

Indian Journal of Theology

Volume 66:1, 2024

Contents

<i>Editorial</i>	iii
1. Religio-Historical Experiences and Symbols, Socio-Political Developments and Radical Ideologies Facilitating the Rise of Sikh Religious Terrorism in the Punjab <i>Kailash Kumar Chatry</i>	1
2. Christians and Nation-building in India: An Appraisal <i>D. Isaac Devadoss</i>	28
3. Inculcating a sense of Wholeness to the Despair: Challenges for Christian Ministers <i>Lalhriatkima</i>	47
4. A Socio-Ecological Reading of Dreams in Joseph Narrative <i>Jonathan Vijay John</i>	64
5. The Economic Justice Challenge from the Book of Amos 5:21-24 and the Experiences of the Victim of Economic Injustice <i>A. Abeni Patton</i>	89
6. Comparative Study of “Born from Above” in Christianity and “Bhakti Marga” in Hinduism <i>Lalramnghamawia</i>	99

Book Reviews 123

1. *A Compendium of Christian Theology: A Holistic Approach*
by Chul Ho Youn
Khamphershisha Kharmawlong
2. *Fashion me a People: Curriculum in the Church* by Maria Harris
Alemkala Imchen
3. *An Integrated Model of Christian Education in Postcolonial Perspective: A Subaltern Approach* by Shyam Kumar Basumatary
Pramod Chand Lakra
4. *Culture and Religion: A Conceptual Study* by Basil Pohlong
Ilino L.

Editorial

This issue of the *Indian Journal of Theology* contains six essays and four book reviews covering comprehensive topics ranging from religio-political and biblical research to contemporary issues involving pastoral ministry, politics, and social justice thereby promising the readers a productive engagement with the diverse contents.

In the first essay, ***Religio-Historical Experiences and Symbols, Socio-Political Developments and Radical Ideologies Facilitating the Rise of Sikh Religious Terrorism in the Punjab***, Kailash Kumar Chatry takes into account the role of radical Sikh religious ideologies as an important motivating factor in the rise of Sikh terrorism. He reviews the origin and development of Sikhism, Sikh community and Sikh religious symbols, and explains and assesses how religio-historical experiences and symbols and socio-political developments facilitate an environment for rise and sustenance of Sikh religious terrorism in the Punjab in the early 1980s.

In ***Christians and Nation-building in India: An Appraisal***, Isaac Devadoss provides a comprehensive historical account on the contributions of the Indian Christians towards nation-building. However, he sees many signs of disorientation and disintegration that are detrimental to the future of the Indian nation as well as its great Constitution. Therefore, he calls for the Indian Christians to re-call and re-claim their contributions towards nation building and invites them to re-think and re-work. For him, the church has to be at the forefront in upholding an all-inclusive perspective of life and be the champion of national solidarity, integrity, development, progress and wellbeing.

In *Inculcating a sense of Wholeness to the Despair: Challenges for Christian Ministers*, Lalhriatkima highlights the crucial role played by ministers in providing care to their members. He brings to light certain barriers that hinder Christian ministers from inculcating wholeness among their congregation, and provides suggestions that will help them instill and nurture wholeness in their ministry especially by proposing the use of an eclectic therapy/approach to counselling. He stresses on the need to bringing healing and wholeness to people's lives as the central part of the ministry of the Church and its ministers today.

In *A Socio-Ecological Reading of Dreams in Joseph Narrative*, Jonathan Vijay John studies the ecological issue of a seven-year famine in Egypt and approaches the three pairs of dreams entitled "ecological dreams" in Joseph Narrative (JN) from a socio-ecological perspective and makes use of key exegetical and syntactical tools of the text. He asks a very pertinent question as to whether the earth is viewed merely as an object and resource for humans or is treated as a subject with a "voice." His analysis of the dreams extracts the anthropocentrism embedded within the text while at the same time retrieves the voice of the earth and challenges the readers to dream ecological dreams.

