity has produced in India both before and after the coming of European Christianity to India. Through the nineteen centuries of their history in Kerala, the Christians have evolved a distinct style of Church architecture. The Syrians who have migrated to Kerala brought with them west Asian conventions in Church-architecture. However, in externals the Syrian Churches continued to retain some of the indigenous features of Hindu temple styles. This gives the Malabar Churches a unique structure of their own which is fully Indian and, at the same time, also Christian. The three-level gabled roofing of Kerala Churches, in descending order, over the *sanctum sanctorum*, the nave, and the portico have all the beauty, utility and traditional scientific perfection of Kerala architecture. The timber roofing

often covering an area of thousands of square feet without pillars is a marvel rarely found elsewhere in the country during the period. The three objects in front of the Churches, viz., the huge open-air rock obelisk crosses rising from a lotus at the top of an intricately carved multi-stepped pedestal (*balikkallu*), the metal-sheathed flag staff (*dhwaja-sthamba* or *kodimaram*) and the rock lamp-stand (*deepasthamba*) are some of the earliest expressions of Indian art. India's national flower, lotus, and the national bird peacock first appear in Kerala art on the rock crosses. The gold and silver crosses, bronze lamps, the colorful decorated processional umbrellas (*muthukkudas*), wooden sculptures, and above all some of the huge pre-Mughul, pre-Rajput mural paintings of Kerala Churches are unique contributions of the Christian community to Indian art.

During the western periods also we find great advances in art and architecture. The Christian missionaries, especially the Catholics, introduced new forms of buildings, architecture and art on the western lines. During the British period many Anglican cathedrals are built with a distinctive architectural design. The Italian Jesuits introduced their own style through their Churches and schools. The architecture of this period often combines elements of Greek, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Norman, Baroque, and Rococo elements and present an impressive sight. They have their typical bells, belfries and baptismal fonts. The Church of Milagres at Mangalore; St. Joseph's Church and seminary at Jeppoo; the Chapel of Loyola College, Chennai; and Chapel of St Joseph's College, Trichi, deserve special mention in this regard. Exquisite frescoes, especially those in St. Aloysius College Chapel – designed by Brother Antonio Moscheni of the Jesuit Order – are of special significance. In recent years in preference to the conventional styles, modern styles are made possible by the use of cement and steel, are also finding their way into the Indian Church architecture.

#### Promoting a Secular State:

One of the fundamental conflicts in the politics of nationalism during the freedom struggle and later in the nation building process has been the definition of the relationship between religions and nationhood. The Hindu right-wing and the Muslim League want statehood to be subservient to Hinduism and Islam respectively. The Hindu right-wing, for example, wants a Hindu India, while the Muslim League wanted an Islamic nation. The moderate leaders within the Congress, on the other hand, adopting a secular attitude, seek to separate the two affiliations – religious and national – and define nationalism without reference to religious affiliation. The All India Conference of Indian Christians has decided to go along the secular option. It has refused to identify the Christian community as a socially and politically closed communal entity. So they reject communal electorates which the British rulers have "awarded" at first to the Muslims and then to the Christians and other religious communities. The

Christian leadership of that time is aware that its value as a minority community – six million strong at that time – has depended on the contribution it can make to the whole nation, not in insulating from outside society. In 1930 the All India Conference of Indian Christians articulates this self-understanding of the Christian community as follows: “[The value of a minority community] depends upon the quality of its life, the standard of its preparation for life's various activities, the strenuousness with which it throws itself into all avenues of useful services and the genuineness with which it seeks the common weal.”<sup>27</sup>

The Christian position is that the real solution for the hardships and disabilities of the minority communities depend ultimately on the ability and willingness of the minority communities to become "indispensable to the nation" by their "positive and constructive service" for the national life. Therefore, when in August 1947, the Interim Report of the Minority Advisory Committee of the Constituent Assembly proposed reserved representation for Indian Christians in proportion to their population in the Central Legislature and in the Provincial Legislatures of Madras and Bombay, Christian leaders, such as H. C. Mookherjee, Jerome D'Souza and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur reject the proposal, arguing that such provisions are detrimental to the national interest. It is their view that all special privileges in the Republic of India should be given irrespective of religion or caste. H.C. Mookherjee's argument is as follows: “If our idea is to have a secular state it follows inevitably that we cannot afford to recognize minorities based upon religion...”<sup>28</sup> Commenting on the role the Christian community has played in building the nation as one secular civil society, George Thomas writes:

The enlightened patriotism the Christian leaders manifested in molding the self-image of the Christian community as part of the national civil society was a significant contribution to the nation building process in India. It strengthened the search of the National Movement to mould the self-image of the Indian people as one secular civil society in the context of religious pluralism. Thus the Christian community played a major constructive role to weaken the divisive destructive tendencies and to encourage all communities to participate in the building of civil society as the basis of common human rights and common political and social aspirations.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> George Thomas: “Christians and the Freedom Movement”, p. 66.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

**Public Administration:**

The Church law prevents Christian priests and nuns from entering into the areas of public administration and party politics, leaving these as the domain of Christian laypersons. This explains the near total absence of Christian missionaries in these two fields. However, Christian laypersons have proved their mettle in public administration. If at the national level Julius Rebeiro is recognized as a committed police officer, K. J. Alphonse as an a dutiful IAS officer, J.M. Lyngdoh as an outspoken, but upright Election Commissioner and P. C. Alexandar as an efficient governor, there have been many other less known officers throughout the country doing commendable work. To take an example from the field of armed forces, the Christian community has produced four chiefs of staff, two navy and one each Army and Air Force chiefs, 32 Lieutenant Generals, Vice-Admirals, and Air Marshals. In the 1971 war against Pakistan four Christian Major Generals have been involved in operations and all of them received Padma Vishist Seva Medals. Christian laypersons have held prominent posts in sensitive areas as the police, customs, and railways and judiciary. Many of them have left their mark for clean and efficient administration.<sup>30</sup>

### **CHRISTIANITY AND THE LIBERATION OF THE DOWNTRODDEN**

What is presented above is not a detailed study of Christian contribution to the building up of modern India. The Christian contribution to the betterment of the nation spans many different areas, not all of which can be touched upon in an essay. Therefore only a sketch of some selected areas is attempted to indicate the extent of the contribution of Christians to the life of the nation and to emphasize the need to study the subject in more detail. In the remaining part of the essay we elaborate one area where, in our view, Christian contribution has been unique, substantial, decisive, and unmatched, i.e., the Christian contribution to the liberation of the depressed classes.

