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Editorial

I express my profound joy in bringing out this issue of the *Indian Journal of Theology*, a Journal that I have always held in high regard since I first joined NIIPGTS as a student in 2012. I thank all the contributors for their valuable articles and book reviews written from different areas and perspectives based on their choices and interests, thereby making this issue insightful, informative and exciting to read.

In the first article, ***Methodological and Ethical Issues in Research with "Children at Risk,"*** Amos Massey asserts that about 1.8 billion children and childhood are at risk across the globe today. They are not heard in most cases and adults act as the deciding bodies to address and redress issues concerning children. He expresses his conviction that children, just like adults, can have their own views and perspectives; and they also have the right to be heard and speak for themselves if appropriate methods are used. Therefore, he points out the methodological dilemmas and challenges along with the ethical issues related to "children at risk." He also develops certain methodological issues in doing pastoral counselling research in the Indian context and brings out the voices of distress and agony.

In ***The Woman said, "The Serpent Tricked Me, and I Ate" – A Political Reading of the Fall Narrative in Genesis 3*,** Bishakh Dutta argues that the narrative stories of Genesis 1-11 are rooted theologically in the historical traditions of ancient Israel. He explains how as a source of primeval history, *Yahwist* brings to us a narrative that shows the supremacy of God and the limitation of humanity. The rebellious act of human invites catastrophic effects upon the entire creation. The narrative explicates that God of Israel is the only supreme ruler who rules the world with

love and grace, and also makes sure that no act of rebellion goes unpunished. Thus, the Fall narrative describes that God holds all authority over life and order in this world. Dutta also adds that the political dimension of faith affirmation encourages the people of Israel towards hope when they experience crisis as a nation.

In ***Inner and Outer Climate Change: God, Nature, and Human Transformation,*** Gifta Angline Kumar focuses on climate change and its effects, especially the role played by humans in destroying the environment in the name of 'development' by means of industrialization, globalization, and consumerism. To address these issues, she brings forward the understanding of "Inner and Outer Climate Change" which calls for working out in harmony with nature and its rhythms, the final outcome of which is to preserve nature. She also gives a biblical response to climate change from the protestant Christian point of view by explaining the ethical implications of eco-justice in eight notable points.

In ***A Postcolonial Reading of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20*****,** Ashish John Archer studies the Great Commission in the context of postcolonialism. He provides an exegetical study of the Great Commission by indicating how the text had been traditionally interpreted and used for understanding and shaping certain mission perspectives. He suggests that reading the Great Commission through postcolonial eyes requires us to focus on the whole issue of expansion, domination, and imperialism and to ask questions about the real meaning and concept of Jesus' authority, why the disciples were asked to go to all the nations, and so on. Since many colonial powers (mis)interpreted this text to expand their colonies, Archer makes an attempt to interpret the Great Commission to liberate the communities affected by it historically and to do away with the colonial understanding and dominant structures.

In ***Fundamental Teachings of Radha Soami Satsang Dera Beas*****,** Sanjay Kumar provides an information on how the *Dera Beas* of *Radha Soami Satsang Beas* (RSSB) came to be established. He states that the teachings of RSSB are not entirely new but taught by the main founder, Seth Shiv Dayal Singh. Various earlier Saints have also discussed about these teachings. Kumar studies and explains ten basic fundamental teachings of RSSB such as *God; Heaven; Guru; Human Body; Karma and Reincarnation; Yoga; Vegetarian Diet and Abstinence from Intoxicants; Seva; Naamdaan; Death*; and provides valuable information and lessons on these teachings.

A book review on ***God at Work in the World: Theology and Mission in the Global Church*** by Lalsangkima Pachuau, done by Jose Philip tells us how Pachuau gives importance to the means, methods and goals of mission while asserting that the Triune God is at work in the world for good. The book credits the International Missionary Council for paving the way for clearer articulation of *missio Dei*. Philip is careful to mention how Pachuau considers the church as occupying a significant position in God's mission of saving the world, quoting his statement that the church, "is a mission before it does mission." God, in Christ, is at work in the world by the power of the Holy Spirit, and humans are to undertake God's work in contextually relevant ways and profitably engage in missions.

In his review of the book, ***Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*** by Sallie McFague, Thanpam Zimik highlights how McFague implores her readers to embrace a new worldview that is responsible, inclusive, and acknowledges the interdependence of all life. Deeply concerned about the increasing likelihood of nuclear war, she directs her focus mainly towards the Americans and the white middle class Christians and advocates for "biocracy" rather than democracy. Zimik points out that the book covers topics on Cosmology, Anthropology, Theology, and proposes certain new conceptions about God in relation to ecology by employing methodologies such as metaphorical, eco-centric, modelling, and dualism approaches.

Finally, N. Chanchibemo Ezung reviews ***Inter-Religious Relations in India: Challenges and Prospects*** by Rodinmawia Ralte. The review explicates how the author presents the importance of inter-faith relations to address the problems and challenges that exist in a pluralistic context like India. Though the process of dialogue has been considered to have a dwindling impact by some, Ezung underlines that the author still sees its importance. He also illustrates that understanding our differences, unity in diversity, displaying love, togetherness and belongingness in the midst of our differences are some of the central themes suggested by the book to have positive inter-religious relations in India.

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Methodological and Ethical Issues in Research with "Children at Risk"

Amos Massey*

"Children here don't like to have dreams for the future because they can't fulfil them..."
– 15-year-old girl from a family displaced by conflict

Introduction

Children at risk are the children in need. Millions of infants around the world begin an extraordinary marathon from defenceless new-borns to becoming pro-active young children. And every year, countless numbers of them are stopped in their tracks – deprived, in one or another, of the love, care, nurturance, health, nutrition and protection that they need to survive, grow and develop. Methodological issues have emerged in the past few decades, while designing research studies involving children at risk and some of the methods and techniques used to elicit views that have been taken into concern as well as ethical issues related to the researches with children at risk, including: gaining access and

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seeking consent; the research setting; questions and activities during data collection; confidentiality and child protection issues. This paper is built on the conviction that children, just like adults, are citizens who hold their own views and perspectives, they have competencies and the right to be heard, and they are able to speak for themselves if the appropriate methods are used. Therefore, this writing reflects on methodological dilemmas and challenges as well as ethical issues related to the children at risk bringing out their voices of distress, anguish and agony through these methodological considerations.

1. Who are these "Children at Risk"?

All children are inherently vulnerable by virtue of their developmental needs but not all children are at risk. To define children at risk, according to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "children at risk are those that have become separated from or have been failed by the primary units of society that normally provide protection: their families and community."[1]

Glenn Miles, defines "Children at risk" as "children in danger who experience intense and chronic risk factors of not reaching their God-given potential, physically, environmentally, mentally, socially and spiritually."[2]

According to the Ministry of Women and Child Development, it is estimated that around 40% of India's children are vulnerable and experiencing difficult circumstances like children without family support, children forced into labour, abused/trafficked children, children on the streets, vulnerable children, children affected by substance abuse, by armed conflict/civil/unrest/natural calamity, etc., as well as children who due to circumstances have committed offences and come into conflict with law.

The vulnerability of young children from age group 0-14 brings out those who are being abused in their families and communities to a significant extent. It governs a thought that the children should speak for themselves, to offer their views,

expressions and stories that could help to define the understanding of interaction with children, in re-understanding care, God, theology, counselling and ministry and wider societal issues. It also includes discussions on authentic responsibility of adults towards children in the situations of risk and vulnerability.[3]

2. Concerns and Issues Relating to "Children at Risk"

"Children at Risk" are mostly understood from the perspective of adults in which children are not heard but adults become the deciding bodies and propose a blueprint to redress the issues concerning children. Almost one-third of the world's population are under the age of 15; that is 1.8 billion children and childhood are at risk. In fact, the fear of childhood risk is increasingly prevalent in almost every country, context and culture across the globe. It is expected that between 1998 and 2025, 4.5 billion children will be born. As 97 percent of the world's population growth takes place in the developing world, multitudes of children will endure a life of high risk and social risk.

It is expected that between 1998 and 2025, 4.5 billion children will be born.[4] As 97 percent of the world's population growth takes place in the developing world, multitudes of children will endure a life of high risk and social risk. UNICEF states that 130 million primary school age children have no access to education[5] and therefore no means by which to pull themselves up out of the quagmire of poverty and give their own children a better chance.

Thus, the statement of "children at risk" brings to mind such vulnerable children as homeless (i.e., living on the streets or runaways), forced labour, abusive parents, child rag pickers, child beggars, child sexual exploitation, child abuse, etc. This means, when children are identified with risk, there is a possibility for loss, damage or destruction of freedom, dignity and rights of children. Children at risk face greater challenges to their survival and development. Family, community and government often

compromise their best interests. They are marginalised, exploited and more likely to die at a young age.

3. Rights of Children in India: A Legal Perspective

The Supreme Court of India pronounced a landmark judgment on child rights with its judgement criminalising sex with a minor wife. This exception treated rape of a married girl child by her husband as an exception to the crime of rape. Despite having the Protection of Children From Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (hereinafter referred as POCSO), the legislature sought to legitimise the sexual crime against married girl child by inserting Exception (2) to Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code[6] and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Notified Rules – 2012, Persons with Disabilities (Equal Protection of Rights and Full participation) Act, The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2017, The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. Articles of Fundamental Rights declare Equality before Law (No. 14), Protection of Life and Personal Liberty (No. 21), Prohibition of Traffic in Human Beings and Forced Labour (No. 23) and Prohibition of Employment of Children in factories and other Hazardous Employment (No. 24). The Supreme Court of India has held that these fundamental rights need to be seen not in isolation of each other but as a package of rights to fulfil the mandate outlined in the preamble of our constitution.[7]

4. Methodological and Ethical Issues

4.1. Research Design

In any research, the researcher must give sufficient thought to the strategy of inquiry, plan and structure it in a manner as would enable one to obtain answers to research questions as precisely and accurately as possible. Such a plan, the structure and strategy of investigation conceived consciously is generally known as research design. It involves outlining the various stages of research – from writing down the objectives and hypothesis to sample selection and experimental procedure to the operational

implications of the final analysis of data.[8] Selltiz defined research design as "the arrangement of conditions for selection and analysing of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure."[9]

4.2. Developing Research Ethical Protocols: Pre–Research Issues

4.2.1. *Seeking Consent and Gaining Access*: Participation in social research reflect the wider issue of access: how do researchers access children to carry out research? An approach has to go in a careful and step-by-step manner. A permission to conduct the research from relevant social work and health ethical committees is important. When the research with children is taking place, it is important to gain the co-operation of a range of different 'gatekeepers,'[10] such as parents, Guardians or social workers as this avoids the risk of undermining the competent child. One concern is that children have the right to participate in research and that parents should not deny them that right. However, the starting point should always be to obtain the parents' informed consent[11] when under-age children participate in research as well as from the children when this is possible.[12]

Children's views are often required to obtain consent from a succession of 'gatekeepers' before they are able to approach the children themselves. Farrell argues, researchers should listen to children as competent participants, which involves respecting their informed consent to participate as well as their right to decline involvement or withdraw from research.[13] According to Alderson and Morrow, "informed consent should be freely given (without coercion, threat or persuasion) by children who can make an appropriately informed decision."[14] Much of the concern revolves around whether or not children are competent enough to give informed consent. When focusing on research conversations with children in schools or NGO's, Danby and Farrell discuss children's experiences of providing informed consent and

situations where parents override their child's desire to consent. They argue that children are competent enough to choose whether or not to participate.[15] Competent minors less than 16 years old of age can give consent, with competence being defined as having enough knowledge to understand what is proposed and enough discretion to be able to make a wise decision in light of one's own interests.

Cocks claims that the notion of consent might exclude some children, such as disabled or refugee children, since it might not always be possible to obtain in their particular contexts. She endorses the concept of 'assent' (agreement to participate) as a sensitive and appropriate option to include all children in research on issues that affect them, and further she argues that the notion of 'assent' 'removes the trust on the child demonstrating adult centric attributes such as maturity, competence and completeness.'[16] However, if children are not fully informed of the research topic, informed consent is automatically denied even if children are able to decide about participation, since informed consent exists only when one is fully informed. Instead, it becomes a question of assent, which refers to a passive acceptance or non-refusal.[17]

4.2.2. *Rationale of Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria*: Have some children been excluded because, for instance, they have speech or learning difficulties? Can the exclusion be justified?[18] One of the research (child) victim said, "I firmly believe that it's important for us to include other vulnerable children in our research. Otherwise, how else would we know how to conduct interventions that address their circumstances? We need to make sure that they are represented."[19] Several spoke passionately about inclusion in potentially beneficial research as matter of fairness and social justice. The process of obtaining decision regarding children's inclusion or exclusion from child agencies and social workers is lengthy and time consuming. This take several weeks and numerous telephone calls to contact social workers and agencies who fail to return a short form

providing the required information, or who did not respond to telephone calls made when they were available.[20] However, all children at risk considered for the research are subject to a court order which meant that, according to the 1989 Children Act, 'the local authority shared parental responsibility with the birth parents. In practice, the decision to include or exclude a child, was made by social workers without conferring with parents or, indeed, children themselves.[21] The social workers who decide to exclude children from this research conveys their reasons to the researchers. The researchers' aims were to gain a contextual understanding of the ethical issues that researchers encounter in practice and to better appreciate the ethical rationale for inclusion and exclusion in research from the perspective of those investigating the health and social challenges facing unaccompanied children.[22]

4.2.3 *Avoidance of Deception*: The use of deception in research with children at risk is ethically problematic insofar as it undermines the principle of free and informed consent. Children (research participants) cannot be expected to provide free and fully informed consent in research if they are systematically misled, at the outset of their participation, regarding the true purposes of the research release of findings.[23] The American Psychological Association Ethics Code 8.07(a) states that "psychologists do not conduct a study involving deception unless they have determined that the use of deceptive techniques is justified by the study's significant prospective scientific, educational or applied value and that effective non-deceptive alternative procedures are not feasible."[24] This code suggests that there are times when the use of deception techniques are at times valid and make use of such techniques.

4.3. Issues during Research

4.3.1. *Child Protection*: The limits to confidentiality often raised relevant issues in research on children at risk. The researcher

should have particular guidelines before the project starts in order to provide support for children who reveal themselves to be at risk of harm. Boyden and Ennew argue that it is the responsibility of the researcher to protect a child from putting themselves at risk and to decide whether, or when, to intervene when a child is indeed at risk.[25] It is worth thinking about child protection in planning research on children, for instance, to avoid creating situations where one adult and one child are in a closed room, check whether there are strong reasons to work like this. Working with pairs of children is one approach; in some research it is good to have a parent or a teacher present with children; and researchers can usefully work in pairs themselves (though larger groups should be avoided).[26] Some ethical considerations also refer to a specific child protection policy and/or a code of conduct for researchers, either including or appending extracts from existing protocols, for example, "Save the Children." The "Save the Children" toolkit[27] for involving children in research includes a specific extract that spells out a code of conduct for staff behaviour. The principle underlying the code "is that staff should avoid actions or behaviour which may be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive."[28]

4.3.2. *Language and Logic*: The researcher must acknowledge the fact that most technical terms, abbreviations, and abstractions employed by researchers are not part of the vocabulary used by children.[29] Moreover, an explanation that works for one child may not work for a child of another sex, caste, ethnicity, age group or background. Therefore, creativity and flexibility in language and approach are required as well as patience and an understanding of the local context in which the target groups of girls and boys live and interact.[30] Using language and logic that the children will comprehend is not only essential for producing the desired results; it also ensures that each child grasps the purpose and content of the research activity in which they have consented to participate.

4.3.3. *Conditions of Listening*: It cannot be taken for granted that more listening means more hearing.[31] There seems to be a tendency

to ignore or misinterpret views and perceptions expressed by children at risk, especially in situations where the researcher feels that the views and perceptions put forward by the child worker are not directly relevant to the research activity. According to Pole et al., there is a "reluctance of some researchers to take children's accounts of aspects of their own lives seriously and see them as legitimate sources of data."[32]

With regard to research on the worst forms of child victims as labour and abuse, it will often be the case that children's answers and comments cannot easily be marked on a ready-made, pre-coded questionnaire. Rather, the researcher should listen to the concerns and issues raised, even when these may not seem immediately pertinent to the initial research objectives. Researchers should therefore be encouraged to combine a set of open-ended and closed questions when interviewing children in intolerable and inhuman circumstances. If children are silent, there are likely to be very good reasons for this. Issues of shyness, or maturity, or ability to communicate emotions might be different amongst girls and boys and amongst children from different caste, class and communities. Keeping in mind the children's right to say "No", the researcher must also rely on observation as an important but frequently neglected tool for generating information about children's lives.[33]

4.3.4. *A Matter of Trust*: Small talk, play, recurrent visits, patience and time are some of the major ingredients needed when obtaining reliable data from children on such delicate issues as family background, illegitimate child labour activities, sexual abuse and exploitation. Children at risk have many painful stories to tell yet the standard setting for doing research with children, classrooms or work sites, may not be the best one to obtain such stories.[34] Agreeing about whether or when researchers will intervene when children are at risk, do harm to others or break the law. Researchers risk losing access to and trust of children if they do intervene.[35] To the extent possible, in-depth interviews with

children should be conducted in a neutral setting, and preferably in a place where children feel safe and comfortable. It is therefore vital that researchers ask children where they would prefer to talk and whether they would like anyone else to be present, for example a sibling or a friend. In the process of data collection with children at risk, it becomes clear these children could not be asked to participate in interviews in the presence of people they feel offended, under any circumstances.

4.3.5. *Vulnerabilities of Children at Risk*: It is not ethical to expose a child already vulnerable to any additional risk through an investigation that carries no benefit for that child. Questionnaires and Interviews about the painful subjects should be performed in accordance with the least harm. The researcher must be aware that these children may be bearing a heavy burden of feelings that they cannot usually express. Giving them an opportunity to tell about their lives may open the floodgates of emotions.[36] The researcher may have to take responsibility for and deal with, difficult situations that may arise during research. Children have a right to keep to themselves information that might put them in danger once the researcher is gone. They also have a right to be protected from inadvertently giving information that may put them at risk.[37]

4.3.6. *Incorporating Indigenous Methods*: Raney & *Çinarba* question the universality of Western counselling methods and state that it is imperative to assess if they are transferable to non-western cultures. They question if theories, approaches and strategies can be assessed without a cultural contextualization; if human beings' psychological needs are similar regardless of culture.[38] They explore these statements by analysing the situation of counselling research methods which is not accessible to everyone in India, a developing country that is influenced by Western phenomenon and where counselling is still a young service. Whereas Anders Kassman argues that it is therefore crucial that researchers and counsellors also use indigenous models of healing to increase accessibility.

4.4. Post-research Issues

4.4.1. *Privacy and Confidentiality*: Confidentiality implies giving attention to privacy in writings and making clear when a researcher may need to pass on information to others (such as if a child discloses that they are being abused or are abusing someone else).[39] Limitations of confidentiality should be informed to the children before participating in the research in order to give fully informed consent.[40] In order 'to stop someone from getting hurt,' the researcher while interviewing children could express what can happen just between researcher and a child and what may need to be told to others.