In *The Economic Justice Challenge from the Book of Amos 5:21-24 and the Experiences of the Victim of Economic Injustice*, Abeni Patton deals with challenges arising out of Amos 5:21-24 with perspectives from biblical scholars, students and ordinary (theologically untrained) readers of the Bible. She focuses on the themes of worship, wealth, righteousness and justice. She brings out suggestions on how we can all can participate in bringing economic justice to the society especially by engaging in the holistic struggle for economic justice of the poor people in our society.

In *Comparative Study of "Born from Above" in Christianity and "Bhakti Marga" in Hinduism*, Lalramnghahmawia asserts that the concept of born from above

in Christianity refers to the idea of spiritual regeneration or a new birth in Christ. Bhakti Marga, or the Path of Devotion, is a spiritual path within Hinduism focused on cultivating deep love and devotion towards a chosen deity. The two concepts come from two distinct religious background and can have several similarities as well as dissimilarities. The author attempts to deal with the two concepts through comparative study in order to open and provide better understanding of belief between followers of both traditions.

Religio-Historical Experiences and Symbols, Socio-Political Developments and Radical Ideologies Facilitating the Rise of Sikh Religious Terrorism in the Punjab

Kailash Kumar Chatry

Introduction

So far different scholars have taken into account socio-economic and geo-political issues in explaining the cause of the rise of Sikh religious terrorism in the Punjab in the early 1980s. The arguments postulated by various thinkers and researchers have not taken into serious consideration the role of radical Sikh religious ideologies as an important motivating factor in the rise of Sikh terrorism. In this article, attempt is made to explain that in contrary to the existing explanations, religio-historical symbols and experiences and socio-political environment in inseparable alliance with radical Sikh religious ideologies inspired Sikh religious terrorism.

1. Various Theoretical Standpoints on the Rise of the Sikh Terrorism

There are various theoretical standpoints put forward by intellectuals on the rise of the Punjab problem. These opinions can be arranged into five categories: first, views expressed in the Government of India's (GOI's) *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*; second, socio-economic factors responsible for the rise of the problem; third, the conception of Sikhs as

* Rev. Dr. Kailash Kumar Chatry teaches Religions at Serampore College and NIIPGTS. He currently serves as the Registrar of NIIPGTS.

an ethnic nation gave rise to the separatist movement; fourth, political machinations of the Congress Party orchestrated the Sikh problem;¹ and, fifth, the communal factor, i.e., the Hindu idea of social system,² was involved in the rise of the problem. However, in the following sections I have critically analysed the opinion expressed in the GOI's White Paper and the argument that socio-economic factors are responsible for the rise of the problem.

1.1. Involvement of External Forces

External forces, particularly Pakistan, are blamed for the breeding and aggravation of the Sikh extremism in the Punjab in the Government of India's *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*. According to the GOI's White Paper, a strong nexus between the *Akali Dal* agitation and the "virulent communalism bred by extremism and the secessionist and anti-national activities of a small group, largely supported by external elements"³ gave rise to Sikh terrorism in the Punjab. The main objectives of the extremist violence, as identified in the White Paper, was to create division among the people of the Punjab (which might mean division in communal line) and destruction of common culture of the Punjab.⁴ The above estimation of the Indian government raise several questions: if the government was aware of the involvement of external elements, then, why did it take more than four years for the government to act against the Sikh extremists? Why was Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who was arrested on 20th September 1981 in connection with the murder of Lala Jagat Narain, released from jail? How were weapons smuggled in large quantities within the Golden Temple complex though there was a continuous presence of police and other security personnel outside the temple complex? There are no answers to these questions in the Government White Paper.⁵ The GOI's statements do not explain the real cause of the problem; therefore, it plainly signifies that these views are

presented only to defend the Congress government and to justify the military action against the Golden Temple.