#### *The Importance of Liberation in the Thinking of the Church*

The Church has received her mission from Jesus. Before he bid final farewell to his disciples, he instructs them: “Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:19). Interpreting this command in the backdrop of Jesus’ own life and works, the Church has understood this mission to include efforts at liberating people from all forms of bondages—ignorance, poverty, oppressive social and religious structures, attachment to enslaving

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<sup>30</sup> *The Real Face of Christians and Christianity*, (Varanasi: Sathya Manthan Sansta, n.d.), p. 4.

traditions, fear of change and selfishness. In the past the Church has emphasized economic development and education as means of liberation. However, in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, influenced both by liberation theology – that originated in the inhuman oppressive conditions in Latin America and swept through the developing countries – and by Paulo Freire’s work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, presents conscientization and empowerment of the masses as a means of social change leading to liberation of individuals as well as societies. The documents of the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1975), a powerful Catholic Religious Order, has helped in popularizing the promotion of justice as an essential part of evangelization. Even with this change in thinking, the Church continues to use the traditional means of education and developmental work, but has added to her liberative attempts the new methodology, namely, conscientization and empowerment of the masses through discussion groups that gather periodically to discuss social and family problems and their possible solutions. Today many mission stations have become also centers of conscientization, a process which liberates people from various bondages and leads to the awakening of the total person to a fresh discovery of his/her dignity and potentiality.

Emancipation of the depressed classes has always been on the missionary agenda of the Church. The missionaries carry with them the message of God’s love for all His children, and his preferential love for the poor, the weak, the suffering, and the pure in heart. The idea of God’s special love for the poor, the weak and the suffering has inspired the missionaries to pay special attention to their condition, and help them to attain human dignity and self-respect. It demands of the Christian workers to become the mouthpiece of the voiceless section of the society. Prophet Moses who has liberated the Israelites from the slavery in Egypt becomes their model. Therefore, in their preaching of the Gospel of salvation to the people of India, Christian missions have emphasized the humanization of life in all aspects of all people. The missionaries in their work have struggled to draw the attention of society toward condition of the orphans, widows, lepers, untouchables, infant girls and women.

#### *The Liberative Efforts of the Church*

Having seen the notion of liberation in the thinking of the Church in the previous section, let us briefly consider the liberative efforts the Church has undertaken in bringing about the true liberation of the marginalized persons belonging to various groups. In doing this task, we highlight, in this section, Church’s campaign against slavery, her work for the emancipation of the depressed classes, her efforts to empower the tribal people and the work the missionaries have undertaken for the emancipation of women.

#### Campaign against Slavery:

The first significant liberative effort of the Indian Church is the campaign against slavery. In this campaign the C.M.S. missionaries have played a remarkable part. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Thomas Norton has started a school at Alappuzha, Kerala, for slave education. Henry Baker has concerned himself with a similar enterprise at Kottayam. As a result of the sustained efforts of the missionaries in this regard, the King (*raja*) of Thiruvithamcore has issued a proclamation on June 24, 1855 emancipating all *sircar* slaves and withdrawing legal recognition for all aspects of slavery. The British have followed suit and abolished slavery in those areas in the Indian subcontinent under the control of the East India Company. The groundwork – for movements and institutions aims at mitigating the evils of the traditional Kerala society and ushering in an era of social mobility for the poorer classes – is laid during this early period of Christian missionary activities in Kerala.

Another effort at the emancipation of slaves is made in Nasik. The Christian missionaries at Sharanpur, Nasik, have trained a number of African slaves in various vocations in their vocational training center and have provided them Christian knowledge so that they can return to their homeland and start Christian work as leaders. Some of those African boys, who have been trained at Nasik accompany David Livingstone in his discovery of central Africa and have remained with him till the end.

#### Emancipation of the Depressed Classes:

Missionaries have been actively involved among the depressed classes, since late nineteenth century. The socio-political movement among the depressed classes, which B. R. Ambedkar has led since the 1930s, has given an impetus for missionary activity among the *dalits*. The depressed classes seeking equality and dignity approach the missionaries to lead them into Christianity, which, at least in principle, uphold those values. The Indian Church, which has assimilated the caste structure into its social organization, cannot offer the *dalits* the equality and dignity they have been seeking; but instead have provided them with educational facilities, financial help, legal assistance and medical-care. This has empowered them and indirectly has helped them to regain their dignity. Education as well as legal and financial assistance has been particularly helpful in empowering them, while the gospel message of the fraternity of all human beings and God's preferential love for the *dalits* has provided an ideological and religious justification for emancipatory action.

Thus having empowered and justified by missionary activities, the depressed classes in India begin to assert themselves and under their organization, the Depressed Classes Conference, start demanding dignified treatment, better wages, greater share of political power and greater freedom to choose any religion. The missionaries, who usually keep themselves

away from direct political action<sup>31</sup> do not involve themselves in this religio-political bargain, but prepare the socio-religious platform for emancipatory political action. The egalitarian constitution of India, which not only upholds equality of all citizens, but actively protects the dignity and rights of the minorities and the *dalits* by affirmative action, is a direct result of such liberative movements.

Though the universal Church preaches the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood/sisterhood of the entire humanity and actively promotes equality of all people, the Indian Church fails to eradicate caste consciousness from the mind of its followers, thereby is unable to remove discrimination from its own fold. The reason is that the new converts, though they are drawn to Christianity by the ideal of the fraternity of the entire humanity, are not free themselves from the caste consciousness and hierarchical thinking which has gone deep into their psyche. It is to this anomaly in the life of the Indian Church that Gandhi points out when he persuades Ambedkar not to accept Christianity.

On this count, though the Indian Church as a whole has failed in its effort to promote equality within its own fold and protect the dignity of its weaker members, individual efforts have continued to bring reality closer to the ideal. The role of the Malayalam newspaper *Nazrani Deepika* needs to be mentioned in this context. When *Deepika* is launched by the Carmalites of Mary Immaculate (CMI)<sup>32</sup> on April 15, 1887, its lofty ideal as defined in its first issue is: "To represent the atrocities, injustices and cruelties meted out to the poor folk before the court of rulers and ministers, and to voice the grievances of the mass like a faithful messenger..."<sup>33</sup> With a profound sense of social responsibility the *Deepika* has been representing the atrocities, injustices and cruelties meted out to the poor folk. The history of *Deepika* is replete with stories of relentless fights against social evils and feudal injustices like untouchability and casteism. These struggles are instrumental in changing the social and political structure of the state.