Thus, it is common practice that if children disclose abuse, researchers will encourage the child to talk to adults who could help or else to agree that the researcher should talk to them.[41] However, what should the researcher do when abuse is disclosed by the child and she or he does not agree to talk to somebody that can help? And how does the researcher identify what is 'harm' that needs reporting? Some researchers have adopted different approaches. Lynch, et al., opine in their study with children who had been sexually abused, had clear from the start that if a child disclosed information that raised concerns about her/his safety, they would try to persuade him/her to speak to those concerned with his/her welfare, and if that did not work, confidentiality would be breached. Their position was specified in a Code of Confidentiality, which was accessible to the participants prior to the interview.[42]

Malcolm Hill argues that sensitive information or any information given by a child should only be disclosed to others when the child consents to that, after having discussed it with him/her.[43] Choosing to breach confidentiality could damage the trust between child and researcher irrevocably (which may have an impact on other situations of trust for the child).[44] In some instances, children may be at personal risk for disclosing information relating to violence and maltreatment.[45] The protection of their identity includes consideration of data storage,

for example, it may be inappropriate to use tape recordings as it can be difficult to be certain of their security.

4.4.2. *Dissemination and Archiving of Findings and Reporting Results:* Ethical issues arise not only in the process of data collection but also through the dissemination and archiving of findings, which can harm children in several ways. Children who are able to identify themselves may feel upset by the way in which they are portrayed. Disclosure of information and storage of data about research subjects may allow others to exploit or may out their (children at risk) physical safety at risk.[46] Lack of control over dissemination may result in misperceptions or sensationalised issues and problems. Researchers need to be transparent about the methods used and the practical obstacles encountered in research. Lack of transparency invalidates results.[47]

4.4.3. *The Importance of Context and Setting*: Children are highly sensitive to the context in which research takes place. Children interpret what adults say to them and respond to questions according to expectations about what they think is expected of them, influenced by their perceptions of the micro-environment in which research takes place.[48] Much research with children take place within schools or the children's homes. In general, most of the children stressed that questionnaires should be administered by outsiders, not teachers, to avoid influence and censorship. For example, Children's behaviour in schools is very much affected by the expectations and customs of that institution, which shape how they perceive an external researcher or consultant.[49] Virginia Morrow states that outsiders are often treated like teachers (e.g., being called Sir or Miss) and communication pattern in the classroom (e.g., putting hands up to be 'allowed' to speak). On the other hand, a researcher may be welcomed just because they are not a teacher.[50] Edward and Pam argue that children will attribute some form of role to researchers rather than none.[51] Although

interviews with children in their own homes and other venues are not uncommon, it is not easy to locate reports of children being asked or volunteering their views on that. With regard to decisions in their everyday lives, it seems most children feel more listened to at home than at school,[52] though there are exceptions.

4.5. Issues with Reference to Qualitative & Quantitative Approach

The principle methodological issue associated with the above mentioned approaches is the differences in their methodological rules which carry the researcher's direction into dissimilar methods.[53] In quantitative research, it is recommended to point out hypotheses and procedures in advance and in some forms of qualitative research, procedural flexibility and openness to the emergence of new questions are recommended. In qualitative research, the researcher's reflexivity is a necessary element of good work whereas in quantitative researcher, reflexivity is inappropriate.[54]

These are some different sets of methodological rules of both approaches undertaking research on "children at risk," the researchers encounter problems in selecting the approach of study, whether to employ qualitative or quantitative method. A majority of the children find it difficult to read, write or communicate[55] and it becomes difficult to make use of quantitative method in data collection. Therefore, qualitative research is gaining momentum in the children at risk study. This does not mean the total negligence of quantitative approach. In the counselling and psychotherapy research, there are contemplation to integrate methodological pluralism. John McLeod elucidates that Pluralism in this context means, "willingness to employ either or both qualitative and quantitative methods in research studies, with the choice of method being determined by the research question and purpose."[56]

4.6. Issue in the Application of Multi-measures Tools

This multi-method, multidimensional often makes interpretation of results more difficult. To avoid such issues in certain researches, there is often more to be gained by measuring one or two constructs well than measuring several constructs with different modalities for each. The Fundamental reality concerning measurement is that before one constructs a theory, the initial importance is that it should be possible for the researcher to measure and explain things with reasonable accuracy.[57] Therefore, in the process of selecting a measurement the researcher must be certain that he/she is undertaking the right approach and the collection of data is relevant for the research problem.

4.7. Issue of Sampling in Research of Children at Risk

An unbiased sample is another crucial issue in sampling. When the sample is biased, the data obtained may not specify the viewpoint of the population. Using proper sampling strategy is one way to obtain representative sample which is unbiased by the preferences of the person selecting the sample.[58] Therefore, to decide what type of sampling should be employed in particular research is essential. Another methodological issue in sampling is the selection of a sample size. The larger the sample size, the smaller the error will be in estimating the characteristics of the whole population. In other words, generalizations about the population are more convincing when there is a well-drawn sample. Regarding this viewpoint Joseph George indicates, "an ideal sample size depends on the size of the population and the nature of the study. A small size is not encouraged, as it does not depict the representative character of the population. A fairly large sample is encouraged in order to maintain and argue the validity and the accuracy of the findings."[59] Thus the sample should not be too large that it becomes unmanageable and too expensive.

5. Implications for Doing Pastoral Counselling Research

Several years ago, Carl Rogers surveyed the therapy scene and concluded that "psychotherapy at the present time is in a state of chaos." What Roger was witnessing was the virtual explosion of new theories and techniques that came on the heels of years of theoretical orthodoxy (mostly psychoanalytic theory). The present is a period in which the most diverse methods are used and in which the most divergent explanations are given for a single event."[60] It is in this impression that the similar phenomenon is occurring currently in the empirical study of counselling and therapy, i.e., in counselling research. This section of the paper is focused to highlight some of the methodological issues in pastoral counselling research specifically referring to the Indian context.

5.1. Culture and Counselling: Research Fields

Values and value conflicts in the counselling relationship often can be understood within the context of differing world views, or ways that people see the world. An individual's world view is influenced by culture and is the source of that person's values, beliefs, opinions, and assumptions.[61] World views affect how people think, make decisions, act, and interpret events. Values of cultures vary in how they relate to nature, time, social relations, activity, and collectivism versus individualism, among other dimensions. When a researcher and a sample (population) are from different cultural backgrounds, they may hold differing world views, some studies can lead to misinterpretations, misunderstandings, and conflicts. This mismatching can, in turn, lead to sample's dropping out of counselling or terminating prematurely.[62]

The term multicultural counselling research has grown from analysing how specifically ethnic minorities have under used mental health services to include how other categories of diversity in human beings such as age, gender, class, sexuality and so on is connected to the use of mental health services. Criticism towards traditional method include the following points: (i) it

is too individualistic (ii) it is based on a language that can be excluding to those who do not master that language or the beliefs that the language is built on; the discourse can be excluding (iii) socio-political analysis of the counsellors' context has not been addressed enough. They, as everybody else, are not immune to bias.[63]

Indigenous counselling research is a third field that is not as established as cross-cultural or multicultural counselling but equally relevant. Hwang writes that indigenous psychology comes from the resistance towards western psychology and western paradigms and solutions. Research about indigenous psychology is therefore a reaction towards the Western hegemony and a solution towards finding contextual methods or adaptations.[64] Indian psychology is on the rise and it offers a counterpoint on consciousness, self, mind-control and self-realization to that of the Western psychology.[65]

5.2. Multidisciplinary Approach in Theological Education

Multi-disciplinary nature of the research is one of the critical issues in pastoral counselling. The implications are both conceptual and practical.[66] Researchers from various disciplines have successfully attempted to incorporate various methodologies and related methods. For example, Indian researchers indicate academic freedom and innovative ways of studying various subjects in Religion – related subjects. But some of these methodologies are rather new and provocatively challenging.[67]

According to Joseph George, the major concern is to develop a pastoral theological methodology that holds the entire work with logic and coherence instead of keeping insights from Religion and Theology on the one side, and Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology and Social work on the other will make the research a problematic and difficult one.[68] His dissertation is on 'an Investigation into the Use and Discussion of Religious Rituals in Pastoral Psychotherapy,' for which he developed 'critical dialogical correlation' method as his pastoral

theological methodology and adopted insights from Paul Tillich (Correlational) and David Tracy (Analogical Imagination) as they employed similar methodology in understanding faith to make it relevant and contextual. Consequently, a correlational method facilitates mutual interaction between disciplines, particularly between Religion and Science for integrating various insights and viewpoints.[69]

5.3. Correlational and Field Research: A Gap between Research and Practice

Most of the counselling research reasonably has relied on correlational methods where ongoing processes are observed but not manipulated. Unfortunately, correlational methods lack the power to evaluate the causal efficacy of various techniques and have not been helpful in improving counselling research. But the critical dialogical method emphasises the ways in which social reality is reproduced through discourse embedded within relations of power and political, economic, cultural and other factors.[70] Critical dialogical approaches support efforts that seek to increase possibilities for social change by enacting dialogue as means to illuminate and problematize the systemic causes of injustices.[71] Using this method, the researcher begins by defining phenomenon then creates or brings about events which will manifest the phenomenon of interest. Because the researcher creates the events, he/she rigorously controls their occurrences so that error and doubt are minimized and the phenomenon of interest is observed and measured.[72] However, perhaps more surprising is that analogue research and practice (field research) are often described as opposing domains.[73]

It has often been stated that the laboratory study is decisive in scientific method and that the less precise and less controlled methods of field observation are merely preludes to really scientific study. The Laboratory may permit exploration of variables and may suggest things about people and methods, while critical dialogical correlation theory encompasses a range

of perspectives and positionalities, they share a commitment to exposing, illuminating, and/or transforming how injustices are socially perpetuated[74] and field research clarifies the frame to provide the bases of life conditions about people.

5.4. Glocalisation[75] and Translation: Disembedding and Embedding

Ideas and practices are embedded in a context with its own set of values and understandings. Once an idea is moved to another context, "…it can be as short as the distance between the office and the factory" the idea has changed. It is pulled, disembedded from its context, which means that ideas that move are never the same. They embed into something new, into a local translation.[76] This has been a vital research issue which researchers face now and then.

Hence, another prevalent word in this theoretical framework is Translation. When ideas move and change context they must be translated, adapted to the new context to survive. This problem occurs and come across on the way in collection of samples from another language and ethnical group. In order to avoid analysing the shift of ideas as pure relocation and imitation, the receivers of ideas can be seen as active agents and both movers and transformers.[77] For ideas to survive the change of context, they must land in the hands of active agents. The degree of engagement is affected by several variables. This construct is focused on the process of change and focuses amongst other things, on how the receivers interpret the idea and how they work with it.

5.5. Investigating Styles in Counselling Research

This section deals with different types of research strategies used in counselling and provide a system for categorizing such strategies. Kiesler makes the point that the counselling researcher must be a "logician of science." That means the logic of the different strategies or styles and not nuances of statistical–experimental design, shall be examined.[78]

Counselling research may be usefully organized along two dimensions. The first dimension reflects the degree to which the researcher controls/manipulates the variable(s). This dimension is most relevant to issues of internal validity. Therefore, this type of research shall be dichotomized as either manipulative or non-manipulative. The second dimension reflects the setting in which the research is conducted. This dimension is most relevant to external validity or generalizability.[79] In general, research that occurs in the field situation is more likely to be generalizable to the population of interest than is that performed in the laboratory. So, this statement assumes that the "naturalness" of the setting critically affects generalizability.

5.6. Research that "Makes a Difference"

It is vital to see research that makes a difference (relevant) both in participant and researcher life. Krumboltz emphasised that all counselling research should have a "test of relevance" applied to it. That is, research should be done as whether it affected counselling practice in a clear direct way. As an example of non-relevant research, Krumboltz mentioned studies of how participants affect counsellors. Since the people we wish to affect in our practice are clients, he reasoned, the research should employ only client factors as the dependent variables.[80]

Couple of factors that argue against the utility of this concept, firstly many current proponents of 'relevance' often make the corresponding suggestion that methodology needs to be loosened, e.g., made more qualitative and subjective. That is, relevance so defined is a two-sided affair. Results of it are not relevant to anything if the empirical efforts generating them to have little internal validity.[81] The second factor, has to do with the meaning of the concept. The point in regard to this second factor is that meaning of the concept of relevance needs to be expanded to include the notion of indirect relevance, i.e., no research can account for very many of the complex interactions existing in nature. Thus, even the most practical findings would produce

disturbingly low 'hit rates' (levels) if applied directly to the real world of counselling.[82] Thus, it is understood that research on the activity of counselling should indeed be relevant, i.e., capable of affecting what counsellors do with clients. At the same time, it is unrealistic and unhelpful to create a standard wherein counselling research would need to be directly relevant to practice, as advocates of relevance research seem to propose.

Conclusion

Researching children's lives remains at an exploratory stage. Several factors need to be taken into account when devising an appropriate methodology: the research question, age, gender and ethnicity of the children, the setting and context of the research. Researchers, conducting research with children at risk, have developed new and adapted old social research methods and tools to fit the aims and objectives of their studies and the characteristics and needs of the research participants. However, the disadvantage and limits of, as well as the reasons for, using innovative/ traditional methods and techniques with young children might need to be reflexively and critically approached. Considering these approaches, the research with children at risk in which children's perspectives are sought can give valuable information and contribute to future research, policy, individual situations and the education system, though this is a delicate matter that raises many methodological and ethical questions. Balance between methodological issues and ethical considerations, for instance, dilemmas that one faces when doing research with children at risk is much awaited. This review is to encourage researchers to reflect upon the research methods and approaches that they use with young children, and the most appropriate way in which to apply them, in order to, as far as possible, diminish their drawbacks and maximize their benefits.

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The Woman said, "The Serpent Tricked Me, and I Ate" – A Political Reading of the Fall Narrative in Genesis 3

Bishakh Dutta*

Introduction

Genesis 1-11 contains the most fascinating and insightful stories in the Bible. Over the ages these narrative stories have captivated attention of the people, because of its style of presentation and significant relevance for present day. The narrative of human fall (Gen 3) belongs to this heritage of Israel's primeval historical narrative. In constructing primeval history of his people, the author places this narrative right after the creation account. The narrative introduces the Snake to be the driving force behind human rebellion. As the result of rebellious act (3:6-7), God's judgment and punishment (3:8-19) comes upon them. Finally, expulsion of human from the garden of Eden (3:20-24) culminates the narrative. Human desire to be like God has been seen as disruption in continuance of God's rule in the world. However, both historical and theological interests of the text concern the way in which God is portrayed as supreme ruler within the larger context of the primeval history of Israel. Therefore, how does this idea of God consolidate them towards faith and practice in their

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life as a nation? Are there any political dimensions of the narrative which can be the responsible factors in shaping their political identity as nation?

1. Essentials in Reading the Old Testament Narrative

The Old Testament (hereafter OT will be used) makes up 75% of the Bible and 40% of the OT consists of narrative.[1] As we see that the OT books are plenteous with different types of narrative,[2] it is necessary to analyze them in terms of its genre,[3] the dynamics of narrative plot[4] and style of the narrative[5] in order to understand them. From about 20th century onwards there has been a growing interest of recognizing and analyzing the Bible as literature. There has been also recognition of the OT as the collection of literary text in similarity with other literature.[6] However, the sole aim of biblical literature is to seek attention of its readers employing several devices in order to make the message heard. In so doing, the author influences readers to believe in God and in turn they might remain faithful to God.[7] So reading the literature is basically a dialogue between reader and text.[8] It is reciprocal yet a complex process of communication. The writers of biblical text are also concerned with theological reality of their life and faith. In order to make communication effective, they employ the best intellectual data of the time, utilizing them to yield fresh insight.[9] Thus, power of narrative stories becomes irresistibly persuasive. It makes impact on its readers and the intention is to influence them to accept its views.[10] The biblical text builds bridge between the author and reader, communicating God's acts in the human history. Dale Patrick and Allen Scult rightly observe,

> *Any characterization of biblical narrative which is to be at all faithful to the intent of the authors must begin with their conception of God's activity in the world. It is clear that they thought they were communicating the word of God and as such their own words must somehow imitate his. Whatever they thought he was doing through his worldly inventions contained in oral and written traditions on which their work was based must be their purpose as well in the narrative they composed for future generations.*[11]

Thus, narratives are treasurable literature in the OT,[12] because they portray so vividly God's involvement in the affairs of the world and illustrate divine principles for a better reality.

1.1. On Reading the Old Testament Narrative Politically

Can one read the Bible politically? It has been one of the most crucial questions faced by the biblical interpreters who seek to read the scripture politically. The issue is whether the Bible can speak politically or its message is only for the Church and Mission. Many would seek to defend the view that the biblical message has nothing to do with politics. But the unavoidable fact is that many of the OT narratives are directly concerned with the ordering of Israel's political affairs, the formulation of legal and religious policies, the responsibilities of rulers and the common people, etc.[13] Again there are biblical stories that express the freedom and purpose of God and human freedom to obey God or not.[14] In the OT narrative, therefore, we see that God reveals his purposes and fulfills them through human intervention, but its success always requires divine approval.[15] However, the political dimensions of the message of the Bible have attracted the attention of many of the biblical interpreters in recent times by rediscovering the various biblical politics. In present times many of the contextual readers of the Bible have taken up the attempt of political interpretation or political implication of the scripture using political hermeneutics as prerequisite for political reading.[16] Richard Bauckham points that there is difficulty in the study comparing between the political societies of biblical times and the political understanding of present modern societies.[17] He further says,

> *In view of this complexity, some may be tempted to dismiss the political relevance of the OT altogether. But there is a good reason for not doing so ... and it is primarily the character of God and his purposes for human life which are expressed in the political*

> *material of the OT. They are expressed in forms of appropriate to the specific conditions of OT… both the specific cultural contexts of the nation living in that time and place, and also the specific salvation-historical context of the national people of God, ...*[18]

Paul R. Abrahamson rightly comments that the OT presents political dimension of reality, because the final text derived from the compilation of collected sources from several oral and written traditions as early as periods of David and Solomon.[19] Thus, many of the OT narratives are enriched with royal interpretation of the history.

2. Why Political Reading of Genesis 3

Let us keep aside scholarly debate and arguments of form criticism, whether the narrative displays the character of myth or saga in its proper sense. In fact, there are elements of Near Eastern myths in the fall narrative. There are, however, socio-political and religious elements embedded in the myths of the ancient world. Myth presents in a figurative and highly imaginative manner the principles of organizing one's socio-political and religious life in the community. If not directly, it deals with political issues of a nation implicitly. For example, in ancient Mesopotamia, the creation epic *Enuma Elish*, has been recited each New Year at Babylon, and celebrated the progress of the cosmos from primeval anarchy to government by the kingship of *Marduk*. Thus, it bears a political significance of the rule of Marduk.

Dhyanchand Carr rightly points that when we see the descriptions of the narratives are mythical in nature, which does not mean they are untrue. The author wants to make some affirmations concerning God and his intention for creation. Therefore, author takes story form to convey the message.[20] So, we can find some sort of political aspects embedded in the narratives of primeval history. J. G. McConville also feels it is impossible to understand Old Testament political theology

without considering the primary history of Genesis, because it establishes relationship between Israel and creation, and Israel and other nations.[21] Although Genesis 3 is not dealing with any political issue directly, it would be fascinating to seek political dimension of the narrative that is enriched with mythical elements.[22] The following discussions do not intend to address any political issues that are present in the modern society; rather our venture is to discover political dimensions embedded in the narrative of fall.