1.2. Socio-Economic Aspects Responsible for the Rise of the Problem

Certain scholars, who consider economic factors as the main cause of the problem, are of the opinion that the Green Revolution wrought social tension in the Punjab, because the Green Revolution created rich, middle and poor classes of farmers.⁶ Hence, the rise of a rich class of farmers prepared a way for increasing competition between the rich farmers and the wealthy Hindu merchants in the cities; and in the competition the farmers were most likely to feel that their interest was at risk due to the Hindu dominated Central Government. In the meantime, the Central Government tried to manipulate the communal situation in the Punjab.

The argument that socio-economic aspects were responsible for the rise of the Sikh terrorism has two major problems: first, this argument tends to ignore the historical background of the socio-religious and cultural grievances of the Sikh religious community; and, second, it does not take into consideration the religio-political and linguistic struggle of the Sikh community from the time of Indian independence. Furthermore, researchers interested in socio-economic issues seem to rely on the recent socio-economic and political developments that began from the late 1960s, to explain the problem of Sikh terrorism. Therefore, the socio-economic theory is incomplete and unsatisfactory.

To understand the fundamental basis of radical Sikh religious ideology it is necessary to review the origin and development of Sikhism, Sikh community and Sikh religious symbols.

2. Historical Context: Guru Nanak and the Formation of Sikh Community

Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in the Punjab in 1469. The Punjab during Nanak's time was under the influence of both *bhakti* (the Hindu reformation movement in North India) Hinduism⁷ and Sufism (Islamic mysticism). The spiritual quest of Nanak could not be fulfilled by either of the religious systems because the mystery, according to Nanak, could neither be found in the *Vedas* nor in the *Quran*. For him the then existing socio-political institutions, because of the prevalent practice of rampant discrimination and corruption, were not delivering justice to the people. According to Grewal, a thorough inspection of Guru Nanak's hymns (*bani*) makes it clear that Nanak could find hardly anything approvable in the contemporary politics.⁸ Therefore, Nanak denounced contemporary beliefs and practices and "sought to transcend Islam and Hinduism by creating a new religion"⁹ for new social order that would be neither "Hindu" nor "Muslim." Furthermore, in such a social system Nanak determined that none should be discriminated as high (*uttam*) and low (*nich*) on the basis of one's birth.

The message of the new religious system, which Nanak preached, is centred on a formless Ultimate Reality that bestows grace upon all, "through the spiritual True Guru, who is the manifestation of His message to humanity."¹⁰ He proclaimed that those who seek to attain union with God (*Vahiguru*) have to follow three important rules – *nam*, *dan* and *isnan*. *Nam* is the meditation of "Divine Name." This comprises of "the total being and nature of Akal Purakh or God."¹¹ One might be able to know "about the fundamental doctrine which Nanak preached" by elaborating this one word.¹² This divine name has the power to release human beings from the cycle of birth and death; therefore, the devotee must realise "the reality of the *nam*" and endeavour "to bring one's own being into complete conformity with it."¹³ *Dan* is alms-giving, and *isnan* is living a pure life.

Among the three words *nam* is the nucleus and other two expand its meaning.

From the end of 15th century, Nanak's message began to attract a following from all walks of life and formed a community, originally known as *Nanak-Panth*.¹⁴ Thus, the early followers of Nanak were identified as *Nanak-panthis* as well as Sikhs,¹⁵ meaning learners. Nanak, before his death, appointed Lahina, renamed Angad,¹⁶ his successor and the second guru from among his closest followers for the perpetuation, guidance and development of the Sikh community and Sikh faith. The line of human gurus continued till the life time of the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), who finally closed the era of human gurus.