In Karnataka the Jesuit missionaries has taken the lead in fighting casteism. They have announced universal redemption, even of the *harijans* and effectively have been fighting the discrimination that is imposed by caste system. Two pioneer missionaries in this field are Faustino Costi and Alexander Camisa, who have come to Karnataka in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and have opted to work for the low castes and the outcastes of south Canara, especially the Pariahs and the Koragars. Costi is disparagingly referred to by the caste people as the "priest of the Pariahs" (*mansere guru*). He has to meet the opposition of the old Christians who demanded that a screen be set up in the Church to segregate the caste Christians and other Christians. The

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<sup>31</sup> The Church law forbids Church leaders from participating in overtly political action.

<sup>32</sup> Carmalites of Mary Immaculate, a monastic religious congregation within the Catholic Church that has its origin in Kerala, India.

<sup>33</sup> Aykara: "The Deepika," *Indian Christian Directory*, 2000, p. 90.

Jesuits have been willing to take on the fight for justice when the situation so demanded. Their fighting spirit and the support of Bishop Paul Perini, who on his pastoral visit has preached an eloquent sermon on the equality of the Children of God and has helped them to overcome their opponents and abolish caste segregation. Costi's work among the untouchables is recognized by the government, when he has been awarded the Kaizer-Hind medal in 1918.

The Jesuits have used education as the main tool for fighting the evils of caste system. Besides education, preaching of God's love for the underprivileged, and books denouncing social evils has helped break down caste barriers. The more important among these books are the *jati Vicharane* by Moegling and journals, such as *Satyadeepika*, *Sabhapatra* and *Christa de Hetavadi*. It is in fact the Christian missionaries who have shown the people that God is not worshipped merely by extolling Him and observing religious rituals and customs, but mainly through service to humanity without caste or class distinctions. The Basel Mission joins the fight against the discriminatory caste system. Once baptized, people of all castes are accepted within the fold as being equal to and one with the rest of the congregation. Converts from all castes without distinction are taught industrial, agricultural and mechanical techniques adopted from Europe. Equality is insisted upon in the boarding schools which become places to help the young to grow free of the trammels of caste prejudice and hatred, though there are at times rebellious attitudes among the Church members themselves.

The early German missionaries in Nadia district have taken another route to the protection and liberation of the poor and depressed castes. They gave protection to the poor peasants, particularly the converts, against the oppression of the local *zamindars* and European indigo planters. In this context, the efforts of Reverend James Long are notable. In Maharashtra, the contributions of Jyotiba Phuel in the abolition of caste system are significant. Jyotiba Phuel, as a student of Scottish mission school in Pune, learns about the equality of all human beings as children of one God and launches the first non-*brahmin* movement against caste practice in India. The ruler of Kolhapur abolishes caste practices in his state under Christian influence. In Tamil Nadu Christianity comes to the aid of the poor peasants who are left with no material security when the *jajmani* system is abolished as a result of the introduction of private property and commercialization of primary commodities by the British. When the *jajmani* system is abolished, the peasants who are mostly slaves lost the little material security that it provides and are forced to seek their liberation and succor elsewhere. Christianity rises to respond to their need and within the context of the weakening of the *jajmani* system and the growing aspirations of the *dalits* functioning as an instrument of re-adaptation to changing conditions.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Walter Fernandes: "Caste, Religion and Social Change in India: Christianity and Conversion Movements," *Scheduled Castes and the Struggle*



There have been many other attempts all over India at liberating the depressed classes, the work of Fr. Leavens among the tribals in Chottanagpur, for example. Summarizing the contribution of Christian missionaries to the liberation of the depressed classes Manickam writes:

The Christian missionaries spared no efforts in championing the cause of the depressed classes. Missionary agitation for the vindication of the legal rights of the downtrodden was very great indeed. By the power of their pen and tongue, the missionaries stimulated public discussions on the wrongs done to the depressed communities. By sending deputation and presenting memorandums, the Missionary Societies mobilized public opinion and moved the government to redress the grievances of the depressed classes. "The Breast Cloth Controversy" in South Travancore and "The Pariah Question" in the Chingleput District in the 19th century are the two classic cases in this respect.<sup>35</sup>

Empowerment of Tribes:

The social condition of the tribals in India has not been as wretched as that of the *dalits*, since they do not have to suffer the indignities heaped on the untouchables. Besides, traditionally the tribals have their own land which is administered by an indigenous system of land ownership, locally known as *khuntkatti* and *bhuinhari*. However, over two hundred years of internal colonialism by non-tribal moneylenders and landlords (*dikus*) has left them deprived of their lands and their indigenous culture. Exploiting their simplicity, the *dikus* has dispossessed the gullible tribals of their property, particularly through litigation and fraudulent trade. This scene has changed with the arrival of the Christian missionaries. In the 1850s the Lutheran Christian Missionaries penetrated into the rural areas of Chottanagpur and engaged in a non-traditional Church work, by rendering legal aid to the tribals who have been distressed due to endless litigation. The impact of this mission of giving legal aid to tribals is revolutionary. The tribals soon retrieved their lost lands. Thereafter thousands of tribals embraced Christianity, wanting to uplift themselves socially and to free themselves from the fear of endless spirits. The Church, on her part, has initiated socioeconomic measures, such as establishing the Catholic Cooperative Credit Society (1909), Chottanagpur Cooperative Stores (1913), and Mutual Help Societies – all aiming at making the tribals economically self-sufficient. Besides, the missionaries have influenced the

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*against Inequality*, ed. Jose Kananaikil (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1983), p. 131. Quoted in Sundar Raj Manickam: "Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu", p.123.

<sup>35</sup> Sundar Raj Manickam: "Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu", p. 127.

British government of Bengal to enact adequate laws to protect the tribals from losing their land to *dikus*. A significant example of this influence is the contribution of Jesuit Father J. B. Hoffmann, who has helped in drafting the Chottanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908. This Act empowers the tribals to prevent alienation of tribal land to non-tribals.