3. The Analysis of the Fall Narrative

The narrative of Genesis chapter 3 is one of the richest literary pieces ever written, with insightful reflection on realities of human life on this planet. By setting forth the act of human rebellion, the author describes the supreme rule of God in his created realm. It also introduces the fact that rebelliousness leads towards divine judgment. After being convinced by Snake's craftiness (3:1-6a), the first woman convinces her man too in violating the prohibition of God (3:6b-7). As a result, the entire creation faces the catastrophic effect (3:8-19). However, we need to understand the narrative within the broader arena of prehistoric narrative or primeval history (Gen 1-11).

3.1. Fall Narrative in the Primeval History of Genesis 1-11

In the primeval history, we find a series of narrative pieces woven together in order to proclaim the supremacy of God – the creation narratives (1:1-2:4a; 2:4b-25); the fall narrative (3:1-24); the story of Cain and Abel (4:1-26); the flood narrative (6:9-8:22); and the Story of Tower of Babel (11:1-9). Although there is compositional unity found in the prehistoric narrative as whole, these narratives are derived from different traditional sources originated in ancient Israel. The conventional understanding concerning the source materials of these chapters of Genesis is of two different traditions, commonly known as Yahwist (usually called as J writer) and Priestly (usually called as P writer). The

Yahwist material can be traced in Gen 2-3; 4; 11:1-9, and in some parts of the flood narrative and the genealogies. The story of Israel's beginning as a nation from the creation of the world to the entrance into Canaan was composed by Yahwist in Judah ca. 960-930 BCE, during the reign of Solomon.[23] The Priestly material is found in Gen 1:1-2:4a, parts of the flood narrative and elements of genealogies.[24] The contribution of priestly writer is found in Genesis through Numbers. Priestly writer wrote in the late exilic or early restoration periods, ca. 550-450 BCE supplementing the old traditions of Yahwist.[25] However, the fall narrative of Genesis 3 belongs to the work of Yahwist within the larger setting of primeval history, which is 'a universal setting for what is to be the early history of one particular people.'[26] The purpose of the Yahwist is not to tell the story simply, rather to retrace and record a great experience of the people as nation. Therefore, our narrative expresses both historical and theological aspects of the life and experience of a particular nation.

3.2. Historical-Theological Consideration

This portion (3:1-24) belongs to the heritage of Yahwist's magnificent work, which is popularly called as 'Paradise Tale'[27] or the story of 'the Garden of Eden'[28] (2:4b-3:24). The narrative expresses insightful theological presupposition of Yahwist concerning the relationship between the world of Creation of and humanity. Although Rolf Rendtorff denies the existence of any source documents in the Pentateuch, preferring the traditio-historical approach,[29] most of the biblical scholars[30] following Julius Wellhaussen, hold the view that major portion of the book of Genesis derives from Yahwist. The fall narrative is an attempt to bring forth the prehistory of their nation. It explicates political and nationalistic claim of their socio-political origin as a nation and identity as God's chosen people. In order to build a background of their history, author makes use of popular and traditional materials. John Skinner rightly points out that in filling up the prehistoric background of their national history the

author has been largely dependent upon the traditions circulating among the nations of ancient world (especially Mesopotamia).[31] The Mesopotamian *Epics of Gilgamesh* and *Adapa*, in which we can find several parallels to the materials of Genesis, probably serve as the raw material for the present narrative.[32] The narrative handles and utilizes them in a peculiarly theological way.[33] The *Epic of Gilgamesh* with its central emphasis on human's quest for immortality provides an opportunity for Yahwist to portray the supreme rule of God.

One significant point, however, is to be noted that the writers of the OT, indeed use skillfully the language of myth (or saga)[34] from surrounding cultures expressing mythical motifs in their narratives. Werner H. Schmidt states that when the OT takes over mythic representations; it changes these and integrates them with its own faith and intellectual outlook.[35] That is where lies the theological foundation of biblical writers, as in the case of Yahwist. The author interprets (possibly theologizes) the older traditions in accordance with the need of the political and religious context (history) of his time. Concerning theological issues pertaining to the work of Yahwist, Gerhard von Rad writes,

> *It is surely not unprofitable to inquire after the divine fact which formed the background against which the Yahwist plotted his entire work. Ancient Israel considered God's speaking and acting for man's salvation as confined to the sacred institutions, particularly to the narrower cultic sphere of sacrifice and divine decision… The Yahwist, however, considers God's activity in a fundamentally different way… He sees God's leading in the facts of history as well as in the quiet course of a human life, in the sacred things... The reader will not find it hard to read the answer from the Yahwist's work. This narrative displays boundless confidence in the nearness of Yahweh, in the immediacy of his rule and in the possibility of speaking of all this, in the simplest possible terms, in the new religious language.*[36]

In his article, Hans Walter Wolf comments concerning the work of Yahwist that the narrative with its magnificent style and theology, has determined to a great extent the outline and theme of the present-day Pentateuch, the *Torah*, as the basic Canon.[37] *YHWH-Elohim*, God of Israel, who intervenes in the history, is not only the creator, but also the supreme ruler in Yahwistic theology, and this has been set in comparison with *Marduk*, the god-king, who is responsible for life and order in Babylonian myth.

3.3. Literary-Rhetorical Consideration

The narrative as literary form derives basically from oral tradition(s) which possibly rests on any bedrock of historical fact.[38] When a simple oral tradition comes into the hands of an author, then it goes through a complex process of literary composition and finally reaches to be a written text. In other words, written narratives must employ different literary and rhetorical techniques appropriate to the situation. Thus, when it is written it becomes more complicated,[39] and demands exploration for understanding. For narrative stories, the narrative plot plays a dynamic role in developing the narrative tension within the narrative. Plots move 'like an arc from a situation of stability, through a process of tension (conflict or destabilization), to a new situation of stability.'[40] The plot of a narrative is the sequence of events that shape or organize a narrative, with every event causing or affecting each other. It is how narrative is arranged into a pattern of tension and resolution for rhetorical purpose.

3.3.1. The Dynamics of Plot within the Narrative

Our narrative portion begins with a circumstantial clause that opens 'a new episode,'[41] describing the character of the snake. With 'dramatic coherence'[42] the introduction of the snake as 'more crafty' significantly portrays the background for further narration of the event. The snake is simply called *nāḥāš* (Snake or Serpent),[43] which is a common Hebrew term for a snake (cf. Num

21:7-9; Deut 8:15; Prov 23:32).[44] Although the common term is used, the expression, "more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made" expresses the principal nature of the snake.[45] The term, *'ārûm* (crafty)[46] appears only in this instance of Genesis, but it is repeatedly used in Proverbs, with the positive sense, 'prudent', 'shrewd', and 'clever.'[47] Although many scholars observe a connection with wisdom tradition[48] in positive sense,[49] representation of the snake as 'crafty' can be taken as negative here.[50] Victor P. Hamilton suggests that one can take 'crafty' as an appropriate description of the snake, because of its use of 'a strategy of prudence' when snake engages the woman in dialogue.[51] He further points that it is an attempt on the part of the Snake to create in woman's mind the impression that God is 'spiteful, mean, obsessively jealous, and self-protective.'[52] This provokes her to obey the Snake and neglect God's directives (3:3). Thus, the snake creates misperception about the prohibition of God. John Skinner similarly suggests that the sense of evil is intended by characterizing the snake and the sense is maintained throughout the narrative.[53] Further in the dialogue with her, the role of snake is made more explicit. An ambition for being like God (or being God) is born into the deep of the woman's heart (3:5), and we see then, Gen 3:6 explicitly depicts the influenced state of the woman in three expressions – 'was good for food'; 'was a delight to the eyes'; and 'to be desired to make one wise.' It illustrates the power of craftiness or cunningness. We see here narrative plot initiates the process of tension in the narrative. Although we do not find snake to tell her to disobey God in literal sense, it is explicitly understandable that she has been misled and influenced.[54] It is more explicit when she says, "the Serpent tricked me and I ate" (3:13). The causative sense of *Hiphil* form of the verb *nāšā'* (to lift up/carry)[55] deepens the narrative tension expressing the act of deception.[56] Now, she follows snake's suggestion instead of giving importance to the divine directive and prohibition. Further, Eve's act of disobedience is expressed by terminology –

'delight' (*ta'ăwāh*) and 'desirable' (*ḥamad*). Both the terms can be connected with the verb, *ḥamad* (to desire/to covet)[57] used in the Ten Commandments (cf. Deut 5:21; Exod 20:17).[58] Therefore, her covetousness for the desirable fruits impels narrative plot to move into a deeper level establishing strong narrative tension, which needs divine intervention in order to restore the divine authority over creation. The narrative further describes in a dramatic presentation,[59] the divine judgment and expulsion as the result of the act of disobedience. In this way, narrative plot develops its dynamic move from conflict to resolution within the narrative.

3.3.2. Rhetorical Effect of Narrative Tension

The biblical narrative stories have reached us in textual form as the result of long and complex process of the transmission of the older traditions existed orally for generations, as epics or legends, before being written down. Once it is written down, we can observe the intentions of the author to persuade his readers[60] in order to convince them to obey God's precepts.[61] Thus, the narrative can have significant rhetorical effect upon the mind of the readers. This helps readers to reflect upon their lives in the given socio-political context.

The disobedience narrative section[62] in Gen 3:1-7 sets the platform for narrating the divine judgment and punishment (Gen 3:8-24), which is a significant key concept of human fall found in vv 14-19 in a poetic form. Walter Brueggemann rightly points out that the purpose of the human creation is to live in God's world, with God's other creatures, on God's terms.[63] He further comments that this text is treated frequently as an explanation of how evil came into the world.[64] But the narrative does not make much interest for the origin of evil[65] or the disobedience of human;[66] rather it highlights the importance of obedience. In other words, the focus of the narrative is not upon sin or evil or death or fall,[67] rather it is focused rhetorically on loyalty of human in obedience to God's rule. Analyzing the action sequences in the narratives of Gen 2-3, Robert C. Culley interestingly points that it is probably

best to consider the provocation of the snake as a component of the action sequence of the narrative.[68] The narrative tension – on one hand, an alternative view of eating the fruit (3:4-5) has made this act possible,[69] and on the other, God's placement of humans in the garden indicates that they would maintain loyalty in obedience to God's command.[70] In fact, the rebellious act is resultant of their heart's desire, to be like God is a serious matter. In effect, it is as serious as the breaking of the covenant in the OT.

4. Discovering Political Dimensions of the Fall Narrative

We must see the prehistory (Gen 1-11) as more than a mere introduction to the history of Israelite people. It expresses their self-portrayal in relation to the world-view. Israelites as a nation living amidst other nations affirm their socio-political identity professing their faith in *YHWH-Elohim*, who has been the source of their unity. In ancient world people groups are identified generally by the land that they possess and with their deities whom they worship. In the face of incessant encounter with different nations (Philistines, Amalekites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, etc.), they are to stand as political entity. Therefore, the concept of theocracy has been an important part of their living as people of God (cf. Exod 19:6).[71] However, when the author begins writing their national history, it begins describing the creation of humankind (2:4b-25)[72] as more earth-centric[73] than universalistic expression of Priestly writer (1:1-2:4a). However, history of a nation cannot be understood without its political aspects. Thus, our narrative is not only enriched with historical-theological concerns, but also implanted with political dimensions.

4.1. A Rebellion Against the Rule of God – Destabilizing Element

The present narrative describes us reliably the beginning of a rebellion within God's ordered world. Many scholars term it as the mysterious origin of evil, while several scholars suggest this

narrative as description of the entrance of sin into God's perfect world presented in terms of cosmic conflict.[74] Without trivializing those views, we also can see it as the first instance of human rebellion against God's rule. The narrative informs us the fact the first woman is influenced by the snake, which is also a creature (3:1); not coming from outside of creation. Then, what can be said of the snake? A very short yet powerful role it plays. It instigates rebellion, and that has been actualized in the 'mutiny of the first couple.'[75] They have been tempted and succumbed to the will of the snake, in lieu of being under the will of God. In this connection, Claus Wstermann identifies the snake,

> *The serpent is nothing more than the narrative symbol of this power of temptation, which mysteriously speaks through the mouth of one of God's creatures. The serpent does not represent either a mythical being or the devil. It does not exist as a speaking, tempting force outside this scene.*[76]

The crafty role of the serpent is the archetypal force that misleads people in rebellion from being loyal to God in the history of Israel. There have been several negative forces that influence Israelites to become wayward (Num 25:3-5; Judges 2:12-13; 1 Sam 12:10; 1 Kings 16:30-33), and it has been serious socio-political issue in the context of being united as people of *YHWH* (1 Kings 12:16ff). Thus, the image of the snake can be compared with the anti-theocratic force that causes disruption in the orderly realm of God by seeding rebellion within.

4.2. The Fall of Human or The Fall of Eden? – Disloyal Living

In Gen 2:15-24, however, the author specifies the point by stating the purpose for God's putting the man there. An important point is to be noted from verse 15 that the Hebrew verb used here is *nûaḥ* (to rest)[77] for "put", unlike verse 8, where the author uses a common Hebrew term, *śûm* for "put". We also find that the author uses this term (*nûaḥ*) elsewhere reserving for two special uses

– God's 'rest' or 'security' given to human beings (Gen 19:16; Deut 3:20; 12:10; 25:19), and the 'dedication' of something in the presence of the Lord (Exod 16:33-34; Lev 16:23; Num 17:4; Deut 26:4, 10). It is preferable to take earlier connotation here (2:15). Therefore, man has been placed into the garden where he can enjoy rest and security along with his partner. So, the humanity is under the blissful environment,[78] as long as they are under God's rule in obedience. Once there is denial to be under God's rule, there follows catastrophic consequences. It marks a beginning of the continuous impact upon humanity, which has been highlighted throughout the book – the first murder by Cain (4:1-10), Cain's descendant Lamech boasted about his murderous acts (4:23-24), increase of wickedness of humankind (6:5), and so on.[79] Thus, the Humanity has been fallen (cf. Rom 3:23; 5:12, 18; 2 Cor 11:3).

Besides the fall of human, can we think of the fall of Eden? It seems to be complicated, but is open for our discussion. We need to consider now the purpose of God planting a garden for human from the perspective of God's rule. It is difficult to discern whether 'garden in Eden' (2:8) indicates the name of a country or 'garden of Eden' (2:15; 3:23) identifies a name of the garden.[80] Our narrative, however, describes it as a place prepared for humans to live in; a territory given to humans. We see here a glimpse of the fact that beautiful gardens used to be laid out only by great kings in the ancient orient.[81] So, then, God prepares a perfect place, Eden for them. Taking into account the meaning of Eden as 'blissful' or 'delight,'[82] the garden may not be understood as the dwelling place of God at all, in the narrower sense, rather the garden has been planned only for human and is to be understood as 'a gift of God's gracious care for the human he created.'[83] God provides them all (provision and protection) that they need to survive in the land. Therefore, Eden becomes a perfect example of an ideal state in the world, where they can even have fellowship with their God (3:8). Eden is a place of beauty, harmony and order.[84] Rex Mason correctly points that the idea of Eden could be understood in some

traditions as depicting an original blissful and ideal state of the world as God meant it to be (cf. Ezek 36:35).[85] Now, being in the garden signifies responsible living of humans by which blissful and ideal state would be kept intact. The supreme rule of God must be obeyed with reverence. Unfortunately, we see a setback, a rebellion, an act of disobedience. Once the care taker of the garden falls, then, the garden loses all its beauty. In similar manner, the history of Israel experiences the fall as nation (also the Promised Land) loosing blissful rule of God.

4.3. Reaffirming the Supreme Rule of YHWH – Ruler-Judge Model

The story of Paradise (Gen 2:4b-3:24) consists of two integral parts – the account of creation (2:4b-25), and the human fall (3:1-24). In both the parts, author focuses his narration highlighting the act of a single actor, *YHWH-Elohim*.[86] In the creation account, we have details of God's creative activity in anthropomorphic terms, and in the fall narrative God's dealing with the rebellion of humans in a way the OT envisages God as Just. God plays role of a judge here pronouncing the punishment (3:14-19) for He is the ruler of his created world. Westermann observes a pattern of 'crime-punishment' structure in the paradise story.[87] In this connection E. A. Speiser also affirms that the relationship between God and humans has been reduced to human scale.[88] It signifies that God wants a very intimate relationship with them. Andrew E. Steinmann is perhaps right when he asserts,

> *... the two humans, who had been intended for a special relationship with God and have rejected it… there is no devil to blame for it; ... is the direct result of human act of self-assertion, attempting to determine good for themselves over against the source of all that is truly good ... there are innumerable aftereffects of that desire…*[89]

Therefore, the narrative offers 'a sophisticated, sustained and intentional reflection on human destiny,'[90] that means humanity is under divine will. The narrative also expresses

Yahwistic testimony in the period of monarchial situation, when supremacy of *YHWH*, in terms of ruler of Israelites, has been under question (1 Sam 8:20) in the context of political advancement. Their experience as nation grows as they reach to a new political situation of experiencing themselves as young nation consolidated by David and Solomon. As examples, we can cite Psalm 9 – where Psalmist expresses the 'nature of God's acts of judgment in past and anticipates his own deliverance in the future. The point here is 'his anticipation is based on the conviction that God is still on the throne' (Ps 9:6-9).[91] Again the eschatological prophetic words of Isaiah (Isa 19:22-23) echo the Yahwistic theology of God's supremacy over all the nations of the earth (cf. 1 Chr 29:11-12; Ps 22:28; 45:6; 47:7-8; Lk 1:52; Col 1:16).

4.4. Envisioning a Realm that is Anti-Chaotic – Problem Fixing Step

Genesis 3 narrates us how the force of chaos works against the created order of God, which is meant to be very good (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31),[92] not tyrannical or threatening[93] for life and order. The calamity comes upon the world of creation soon after God fashioned it. The snake firmly denies the validity of the divine prohibition of eating from the tree in the middle of the garden. This sets a direct opposition to God as an authority on the subject of life and order. In discussing several symbolizing aspects of the snake in Genesis 3, Karen R. Joines points,

> *The serpent of Gen 3 represents the embodiment of a strange combination of life, wisdom, and chaos. The underlying purpose of this serpent is to deceive and to destroy mankind; consequently, it basically symbolizes chaos ... However, it uses its association with life and wisdom to realize this objective. Apparently, the original design of the serpent is that man should become immortal and thereupon throw into confusion the plan of creation.*[94]

The effects can be seen in the livelihood of man (3:18), in the realm of animals (3:14), and even in the case of childbirth (3:16).[95] In fact, the primeval chaos is back now (cf. Rom 8:20-22).[96] Mason arguably writes,

> *Yahwist shows that something goes wrong in Eden when Adam and Eve are tempted by the serpent and eat the fruit of the tree. Humankind attempted to cross the boundaries of their humanity and usurp the realm of the divine. These consequences are increasingly disruptive of relationships, their effects being more and more widely felt like ever-increasing shock waves of a nuclear chain reaction ... a disruption with terrible consequences for all. It is, in effect, a reversion to chaos from the order and purpose of creation.*[97]

Critical observation on punishment (3:14-19) shows that God initiates to restore his creation from being chaotic. Snake's head would be struck (3:15) destroying the power of death (cf. Heb 2:14; John 3:8).[98] However, Robert C. Culley's analysis of action sequences – 'wrong/wrong punished' (3:14-19) and 'difficulty/difficulty removed' (3:23-24)[99] can be preferred in understanding God's actions against the power of chaos. It is also plausible to make a connection with the Babylonian phenomenon of the New Year festival in which, through appropriate ritual activity, the power of life and creativity are renewed for the coming year, as Sigmund Mowinckel also points the festival as an act 'to ensure that the gods will again be victorious over the powers of chaos, create the world anew and bless the land.'[100] In this connection we should consider that theological tendency of Yahwist affirms the end of chaos and the establishment of a new order (cf. Gen 8:22) by God; envisioning a nation free from chaotic administration (cf. 1 Kings 5:13; Amos 3:13-15; Hos 4:1-4; Mic 3:1-3).