2.1. Transformation of Sikhism: Formation of *Khalsa Panth*

As time passed by, the followers of Sikh faith began to increase and by the time of Guru Arjun (1563-1606), the fifth guru, Sikhism was rooted firmly in the central districts of the Punjab. This development, the increasing number of Sikh followers, initiated the building of *Harimandir* (the Golden Temple) in Amritsar and the compilation of the *Adi Granth* (Sikh Holy Scripture) to mark and formalize the growth of the Sikh community. But the progress and spread of the Sikh faith was not acceptable to the Muslim Emperor, Jahangir. Therefore, to frustrate the spread of Sikhism and the growing popularity of the guru himself, the Emperor arrested Guru Arjun and ordered him to be "put to death with torture" in 1606.¹⁷ The execution of Guru Arjun was the turning point in the history of Sikh faith. This incident was the genesis of the "transformation of Sikhism from pacifist reformers to the militant *Khalsa*."¹⁸

The process of change in Sikhism was inaugurated by the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind (1595-1644). The young Hargobind sat on his father's seat "with two swords", one symbolizing spiritual (*miri*) authority and other temporal (*piri*) power. To

encourage his followers in military activity, he built a fortress called *Lohgarh* (an iron castle), and the *Akal Takht* (the immortal throne). It was at this time that the concept of “saint-soldier” had emerged in Sikhism¹⁹ and made the Sikh *Panth* more than a gathering of the devotees. Thereafter, the guru exercised “an authority more expansive than that of his predecessors.”²⁰

The shift which commenced with the sixth guru reached its zenith during the time of Guru Gobind who established two new ordinances that became the basis for modern Sikh identity: constant and cruel persecution faced by the Sikhs in the hands of the Muslim rulers; regular attacks on the Sikh institutions; and, schism within the Sikh religious community owing to the rivalry for *guruship*. Firstly, he instituted the *Khalsa*²¹ (pure) at Anandpur on the first of *Baisakh* (New Year) in 1699; and secondly, he “gave the institution of *Guruship* a permanent and abiding character by vesting in it the immortality of the *Granth*.”²² These acts of Guru Gobind had provided a concrete model for unity of the Sikh community in the face of both internal (factionalism within Sikhism) and external challenges.

The *Khalsa* was a new community that would unflinchingly take up the responsibility of defence of the Sikhs. Meanwhile, Guru Gobind prescribed five symbols (known as the Five *Ks* – *kes*, *kangha*, *kach*, *kara* and *kirpan*²³) to be kept by the *Khalsa* to uphold distinct Sikh identity. Among the five symbols, *kes* (wearing unshorn hair and beard)²⁴ symbolizes ascetic character of a person because from antiquity Indian ascetics have been accustomed of keeping unshorn hair, whereas *kach*, *kara* and *kirpan* symbolize martial or militant feature. Within very short period, the *Khalsa Panth* gave birth to thousands of “bearded, beturbanned, fully armed” people, who possessed “a crusader’s zeal to build a new commonwealth.”²⁵

The purpose of instituting the *Khalsa Panth* could not be more than the establishment of the kingdom of the Immortal God (*Vahiguru*), i.e., the realm of spiritual sovereignty –

according to Banerjee, “neither the *Bachittar Natak*” (Guru Gobind’s Autobiography) “nor the *Zafarnama*” (Epistle of Victory) contains any proof that Guru Gobind intended or foretold “the establishment of the temporal sovereignty of the *Panth*.”²⁶ However, the episode of the sacrificial enactment and the baptism of the *Khalsa* at Anandpur, and use of weapons by the guru himself enjoined fresh religious ideals and values and generated consciousness among the *Khalsa* Sikhs to transcend the existing religious and theological perception in the given socio-political context.