Another program the Christian missions have launched in a mass scale in the 1900s is providing education. A large network of schools at various levels has been established, which is directly related to the educational upward mobility of the tribals. Obviously, education has led to occupational mobility, which entails higher social status. Today hundreds of tribals hold lucrative government jobs in urban centers all over India. Besides, a large number of them occupy positions of leadership within the Church as priests, nuns, bishops and archbishops. Overall, a hundred and fifty years after Church work has begun in Chottanagpur, there has been substantial change in the religious and socioeconomic life of the tribals in Chottanagpur. Perhaps, it is in the life of the tribals of Chottanagpur and the North East that the liberative effect of the emancipatory activities of the missionaries is felt the most. Historian Jose Kalappura summarizes the work of the mission in Chottanagpur and its effect in the following words:

While conversion was sought as a strategy for socioeconomic uplift and liberation from fear of spirits, certain purposive action geared to Christian religious education along with providing facility for formal education, alternative employment, financial support through institutional means and so on, did result in the empowerment and significant upward mobility of the tribals.<sup>36</sup>

#### Women's Emancipation:

A century ago the position of the Indian woman has been pathetic, indeed. She is considered as an economic liability rather than a family asset. The Hindu scriptures (*sastras*) prevented the education of women and it is regarded as "unbecoming of the modesty of sex, and fit only for public dancers."<sup>37</sup> In the words of Gray, women are simply "cabined, cribbed [and] confined."<sup>38</sup> The distress of the Indian women profoundly moved the hearts

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<sup>36</sup> Jose Kalappura: "Dignity Rediscovered: Christians in Eastern India" *Indian Christian Directory*, p. 104.

<sup>37</sup> "Minute of Sir Dir Thomas Muro, Governor of Madras, June 25, 1822", *Parliamentary Papers*, vol. IX (1831-1832), Part I, Appendix I, p. 501. Quoted in Sundar Raj Manickam: "Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu", p.124.

<sup>38</sup> H. Gray: "The Progress of Women," *Modern India and the West: A Study of the Interaction of Their Civilizations*, ed. L.S.S. O'Malley, (London: OUP, 1968), p. 456.

of the missionary ladies and during the last one hundred and fifty years before India's independence, increasing efforts have been made to improve their lot. Christian women activists has gone about teaching their Hindu sisters in distress the basic elements of education – reading, writing, arithmetic and sewing. They have tried to enlighten the women of India as to the real meaning of Christianity and to carry the consolation and hope which the Gospel of Christ can give them. As Vedanayagam S. Azariah, formerly the Anglican Bishop in Domakal, said: "Christians were everywhere the first to break the shackles in which the women were bound and set them free to know and understand the world."<sup>39</sup> The Church has also worked untiringly for the eradication of other injustices to women, such as *sati*, taboo on the use of upper garments by lower caste women, female infanticide and polygamy. For example, William Carey and his Serampore Mission have made every effort to conscientize the Bengali intelligentsia about the evils of female infanticide and *sati*. It is to a great extent his influence which has led to the work of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the reform bill of Governor General William Bentick to abolish the practice of *sati* in 1829.

The contributions of Pandita Ramabai Saraswati in this respect are also significant. She is a strong advocate of the right of women to participate in national politics. In fact, she is one of the first Indians to advocate the emancipation of women and is regarded as the greatest among the pioneering woman champions of the emancipation of Indian women. In the Congress session of 1889, she has stirred the participants by eloquently articulating the pathetic history of the Indian womanhood. In the third session of the National Social Conference of 1889, Ramabai has given powerful voice to the cry of the Indian women for social freedom and the right of speech of women. She has called for a banning of the practice of disfiguring the Hindu widow. She also has highlighted the superstition involved in the custom of shaving off the hair of the Hindu widow and the mental and physical torture this inflicted on thousands of women and challenged the overwhelmingly male audience to defend their own wives and daughters from a predicament they do not want inflicted on themselves. Ramabai also has served the cause of the emancipation of women by starting widows' homes in the country. Her Mukti Mission at Khedgaon remains the largest effort of its kind in Asia. Her influence on Hindu reformers cannot be underestimated.

In Kerala, the Christian missionaries have fought for the right of the lower caste women to cover their breasts.<sup>40</sup> According to the established custom in Kerala, the lower caste women, particularly of the Nadar caste, unlike the upper caste women, are not allowed by the caste Hindus to cover

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<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Sundar Raj Manickam: "Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu", p.124.

<sup>40</sup> For details Cf. C.P. Thankaraj: *Whither Indian Christianity* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1990), pp. 47-48.

their breasts. The Christian missionaries like Charles Mead and the converted Christians from the lower castes revolted against this pernicious practice. This revolt is called the Breast-Cloth Controversy or the Upper Cloth Revolts in Kerala. The caste Hindus has resisted every attempt of self-assertion by the lower castes. Seeing in the Breast-Cloth Movement among the Nadars an attempt at self-assertion, the caste Hindus put up stiff resistance. The British Government intervened. Finally, the Travancore Government had to yield to the popular demands. On 26 July 1859, it officially granted the Nadar women liberty to cover their breasts. Through further agitation spearheaded by Christian converts this right has been granted to all the lower castes through another legislation in 1865. However, for the active support of the Christian missionaries, the right to wear upper cloths by the untouchables like the Nadars could not have been achieved.

Undoubtedly, these interventions by Christian workers have resulted in assuring a better place for women in Indian society. However, the major element that has led to the enlightenment of Indian women of all religions, castes and regions in modern times and contributed to women's liberation is the importance attached by the Church to women's education. As in the case of modern education, the missionaries have been the pioneers in women's education as well. The missionary service to the education of Indian women has long been acknowledged by prominent social workers and Hindu leaders of eminence. Muthulakshmi Reddi of Madras, a staunch Freedom Fighter and an ardent advocate of women's emancipation, has made an observation, which merits our serious consideration:

I honestly believe that the missionaries have done more for women's education in this country than the government itself... Had it not been for these noble bands of Christian women teachers, who are the product of the missionary schools, even this much advancement in the education of the Indian women would not have been possible; even at this day, in every province, we find missionary women teachers working hard in a spirit of love and faith, in out-of-the-way villages, where the Hindu and Muslim women dare not penetrate.<sup>41</sup>

About the emancipation of women that have been brought about by Christian missionary ladies by means of women's education, Sunder Raj Manickam has this to write:

In a country known for the power of caste prejudices and the strength of Hindu orthodoxy, the Christian missionary ladies daringly entered the caste homes and courageously

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Sunder Raj Manickam: "Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu", p.126.

fought against the illiteracy and ignorance of the Hindu women and helped the much distressed ones to breathe the air of emancipation and independence for the first time in their lives.<sup>42</sup>

Having looked into the Church's efforts at liberating people of various depressed groups of the Indian society, we move on to consider the instruments the Church used in liberating oppressed people, in the next section.