4.5. God's Politics of Love for Creation

The expulsion of humans (3:23-24) from the garden projects apparently God as dealing with his creation in a very hostile manner. But the narrator makes a certain point that explicates humanity is always under God's love and care, as Westermann rightly states,

> *...and making all its fruits available to them; they need suffer no want. He forbids them only to eat of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. If they eat from it, they must die; the prohibition is intended to protect them. By giving the man the command, God expects something of him. If he trusts the one who gave the command, he will adhere to it; but he is also free to act in opposition to the command. Here the narrator is portraying the incomprehensibility of human existence – that humanity goes astray, that humanity sins. This must be said of the human beings created by God: that is the way God's creatures are.*[101]

We see there is always an opportunity of grace in all these narratives of primeval history. The case of fall narrative is also not exceptional. We find the acts of divine mercy that preserve humanity from the worst consequences of their rebellion. Steinmann notes two elements of grace in the concluding verses (3:21-24). Now they can exist as independent entities, and they need provision and protection to exist, and in 3:21, God provides usable cloth as the first gracious effort for them.[102] Clothing exhibits God's continued care for human even after the fall (3:21).[103] Thus, the expulsion from Eden is to be seen as 'an act of kindness' rather than hostility, with the intention of protecting them from the danger of being deceived.[104] The history of Israel has experienced the waywardness of the people that has affected even their political life. Their disloyalty towards covenant has led them even to exiles losing their national and political identity. Yahwist's portrayal of God who hates wrong but accepts wrongdoer rays the light of hope (cf. Isa 55:7; Ezek 18:23; Prov 8:13; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Rom 5:8).

5. A Brief Reflection

The narrative is not much interested in the character of the Snake or of the tree; the point of emphasis is God's command, because God's command signifies his supreme rule. We see here birth of a desire to be like God resulting in rebellion to deny God's supremacy. The act of disobedience, further, comes into the scene in order to intensify the fact that human attempts to deny the boundaries between humanity and divinity. When we retrospect our lives in the light of the narrative, we find that there are uncountable elements of rebelliousness in our lives either in sacred or in secular spheres of living. The greed of money, power, position, immorality, and unfaithfulness are the sources of chaos, destabilizing element, which have enslaved even our ecclesial realm. Consequently, our ecclesia is often far from the concept of reign (or Kingdom) of God that Jesus has spoken about (Matt 6:9-10; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 17:21; John 3:3; cf. Rom 14:17). We, humans, project ourselves as if we are ruler of the world destroying created order. In other words, our actions depict the denial of God's supreme rule.

Conclusion

The narratives by which the primeval history of Genesis presents God's involvement in human history make it clear that God is creator and ruler, and involves himself actively in bringing everything into order. This narrative of human fall is a significant part in author's total project of prehistory of Israel. In dramatic presentation, the author narrates the story of rebellious act of human and culminates it in divine punishment. The author initiates narrative tension through developing dynamics of plot within the narrative in order to persuade his readers rhetorically. With its rich historical-theological perceptions, in the midst of the popular understanding of god and creation in Ancient West Asia, the author tries to establish the fact that God of Israel is the supreme ruler of his created world order. Therefore, God as ruler-judge takes problem fixative step of punishing the human rebellion, which is a destabilizing element in the created order. Moreover, God's salvific acts focus on disloyal living of humans with everlasting love and care.

End Notes

1 Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth – A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, 2nd ed., (Michigan: Zondervan, 1993), 73.

2 See, William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (London: Word Publishing, 1993), 261-275.

3 For comprehensive understanding on genre of a narrative, see, David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Farewell, Narrative in the Hebrew Bible (New York: Oxford University press, 1993), 1-7. Mythical or Legendary story, report, ancient list, Prophetic narrative, heroic narrative, novella etc.

4 For detail discussion on the dynamics of plot, see, Jerome T. Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative – A Guide to Interpretation* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 13-22.

5 M. Sterenberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 75-76.

6 David Jasper, "Literary Readings of the Bible" in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, ed., John Barton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 21; also see, Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narrative: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, trans., Yael Lotan (Augsburg: Fortress Press, 2001), 2-10.

7 Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narrative: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, tr., Yael Lotan (Augsburg: Fortress Press, 2001), 2.

8 Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative*, 13.

9 Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation - A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982), 14.

10 Amit, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 2.

11 Dale Patrick and Allen Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation (JSOT),* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990), 32.

12 Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 102.

13 Richard Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics – How to Read the Bible Politically* (London: SPCK, 1989), 1-3.

14 Richard Bauckham, *The Bible in the Contemporary World – Hermeneutical Ventures* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 12.
15 Bauckham, *The Bible in the Contemporary World*, 12.
16 Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics*, 1.
17 Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics,* 1.
18 Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics,* 6.
19 Paul R. Abrahamson, *Politics in the Bible* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 1-2.
20 Dhyanchand Carr, *Reading the Bible with New Eyes* (Yangon: The British and Foreign Bible Society, 2015), 24.
21 J. G. McConville, *God and Earthly Power: An Old Testament Political Theology Genesis-Kings* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2006), 30.
22 John Skinner, *Genesis (ICC)* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1980), xii. He categorized this as explanatory myths or etiological myths – those which accounts for some familiar fact of experience by a story of the olden times.
23 Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible - A Socio-literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 137; Werner H. Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction,* translated by Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: ST PAULS, 2020), 57.
24 Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 14.
25 Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 140.
26 E. A. Speiser, *Genesis-The Anchor Bible (AB)*, eds., William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 1, (New York: Doubleday, 1962), Liii.
27 George W. Coats entitles as 'Paradise Tale'; G. von Rad entitles as 'The Yahwistic Story of Paradise.'
28 E. A. Speiser entitles as 'the story of Eden'; Gordon J. Wenham entitles as 'The Garden of Eden'; Andrew E. Steinmann and others also.
29 His opinion is that the Pentateuch stories grew as the result of retelling of the stories and linked together by editors. See, Rolf Rendtroff, *Das uberlieferrungsgeschichtlicche Problem des Pentateuch* as cited by Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, *Word Biblical Commentary (WBC)* (Texas: Word Book Publisher, 1987), xxviii.
30 G. von Rad, E. A. Speiser, G. J. Wenhan, N. Lohfink, J. van Seters, G. W. Coats, R. N. Whybray, H. H. Schimid, R. Smend and others.
31 Skinner, *Genesis*, x; Speiser, *Genesis-The Anchor Bible*, Liii-Lvii.
32 Donald E. Gowan, *From Eden to Babel: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 1-11(ITC)*, eds., F. C. Holmgren and G. A. F. Knight (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 34; Speiser, *Genesis*, 27.

33 Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 12.
34 For detail discussions on Saga, see, George W. Coats, *Genesis: With an Introduction to Narrative Literature, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature (FOTL)*, vol. 1, eds., Rolf Knierim and Gene M. Tucker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 1ff.
35 Schmidt, *Old Testament*, 72.
36 Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis – A Commentary Old Testament Library (OTL)*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 29-30.
37 Hans Walter Wolff, "The Kerygma of Yahwist" in *Interpretation*, 132.
38 Skinner, *Genesis*, vi.
39 Amit, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 6.
40 Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative*, 14.
41 Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 72. "Episode" is also called as "scene" in narrative criticism.
42 Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 40.
43 *nāḥāš* if it is to be connected with the verb *nahas*, 'to practice divination', 'observe sign' (Gen 30:27; 44:5, 15; Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10). The related noun *nāḥāš* means divination (Num 23:23; 24:1). Near eastern divination formulae frequently include procedures involving a snake. See, K. R. Joines, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament* (Haddon field, NJ: Haddonfield House, 1974), 2-3, 22. cited by Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17 New International Commentary on Old Testament (NICOT)* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 187.
44 Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 187.
45 It is more probable that behind the sober description of the serpent as a mere creature of YHWH, there was an earlier form of the legend in which he figured as a god or a demon. See, John Skinner, *Genesis*, 72.
46 The term *'ārûm* means, to be cunning, be crafty, be deceptive. The root, *'rm* is attested in Aram., and Syr. shrewd, while, the LXX translates in Gen. 3:1, thoughtful or wise, both negative and positive meaning. See, Alex T. Luc, "*'rm*", in The *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 3, ed., Willem A. VanGemeren (UK: Paternoster Publishing, 1996), 539-541.
47 Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 187.
48 John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative – A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 103.
49 Luc, "*'rm*", in the *New International Dictionary,* 541.
50 Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 187.

51 Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 188.

52 Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 188.

53 Skinner, *Genesis*, 71.

54 Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 88.

55 Helmer Ringgren, "*nš'"* in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* eds., G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans., Douglas W. Stott, vol. 10, (UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 54.

56 Eugene Carpenter and Michael A. Grisanti, "*nš'* " in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 3, ed., Willem A. VanGemeren (UK: Paternoster Publishing, 1996), 183.

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58 Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 190; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 75.

59 Dramatic scenes are explained in detail in Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 44-50.

60 For Both original reader and implied reader. For detail discussions on reader(s), see, Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987).

61 Amit, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 3.

62 Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 40.

63 Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 40.

64 Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 41.

65 Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 41.

66 Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 103.

67 Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 41.

68 Robert C. Culley, "Action Sequences in Genesis 2-3" in *Semeia*, Jan, 1 (1980): 28.

69 Culley, "Action Sequences in Genesis 2-3", 28

70 Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 44.

71 Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* (Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 91-92.

72 Rex Mason, *Propaganda and Subversion in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1997), 26.

73 G. von Rad, *Genesis – A Commentary,* 76; Speiser, *Genesis*, xxvii.

74 Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture – Finding our Place in the Biblical Story*, 2nd ed., (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2014), 39.

75 Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 40.

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78 Westermann, *Genesis*, 22-23.

79 Andrew E. Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary (TOTC)*, vol. 1, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 29.

80 The name of the place, Eden is mentioned in Ezek 27:23 to be a place in Mesopotamia.

81 Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis – A Commentary*, 77.

82 John Goldingay, *Genesis for Everyone*, vol. 1, (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 34.

83 Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis – A Commentary*, 78.

84 Gordon J. Wenham, "Genesis" in *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament – A Book by Book Survey*, ed., Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2009), 34; Mason, *Propaganda*, 23-27.

85 Mason, *Propaganda*, 23-27.

86 The combination of both designations for God, *YHWH-Elohim* is used only in the story of Paradise and the human fall. See, Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis – A Commentary*, 77.

87 Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans., John J. Scullion SJ., (London: SPCK, 1984), 193-94.

88 Speiser, *Genesis,* xxvii.

89 Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 57.

90 Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 40.

91 Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Word Biblical Commentary – Psalms 1-50 (WBC)* 2nd ed., eds., Bruce M. Metzger, D. A. Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 118-19.

92 Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 39-40. In the text, orderly creation is affirmed by the 'approval formula', which occurs seven times (vv 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) in the first chapter. In the first six occurrences, we find the expression, *ki tob* (that…good), and in v 31, *wehineh tob me'od* (and behold, very good). The common Hebrew word,

tob (good) is used in all the seven instances, but, in v 31, perhaps, term, *me'od* (very) is used significantly to portray an orderly creation.

93 John Walton, Victor Matthews, and Mark Chayalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), 20.

94 Karen Randolph Joines, "The Serpent in Gen 3" in *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* (January 1, 1975), 9.

95 Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 68.

96 Wenham, "Genesis" in *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament*, 35.

97 Mason, *Propaganda*, 27-29.

98 Steinmann, *Genesis*, 68.

99 Culley, "Action Sequences in Genesis 2-3," 28-30.

100 Walter Brueggemann, "Kingship and Chaos – A Study on Tenth Century Theology" in *The Catholic Bible Quarterly (CBQ)*, vol. 33, July, 1971: 317-32. The highest royal theology appears in Egypt, there Pharaoh is the god who maintains creation – When the creator-god stands upon the primeval hill and begins his work of creation he puts order (*ma'at*) in the place of chaos. When this perfect order exists in the universe there follows a period of paradise-like bliss ... every succeeding Pharaoh was god, Horus incarnate, and as such was divinely responsible to the creator for the preservation on earth of the divinely ordained order and harmony.

101 Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, trans., David E. Green (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 22-23.

102 Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction,* 60.

103 Skinner, *Genesis,* 187. At least in the final form of the narrative; also see, Mason, *Propaganda*, 29. But for G. W. Coats clothing cannot be 'a sign of God's grace,' rather it indicates the progress of human civilization. See, Coats, *Genesis: With an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, 56.

104 Mason, *Propaganda*, 30.

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Inner and Outer Climate Change: God, Nature, and Human Transformation

Gifta Angline Kumar*

Introduction

Climate Change is a serious issue. It has scared people. Day by day its effects are increasing. Climate Change, Global Warming, Energy efficiency, Green Theology, Save Water, Save Planet are buzz words in the 21st century. Increased human activity in the name of human 'development' by means of industrialization, globalization, and consumerist economic system has contributed to global warming and change in the global climate. While climate change and climate modelling are subject to inherent uncertainties, it is clear that human activities have a powerful role in influencing the climate and the risks and scale of impacts in the future. In this context, Inner and outer climate change can be understood in which we work out in harmony with nature and its rhythms personally, the outcome of which is to preserve the nature. This is only achieved if there is a will to work out for the betterment of the environment. Hence, this paper deals with the biblical ethical response to climate change from the protestant Christian point of view.

1. Meaning of Climate Change

Climate change in simple terms can be defined as the fluctuations in temperature, precipitation, and other climatic systems of the

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earth. The case of climate change which is particularly caused by human activities can be seen from two viewpoints such as firstly it was the emission of Greenhouse Gases[1] (GHGs) and secondly, as damage to the environment.[2] Climate change also occurs due to damage inflicted on the environment. The level and scale of destruction consist of different kinds of land exploitation, deforestation, destruction of the ecosystem, and environmental pollution. The problem of this concern lies in the fact that it is irrecoverable.[3]

Climate change is regarded as one of the most difficult problems humanity has ever faced. If climate change is unchecked, we may have to face food insecurity, water shortages, mass migration, and political instability. But it is also caused by population growth, global economic inequality, and an economic system fuelled by carbon. Climate change is not a problem that can be solved by throwing a switch on the wall. Solutions will require us to address population issues, economic inequality, and to devote resources to new technologies that can free us from a dependence on fossil fuels.[4]

2. Climate Change as Climate Injustice

Climate change is an issue of injustice. The World Council of Churches (WCC) has been motivating Churches in the communion to address Climate Change. The World Council of Churches' International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held in Kingston, Jamaica, addressed that "human beings are to respect and protect creation. But greed at many levels, self-centeredness, and a belief in unlimited growth have brought exploitation and destruction to the earth and its creatures. Excessive consumption of fossil fuels and other limited resources is doing violence to the people and the planet. Climate change as a consequence of human lifestyle poses a global threat to just peace. Global warming, the rise of the sea levels, and the increasing frequency and intensity of droughts and floods affect especially the most vulnerable populations in the world."[5] Hence, victims of climate change are

the new face of the poor, the widow, and the stranger that are especially loved and cared for by God (Deut 10:17-18). When creation is threatened in this way, churches are called to speak and act as an expression of their commitment to life, justice, and peace.

The World Council of Churches on its 10th Assembly in Busan 2013 called on WCC member churches and ecumenical organizations to insist that their respective governments look beyond national interests to be responsible towards God's creation and our common future, and urge them to safeguard and promote the basic human rights of those who are threatened by the effects of climate change.[6] In a groaning world, the Gospel calls for combining ecological sustainability with social justice. Eco-justice is the well-being and holistic growth of the entire earth. It calls for the commitment to proclaim the Gospel of life, and the integrity of God's creation. It is with this vision, that the National Council of Churches, in its commitment to discern Gospel in a groaning world, entrusted the Commission on Justice, Peace, and Creation to develop an eco-justice policy with the help of organic activities, church leaders, and theologians. The core group that drafted the policy has also suggested bringing out a handbook, theologically articulating the policy, to facilitate the eco-justice ministries of the churches in India, particularly in the context of climate justice.[7]

The National Council of Churches in India launched a 'Campaign for Climate Justice' on 19th September 2009. The fruit of this campaign was the bringing out of a policy on eco-justice as a kind of guideline for all churches and Church related bodies by 16th September 2010.[8] Every year the NCCI initiates the 'Earth Day', 'Creation Day', and 'World Environment Day' Campaigns and facilitates the constituent members in observing the same and becoming stronger 'Eco-justice Conscious Communities.'[9]

The Church of South India (CSI) ecological Concern Committee seeks to create awareness among all people about

environmental and ecological concerns and thereby to care for God's creation. It endeavours to encourage people to refrain from abuse of nature's resources and to strive to keep the earth a habitable place for all. It encourages parishes to incorporate ecological concerns in their order of worship and include both advocating direct action for social justice and the integrity of creation in missional activities. It encourages the active participation of all people of goodwill through prayer, partnership, and involvement, which will help humanity to return to an eco-friendly lifestyle.

Church of South India Synod constituted a committee for ecological concern in 1992. Later CSI incorporated ecological concerns in the constitution of CSI. The Church of South India recognizes that God's mission has various dimensions. The constitution of the CSI specifies the mission of the Church as 1) Proclamation of the Gospel; 2) Nurturing the people of God; 3) Service; 4) Establish justice in society; 5) Stewardship of Creation. It has also a Committee at the synod level for ecological concerns. In the constitution, it is written, "The Church seeks to create awareness among all people about environmental and ecological concerns and thereby to care for God's creation. It endeavours to encourage people to refrain from excessive exploitation of nature's resources and to strive to keep the earth a habitable place for the present as well as future generations."[10] In association with the Church of South India, Department of Ecumenical Relations and Ecological Concerns, the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College (BTESSC) organized a Bible study Workshop on Climate Justice in Chennai in September 2012. This workshop was meant to develop Bible Study materials on climate justice for the use of the Christian community in India. Climate justice has been chosen as the theme for the activities of the BTESSC for the academic year 2012-2013. Various programmes were organized during this year to create awareness among the theological educators and students

as well as the wider Christian community.[11] Hence, in this way, the protestant Christians in India are involving in bringing climate justice. This should challenge us as individuals to wake up and act now before it's too late. We should ask ourselves, what we can do as individuals, religious organizations, NGOs, to respond to climate change. We need to act in re-ordering our personal lifestyles; encouraging and promoting ecologically helpful programs and projects; speak against and participate in agitations that highlight ecologically unviable developments; and commit to use and promote only ecologically helpful products.

3. Biblical Response to Climate Change

While dealing with the climate issue, certain Biblical reflections need serious consideration.