2.2. Realization of *Khalsa* Aspiration

Guru Gobind, the innovator of modern Sikh identity, died in 1708. With his death ended the line of human gurus in Sikhism. However, the *Khalsa Panth*, his new innovation, began its new religio-political adventure. Banda Bahadur, one of the guru’s most trusted followers,²⁷ with the *Khalsa* army, started militant activity against the Mogul rulers in the Punjab. The original purpose of the armed struggle was to avenge the murder of the guru’s two younger sons and the death of the guru himself. This limited goal was soon expanded for gaining political sovereignty for the Sikhs. It was during this time the *Khalsa* first raised the slogan: “*Raj Karega Khalsa yaqi rahe na koi ...* (The *Khalsa* shall rule, no opponent shall exist).”²⁸ This aspiration of the *Khalsa* materialized (implicitly and explicitly) in two different periods of the Sikh history: firstly, during the brief career of Banda Bahadur’s military exploits against the Moguls, i.e., from 1709 to 1715; and secondly, in the period extending from 1769 to 1849. Banda could be the first Sikh leader to think of establishing a temporal realm for the Sikhs; however, the period of Ranjit Singh’s (1799-1839) rule can be termed as the golden age²⁹ of the *Khalsa Panth*. It was during this time the *Khalsa*’s objective that “the *Khalsa* shall rule” was fulfilled explicitly even though Ranjit Singh’s kingship, in real sense, was not a Sikh theocracy. According to Surjeet, Ranjit Singh’s kingdom

comprised entire territory between the Indus and the Sutlej. Though a monarch, Ranjit Singh was a benevolent ruler. He treated all religions alike, though he himself was a devout Sikh. This was the period of Sikh glory and it had its impact on the thinking of Sikh masses.³⁰

3. Identity Crisis and Sikh Resurgence after the Collapse of Sikh Empire

The political success of the *Khalsa Panth*, in actuality, concluded with the demise of Ranjit Singh. Within a decade of Ranjit's death, the Sikh empire disintegrated as a result of the rivalry among the successors of Ranjit Singh. This chapter of the Sikh kingdom was finally closed with the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 by the British government. With the fall of the Sikh Empire there began a gradual decline of Sikhism, particularly of the *Khalsa Panth*. Thenceforth, the Sikh religious community faced serious challenges from within and without.

Within the community there existed different sects - *Udasi*, *Nirmala*, *Ram Dasi*, *Nirankari*, *Kuka* or *Namdhari*, *Sarvaria*, etc.,³¹ and among them *Namdhari* and *Nirankari* were the notable ones. These sects, particularly the *Namdhari* and the *Nirankari*, differed from the *Khalsa Panth* on certain important precepts concerning the gurus and the Guru *Granth Sahib* because the *Namdharis* and *Nirankaris* acknowledge "a continuing line of Gurus."³² Often the members of these sects would not differentiate Sikhism from Hinduism. Besides, the Sikh community has been mostly divided into *Amritdhari* (baptised), *Keshdhari* (those who keep uncut beard and hair), *Sahajdhari* (those who cut their beard and hair), and *Patit* (impure/fallen) Sikhs. To be *Khalsa* Sikh, one has to be *Amritdhari* Sikh.

The main external force was the Christian missionary activities among the Sikhs. Soon after the annexation several Christian organizations, with the active support of British officials, began their missionary activities in the Punjab with the aim of gaining converts. Due to the Christian Missionary

venture many Sikhs, including educated ones and those belonging to aristocratic families were converted to Christianity and the Christian population began to grow rapidly.³³ Mostly Sikh leaders were alarmed as a result of the conversion of learned and aristocratic families to Christianity.³⁴

Consequently, prominent Sikhs felt that there was an urgent need to safeguard the purity of Sikhism and Sikh identity ordained by their gurus. Thus, they called a meeting of likeminded Sikhs in Amritsar as a result of which there came into existence an association known as the *Sri Guru Singh Sabha* in 1873; later on, other *Singh Sabhas* were established in different parts of the Punjab. Furthermore, in 1919, Sikh leaders founded the Central-Sikh League to achieve "immediate and long-term" religio-political objectives.³⁵ The objectives were: to rebuild the demolished wall of Rakabganj *Gurdwara* in Delhi; to put the *Khalsa* College in Amritsar under the management of the representatives of the *Sikh Panth*; to free all *gurdwaras* (in the Punjab and other parts of India) from the hands of the *Mahants*; and to motivate the Sikhs to take active part in the movement for India's independence. The League achieved the first two goals within a short time. Also, the urgent concern of the League to liberate the Golden Temple and the *Akal Takht* and to place them in the care of a representative body of the Sikhs resulted in the establishment of two important organizations, the *Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak* Committee (SGPC) and the *Shiromani Akali Dal* (SAD), within a year. These organizations were to play fundamental role in the Sikh history after 1920 (the year they were founded).