*Two Instruments of Liberation: Conversion and Western Education*

Before Vatican Council II in early 1960s many methods have been adopted by the missionaries to bring liberation to the depressed classes and groups. It included religious conversion, humanitarian work, social service, developmental work and formal education. Out of these, religious conversion and western education have turned out to be the most potent means of liberation of the depressed classes and groups in India.

Conversion and Liberation of the Depressed Groups:

Even before the arrival of the western missionaries, conversion to Christianity has been happening on the Malabar Coast, though it is a rare and isolated phenomenon. However, after the arrival of the western missionaries in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, we observe the phenomenon of group conversions. This phenomenon reached the peak in the 1870s, though the intensity of these movements has been felt by the Christian missions only in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

What is important to know is that the people who strengthened these movements are primarily *dalits* who have suffered under the yoke of the caste system for ages. They, now, want to move up on the social ladder by moving out of the caste system by joining the Church which preached the equality of all human persons. To the life of these converts from *dalit* background Christianity has come as a liberative force and has functioned as an instrument of re-adaptation to changing conditions. This role of Christianity is well established by the researches done on the conversion of Adi-Dravidas of the Kongunad region and the Shanars/Nadars of Tirunelveli.<sup>43</sup> The researchers have shown how "Hinduism has utterly failed to uplift these downtrodden, simply leaving them to their fate, while

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Sundar Raj Manickam: "The Social Setting of Christian Conversion in South India" Unpublished Dissertation (Madurai: Kamaraj University, n.d.). Cf. also Samuel Jayakumar: *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion: Historical Resources for a Contemporary Debate* (Oxford: Regnum International; Delhi: ISPCK, 1999).

Christianity has come to their lives as a liberative force.”<sup>44</sup> The Indian Church continues to labor under the burden of caste discriminations within its own fold. Full equality within the Church is still a far cry. Yet, comparing the present condition of the converts with their former condition, one can notice that conversion to Christianity is really a matter of great significance. In the words of Sunder Raj Manickam, by their conversion to Christianity, “people, whose spiritual and material well-being had from time immemorial been outside the concern of the Hindu legislators and philanthropists, became heirs of a new heritage – a creed, a cult and a culture... Besides its protective embrace, the Church has also provided an organizational base for unity among its members.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, liberation through religious conversion is a distinct contribution of Christianity to the downtrodden community in India.

B.S. Murthy agrees with the above stated assessment regarding the role of conversion to Christianity as an important means for emancipation of depressed classes and groups, when he writes the following:

Another purposeful and concerted attempt at ameliorating the conditions of the untouchables was made by the Christian missionaries. They had a genuine sympathy for the sufferings of the underprivileged people. They tried to save every soul in the sacred name of Lord Jesus. In India there are several missions working, each establishing hospitals, high schools, colleges, workshops and also providing economic programs to raise the standard of living. Naturally the untouchables, the poorest of the poor, were attracted by the kind missionaries and several millions embraced Christianity. The Cross became to them a symbol of self-reliance. The untouchables who as Hindus were denied entry to temples and precluded even from hearing recitations from Vedic scriptures were happy to have a Vishnu in Christ, a Veda in the Bible and a *Mandir* in the Church and happiness everywhere instead of tears and fears of their earlier existence. In every big city of India, one can see how the erstwhile ill-clad, illiterate and despised untouchables, turned out as if by a magic wand of the Christian Church, into well-clad, well groomed and learned citizens carrying the message of the gospel.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Sunder Raj Manickam: “Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu”, p. 122.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> B.S. Murthy, *Depressed and Oppressed: For Ever in Agony* (New Delhi: S. Chand, n.d.), 16-18. Quoted in Sunder Raj Manickam: “Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu”, p.123.

Many from the depressed classes have accepted Christianity to protest against and escape from the inhuman situation to which they have been subjected. To these converts Christianity offers significant upward mobility in the social, religious, educational and economic spheres of life. However, viewed from the perspective of those converts who have been in the subaltern conditions the greatest impact of Christianity in their lives is the rediscovering of their dignity as human persons.

#### Western Education and Liberation of the Depressed Groups:

The effect of education on the converts, particularly on those from the depressed classes and groups, is very great indeed. Conversion to Christianity has created in them remarkable eagerness for education, which, in its turn, has facilitated their entry into occupations which have hitherto been closed to them, and has improved their economic status and the social prestige. Because of such obvious advantages of missionary education, an ever-increasing number of *dalit* children entered the mission schools and this resulted in what Stanley Jones, a well known American preacher, calls "the mass movement of mind."<sup>47</sup> Sunder Raj Manickam describes the social revolution brought about by western education as follows:

Some of them [*dalits* who were considered unfit for academic pursuit] who passed all the necessary government and university examinations taught and still teach the *Brahmins* in the strongholds of *Brahmanism* in South India. *Brahmins*, once considered to be the sole custodians of knowledge and learning, now sat at the feet of the despised *Harijans* and learnt the words of wisdom. With the help of the missionaries and their institutions, the so-called outcastes or the *avarnas* have achieved, among various other things, university honors, the wearing of the surplice, and the rod of the pedagogue.<sup>48</sup>

By providing education to all and sundry irrespective of caste, color and creed, the missionaries and the British Government has done much for the destruction of caste prejudices and for the democratization of education. In so doing they have successfully destroyed the monopoly in education enjoyed for ages by a single privileged caste, namely the *brahmins*. Because of education it has become possible even for *harijans* to compete with them on more equal terms, including political participation. The Government, having nothing to do with religion, cared not whether one is a *brahmin* or an

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<sup>47</sup> J.J. Ellis, "Christward Movements in Southern India", *The Foreign Field*, vol. XXV (1928-1929), p. 5. Quoted in Sunder Raj Manickam: "Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu", p.123.

<sup>48</sup> Sunder Raj Manickam: "Christian Contribution to Tamil Nadu", p. 123.

outcaste, and has thrown its doors of liberality open to all. An Adi-Dravida can become a high official and outstrip those who prided themselves upon the social respectability of their descent. The one, who is called by all sorts of names of contempt by the caste people, come to them now as a respectable gentleman and they dare not utter a word in derision. In this manner, true social revolution and liberation is set in motion in the life of all depressed groups by western education.