3.1. Purpose of Creation

There are quite a few biblical texts where God is described as the creator of the universe (Gen 1:1; Psalm 24:1; Isaiah 48:12-13; Job 38-40). There are several explanations for why God has created the earth and other living beings. God's purpose in creation was for his own pleasure and for the harmonious co-existence of all his creatures (Psalm 104:1-23). In Isaiah 43:7, we read, "Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory."[12] The environment is God's gift to us. The environment is one of God's ways of being with us and of getting deeply involved in our daily life.[13]

If creation is the gift of God for us, humans have no right to think of creation as their own. As far as the earth is concerned, the land, water, and air belong to one cluster of human existence. They are symbols of life. Human greed and selfishness have turned these symbols of life into symbols of death. Hence, there is death in the land, in the water, and in the air due to our lack of stewardship.

3.2. The Stewardship of Creation

The biblical account affirms that our God is a God who loves the harmonious existence of God's creation. The creation narrative details the creative activity of God from a state of chaos, confusion, and disorder into a state of proper order. The void and formless were occupied and began to have a specific form. Human beings became the crown of creation and God entrusted humans to be "stewards" over creation. This is the first responsibility given by God to humankind. The concept of stewardship implies that it is a power given by God to tend and care for the creation and not just to exploit and sell the resources and plunder the lives.[14] This means that just as we are bestowed with the stewardship, we are saddled with the great responsibility not to upset the delicate balance of the total created order supporting life on this earth.[15] We are free to use it for our benefit, but we must use it responsibly. It is to be treated with very special care. Human stewardship means environmental responsibility but we are using natural resources that are finite supply with thoughtless greed and causing unnecessary pollution. The effect of this bad stewardship will be felt not just by ourselves, but by people in all parts of the world. It will also affect future generations.[16] Hence, our stewardship under God implies that we are morally accountable to God for treating creation in a manner that best serves the objectives of the kingdom of God; but both moral accountability and dominion over the earth depend on the freedom to choose. We are God's stewards, just as we seek to understand God's will for ourselves as His creatures, so we must seek to understand His will for His creation and other creatures too.

3.3. Paradigm from the Life of Jesus

Jesus shows intimacy and familiarity with a variety of God's creatures and the various processes of the environment. He is not driven by an urge to dominate and control the world of nature. Rather he displays an appreciative, reverential, and contemplative

attitude towards creation which is rooted in the Father's love for all that he has created.[17] Jesus calls us to pay attention to the environment and to be responsible. The many references he makes to the things belonging to the environment are a clear sign of his personal involvement with the environment. For example, 'look at the flowers; consider the birds, think of the fig tree, feel the wind, I am the vine; you are the branches, light, salt, bread, water (Matt 6:26-28; 13:1-43; Mark 4:26-29; John 15:1; Matt 13: 4-9; 18:4-9, 18-23; Mark 4:3-9, 13-20; Luke 8:5-8, 11-15; John 15:1-7; Mark 12:1-12; Matt. 21: 33-34; Luke 20:9-19; Luke 12:27; Matt. 6:26; Luke 9: 58). All these reflect Christ's closeness to the environment and the warmth of his affection for it.[18] Hence, we have much to learn from the attitude, perspective, and respect which Jesus displayed towards the environment.

3.4. Need for Human Transformation

In the beginning, God worked to bring forth order from a disordered creation. Further, God looked at the ordered creation and rejoiced in the goodness of the creation. He makes a garden (vineyard) for humankind and makes a covenant to live an interconnected life with creation. But, Jeremiah in the 4th Chapter witnesses the earth to be a waste and void, heavens without light, a fruitful land into desert, the sky without birds. Human beings who were ordained to preserve the ordered creation (vineyard or garden) went astray from the covenant in desolating the order into disorder. Jeremiah 12:10 and 11 says, 'the shepherds have destroyed my vineyard; they have trampled it down and have made my pleasant portion into a desolate wilderness.' The vineyard of God has been trampled and exploited into a desolate wilderness and is now mourning to the Lord (Jeremiah 12:11) for justice. Some of the biblical values which will lead us back to the vineyard from the wilderness are repentance recognizing God as the sovereign of all creation. Jeremiah 2:9 warns us that godless and reckless living will bring abomination on our children and children's children.[19] Hence, it is high time that we realize the

damage that we have caused to the creation and repent for what we have done, so that our generation may have fresh water to drink, fresh air to breathe, and better mother earth to live.

3.5. Eco-Centric Attitude of Life

There is an old saying, 'if you do not like where you are going, change the directions.' This is true about the environment. We now know that our environment is grossly out of balance and our planet earth is at stake. Simultaneously, however, we have a basic understanding and know-how to restore the balance. We need only to change directions. This doesn't mean abandoning modern techniques and capabilities to protect the environment. All that is needed is to put greater emphasis on more sustainable development, redesign our lifestyles, change our attitude and behaviours and be more cautious and judicious in the utilization of natural resources.[20] All biblical passages that command us to 'love our neighbour' also have strong implications for environmental responsibility. As we understand better the dimensions of our environmental problems, it is clear that they are often connected to social injustices. We cannot adequately show love to our neighbours, therefore, without taking into account the environmental problems that affect them.[21] We are responsible for protecting God's creation because it is intended for the well-being of all creatures. When we care for God's creation, we practice justice by protecting the vulnerable. Ensuring a cleaner, safer environment means that we care for the elderly and the sick by not putting their lives at risk from harmful pollutants and that we ensure a safer, more secure future for generations to come.[22]

We must see nature as God's creation and as a source of wonder and beauty.[23] The threat of dangerous climate change asks us, what do we leave for our children? With the extravagant use of fossil fuels, we will not leave a hospitable planet to our children. Scientists predict more droughts and famine for the next century. Food and water supplies will be stressed in many parts of the world. In this context, there can be much hope when we join with

God to preserve nature and climate. Our scripture encourages us to engage with the problem and not to escape from facing it. Praising God and destroying nature cannot go hand in hand, because we can't honour the creator and disrespect what He has made.

4. Ethical Implications of Eco-Justice

Climate justice implies just and fair instruments, decisions, actions, sharing of the burden, and accountability in order to prevent, improve, adapt to climate change. This includes the following dimensions:

4.1. Climate Justice as Capability Related Justice: It means that every person and institution have to contribute to solving problems based on their ability. In relation to climate justice, everyone can and should contribute according to their physical, economic, political, intellectual, and spiritual abilities.[24]

4.2. Climate Justice is Need Related Justice: It means that basic human needs and rights (e.g., a living wage, a life in dignity, and the right to food and water) should be taken into consideration for every person and institution. Concerning climate justice, every person has the right to that which they need to survive to adapt to climate change irrespective of their capability and performance.[25]

4.3. Climate Justice as Equal Treatment: It means that all human beings have the same human rights and rights to equal treatment, irrespective of their capabilities, performance, needs, origin, and other factors (such as gender, race, caste, religion). In relation to climate justice, this means that climate-related measures for preventions, vindication, and adaption should ensure the equal treatment of all those affected.[26]

4.4. Climate Justice as Intergenerational Justice: It means the sustainable use and fair distribution of resources, including between present and future generations. In relation to climate justice, decisions have to respect the needs of future generations

who have the same right to equal treatment as do people living today.[27]

4.5. Climate Justice as Participatory Justice: It means fair and appropriate participation in decision making by all those affected. In relation to climate justice, climate-related policy decisions should be arrived at through democratic participation and representation at different levels, from the local to the global.[28]

4.6. Climate Justice as Restorative Justice: This means that justice between perpetrators and victims needs to be restored through different measures. Climate justice as restoration of compensation, reparation, and/or reconciliation. Climate injustice occurs daily because those who suffer the most from the negative impact of climate change are not those who cause it. Polluters, especially in industrialized countries, need to take bold and decisive measures to restore justice.[29]

4.7. Climate Justice as Transformative Justice: It is a creative, ongoing process that goes beyond punitive or restorative justice to transform and renew reality toward greater justice. Climate justice does not mean taking reality toward greater justice. Climate justice does not mean taking isolated decisions or actions, but it is a holistic process of transformation of societies in their relations, the use of natural resources, distribution of goods and services, and sustainable policies.[30]

4.8. Climate Justice as On-time Justice: It means that decisions and actions for the sake of justice need to be taken at the right time. If this occurs too late, the patient or victim dies unjustly and it is difficult to restore justice. This time factor is critical for the sake of climate justice, to prevent further victims of climate change.[31]

Conclusion

Protection of the environment has become a necessity for the very survival of human beings. Instead of being the stewards of

God's creation, we humans are fast becoming its destroyer in our relentless and uncontrolled race for technological advancement. Nature is sending alarming signals of protest through drastic climate changes, global warming, tsunami-like natural calamities. In this context, the climate condition depends on the cordial relationship with human beings. So, the level of life-giving capacity depends on the solidarity and partnership between the different residents in the eco-systems. Human beings can play an important role in implementing developmental programs and action plans to step towards climate justice to save this beautiful creation of God. We must take step towards transforming oneself and then spread globally.

People living today not only have to consider their own wellbeing, but also the wellbeing of future generations. The existential interests of coming generations take priority over the few pressing needs we have today. Responsibility for future generations requires restraint from those disturbances into the environment that would result in the irreversible loss of natural resources and lessen their availability for future generations.

End Notes

1 The excessive release of Greenhouse Gases into the atmosphere resulted in global warming. The main factor that contributed for the problem is Carbon Dioxide (CO_2), which is the by-product of fossil fuels. The most important activity that increases the usage of CO_2 is industrialization. CO_2 when it reaches the atmosphere it spreads without maintaining any geographical boundaries. The country that is involved in the excessive use of fossil fuels and the under developed countries have been affected in the same way. However, the task of reducing the amount of reduction of CO_2 is a serious economic and political concern. The task of engagement must be done through a global discussion and it requires the discovery of an alternative source of energy. See, Sushil Kumar Dash, *Climate Change: An Indian Perspective* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3.

2 Dash, *Climate Change: An Indian Perspective*, 3.

3 Dash, *Climate Change*, 3.

4 Scott G. McNall, *Rapid Climate Change: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions* (New York and London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), ix-x.

5 Olav Fykse Tveit, "World Council of Churches General Secretary Message for Rio+20 2012," *Religions for Climate Justice: International Interfaith Statements 2008-2014*, accessed on 08/12/2020, https://new.waccglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20.-Globethics-Religions-for-Climate-Justice2014.pdf.

6 Shanghai and Nanjing, "Statement on Climate Justice," *World Council of Churches* (2016 November): 1.

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8 Roger Gaikward, "Foreward," in *Green: The Policy on Indian Churches' Engagement in Eco-justice Ministries* (Nagpur: NCCI, 2012), iv.

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10 Thomas Samuel, "Preface," in *A Christian Response to Ecological Crisis*, ed. Thomas Samuel and Matthew Koshy Punnakadu (Tiruvalla, Christava Sahitya Samiti, 2009), 7.

11 Viji Varghese Eapen, George Zachariah and P. Mohan Larbeer, "Editorial," in *The Word and the World: Biblical Reflections on Climate Change*, ed. Viji Varghese Eapen, George Zachariah and P. Mohan Larbeer Chennai: BTESSC & CSI, 2013), viii.

12 M. J. Joseph, "All are Mine," in *Green Gospel*, ed. Thomas Samuel and Mathew Koshy Punnackadu (Tiruvalla: Christava Sahitya Samhita, 2010), 34.

13 Ignacimuthu, SJ., *Environmental Spirituality* (Mumbai: St Pauls, 2010), 108.

14 Joshua Nimalan Manson, "Caring for the Creation: Use, Abuse and Reduce-A Challenge for Harmonious Living," *The National Council of Churches Review* CXXXIX/03 (April 2019): 181-182.

15 Varkey Kurian Thaitharayil, "A Christian Response to Environmentalism," in *Green Gospel*, ed. Thomas Samuel and Mathew Koshy Punnackadu (Tiruvalla: Christava Sahitya Samhita, 2010), 106.

16 Ignacimuthu, SJ., *Environmental Spirituality*, 98.

17 Ignacimuthu, SJ., *Environmental Spirituality*, 59.

18 Ignacimuthu, SJ., *Environmental Spirituality*, 99.

19 Christy Gnanadasan, "Development- Wilderness to Vineyard," in *The Word and the World: Biblical Reflections on Climate Change*, ed. Viji Varghese Eapen, George Zachariah and P. Mohan Larbeer (Chennai: BTESSI & CSI, 2013), 84-85.

20 Ignacimuthu, SJ., *Environmental Spirituality*, 118-119.

21 Thomas Samuel and Mathew Koshy Punnakadu, ed., *A Christian Response to Ecological Crisis* (Tiruvalla: Christava Sahitya Samiti, 2009), 7.

22 Samuel and Punnakadu, ed., *A Christian Response to Ecological Crisis*, 172.

23 John Samuel, "Biblical Reflections on Climate, Climate Change, and Climate Justice," in *Theologizing in India Today: Interpreting the Signs of Times*, ed. Vincent Rajkumar (Bangalore: Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 2012). 306.

24 Manson, "Caring for the Creation," 183.

25 Manson, "Caring for the Creation," 184.

26 Manson, "Caring for the Creation," 184.

27 Manson, "Caring for the Creation," 184.

28 Manson, "Caring for the Creation," 184.

29 Manson, "Caring for the Creation," 184.

30 Manson, "Caring for the Creation," 184.

31 Manson, "Caring for the Creation," 185.

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A Postcolonial Reading of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20

Ashish John Archer*

Introduction

The last four verses of the Gospel of Matthew have been and are of great importance throughout the Christian history. It is known as the Great Commission, which constitutes a great climax of his Gospel. The disciples of Jesus, having seen Jesus in Galilee as the crucified one whom God has raised, at last comprehend that suffering sonship entails suffering discipleship, and receive from Jesus the commission to go and make all nations his disciples.[1] In this paper we will attempt to study the Great Commission in the context of postcolonialism.

1. A Great Commission?

Though the passage has been of great importance, Bosch notes that the New Testament scholarship was not interested in this passage.[2] The scholars were in disagreement concerning the importance and even the authenticity of the passage.

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1.1. The Doubt Among Scholars

The earlier scholars had different understanding of Matthew 28:16-20. LaGrand presents a good discussion about the doubt in the authors. He quotes Kilpatrick saying the first view clearly, if not quite absolutely, with reference to the conclusion of the first Gospel. "From xxviii. 9 onward Matthew is without the guidance of Mark's narrative…and the two sections xxviii. 9f, 16-20 are the evangelist's attempt to fill the gap…the materials available for the evangelist in his attempt…were poor in the extreme."[3] He also adds that Kilpatrick further says that it may be admitted that there is probably an element of tradition behind the assertion of an appearance in Galilee and a formal commission of the disciples.[4] Bosch points out that in his monumental work, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in First Three Centuries,* Harnack even suggests the idea that these words may be a later edition to the Gospel, since he could not understand why Matthew would have added them.[5] Gunther Bornkamn also cites Kilpatrick in support of his judgment that the commission bears a "Matthean stamp in both language and content."[6] Benjamin Hubbard also concludes that the basic material in Matthew 28:16-20 including the juxtaposition of the resurrection with the command to preach the Gospel to all nations did not originate with Matthew. Hubbard argues that this tradition was current in Christian communities already before 48 CE.[7]

1.2. The Acceptance Among Scholars

It was in the 1940s that the New Testament scholarship began to pay serious attention to Matthew 28:18-20. Even Harnack, who previously was skeptic about the authenticity of the text, in his fourth edition of the same book calls it a 'masterpiece' and summarizes saying that it is impossible to say anything greater and more than this in only forty words.[8] Bosch further quotes many scholars showing the importance of the text; for example, Michel says that the entire Gospel was written only from the perspective

of the presuppositions embodied in this pericope. He also quotes some of the phrases scholars have used to give expression to the importance of these verses for understanding. For example, G. Bornkamm calls it "the theological programme of Matthew"; Kosmala calls it "the most important concern of the gospel"; U. Luck calls it "the 'climax of the gospel"; Nepper-Christensen calls it "a sort of culmination of everything said up to this point"; Schille calls it "a 'table of contents' of the gospel." He very aptly concludes his discussion by commenting that the modern scholarship agrees that the entire Gospel points to these final verses, thus stating the importance of the "Great Commission."[9]

2. An Exegetical Study of "The Great Commission"

In this section we shall try to study the text in terms of how it has been traditionally interpreted and how it was used in mission perspective in traditional understanding.

"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them" (v 16)

As the woman had instructed them, the disciples go to Galilee. The narrative refers only to the eleven but the appearance of many faithful women in 27:55-56, their description in discipleship language and their prominent role in 28:1-10 suggests that they have been present throughout. It seems reasonable that other follower women and men also met the risen Jesus. The location which is a mountain is also very important. Significant things have happened on the mountain like Jesus' temptation, Sermon on the Mount, feeding of the hungry, transfiguration etc. Echoes of Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion traditions cluster around these references.[10] Also with the mountain the readers will not think geographically of a particular mountain but of the mountain known to them from the Gospel but of which mountain they will think remains an open question.[11] Hubbard also thinks of this mountain as of "mythological rather than geographical significance." He says Matthew may have derived the mountain theme from the tradition which comes from Acts 1:12.[12]

"When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted" (v 17)

In accordance to his promise, Jesus appears to his disciples. The focus is Jesus and the disciples' confrontation with and reaction to him.[13] No description of risen Jesus is given. We learn only that when the disciples saw him they both worshipped him and doubted him.[14] The worship of the Lord attributed to the disciples is an act of faith but doubt is bound up with it having no partitive meaning but bound to all the disciples.[15] They worshipped him just as the women did in 28:9 and the disciples had done in 14:33. But some of them doubted, which suggests the presence of some faith even though it is insufficient, indecisive, and wavering.[16] The presence of 'little faith' is the Matthean concept which was presented in 14:31-33. With Matthew the disciple's faith is not elevated beyond all conflicts.[17] The meaning becomes more difficult because Matthew makes no point good or bad concerning their doubt. Jesus neither condemns nor admonishes them, whereas Jesus annuls the doubt in Luke 24:43 and in John 20:27. In Luke 24:25, he chastises them for their hardness of heart, as he does in the longer Markan ending (Mk 16:14).[18] Matthew even foregoes having Jesus overcome the little faith of his disciples with a gesture of blessing or with an invitation to touch him as in the case of many appearance stories.[19] For Matthew, it is good for the disciples to have little faith because a person with little faith prays more and repeatedly to the Lord.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (v 18)

Jesus now comes to the disciples. From the context of verse 17, it would appear that the disciples first saw Jesus on the Galilean mountain, He was at a distance and as he came closer to his followers, presumably so they could see it was really him and so they could hear him.

All the authority (Mission with the authority of Jesus)

He says to his disciples that all the authority is given to him. Jesus has previously turned down the tempter's offer of all the kingdoms of the world in 4:8. Accepting that would have been not fulfilling God's will. Here he receives all the authority from God as God's beloved son or agent faithful to God's purpose.[20] This phrase has great missiological implications also. We have to do our mission under the authority of our risen Lord. Matthew portrays Jesus' importance and authority by using titles such as *Messiah, Son of David, Son of Man, Son of God*, etc. Not only this but he is a new Moses, greater than Solomon and Jonah, greater than temple and priesthood. Most of all, God himself attests Jesus as his dear son at his baptism. Christian mission can never be understood apart from its authorization in the authority of Jesus.[21] Jesus reminds all the authority shown to the people throughout his earthly ministry to the disciples and assures them of the same authority on which the universal mission is to be based while they are to be sent to all the nations to preach the Gospel.