However, one of the most difficult challenges the resurgent Sikhism faced was liberation of *gurdwaras*. After the fall of the Sikh Kingdom the *gurdwaras* gradually fell into the control of "hereditary *Mahants*."³⁶ These *Mahants* neglected the Sikh religious duties and took hold of the properties attached to

the Sikh sacred places, and introduced extravagant religious ceremonies replacing simple form of the Sikh religious rituals.

The SGPC and the SAD, with the support of the Sikh League, began a non-violent movement against the British government and the *Mahants* to free their holy places. They organized and employed bands of unarmed Sikh volunteers known as *jathas* in the struggle. After half a decade of struggle and with the loss of four hundred Sikh lives,³⁷ the Sikh reformers succeeded in liberating all of their places of worship. This success could be termed as “a great religio-political victory” achieved by the Sikhs against the British government and the *Mahants* and their Hindu supporters. Finally, on 25 July in 1925, “the Sikh Gurdwara Act” was passed recognizing the SGPC. Since then, the SGPC and the *Shiromani Akali Dal* have been playing vital role in the Sikh religion and politics. SGPC represents the *miri* and SAD represents *piri* authorities of the Sikh *Panth*.

4. Post-1947 Sikh Issues

SAD and 57 SGPC played an essential role in the freedom struggle of India. However, the struggle of the Sikh community, particularly the *Akalis*, did not cease with the Partition and Independence of India.³⁸ The sacrifices the Sikh community made for the cause of Indian independence and the promises made to the Sikh community by the leaders of the Congress party Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, were simply ignored. Gandhi in 1939 assured the Sikh community that the Congress party would never betray Sikhs.

The independence of India neither solved the long-standing socio-religious concerns of the Sikhs, nor could the Sikhs “experience the glow of freedom” as assured by Gandhi and Nehru.³⁹ Instead, they became a minority under the dominant Hindu majority – in 1951 the Sikh population was about 35% and the Hindu over 62% in the Punjab.⁴⁰ So, after independence the Hindu community became the dominant majority in both the centre and the region. Fearing such a situation before

independence, Sikh leaders had suggested to Lord Mountbatten that, “either the Constituent Assembly should give weightage to the Sikhs in the new constitution or the Hindi-speaking areas of the East Punjab should be separated from its Punjabi-speaking areas.”⁴¹ The second proposal was totally unacceptable to Nehru and the first could not find room in the constitution of a federal republic with parliamentary democracy. Due to non-acceptance of their demand, the Sikh members of the Constituent Assembly refused to sign the draft constitution which was adopted on 26 January, 1950. Hence, the aspirations of the Sikh community remained unrealised and their long-standing problems unresolved.

Besides, the language disputes in the Punjab took a serious turn, and this further widened the relationship gap between Sikhs and Hindus. Though the government tried to deal with the controversy by implementing three different formulae from 1949 to 1966,⁴² the controversy deepened further mainly due to communalization and politicization of languages by the Hindu nationalists, the *Akalis* and the Congress. The government formulae failed because the *Arya Samaj* refused to accept Punjabi in *Gurmukhi* or *Devanagari* as medium of instruction in the institutions in those areas where it had its stronghold. The language dispute seems to have clearly divided the people of the Punjab along communal lines: the Punjabi Hindus, who were persuaded to opt for Hindi in *Devanagari* script instead of Punjabi, their mother tongue; the Sikhs, who strongly advocated for Punjabi in *Gurmukhi* script. The argument against Punjabi in *Gurmukhi* was that, *Gurmukhi* was the religious script of the Sikhs; and, therefore, to the Hindus “it was in fact a communally motivated demand.”⁴³