*Emancipatory Efforts since Independence: Conscientization and Empowerment*

Even after the independence of India the missionaries have continued to pay special attention to the liberation of the poor depressed classes of India. However, there is a major change in their approach that has been brought about by the change in the Church's mission theology since Vatican Council II. This Council has shifted the emphasis of missionary activity from proselytization – winning converts to Christianity – to evangelization, which consists in spreading the gospel values without necessarily winning converts to Christianity. This change in mission theology is the consequence of a change in two other theological ideas. The first is the idea that formal baptism – the ritual entry into the Church – is not necessary for salvation. The second is the idea that separates the Church and the Kingdom of God, and subordinates former to the latter. In this new conception, the Church is understood as a community, existing not for itself as a haven of salvation, but entrusted with the responsibility of working for the establishment of the Kingdom of God, which is a humanitarian and just society, a society in which the Biblical vision – “There will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever” (Rev. 21:4) – is fulfilled.

Because of this change in the theological vision of the Church, in the last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the work of the Church among the poor has assumed a new focus. The missionary work since Vatican Council II has focused less on proselytization and more on the empowerment and liberation of the depressed section of society through conscientization, so that the vision of Prophet Isaiah<sup>49</sup> of a harmonious and conflict-free world can be brought about. Apart from building Christian communities committed to live the values of Christ and equipped to act as leaven in the transformation of society, missionary activity consists in imparting formal and non-formal education, training in skills to generate and augment income, opening hostels to help *dalit* and tribal children in their schooling, providing economic assistance to start projects of self-employment, spreading of general awareness of the socioeconomic problems of their

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<sup>49</sup> Prophet Isaiah speaks of a golden age to come, a time of peace and tranquility when all hostilities will be forgotten and the earth will be filled with people who know the LORD. Cf. Is. 11: 6-10.



society, creation of fora in parishes and villages where people's problems can be discussed, analyzed, and solved. These are supplemented with supportive, foundational humanitarian principles, and Christian insights so that the *dalit* community's "psyche would discard some of the hitherto unquestioned dicta, which chained them to perennial low status"<sup>50</sup> and work "towards rediscovering their lost dignity."<sup>51</sup>

Conscientization is often followed by affirmative action. An example of this is the efforts of the Jesuit priest Thomas Chakkalackal in Bihar.<sup>52</sup> After working for a decade and a half in Gholeng, a predominantly tribal area in south Bihar, now Jharkhand, where he has struggled for the upliftment of the local tribal population, in 1979 Chakkalackal moved to west Champaran district in Bihar where he has set up a social service center with the name "Seva Sadan". The aim of the center – as enunciated in a letter Chakkalackal has written to his friends in 1984 – is "to give an experience of God's love and peace to the people suffering from exploitation, poverty and injustice by social action leading to emancipation and justice." Using "*Awaken People's Power to Create a New Society*" as his motto, Chakkalackal has initiated various activities which included adult literacy, conscientization, recovering of peasant's land that is grabbed by landlords, organizing poor people against exploitation by the rich, demanding minimum wages, promoting cottage industries, protection of forests and improving farming. The rich and the powerful of the locality, who have begun to feel the effects of such activities struck back. To get Chakkalackal out of their way, they got him kidnapped by robbers. When under the intervention of the Central Government he was released, he has taken up with added vigor his fight against the exploiters on behalf of the exploited.

Perhaps the most outstanding struggle he has undertaken after his release is on behalf of the bonded laborers. In 1983, the local administration of Bagaha Subdivision has made a public claim that it has liberated 581 bonded laborers at the expense of Rs. 11,75,528. Chakkalackal and the local people knew that this is a fraudulent way of appropriating government fund. With the help of the activists of the social service center, Chakkalackal has prepared a list of 998 bonded laborers and submitted it to the Sub-divisional Officer (SDO). The SDO who has been in collusion with the landlords of the area conducted a fraudulent inquiry and declared that the list of Chakkalackal is false. Chakkalackal challenged the report of the SDO in the Supreme Court, which had ordered the Bihar government to conduct a fresh inquiry. The SDO, who has been a supporter of the landlords, has put

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<sup>50</sup> Jose Kalappura: "Dignity Rediscovered: Christians in Eastern India", p. 105.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> For details of Thomas Chakkalackal's life and work Cf. K.C. Philip, *Champaran ka Naya Gandhi (The New Gandhi of Champaran)*, (Patna: Patna Jesuit Society, n.d.).

various roadblocks and used delaying tactics to scuttle the inquiry. Chakkalackal with his characteristic fighting spirit has continued to keep up the pressure. After much struggle and many setbacks Chakkalackal has tasted victory, when on 25 Nov., 1986, the Supreme Court has given an order to the district administration to take necessary steps to release and rehabilitate 350 of the bonded laborers in Chakkalackal's list and after the completion of the task to report the matter to the Court. Having defeated and humiliated, the landlords and the district administration have used their influence to get a series of reports published in the a leading Hindi newspaper, *Aaj*, accusing Chakkalackal, among other things, of being a CIA agent, coercion to conversion and sexual exploitation of young women at the social service center. Chakkalackal approached the Press Council of India. The Council has given an order to investigate into the truth of the reports. Finding them false, the Press Council reprimands the editor and asks the management of the paper to publicly apologize for publishing calumny against Chakkalackal. Hoping no earthly rewards, on the contrary, facing many false accusations and braving great personal risks, Chakkalackal continues his struggle on behalf of the poor and the oppressed peasants of Champaran. Until his death in 1994, he has been the voice of the voiceless people. Local peasants affectionately call him "Champaran's Gandhi".

Chakkalackal is not an isolated phenomenon in the Church. The Society of Jesus, of which he is a member, runs four other such social service centers in Bihar alone and many more throughout India. To these if we add the number of centers run by other Catholic religious groups the total number of social service centers run by missionaries throughout the country would count up to thousands. The work in these centers is very risky, for the oppressive class, experiencing erosion in their privileged position, often strikes back with vengeance using all their clout in civil administration, police, politics and mass media. In the recent past a number of Church activists have been branded antisocial, CIA agents, fraudulent proselytors or instigators of violence and their property destroyed. Some are pulled into prolonged litigation, some are arrested on false accusations, beaten up, stripped, or paraded in public, and in extreme cases, even raped or killed. Graham Steins, A.T. Thomas, Thomas Gaffiny and Rani Maria are murdered brutally for their good works to emancipate the poor and the marginalized. Nevertheless, facing the wrath of the powerful oppressors and braving great personal risks, Church workers side with the poor and the oppressed and fight for their rights so that they can have a better future in a transformed India where, in the words of Tagore, the mind is free and where the poor will not have to bend their knees before insolent might.