(Threefold Mission Statement)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (vv 19-20a)

With the authority which Jesus has displayed and of which he has assured his disciples, he now commissions them as his agents of mission. We will be looking at the following important terms of this passage.

all the nations

The target audience and the arena of Jesus' command is 'all the nations.'[22] The term used here is *panta ta ethne*. The identical expression is used three times in the first Gospel, and in each case the meaning is the same: all nations without distinction.[23] Bosch notes some of the scholars who are of the opinion that the

Jews have, by their conduct forfeited the right to be preached to. Some scholars even suggest that these words refer to all nations excluding the Jews.[24] He further says that despite his strong views on the hardheartedness of Jews, Matthew never doubts the continued validity of a mission to his compatriots.[25] The term has a great missiological implication for the church. The church has to reach out to the people irrespective of their origin and status in the society. The message of God which is Jesus Christ cannot be limited or preached to selected audience. It has to be preached to everyone everywhere. We cannot exclude people as they may have hostile understanding about our message. The command of Jesus is very clear to us through the disciples to go to all the nations of the earth. It is better to take the commission here as expanding the "mission" of 10:5 to include all ethnic groups. What Matthew intends on this reading is that the disciples understand that their mission is to ethnic groups, and they must preserve the ethnic identity of each group. Matthew focuses the commission upon individuals, not nations. Jesus commands the making of disciples of individuals from all ethnic groups, including Judaism. The best or most effective way of reaching persons within their particular ethnic heritage is simply not addressed in this passage.[26]

make disciples (Mission as making disciples)

The first command of the commission is to make disciples. It is further elaborated by two participles baptizing and teaching. The theme of discipleship is central to Matthew's Gospel and to his understanding of the church and mission. The 'disciples' is the specifically ecclesiological concept of the evangelist.[27] For Matthew being a disciple means living out of teaching of Jesus. It is unthinkable to divorce the Christian life of love and justice from being a disciple. Mission involves from the beginning making new believers sensitive to the needs of others, opening their eyes and hearts to justice, suffering, oppression and the flight of those who have fallen by wayside.[28] The link between Jesus' own time and the time of Matthew's community is given

in the command 'Make Disciples.' In other words, followers of the earthly Jesus have to make others into what they themselves are: disciples. Thus, 'disciples' of Matthew's time are not just linked to first disciples but also to one another. Every disciple follows the master, but never alone; every disciple is a member of the fellowship of disciples, the body, or no disciple at all.[29] For Matthew, to be a disciple is not just the same as being a member of a local church and making disciples does not simply mean the numerical expansion of the church.[30] We can draw some useful missiological implications from the command 'make disciples.' In the present world where there is an ongoing debate about conversion, church's numerical growth is taking place, the true meaning of Jesus' command can be a guiding factor for the renewal of the church. The church's mission should not be its numeric expansion but to make disciples of all people.

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (mission as baptizing in the name of Triune God)

The command of making disciples of the nations, involves first of all the command to baptize. Since baptism is the sign common in all Christians, the command to baptize is a confession of the whole church.[31] Most believe the "Trinitarian" or "triadic" phrase comes from Matthew, not Jesus, for two reasons. First, nowhere in Acts is anyone baptized with these words. The logic runs that if Jesus had specified these words, then Acts would have certainly indicated that they were the words used. Second, the theology being advocated is, at the least, initial Trinitarians. Many believe that this doctrine arose after the time of Jesus.[32] Hubbard reflects that probably this is the most disputed feature of the great commission but concludes that it is most probably authentic.[33] The disciples are enjoined by Jesus to carry out their mission of disciple making both by baptizing into threefold name and by teaching them what Jesus commanded.[34] It is certain that with their baptism the newly won disciples of Jesus follow the example of Jesus who also submitted to baptism. The command to baptize

in the name of Triune God does not yet imply the much later dogma of the Trinity, although later it was thusly interpreted.[35] The phrase 'in the name of' represents commitment to, ownership, and protection. God the Father and Jesus the Son have been linked in that Jesus the Son does the Father's salvific will and reveals the Father. The disciples of Jesus also do the Father's will. Their baptism is an indication of a life of obedience to God in following Jesus. The Holy Spirit presumably assists in living this life, just as the 'Spirit of your Father' (10:20) assists in their speaking.[36] The command to baptize is very important in the present world. The command of Jesus was taken very seriously and a large number of conversions took place in history of the church. But Jesus was not speaking in terms to enlarge the number of his followers by baptizing them. The command was to first make them disciples and when they are ready to obey what Jesus has commanded, in other words ready to take the next step the baptism should take place. The command to baptize was taken literally, and the true meaning of the command was either ignored or ignored. Baptizing in the name of the Triune God can be mission, but it should not be the first step in the life of a new believer. Rather, he or she should be initiated into Jesus' faith and teachings first, followed by the sign of baptism.

teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (mission as teaching)

Besides baptizing, the disciples are charged to make new disciples by teaching them to observe all what Jesus had taught them. On the face of it, this 'teaching them', together with the preceding 'baptizing them', appears to be the real content of disciple making and therefore of mission in Matthew's understanding.[37] The eleven disciples are not called to proclaim the Gospel or repentance for the forgiveness of sins. They are not to be witness of resurrection. They are to teach what Jesus had commanded them. The importance of the teaching is that the Jesus' cause goes on.[38] The activity of teaching has been Jesus' activity until now which now

is entrusted to the disciples. This life of teaching is marked by obeying of the commandments which Jesus commanded them.[39] Therefore, the content of teaching for the disciples is keeping the commandments. Matthew understands church as Jesus' family that does the will of the Father and stands under Jesus' blessings. The disciples have to teach 'all' that Jesus has taught them including Torah. 'All' reminds us that the will of God does not consist of one commandment, the commandment of love; it consists many commandments which of course reach their highest point in the love commandment. Thus, the goal of the disciples' missionary preaching is not conversion but the practice of Jesus' newly won disciples. For this reason, the disciples' 'teaching' is also accompanied by their good deeds so that "your light shines before people that they see your good works and therefore praise your Father in heaven" (5:16).[40] This also has great implications for us. Mission for us should be teaching what Jesus has taught us and the teaching should be accompanied with our lifestyle. Conversion was never the goal of Mathew and so it shall be for us also.

"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (v 20b)

surely I am with you always (mission as the presence of Jesus)

The text ends with the promise of Jesus' presence with the church. From first to the last Matthew's Gospel is Gospel of 'Immanuel', God with us. Wherever two or three disciples gather in his name, Jesus declares that he is in their midst and now in his parting words Jesus is assuring his disciples that he will be present with them till the end of the age as the disciples seek to follow him.[41] The being with us of God in the Immanuel, Jesus has proven to be a basic note sounding throughout the entire Gospel. Thus, Jesus' promise to be with his disciples to the end of the world again points back story of the earthly Jesus. In the disciples' experience of the earthly Jesus, the church recognizes its own experience with the risen Jesus. Church can learn what this promise at the conclusion of the Gospel means for it. He himself is present with

the church.[42] The community does not suffer and struggle on its own in this mission task with an inevitable difficulty created by an environment of deceit and hostility. Though Jesus is not physically present, his presence continues through the Gospel narratives of his words and actions and based on 10:20, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit.[43] Jesus has never left his church; the last paragraph of Matthew's story is vibrant with authority, urgency and benediction. Matthew's first readers and every successive generation of disciples finish their reading of his story with a worldwide mission based on Jesus' worldwide authority, to be conducted in Jesus' like manner with the promise of his worldwide and history long presence.[44]

3. Theology of Great Commission

The impetus for the Great Commission comes from God's heart. He loved us and gave us his Son (John 3:16). The disciples are sent out to complete what God began with the sending of his Son (John 20:21).[45] The risen Jesus commissions the disciples. Assuming the role of God, played in prophetic commissioning, and sharing in God's cosmic authority, Jesus is able to be with the disciples forever though he is not physically present. The community of disciples, with its imperfections and doubts, is given the task of continuing Jesus' mission and is reassured of Jesus' presence with them.[46] This was the moving and guiding force for the disciples to follow Jesus' commandments and teach the whole world what Jesus had commanded them. This small and marginal community of disciples is commissioned to nothing less than worldwide mission.[47]

David Bosch finds three terms in Great Commission which summarize the essence of the mission for Matthew, and they are; 'make disciples', 'baptize' and 'teach.'[48] Luz says that the phrase "make disciples" appears in the New Testament almost only in Matthew and is understood here as almost everywhere in early Christianity. Interestingly a slower and lower profile verb is used here in place of the usual missionary terms like 'preach', 'convert',

'win' and so on are not used. Disciples are not only the twelve disciples of the earthly Jesus but this discipleship occurs wherever his power becomes operative among people (v 18b, 9:8) and his commandments are kept (v 20a). Therefore, the mission command of the risen Jesus is not directed only to the eleven disciples at the beginning of the church history. The disciples are people of all nations and all ages who can identify themselves with those eleven disciples.[49] The followers of the earthly Jesus have to make others what they themselves are. Bosch further notes that the disciples are the prototypes of the church. For Matthew, the ones who are the members of this new community too wait for God's reign (5:20), too are the salt and light of the earth (5:13), and are the blessed ones. God is their parent and they are the children of God and of God's reign (13:38). The disciples of Matthew's time are not just linked to the first disciples but also to one another, each of them follows the master, but never alone; every disciple is a member of the fellowship of the disciples, the body, or no disciple at all.[50]

The task of making disciples of the nations involves first of all the command to baptize, since baptism is the sign that all Christians have in common. It is interesting to note that Jesus prefers baptism to circumcision. It is not easy to find out the reason of the saying because Jesus speaks very little of baptism in the Gospel. Luz implies that the new disciples of Jesus follow the example of Jesus who also submitted to baptism (3:13-17). He further says that since on the baptism of Jesus the voice of God comes from above and the Spirit of God descends on him, the triadic formula of baptism can easily be related.[51] Bruner notes that baptism can be considered the last great handing over of the passion-resurrection of Jesus. For in baptism discipled people become the beneficiaries and children of God, new siblings of the son, and the fresh companions of the spirit. Baptism is not only a symbol, it is a means of grace that is, it is not only God's

ceremony of initiation, and it is God's agent of initiation. Baptism really joins the evangelized to the Triune God.[52]

The eleven disciples are also called to teach. Interestingly another sober word 'teach' is used here. They are not commanded to proclaim the Gospel or repentance of sins, but they are to teach all the nations.[53] Jews at those times were fully trained scribes and teachers. They have been good learners, they command the material and the arguments that have been presented to them and are now the teachers of the things Jesus has taught them. Jesus taught the disciples who taught the scribes who in turn became teachers to the people. Overman asserts that this became a counsel and strategy that ultimately worked for Christianity.[54] Bosch notes that teaching for Matthew, is not merely an intellectual exercise. Jesus' teaching is an appeal to his listeners' will and not to their intellect. It is a call for a concrete decision to follow him and submit to God's will as Bosch quotes Frankemolle. What the apostles should teach the new disciples is to submit to the will of God.[55]

Craig S. Keener says that the great commission can be understood in three terms. Firstly, the narrative teaches about the faith and unbelief of the disciples. The disciples believed the report of the women but when they see Jesus they doubt. Secondly, the narrative teaches about Jesus' identity. As son of man and son of God Jesus holds all the authority, and with that authority the disciples are to teach and baptize the people of all nations. Thirdly, the narrative talks about the mission of the disciples and the believers. The disciples of Jesus have to set out on mission with the authority of Jesus,[56] of which they are assured and promised Jesus' continuous presence with them in the mission they will do. Thus, the disciples have to do the mission in the authority and presence of Jesus.

William Carter very beautifully puts the importance and significance of great commission saying that the mission of the disciples was not a military one, though; they preached the

message of the kingdom of God. It finds the divine purposes and blessings not in the emperor but in Jesus who is now risen. It calls people to recognize the supremacy of God as the "Lord of heaven and earth" (11:25). It is to this mission that the community of disciples is again sent by one who claims "all authority in heaven and earth."[57]

4. Postcolonial Approaches to Mission

According to Sugirtharajah, postcolonialism is a discipline in which everything is contested, everything is contestable, from the use of terms to the defining of chronological boundaries. In popular perception, postcolonialism is seen as a period which began in the 1960s after the end of formal European colonialism following the struggle for independence waged by colonized people.[58] Postcolonialism is further understood to be used to position the postcolonial nations against the power of imperialism and neocolonialism. David Joy quotes Sugirtharajah who argues postcolonialism is a fitting reply to the attitude and approach of domination of the oppressed classes in a postcolonial situation. He further quotes Robert C. Young, who believed that the tendency of one people to subjugate another should be the basis for an alternate reading practice.[59] Postcoloniality involves the once colonialized others insisting on taking their place as historical subjects. Unlike other current theoretical practices such as feminism and structuralism, postcolonial discourse in not about the West, but about colonized people. Those once assigned to the margins appear at center, as confident and indomitable and partners in the dialogue and collaborate with the dispossessed and disadvantaged in the West. It is about acquiring a new identity. It also is a critical enterprise aimed at unmasking the link between ideas and power which lies behind Western texts, theories and learning.[60] Postcolonial theory focuses on researching, analyzing and critiquing the "hegemonic systems of thought, textual codes, and symbolic practices which the West constructed in its domination of colonial subjects." Catherine

Keller, who has coined this definition, focuses on the three components of thought, text and symbols in order to highlight how these elements are deployed together in the construction of a hegemonic system.[61] The term postcolonial has been used in both historic and political sense after the era of colonialization. It has also been developed as a discipline when it is coupled with the term studies. It has been, "configured as an academic discourse that relocates that denotation and its attendant political urgency into an interdisciplinary and cross-border mode of reading often extending backwards in time, and finding practices of resistance and subversion in cultural production both before and after the moment of colonization, and in different regions of the once-colonial world."[62]

V. V. Thomas opines that it has been used "as a name for a condition of nativist longings in post-independence national groupings: as an oppositional form of reading practice, as a name for a category of literary activity…"[63] Postcolonial method is applied in the mission studies to liberate the people's experience in the colonial period. The texts and contexts are read and re-read with a postcolonial lens to "de-Europeanize or de-hegemonize the mission history" to provide a true representation of the people, culture and history of colonized India."[64] It made the study of Indian Church history and Christian Mission a people's concern. It perceives the mission history which is less concerned with how and by whom it was propagated but more with the people who accepted it, indigenized it and made it their part of lives. The postcolonial exists as an aftermath, where the subject matter is effects of colonialism.

5. Towards a Postcolonial Understanding of The Great Commission

While reading the great commission through postcolonial eyes we have to focus on the whole issue of expansion, domination, and imperialism as the central forces in defining the interpretation.[65] While reading it we should ask some questions and motifs. We

have to ask questions like why Jesus states about the authority which was given to him; why the disciples are asked to go out to all the nations, and so on and so forth. Asking these types of questions is important from a postcolonial perspective. Being a citizen of India, which once was colonized by the European countries, these questions become more important. These commands of Jesus were always (mis)interpreted historically and have been used by the colonial powers to expand their kingdom. In the name of going to all the nations the colonial powers, went to the people of the land, usurped all the power and authority from the people of the land. There's a well-known African dictum: "When the white man came to our country, he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us, 'let us pray.' After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible."[66] This shows very well that how the colonial powers used the biblical text for the benefit of their hidden agendas.

When we look at the text of great commission, there are several texts which led to misinterpretation from a colonial perspective and need to be re-read with a postcolonial understanding. For example, "And Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (v 18). The term authority can be a debatable term. Jesus uses this term because the disciples were living in a context of colonialism themselves and the people in the Roman Empire lacked any authority except those who were in a place of position and power which disciples were lacking socially. That is why Jesus speaks of all the authority in heaven and on earth in which they have to go. But the term authority was historically interpreted as a term allowing all the colonial powers to go to all the nations on the globe because they were doing it in the authority of Jesus Christ. The authority was meant for the people who were colonized and subjugated but the authority was used by the western powers to oppress and to expand their kingdom and influence.

Verse 19 says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This verse has been traditionally understood as an open invitation for the Gentiles to come and be a member of the new faith. But most of the postcolonial writers doubt that. Susan Smith quotes Muse W Dube on the acceptance of Gentile Christians into the community, and the relaxing of ritual and purity laws, and says that those markers of opposition to imperial rule leads her to ask: "Does not Matthew's opening of boundaries, his agenda of discipling the whole world according to the commands of Christ, indicate a collaborative stance with the empire? Matthew's command to Christianize the world ironically befriends the Roman Empire's political and cultural imposition of its structures on Jewish people and all its colonized subjects. Her postcolonial interpretation of this text allows her to see it as one that aided and abetted the 1st century Roman Empire's universalising enterprise. She believes that something analogous occurred in 19th century missionary activity. The particular was categorised as "pagan" or "uncivilised" and in turn this usually meant that the relationship of missionaries to indigenous and colonised peoples was one of cultural domination. She also quotes W. R. Hutchinson who writes: "Christianity as it existed in the West had a right not only to conquer the world but to define reality for other peoples of the world." She further argues that Dube's postcolonial hermeneutic requires the reader to enter the interpretive process by identifying the text's similarities and differences with the contemporary community's specific context. Recognizing the nature of Roman imperial rule and the Jewish response in this case necessitates a shift away from later interpretations associated with Western Christianity's commitment to a universalizing expansion.[67]

We live in a world which is full of hatred and envy of each other. We live in a world which is still divided in rich and poor, privileged and unprivileged, high castes and dalits, Tribals and

non-Tribals, masculine and feminine and the list goes on and on. One of the two is historically deprived of their rights, subjugated and oppressed because some of the biblical text was interpreted in a way which suited the dominant classes. Being students of mission, we have a great burden and responsibility to understand the importance of re-reading the bible with postcolonial eyes and re-interpret those portions which have helped the dominant classes, be it colonizers or someone else in the past, in a way which conveys the real understanding of the text and help those to become free who have been in clutches because of its historical (mis)interpretation.

Conclusion

Thus, we see that commissioning of the disciples has many important aspects. We have seen the traditional understanding of the text and also attempted to understand the text with a postcolonial understanding. Traditionally it was misunderstood to convert the people to Christianity, without taking in consideration the aspirations and beliefs of the people. In the name of this Great Commission, colonial powers expanded their kingdom. They were more interested in their profits and businesses than obeying Jesus' commands. In the context of modern world and understanding, the Great Commission, should be understood in different light. Our task is cut out clearly. It is to liberate the text from postcolonial limitations and interpret it in a way that liberates the communities affected by it historically and still continue to be affected and to help people to stop themselves interpreting it in a way that indirectly supports the dominant and colonial understanding and structures.

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Fundamental Teachings of *Radha Soami Satsang Dera Beas*

Sanjay Kumar*

Introduction

Baba Jaimal Singh was one of the foremost disciples of Shiv Dayal the founder of *Radha Soami Satsang* Agra branch. In October 1877, when Jaimal Singh came on leave *Soamiji* said to Jaimal Singh: "This is our last meeting. Now I shall go away to *Param Dhaam*, after completing my life's pilgrimage. I have made you my beloved and own *roop.*"[1] But during his life on earth *Soamiji* did not appoint a successor; therefore, several disciples emerged as would be successors, which led to a split in the group and six disciples of Shiv Dayal *Soamiji* led the movement forward.[2] They are Rai Salig Ram,[3] Jaimal Singh,[4] Gharib Das,[5] Sanmukh Das, Pratap Singh[6] and Naryan Dei. Jaimal Singh was one among the six people who over a period of about nine years come to be regarded as spiritual successor of Shiv Dayal.[7]

According to Jaimal Singh, when *Bhai* Chanda Singh (a devotee of Shiv Dayal) requested that *Satsang* be started in the Punjab, *Soamiji* replied: "this request has been accepted by *Akal Purusha*, and this task has been allotted to Jaimal Singh."[8] Then *Soamiji* gave his own turban to Jaimal Singh as *Prashad* and ordered him to go and preach *Naam* in Punjab.[9] Thus, *Dera* Beas

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of *Radha Soami Satsang Beas* (RSSB) was established. Jaimal Singh came and settled down on the banks of the river Beas,[10] between the villages of Balsarai and Waraich, and started *Satsang* in 1891.

The teachings of *Radha Soami Satsang* Beas (RSSB) are not entirely new but taught by the main founder Seth Shiv Dayal Singh. These teachings have been discussed by various earlier Saints such as Kabir, Nanak, Namdev, Paltu, Dadu, Tulsi Sahib, Maulana Rome, Shams-i-Tabri, etc. Nearly all ancient religions literature make reference to the *Shabd* in various names. Shiv Dayal Singh rejected all the ancient *Yoga* systems and propounded the *Surat Shabd Yoga* which can be practiced by an individual and all without criticizing their worldly duties. His book *Sarbachan* is a celebrated philosophical outcome in plain and simple language. Hence, in this paper we shall discus some basic fundamental teachings of *Radha Soami Satsang Dera Beas*.

1. God

In the literature of the Saints, God is articulated by various words, such as *Soami, Ekankar, Nirankar, Radhaswami, Akal, Nirala, Anami, Agam, Alakh, Sat Punish, Prabhu, Prabhswami, Hart Roy, Akshar, Parameshwar, Akshar Purush, etc.* All of these words have been created in an effort to convey to human intellect certain clue of what the Saints think of God, or Lord God, the utmost power. *Ekankar* means the "One oneness," the body of oneness. *Nirankar* means without body or form. *Soami* or *Swami* means the all-pervading Lord. *Radha Soami, Radha* (soul) and *Soami* (Lord) the Lord of the soul *Radha*, when upturned, becomes *dhara* or current. As soul has to revert to its source, so its *dhara*, when reversed, when its current is turned toward God, becomes *Radha*. Therefore, according to Shiv Dayal *Soamiji,* there are two kinds of names of the Supreme Being. They are *varnatmak* and *dhunatmak*. "*What the name is, that do I tell thee, O friend; distinction of two kinds shall I describe*" (*Sarbachan* 10:1). The *varnatmak* name of God is a word or phrase of some language, which therefore can

be spoken and written and conveyed to others by the common means of expression by the tongue such as "Ram, Hari, Gobind, Madho, Khuda, Allah, Maula, God, Heavenly Father, Waheguru, Om, Brahm, Parbrahm, Sat Nam*, Anami, Radha Soami*."[11] The whole things are *varnatmak* names because all of them can be articulated and inscribed. The *dhunatmak* name is not a word or phrase. It can neither be uttered by tongue nor heard by the ears. It is divine melody or heavenly music is transcendent, yonder the senses and brain power. It can be communicated by the soul and no-one else which eventually unites in and becomes one with it. "*When Shabd [divine melody] and soul become one then is the dhunatmak name seen*."[12]

The entire creation is considered as one, the true *Ekankar*. There is perfect unity in the universe, which is also co-existent with God, infinite, unlimited. Hereafter the *Soami* is *Nirankar*, *i.e.,* formless. As such, he is without personality, therefore without name. He cannot be said to be anywhere as he is in all places. Since he is everywhere, all and everything, he must be impersonal. He may assume any numeral of forms, but none of these forms hold his entire being any more than one sun embraces the sum total of physical matter.

2. Heaven *Sat Lok*

According to Kabir, Nanak, Tulsi Sahib of Hathras and Shiv Dayal *Soamiji*, *Sat Lok/Sach Khand* have three regions. It is divided into four different planes, each having its own characteristics and its own Lord or Governor. But the alteration between these sub-divisions is very minor. From above down they are named:

- *Anami Lok* or *Radha Soami Dham: Radha Soami Dham* (meaning home of the Spiritual Lord). It is also called *Anami Lok* (meaning nameless region).
- *Agam Lok*: The next plane below the highest is *Agam Lok* (*Agam,* inaccessible, and *Lok,* place).

- *Alakh Lok*: The third plane is *Alakh Lok* (*Alakh,* invisible and *Lok,* place). The last of these higher planes is *Sack khand (Sach,* truth and *Khand* home).
- *Sat Lok*: The last one is also called *Sat Lok,* the true place. By the *Mohammedan* Saints, it has been called *Mukam-e-Haq,* meaning the home of truth.

The light of all four of these regions is so very powerful that it is incredible for any human to get an understanding of it. It cannot be pronounced. The great *Soamiji* sums up his proclamations regarding this region by saying simply that it is all Love. "They are so wonderful and bewitching that I cannot describe them."[13] However *Maharaj* Charan Singh believes these stages are sub-divisions of *Sach Khand* (heaven).

3. *Guru* or Master

The significance of a true living *guru* is an absolute requirement for God-realization. Without contacting with a living *guru*, an individual cannot get *bhakti* (devotion) and without devotion one cannot cross the ocean of this universe.[14] According to Jagat Singh, we have to take refuge of a true living master to attain perfection in *Surat Shabd Yoga*.[15] Further Charan Singh articulated, "the saints of past were doubtless perfect Masters. But we cannot benefit from them now. We need a living Master of the present day. He alone can help us to cross the ocean of the universe."[16] A true living *guru* is one who tells us all about the five stages up to *Sat Lok*, their distinctive melodies and transcendent entities, their ruling spirits or manifestations of God; all within our body.

4. Human Body

Every single soul has taken birth reincarnation countless times. In every birth, an individual has accomplished both good and bad actions (*karmas*) that needs to be well-adjusted. Therefore, the purpose of human life is to return to the Lord/creator. It can be accomplished by receiving Initiation from a perfect living *guru*,

who connects the devotee's soul to the *Shabd*.[17] *Radha Soamis* believes that human body is made of three substance:

- *Solid matter (creation of body)*
- *Astral matter (creation of mind)*
- Soul (emphasises human body is the temple of living God). The Hindu sages called it *Nar-Naryani Deh* (body that is the creation of God and in which He abides).[18]

Sometime this body is mentioned to as house of ten *doors* (gates). Nine gates open external, through which our energies are dissipated. The tenth gate opens the way to the palace of the Lord within. The ninth gate includes our two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth and the two lower outlets. The tenth is in the center behind the two eyes. It is entitled by different names *til*; *tisra till*; Shiv *netra* or third eye. The *Mohammedan* Saints call it *Nukta-i-Swaida* (third eye).[19]

4.1. Body as Microcosmic Centers

4.1.1. The Mul-chakra

It is also entitled *muladhara* or the *guda-chakra.* The first chakra is located close the rectum. It administers removal. These centers are shaped slightly like the lotus flower, more or less round, and the number of distinct parts are spoken of as petals. This lowest one has four petals, the higher ones increasing in number as we go up. It is an exciting point that these body *chakras* taken together have exactly fifty-two petals.[20]

4.1.2. Indri-chakra (Sex)

Indri communicates to sex, and *chakra*, to wheel or *lingachakra.* It is also called *shat-dal-kanwal* it is located nearby the sacral plexus, and it has six petals. It has to do with reproduction.

4.1.3. Nabhi-ckakra (Navel)

It is also called *ashta-dal-kanwal*. It is positioned at a point near the solar plexus. It has to do mostly with over-all nourishment.

4.1.4. Hrida-chakra (Heart)

It is also entitled *dvadas-dal-kanwal.* It is situated near the cardiac plexus, and it has twelve petals. It has relation to the general circulation of the blood and breathing, so far as the heart is a part of the breathing machine. (This function is not yet recognized by physiology, but we know that if it were not for the heart, the oxygen inhaled by the lungs could not be conveyed to the whole body).

4.1.5. Kanth-chakra (Throat)

It lies near the cervical plexus. It has to do with respiration. It is also named the *shodas-dal-kanwal,* the lotus of sixteen petals.

4.1.6. Do-dal-kanwal

The two-petal led lotus. It is situated back of the eyes, on a level with the lower part of the eyeballs, but exactly in the center of the brain cavity, at a point in the subtle body, corresponding to the position of the pineal gland. That is the seat of the mind and soul. That is the center of control over the body.[21]

5. *Karma* and Reincarnation

Every individual man and woman take his/her place in the cycle of life, and does the work which he/she must do, and creates new *karma* according to the liberty of choice which he/she possesses at the moment. When his/her work is finished, he/she departs to some other scene of action, according to his/her *karmic* earnings. And so the entire system carries on from age to age, from *yuga* to *juga.* The *gurus* of *Dera Beas* recognized that there are three categories of *karma*, *pralabdh karma* (destiny or fate *karmas*) *kriyaman karma* (action performed in this body) and *sinchit karma* (the store of *karmas*).

5.1. Pralabdh Karma

The portion of our *karma* which is allotted to this life and is responsible for our present existence. It is also called fate or

destiny. *Karmas* which have been received in one or more previous lives, and upon which this current life is based. This category of karma the individual must pay off during this life. He/she must live it out to the full level. There is no escape from it as a rule, not even if one has a *Guru*. The teacher can destroy it but does not, as a rule. That is because this kind of karma must be met and paid by the individual. It is associated to an arrow shot from the bow when once shot into the air, it must go where the force of the bow has determined that it shall go. There is no changing that, after it is once shot forth.[22]

5.2. Kriyaman Karma

The result or fruit of new actions performed during the present life. *Karma,* which we are creating now from day to day throughout this life. Now this category of *karma* may be prepared in any one of three different ways. We may suffer or gain its payment at once or at some other time for the period of this life.[23]

5.3. Sinchit Karma

Karmas which still remain to be taken out of our own stored-up lot and are to bear fruit in future incarnations. It may be associated to money deposited in a bank in a savings account. But in this case, it is drawn upon not at the will of the individual but at the will of the lord of *karma*. He may draw upon that and allocate it to be lived out at such times and places as he may determine. The individual has no say in it. Therefore, sages and seers have called this world the field of actions. Charan Singh writes, "In this world all our pains are due to our evil karmas in past lives, the consequences of which we are bearing now, and whatever moments we have of pleasure are due to our good karmas."[24]

6. Yoga

6.1. Hatha Yoga

The control of mind and achievement of the *siddhis (*psychic powers), primarily from side-to-side *asana* (physical postures)

exercise, such as control of the breath, etc. The *asana* undoubtedly exercises a very useful outcome upon the health.[25]

6.2. Raja Yoga

This seeks to concentrate and stagnant the mind by calm and natural methods of mental self-control. The importance in *Raja yoga* is upon the mind, rather than the body.

6.3. Ashtang Yoga

This yoga contains eight elements, first five – *yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara* refer to the body. The last three – *dharana, dhyana and samadhi,* refer to the mind. The objective of this yoga is to unite the soul into God.[26]

6.4. Laya Yoga

Laya means absorption. This yoga contains in the preoccupation of the mind in the celestial light. This is generally accomplished through the practice of *mudra.*

6.5. Karma Yoga

This is called the *yoga* of action. The essence of *karma yoga* is the ideal of duty well done and the spirit of detachment. It rejects the notion of renunciation and looking to the fruit of actions.[27]

6.6. Bhakti Yoga

The *yoga* of devotion, demands most of all to people of the emotional outlook. It rejects all rites, rituals and forces love only.

6.7. Mantra Yoga

This yoga objectives are mental powers, spiritual or cosmological. The repetition of certain formulas which are supposed to set up particular vibrations, especially when frequent with the mind fixed upon certain centers.[28]

6.8. Sahaj Yoga

It is also known as *Surat Shabd Yoga,* the *Yoga* of the Masters. The different *yogi* methods have been derived from the *Yoga* of

the Saints and changed, in many cases, to suit their own ideas. But the *Yoga* of the Masters cannot be changed, except at great loss.[29]

7. Vegetarian Diet and Abstinence from Intoxicants

Whatsoever is needed for human to eat is found in fruits, bananas, figs, dates, apples, pineapples, almonds, walnuts, groundnuts, coconuts and certain other dry fruits. Some food experts believe that it is not required to cook food. Boiling and cooking of vegetables terminate various energy-giving elements. Elements which cannot be taken without boiling, is actually not our food. Fruits increase mental and physical energy. Subsequently vegetables, pulses and cereals, butter, milk and wheat are considered to be the best energy producing food among cereals. Porridge of wheat, boiled wheat taken with milk, dried fruits, and sugar are more strength-giving than other foods. Milk, curd and fresh fruits are good foods. Pulses take long to be digested. They produce a certain acidic poison and should be taken sparingly.[30] The devotee is requested to take four vows at the time of initiation, encouraging to abide by them for lifetime. They are the commitments before the living *guru*, to make progress on the path. The four vows are as follows:

- To adhere to a lacto-vegetarian diet
- To abstain from alcohol, tobacco products, habit-forming and mind-altering drugs
- To lead a pure moral life while performing one's duties in the world
- To practice meditation with sincerity and dedication for two and a half hours daily, as taught at the time of Initiation.[31]

8. Seva

The act of *seva* (service) is one of the methods by which a devotee can attain glory in the eyes of God/*guru*. An individual who renders no service to mankind cannot hope to accomplish anything in this world. One who does not serve his fellow beings is insignificant. There are four kinds of seva:

- Physical or manual service – rendered with the body
- Service with wealth
- Service rendered by mind
- Service rendered by soul.[32]

9. Naamdaan/Initiation

Receiving *naam*; the ceremony where the *guru* instructs the disciple into the techniques necessary for *Shabd* meditation. The term "initiate" is derived from the Latin word *initiare,* which means to begin or start something new. The word initiation therefore indicates that an individual is in a process of a new practice on this spiritual path.

10. Death

After death mankind goes into four distinct classes or groups; and the reason is that each of these four groups meet with a different kind of experience after death.

10.1. An individual without Guru

All those who have no *Satguru* are obliged to meet the emergencies of death unverified, unattended, categorically alone and helpless under the law of their own *karma*. When an individual dies, he/she is taken by the messengers of death to the subtle regions where *Dharam Raj* (righteous judge), take a seat enthroned to judge every individual according to his/her punishments. There no one ever questions the judgment. No statement is made, no long-winded oratory for the defense, no pretended good blame of the trial. The prisoner himself/herself makes no complaint, and requests no favors. He knows he is getting justice and agreements to the judgment. He is then taken to that region or condition where he/she has earned his/her residence, be that good or bad.[33]

10.2. Insignificant Devotees

The second kind of devotees are the ones who have had the Initiation from a living Master, but have completed nothing in the way of spiritual exercises. As a result, they have made no progress

on the Path; yet they have a Master. For them after death, the Master meets them at death or a little before. That is, he makes himself visible to them and he notifies them that their time is up.[34]

10.3. Active Devotees

The third type of devotees are the one who have made good progress on the Path of the Masters, but have not yet achieved mastership by themselves. The entire procedure of death is under their control, and there is never a shadow of trouble or distress during the process of passing. Neither have they lost realization for a single moment. They pass out of the body as easily as one would lay off an old garment. In their day-to-day rehearsal, they have already gone through that procedure several times. These two classes never return to earth life again, unless it is so willed and well-ordered by the Master.[35]

10.4. Guru Himself

The fourth and last category comprises of the Masters themselves. When the time comes that a Master desires to leave his body for all time, he merely lays it down of his own will and steps out of it, as he has so often done before. His disciples arrange it and take it to the funeral fire. The entire progression, of this passing, as well as all environments connected with it, are under his own control, and there is never a momentary shadow of unconsciousness. He remains guru even through the procedure of his own death.[36]

Conclusion

In the RSSB teachings, God is articulated by various words, such as *Soami, Ekankar, Nirankar, Radhaswami, Akal, Nirala, Anami, Agam, Alakh, Sat Punish, Prabhu, Prabhswami, Hart Roy, Akshar, Parameshwar, Akshar Purush*, etc. Therefore, according to Shiv Dayal *Soamiji,* there are two kinds of names of the Supreme Being. They are *varnatmak* and *dhunatmak*. *Varnatmak* name of God is a word or phrase of some language, but *dhunatmak* name is not a word or phrase. It can neither be uttered by tongue nor heard

by the ears. It is divine melody or heavenly music is transcendent, yonder the senses and brain power. In RSSB faith, heaven is entitled *Sat Lok/Sach Khand,* it has three regions, and it is divided into four different planes. *Anami Lok* or *Radha Soami Dham, Agam Lok, Alakh Lok* and *Sat Lok. Radha Soamis* believed that human body is made of three substances. Solid matter (creation of body), *astral* matter (creation of mind) and Soul. Body has Microcosmic Centers called *Mul-chakra* (*gurda-chakra), Indri chakra* (*lingachakra), Nabhi-ckakra* (Navel), *Hrida-chakra* (Heart), *Kanth chakra* (Throat), and *Do-dal-kanwal chakra.* The *gurus* of *Dera Beas* recognized that there are three categories of *karma*, *pralabdh karma* (destiny or fate *karmas*), *kriyaman karma* (action performed in this body), and *sinchit karma* (the store of *karmas*). They also believe in *Hatha Yoga, Raja yoga, Ashtang Yoga, Laya Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Mantra Yoga,* and *Sahaj Yoga.* Vegetarian Diet and Abstinence from Intoxicants are the primary steps to become a devotee of RSSB. After and before, four kinds of *seva* are required from the devotees such as physical or manual Service, Service with wealth, Service rendered by mind, and Service rendered by soul.

End Notes

1 Jaimal Singh, *Spiritual Letters* (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1958), xv.

2 Singh, *Spiritual Letters*, xv.

3 Rai Saligram Bahadur popularly known as *Huzur Maharaj* was born in a *Kayastha* family of peeplmandi, Agra on 14th March 1829. Rai Ajudhia Prashad, *Jeevan Charitra huzur Maharaj* (Agra: Radha Soami Sabha, 1909), 3 in Agam Prasad Mathur, *Radha Soami Faith a Historical Study* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1974), 55. His father, Bahadur Singh was a lawyer or repute, was a highly religious and generous man. In academic career, Rai Saligram was a brilliant student. After completing his primary education in a *maktab Urdu* School, he went to Agra College for higher studies in *Persian* and *Arabic* language. He also studied advanced books on religion, philosophy and astrology. He took great interest in learning *Hindi* and *Sanskrit* and within a short time acquired high proficiency in these languages. But he had a great desire to reveal unto him the secrets

of absolute truth. Driven by an inner urge to seek a perfect *Guru*, for that he visited many Holy places in the country where he met many religious teachers and saints. His first marriage was short lived and his wife died after giving to a baby girl child. He married again in 1852. After that he was appointed as a second clerk in the office of Postmaster General, North-Western Provinces soon after he finished his studies. In 1871, he was appointed chief inspector of Post Office in India, in 1881 as the Postmaster General of the North Western Provinces with headquarters at Allahabad. He was the first Indian to hold this coveted post. But his long-cherished ambition was realized when he met *Soamiji Maharaj* in 1858; in whom he could discern a real guide in flesh and blood, as cited by Mathur, *Radha Soami Faith a Historical Study*, 55-57.