In recent days, Church's concern for the emancipation of the depressed classes has found a new expression. In the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we find a good number of priests and nuns entering the legal profession. In the context of the judicial activism that the country has witnessed during this time, realizing the power of courts in providing justice

to the poor and in bringing about social transformation, many priests and nuns have entered the legal profession. Working as lawyers in various courts, they take up and argue cases connected with social justice for the depressed classes. It is difficult to assess the extent to which this type of missionary activity has contributed to the recent awakening of the backward and *dalit* communities. One way of assessing the impact of the liberative missionary activity on the Indian society is to study the extent and ferocity with which violence unleashed in recent days on missionaries and the Church institutions. The advocates and perpetrators of the violence cite proselytization as the reason for their hostility. However, this is hard to believe for three reasons. First, because of the belief that baptism is not essential for salvation, proselytization has lost its importance in the missionary practice. Since the days of Vatican Council II in the early part of the 1960s, the mainline Churches have shifted their emphasis from proselytization to evangelization and empowerment of the poor and marginalized people for liberative action. Second, there is the absence of hostility to missionaries during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when mass conversions to Christianity has been taking place due to the protest movement that has been led by B. R. Ambedkar. Thirdly, it is also worth noticing that the priests and nuns who are attacked, raped and killed are not people who are involved in proselytization, but social workers involved in the social upliftment of the poor and oppressed section of society. Since the hatred of the missionaries and violence on their persons and properties coincide with the shift of emphasis from proselytization to empowerment and liberation of the marginalized people, one should suspect that they are the reaction of the dominant society to the emancipatory action undertaken by the Church personnel. Thus, the recent violence on missionaries speaks of the catalytic effect the missionaries are having in the social churning that the country is witnessing today.

Apart from this indirect suggestion of the impact of the emancipatory missionary activity, there are some clearly visible consequences of the recent-day missionary activity. One of them is the change that has taken place in the socioeconomic life of a large section of the depressed communities. Taking advantage of the facilities the Church provided for education, the *dalit* children are able to leave their old caste-related professions and take up alternative, more remunerative and higher status employment. Another visible consequence of the missionary activity is the weakening of three exploitative social institutions – money-lending at very high interest rates (*mahajani*), semi-bonded labor-patronage system (*janouri*) and patron-client relationship in caste-based service (*grihasthi-pauni*). To protect the *dalit* community who embraced Christianity, the missionaries popularized the Cooperative Credit Society, popularly called Udhar Sangh. This rang the death bell of *mahajani* in areas where Udhar Sangh got established. Likewise, education and religious indoctrination are used to stamp out *janouri* and *grihasthi-pauni*. Education facilitated upward social mobility of the *dalits* and opened the possibility of their liberating

themselves from the caste-based, traditional occupations by taking up other jobs; while religious indoctrination provided the psychological mobility – liberation from a subaltern mind-set – required for rejecting the exploitative *janouri* and *grihasthi-pauni*. Thus, we can say with Kalappura that “the most significant contribution of Christianity in recent times ... [is] the empowerment of the powerless and helping them to re-discover their human dignity which ... [has] been lost due to centuries-old socioeconomic and cultural subjugation and subalternity.”<sup>53</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The contribution of Christian missionaries to the shaping of Indian life in modern times has, indeed, been very impressive. Despite the accusation of proselytization, they merit high appreciation as pioneers in the fields of education; medical relief; care for the poor and abandoned sections of society; preservers and disseminators of culture, language and literature; and protectors of the poor and the weak. It is an indisputable fact that Christian missions, preaching the Good News of God's love for all and believing that the glory of God is in the enlightenment and well-being of humans, have always been promoters of human values. By their activities these missions have acted and continue to act as a catalytic agent in bringing about radical social changes in India. By preaching the love of God, supporting the downtrodden, preserving the past, encouraging science and spreading education and social awareness, “the Christian presence has been an agent of social, economic and moral transformation, leading to a beneficial exchange of ideas and political enlightenment and has generally been a stimulus to every kind of activity.”<sup>54</sup> Just as proselytization is the chief concern of the Church workers in the past, in the present times the building up of the Kingdom of God by building a just and humane society by liberative action is the focus and thrust of the missionary activity. However, to estimate the value of Christianity as a liberative force in India is very difficult. Yet, while looking back at the work of the Christian missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, over the past fifty years or so, even a casual observer would be impressed by the variegated activities in which the missionaries and the Church have been engaged: evangelism, the building up of a Christian community, the creation of literature, the running of Church-related agencies like schools, medical and industrial missions, rehabilitation centers and the like. Through these and many other ways, they have made massive and lasting contribution to Indian society, often braving many odds and making great sacrifices required to go into unknown, undeveloped places far away from one's home and friends. But for their

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<sup>53</sup> Jose Kalappura: “Dignity Rediscovered: Christians in Eastern India”, p. 106.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Anchukandam. “Christian Contribution to Karnataka,” *Indian Christian Directory*, p. 121.

courage, love of those “redeemed by Christ,” and self-sacrificing spirit which prompt them to go into the most remote and backward regions of the country to transmit the message of love in action, modern India would not have reached the commendable cultural, civilizational development of which it is proud of.



## CONCLUSION

As we come to the end of this volume unfolding Indian cultural tradition in its identity, creativity and modernization, we need to raise the issue of the identity of Indian culture and its relevance in the globalizing world of today. Since Indian culture is influenced by various cultural and religious groups for over five thousand years, by its nature it is open to new changes and adaptations. However, it is often difficult to maintain its identity as Indian culture while being syncretic and open to other influences. Thus, there are conflicts in perspective between the conservatives and liberals as regards how Indian cultural tradition should be interpreted and understood. Dharmendra Goel, in his essay critiques the absolutism, held by certain sections of the traditional as well as the present-day Indian society, which blocks the *gravitas* of the culture-creator thereby does not allow him to give creative expression to his perception of the Indian cultural tradition. Similarly, A. Rahuramaraju in his paper critiques the project of modernity, the high-culture classical tradition in India and ideology of Hindutva that attempt to destroy multi-culturalism, which is part and parcel of Indian cultural tradition, and attempt to understand it in a uniform mode. These two essays highlight that there are trends in the Indian thinking that attempt to undermine multi-dimensional nature of Indian cultural tradition, and attempt to understand its identity in relation to some fixed standards and ideologies.