4 Jaimal Singh (1839-1903), the disciple of *Soamiji Maharaj* of Agra was told by his master to spread the teachings of the word in Punjab. After retirement, he settled in a deserted area on the banks of river Beas. Singh, *Spiritual Letters*, 290.

5 Gharib Das, a blind helpless sadhu, had a tiny group nearby Delhi, that later faded out of experience. Therefore, CAC oppose him to act as a *Guru*. This he did just to help himself and for his own personal gain. Chachaji listed many advanced disciples of *Soamiji* in it, but not Jaimal or Gharib Das**.** http://radhasoamis.freeyellow.com/page12.html, accessed on 12/10/2010.

6 Pratap Singh (1830-1909), youngest brother of Lala Shiv Dayal Soamiji Maharaj of Agra. Singh, *Spiritual Letters,* 294.

7 Karine Scomer and W. H. Mcleod, eds., *The Saints Studies in a Devotional Traditional Tradition of India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1987), 274.

8 Singh, *Spiritual Letters,* xv.

9 Singh, *Spiritual Letters,* xv.

10 Beas the name of an important river in Punjab comes from Himachal Pradesh. Beas also is a name of a small village near Amritsar, on the banks or the Beas River.

11 Lekh Raj Puri, *Radha Soami Teaching: As given in Soami Ji's Book Sar Bachan Poetry* (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1967), 32.

12 Puri, *Radha Soami Teaching*, 32.

13 Om Prakash Kaushal, *The Radha Soami Movement 1891-1997* (Jalandhar: ABS Publication, 1998), 97.

14 Puri, *Radha Soami Teaching*, 167-169.

15 Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul* (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1963), 172.

16 Charan Singh, *The Path* (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1969), 87.

17 N. A, *Seekers' Guide* (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, N.D.), 4.

18 Sawan Singh, *My Submission* (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1967), 84.

19 Charan Singh, *Truth Eternal* (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1977), 22-23.

20 Julian Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga* (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1939), 442.

21 Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga*, 443.

22 Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga*, 376.

23 Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga*, 376.

24 Charan Singh, *Divine Light* (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1967), 7.

25 Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga*, 508.

26 Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga*, 509.

27 Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga*, 509.

28 Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga*, 509.

29 Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga*, 509.

30 N. A, *Seekers' Guide*, 5-12.

31 N. A, *Seekers' Guide*, 5-12.

32 Singh, *My Submission,* 135-137.

33 Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga,* 387.

34 Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga,* 544.

35 Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga,* 545.

36 Johnson, *The Path of the Master the Science of Surat Shabd Yoga,* 546.

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Book Reviews

God at Work in the World: Theology and Mission in the Global Church by Lalsangkima Pachuau, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2022, pp. xiii to 172.

Jose Philip*

What is mission; how are we to understand and practice it? What are its proper means, methods, or goals? Questions like these are central to the task of theology and missions. A task, Pachuau argues, calls for careful (re)examination across along confessional, cultural, and regional lines, in the light of Global Christianity. A task he adeptly undertakes in 'God at Work in the World' (Baker Academic, 2022). At the heart of Pachuau's proposal is the assertion that the Triune God is at work in the world for its good.

Having introduced his bold (re)vision that theology and mission is inseparably intertwined in Chapter 1, Pachuau persuades that theology of mission is not a footnote in the discipline of theology, but its lifeblood, consequentially is the heartbeat of the Church. Drawing from the theology of Thomas Aquinas and the missional practice of Ignatius of Loyola, Pachuau argues that the mission of the church is better served located within *missio Dei*.

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Missions as an invitation to participate in *missio Dei* invites critical reflection on the theology of missions. *Missio Dei*, therefore Pachuau argues, is not only an appropriate starting point for the theological enterprise; it is the engine that propels the theological enterprise forward. The notion that missions find its source in the Trinity is not new, it was first discussed at the International Missionary Council. While the Council failed to answer the primary questions of its meeting, Pachuau observes that it paved the path for a clearer articulation of *missio Dei*. Reflecting of the work of Karl Hartenstein, Karl Rahner and Karl Bath, Pachuau points out that in the economic Trinity, theology of mission finds a firm footing to explicate God's redemptive work in the world. Moreover, given that trinitarian theology finds its missiological significance through the doctrine of incarnation, he explores the diverse biblical images and Christological motifs, dimensions and scope, of salvation in chapters 2 and 3.

The "incarnation of Christ" Pachuau argues affords Christian Theology the twin benefits of the knowledge of God and his mission. As the means God has chosen to accomplish his mission of saving the world, the incarnation is better studied as the redemptive embodiment of the *missio Dei*–the channel of God's mission in the power of the Holy Spirit. Salvation, then, one could argue, is at the heart of *missio Dei*; "the basic message and the raison d'être–of Christian missions."

While the notion of salvation is an essential aspect of all religious teachings, it is different for different religions. Even within the Christian scriptures and tradition, incarnation, and its relation to salvation (which is a mystery) is diversely expressed and differently theorized. That notwithstanding, critical to the doctrine of incarnation and salvation, and central to the biblical story, is the election of a people (Israel), and a person (Jesus Christ)—the scandal of particularity. However, careful reading of the bible will reveal that the election of the one (or few) was for all (or many). Election, in that sense is 'into mission.' Hence,

to use the word exclusivism with caution, is not to water down the exclusivity of the message, rather to offer hope to all.

A helpful starting point in our reflection on the notion of salvation, is to recognize its profound contextual and diverse nature. Moreover, if one were to unpack the different understandings of God's salvation carefully, they could be situated across a spectrum of redemption on one end and restoration on the other. Pachuau helpfully lays the spectrum out by proposing that "the entire theology of salvation encompasses four main themes: redemption, liberation, reconciliation, and renewal of life. Pachuau's four-fold thematic framing of God's salvation not only helpfully takes the entire Biblical Canon into account but also brings the theological discussions about salvation over the centuries into consideration – a necessary conversation if we are to benefit from (and not be polarized by) the diverse understandings of the salvation of the different traditions; ancient and contemporary. This invites careful reflection on the work of evangelism and the nature of conversion, as they are shaped by our understanding of salvation and vice-versa. This understanding is especially important as the biblical vision and scope of salvation is worked out in connection with other religions, and to do so, as Pachuau helpfully points out, it is necessary to hold in tension two seemingly contrasting biblical points—that God wants everyone to be saved and that there is salvation only in Jesus Christ. This 'Scandal of Particularity' shines the spotlight on the identity and mission of the Church. Pachuau explores this in Chapter 4.

The role of ecclesiology in missiology cannot be overstated. It defines how we engage the world and shapes what we become. This necessarily emphasizes the all-important task of exploring our ecclesial identity ecumenically. The fruit of exploring the ecclesiological shaping of missiology in an ecumenical context in the twenty-first century, Pachuau observes, is its missionary character unveiled by different congressional traditions and

denominations, and in its outworking (primarily in North America) as "missional church," or "missional ecclesiology." Therefore, arguing persuasively that the church occupies an irreplaceable position in God's mission of saving and blessing the world and being called to be God's witness, the church, "is mission before it does mission." This calls for further reflection on: (1) the church as the covenant people of God, (2) the church as the body of Christ, and (2) the church as the Spirit-led servant-herald of God's kingdom. These three together," Pachuau argues, "highlight God's missionary calling of the church," a theme he explores more fully in Chapter 5.

One of the critical ideas that Pachuau explores is church as sent, countercultural, communal, and public, necessitating we pay close attention to our situatedness. Given the multifaceted nature of culture and "cultural presuppositions also direct the trajectory of our faith," Pachuau's contextualization necessitates that the Church embodies (incarnate or enculturate) the Gospel in ways that remain faithful to the intent of the text of Scripture and relevant to the context of missions. This calls for a posture that enables incarnating in the culture to transform the community from within. The value of reflecting on missions in the light of *imago Dei* and *missio Dei* is not only that God is at work in the world, but his work is to be undertaken by humans in contextually relevant ways.

Our globalized, inter-connected world demands that we reflect not only on the historic confession of the Christian faith but its contextual nature as well; moreover, as Pachuau rightly observes, "[t]heological understanding and interpretations tend to become multifarious along confessional, cultural, and regional lines." Navigating this (relatively) new dynamic, then, requires a careful dialectic between text and context – Scripture and tradition, and social and cultural realities. Fundamental to its twofold task of theologizing and praxis, missiology should remain a "dialogue" between God, God's word, and God's church. This necessitates,

Pachuau argues, we assume: (1) God is actively engaging with the world; (2) God wants to save/redeem the world; (3) God calls his people to serve. In essence, the 3 lynchpin of the theology and mission is pursuing and participating in God's work in the world.

In *God at Work in the World*, Pachuau persuasively argues that out of his great sacrificial love, God, in Christ, continues to be involved in world by the power of the Holy Spirit, for its salvation. Pachuau constructs his theology of mission, not only reinforcing the bonds between theology and mission but also in casting a fresh vision for what it means for the Church to be co-laborers with Christ, empowered by the Spirit, exhibiting the sacrificial love of the Father, participating in *missio Dei*. In so doing he presents Christians with a resource to both appreciate the complexity involved in doing theology today, and profitably engage in missions.

Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age by Sallie McFague, Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1987, pp. v to 240.

Thanpam Zimik*

Epitome of the Book

In order to solve the difficulties of the day, McFague implores readers of her book to embrace a new worldview that is responsible, inclusive of all living things, and that acknowledges the interdependence of all life. She has grown more concerned with the idea that the dominant religious paradigms may be destructive to the continuation of life on earth in addition to being idolatrous and meaningless. The manner in which the Judeo-Christian triumphalism imagery for the relationship between God and the world had actually increased the likelihood of nuclear war particularly concerned her. She addresses Americans especially, but she also addresses the white middle class Christians.

In McFague's constructive theology, various new conceptions of God are discussed while emphasizing ecological concerns. Her literary background has a big impact on her religious beliefs. Her primary strategy is to promote her theology using postmodern scientific thinking, feminist theories, process thought, scripture, tradition, and feminist concepts. She employs a number of methodologies in her theological articulation, including metaphorical approach, eco-centric approach, modelling approach, and dualism approach. Other important Christian ideas, such as eschatology, sin, salvation, the church, divine-

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human interactions, and ecological concerns are creatively reinterpreted by the author.

She first argues in her work that there is a narrow line to be drawn between a ghettoizing retreat by using obsolete models and metaphors and a retreat from all models into sterile abstract language. Instead, she chooses to experiment with the notions that the universe acts as God's body and that God is the world's mother, lover, and friend. Second, she uses both figurative and heuristic theology in this book, indicating that it was initially experimental and openly organic in nature. It also expands on her theology by picturing the connections between humankind, God, and the rest of creation.

Her proposal is to destroy the dominant models and the power they represent in order to replace them with new, modern models that put the power of love at their heart. McFague proposes the metaphor that the universe is God's body, His or Her manifest presence in all of space and time. She attempts to re-mythologize the gospel for our day by employing this metaphor. She employs a postmodern scientific perspective in this book. This is especially true of her view of creation as the physical manifestation of God. Her theology is constrained by modern science, which sees the church as the body of Christ. What McFague refers to as the "common creation myth" serves as the foundation for her theological development.

Her theological circle begins from two fundamental points. The sociological-anthropological defense of how people have survived on earth forms the basis of the argument. Second, it is grounded in science, encompassing cosmological models, environmental science knowledge, and scientific design principles. In fact, she used a variety of scientific model types to construct her religion. Theology can detach thought and life, belief and conduct, and words and their embodiment, according to McFague's perspective, if it becomes very abstract and academic.

Central Thesis of the Book

This book's central premise is that we experience God in the world, which implies that God is both universally immanent and globally transcendent. This book covered the following three crucial topics:

(a) Cosmology – Scientific cosmology and Theo-centric cosmology
(b) Anthropology – Holistic anthropology and ecological anthropology
(c) Theology – God-world relationship, Trinity, Body of God model (resource for a Christian ecological theology)

The image of God as our mother, lover, and friend was developed by her. She makes the case that we need to adopt an image that is centered on all of God's creation rather than the current anthropocentric one. She argues that science, especially postmodern science, can help deconstruct long-standing myths and reconstruct creation, creating new opportunities for re-mythologizing by changing the way we talk about the relationship between God, humans, and creation.

Theological Concern

According to McFague, the universe is God's body. Although she emphasizes her concept of the soul and body, of physical and spiritual reality as independent beings within our being, in this perspective, God is seen as the spirit of the body. Although she seeks to combine the spirit with the body in complementary ways, her cosmic conception of God's body has some problems. In line with ecological sensibility, we require God-models that express the ecological interdependencies of life.

In order to change the male-centered symbols, McFague looks for alternative traditions. She also looks for inclusive symbols while interpreting the Scripture. The following elements must be present in order for feminist theology to fulfill its mission and vision:

(a) Redefining feminist theology from a holistic perspective
(b) Reinterpretation of women's history from women's perspective
(c) Critically evaluating feminist hermeneutics
(d) Sources for feminist theology

Relevancy for our Context Today

According to McFague, adopting a holistic perspective involves acknowledging the value of everyone and everything in the world. She advocates biocracy rather than democracy in order to preserve the environment and promote peaceful coexistence. She is highlighting societal and ecological challenges. Natural Christian spirituality entails the release of the oppressed so that they can live as free individuals. And this spirituality must have objectives. This needs to be understood in the context of the oppression and repression that exist in our Indian society.

Strengths and Weaknesses

McFague examines the potential of God's creation from the perspective of all of creation being saved. The mention in Genesis 2:15, which discusses creation keeping, intensifies her concern for the environment. Overall, she urges liberation theologies to concretize or make tangible their choice for the oppressed, as well as academic theology to evaluate its own intellectual presuppositions.

The specific relationships that should be obtained between scientific reflection and the fundamental language of metaphor and parable are left unanswered as she takes a diversion to explain her theology in the light of the cosmos as the body of God, God as mother, lover, and friend. She must address the dominance of women, the dominance of our earth, and the marginalization of so many people in the creation of her theology. In light of the Trinity formula, her metaphorical interpretation of the universe as the body of God becomes controversial. She refrained from discussing the Trinity's deeper significance in respect to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

McFague is a theologian who developed a metaphorical theology that she later framed in terms of our interaction with the rest of the universe. Her approach to metaphorical analysis enables us to consider Christianity from a different perspective. McFague must examine the salvation of all of creation because of her profound affection for the natural world. We must change our minds, spirits, cultures, and social relationships in order for humankind to coexist in harmony with all other living things on earth.

Inter-Religious Relations in India: Challenges and Prospects by Rodinmawia Ralte, Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2021, pp. x+210, Rs. 750/- hardback.

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In *Inter-Religious Relations in India: Challenges and Prospects*, the author tried to show the importance of inter-faith relations in a pluralistic country like India. He presented the problems and challenges that are being faced and explained how far inter-faith relations have gone and most importantly, suggested some concrete ways in order to strengthen the inter-religious relations in India. The first chapter is about historical survey of Inter-religious relations in India both good relations and conflict that had existed since Pre-Historical India. It is found that the inter-religious relations and conflicts are caused by political quest. The second chapter is also historical account of inter-religious relations in India. However, the scene is based on nineteenth and the following. The third chapter is about attempts from different religious communities towards inter-religious relations and the fourth chapter is about the contributions of modern Indian Gurus towards inter-faith relations. All these talked about their effort to bring unity and harmony towards other religious community in India and also learning and adapting positive attitude from one another. The fifth chapter is about interpretation of Jesus Christ of the Indian Gurus that are considered significant in inter-religious relations for peace and harmony; the author does not find it necessary the understanding and interpretation of Jesus to the Gurus, and gave more importance to the inter-religious relations that the Gurus formulate through Jesus. The sixth chapter is about the Christian contribution particularly the evangelicals' contribution towards inter-faith relations. Christian evangelists are seen to be exclusive at the beginning but are more open and active towards other religions in the form of dialogue with the passage of time. The seventh chapter is a suggestion from the author towards inter-faith dialogue. He suggested four-tiers of dialogue where some are effective and some are not. All the dialogues are important in their own way, yet, the reason for having dialogue is for the prosperity and unity of the dialogue, the third and fourth tiers are seen as more important. In the eighth chapter, the author contributed his idea or viewpoint towards inter-religious relations. Six points are given by the author which are necessary to the society in general and Christians in particular that will enable and strengthen the inter-religious relations in the country.

Some of the central themes that we can draw from the book are togetherness, unity, and belongingness in the midst of differences. The book tells us that many attempts have been done and are going on under intellectuals and scholars for the inter-religious relations where one such attempt is the dialogue.

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The author recognizes the importance of dialogue even though it is seen as having less impact to the society. The inter-religious conflict which has existed since pre-historical India has not been healed but more wounds are seen added without any solution. The author is seen concerned for this and suggests his ideas. He even suggested and expressed more of the dialogue into four tiers, some of which are in practice and some, rarely found. His analysis towards positive inter-faith relations also includes understanding along with the differences, unity in diversity, and love that will secure and create positive relations among the different religions.

There are some subjects that readers might have different views in understanding and comprehending the knowledge that the author had portrayed, for which the author can bring more clarification or correction if needed so. Firstly, the author talked about "Hindus and the so-called 'Foreign Religions,'" can be divisive since the religion of the Aryans which we know today as Hinduism can be also considered foreign like any others if we consider the Aryans to have come from central Asia. The difference the Aryans had with other invaders including the British was that, the Aryans were first big group to come and dominated, assimilated, and incorporated the minor indigenous religions that were in existence into their fold as part of Hinduism.

Secondly, the author mentions in the Christian approach to other religions about practical ways alongside dialogue for which I find the works of the Serampore trio very relevant as the author commented and suggested that 'one needs to have concern for the welfare and survival of the members living in the community.' The works of the Serampore mission towards the social injustice and the social evil present at that time was for the betterment of the society as a whole regardless of religion which is worth mentioning. Mentioning every effort done in the history would be problematic theoretically yet mentioning some as examples will be very accommodative and efficient. And lastly, the concept

of love that the author wants to portray is the *agape* love. His comparative study of *agape* love towards the other types of love and considering them wrong or negative is not relevant. As it is generally understood that there are many types of love but four types of love are commonly defined such as *eros, philia, storge,* and *agape* love, which have their meaning in their own field. Even if all types of love fall on the same umbrella term 'love,' the definition that fits *agape* love does not necessarily have to fit *eros* love or *philia* love or any other and vice versa.

Apart from the above comments, I find the book very resourceful as it is well presented for which I also congratulate the author. His concern for the society as to bring peace and harmony among the different religions of the country is expressed in this book which is genuinely appreciated and respected. The vast knowledge and the scholarship of Rev. Dr. Rodinmawia Ralte are once again portrayed in this book. The well researched chapters and the vast exhaustive bibliography show his dedication in bringing out valuable source for the society in general to learn anew, not forgetting the index that makes it easier to find and locate particulars. It is certainly an immense valuable work for scholars and readers that want further research in the particular area and also, it is an additional gem for the field of religion as it meets the needs of theological students, students, teachers, readers, and the society in general.