However, identity of a culture cannot be understood in relation to some fixed standards or ideologies. The identity of a culture is to be viewed as dynamic and evolving. There are two causes that can bring about fear of other cultures: the first is the misconception that each culture is an unchangeable monolith and accepting one part of which equals accepting the whole; and secondly the lack of a strong cultural digestive system in a particular culture that can accept, absorb and assimilate that are best in the other culture and integrate them into it. There is, in fact, no opposition between cultural identity and globalization, and between cultural authenticity and modernization of culture. It is not proper to think of the other cultures as a threat to one's culture because it would lead to exclusivism and stunted growth of a culture.

Since Indian culture has been open to diverse cultural influences from its beginning, it has an in-built cultural digestive system that can check its being taken take-over by any other culture. Mahatma Gandhi comments on this point as follows: "I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any." K. N. Pannikar, an Indian historian, in a lecture he delivered in Bangalore, in 2004, elaborates on this point as follows:

The political history of India is characterized by a continuous cyclical process, centrifugal on the one hand and

centripetal on the other... The cultural make up of the nation is enmeshed in this political process... The dynamism of Indian culture is derived from this diversity which molded the cultural practices of the people ... the coming together of people of diverse cultural moorings and traditions had several cultural consequences. These have been variously conceived as synthesis, assimilation, acculturation, and eclecticism... The crucial question is whether Indian culture is conceived as a static phenomenon, tracing its identity to a single unchanging source, or a dynamic phenomenon, critically and creatively interrogating all that is new... The Indian Renaissance and the national movement recognized the positive significance of cultural plurality for national identity and sought to further the syncretic tendencies already present in social and religious life; hence the nationalist notion of unity in diversity.

The Vice President of India Shri M. Hamid Ansari in his inaugural address at the recently held International Seminar, on the theme *Indian Culture in a Globalised World*, says the following regarding the accommodation of diversity in the modern India:

[In India] plural society is an existential reality; we have consciously adopted a democratic polity and a secular state structure. Our diversity emanates from the first characteristic, and is expressed through the second and the third. Diversity is an Indian passion: we live it, tolerate it, accommodate it, and relish it. Contestation is thus inherent, but it manifests itself most of the time in an agreed framework. A historian of modern India, Ramachandra Guha, has observed that 'at no other time or place have social conflicts been so richly diverse, so vigorously articulated, so eloquently manifested in art and literature, or addressed with such directness by the political system or the media.'

Having clarified the multi-dimensional and diverse nature of Indian cultural tradition and stating that unity in diversity is fundamental to its identity, we move on to consider the relevance of Indian cultural tradition in a globalized world.

UNESCO's *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* adopted in November, 2001, proclaims the importance of cultural diversity for the integration of humankind. It states that just as biodiversity is necessary for the genuine good of the physical nature, so also cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind and its wellbeing. The declaration, asserting the relevance and significance of cultural interaction, states that while creativity



draws on the roots of cultural tradition it grows, develops and attains newness by its contact with other cultures. According to this declaration globalization sets the conditions necessary for the dialogue between cultures. In a globalized world, which is spoken as the “world of ruptured boundaries”, cultures are no longer discreet and inconspicuous, but are open to each other and seek reciprocal recognition and interaction. This, in turn, brings about frequent confrontation between cultures and the consequent debates on identities of cultures. The unavoidable consequence of this interaction among cultures is the erosion of purity of cultures because each culture attempts to influence the other. Thus, the notion of homogenous national state or a national culture wears away. Despite these limitations of globalization – with its inherent connectivity and mobility – it calls for accommodation of diversity between cultures that interact with each other. If each culture in the globalized world can appreciate and accommodate each other’s values, the world would be a better place for all. Such an appreciation and celebration of diversity among cultures and nations, in turn, bring not only cultural accommodation, but also can initiate economic as well as political strategy to build a new world order. This is the positive dimension of globalization.

According to Shri M. Hamid Ansari, it is here that Indian culture has a relevance to the globalizing world of today. In his inaugural address to International Seminar, on the theme *Indian Culture in a Globalised World*, speaking of the relevance of Indian cultural tradition to the globalized world, he says as follows:

[Indian cultural tradition] being the confluence of ideas, values and traditions ... cannot but be inherently syncretic. While maintaining the purity of individual traditions, dance forms, music, literature and art, it accepts the authenticity of others and often synthesizes them into newer and richer forms. The same holds good for manifestations of diversity in the daily life of the people, be it in language, cuisine, clothing, behavior patterns. The imperative of a common market, and of a common political system, has induced intermingling. All of this finds reflection in popular culture and above all in films. The instinctive Indian impulse is to evade the either/or question and seek an approach that accommodates both. Fringe trends apart, assimilation and homogenization are viewed neither as feasible nor desirable. The richness of values secreted in the interstices of Indian culture was known and appreciated long before the era of present day globalization. It left its imprint on the culture and civilization of East Asian, South-east Asian, Central Asian and West Asian lands. The Western world too discovered some aspects of it in the colonial period. The new world now taking shape amplifies and magnifies them.

Many factors contribute to it: the speed of connectivity, the number of Indians abroad, the popularity of commercial Hindi films and yoga and of the literary products of Indian writers in English, the projection and acceptance of the work of painters and sculptors, etc., in addition to philosophy and classical music, classical dances and other art forms. An overarching backdrop to these is provided by the emergence of India as a major economic and political factor on the global scene. These traits of culture go beyond national experience in the political sense and are reflective of the genius of a civilization. So long as Indians continue to imbibe and practice them, there is every reason to anticipate an expanding impact of Indian culture in the world of tomorrow... [The] openness of mind to ideas and practices is the principal ingredient of Indian culture. It is to be nurtured and cherished and must never be allowed to be tampered with for any reasons.

Thus, if the spirit of openness and accommodation – that is characteristic of Indian psyche – continues to be nurtured in the Indian cultural tradition, it would continue to discover and transform its identity and continue to modernize itself, in the process expand its impact in the globalized world.

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# THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

## PURPOSE

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Studies in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

## PROJECTS

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life*. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week crosscultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. *Joint-Colloquia* with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976 in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

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- Series II. African Philosophical Studies*
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- Series IVA. Central and Eastern European Philosophical Studies*
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