4.1. Demand for Punjabi *Suba* (State)

The fear of losing the importance of Punjabi language in the Punjab of free India prompted the *Akalis* to put pressure (from 1949 onwards) on the Central Government for the creation of a

separate Punjabi-speaking state in which Punjabi in *Gurmukhi* would be the official language and medium of instruction in the educational institutions. But the Congress party, though it was in favour of “reorganization of provinces on the basis of languages” before the Partition, began to seriously re-think the question of reorganization on linguistic basis after the Partition.⁴⁴ Hence, the demand of separate state on linguistic basis for the Punjabis, particularly the Sikhs, was unacceptable to Nehru and the Congress party for three reasons: that it was communal plot, because it was voiced by Sikhs; that it would make the Hindu-Sikh relationship more bitter, because the Sikh community would be majority in the proposed state; and that a section of central leaders envisaged a security threat in the Sikh-dominated state bordering Pakistan.⁴⁵ These arguments underscore the communal bias in Congress party’s policy.

4.2. Formation of the Punjabi *Suba*

The *Akali*’s demand for the creation of a separate Punjabi speaking state could not be realized during the life time of Nehru due to the opposition from the two fronts – Hindus of the Punjab and the Congress party. To suppress the agitation for a separate Punjabi speaking state (on the one side) and to pacify the *Akali* leaders (on the other) the Congress Party put forward a series of impracticable compromises. Therefore, the *Akalis* re-launched an agitation for a Punjabi *Suba* from early 1960s, and in the next five years they were emboldened by new developments: Nehru and Pratap Singh Kairon, the two chief political opponents to the demand, died in 1964 and in 1965 (Kairon was assassinated) respectively; the *Akali* leadership was taken over by Sant Fateh Singh whose idea “of a Punjabi *Suba* was more inclusive and cultural”; and Hindu opposition weakened due to growing impetus behind the *Hariyanvi* movement for “the creation of Hindi-speaking state in the south-east.”⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the suspension of a fast-unto-death by Sant Fateh Singh at the outbreak of Indo-Pak war in 1965

demonstrated the Sikhs’ patriotism towards national interest. As a reward for this patriotism, a Parliamentary Committee recommended the formation of a Punjabi *Suba*. Accordingly, on 1 November 1966, “the Punjab Reorganization Act (1966) came into effect.”⁴⁷

According to the Act, Punjab province was bifurcated into the Punjab and Haryana states and some mountainous areas were merged with Himachal Pradesh. At last, the “Sikh homeland” with a Sikh majority (60%) became the reality.⁴⁸ However, at the time of demarcation of boundaries some very sensitive matters such as the non-inclusion of Chandigarh (Chandigarh was made the capital of both the Punjab and Haryana) and several Punjabi-speaking areas (which were merged with Haryana) within the Punjab, and water sharing and language disputes were left unresolved. These issues became the ground of later disputes between the Punjab, Haryana and the Centre.

5. Economic Transformation and Its Negative Effect

In spite of political complications, the Punjab witnessed rapid economic transformation since mid-1960s due to “the Green Revolution” as a result of the process of modernization. From mid-1960s farmers began to harvest bumper crops of wheat and rice using “high-yielding variety”⁴⁹ of seeds, chemical fertilizers and modern agricultural machinery tools. This changed the Punjab from “a food-deficit state” into the “granary of India.”⁵⁰ In addition, many people from the Punjab immigrated to the Middle East and the Western world in search of job and other opportunities due to the open door for immigration to the outside world. Many of the immigrants brought back home fortunes earned in the foreign countries, and helped their families to improve their economic condition further. The Green Revolution and immigration changed the economic and educational map of Punjab in general and Sikh society in particular.

These essential developments wrought by the process of modernization not only transformed the Sikh society of Punjab

economically and educationally but, also had some negative impact. Increasing number of Sikhs began to neglect the visible Sikh symbols (the five *Ks*). Religiously-prohibited habits like smoking, drinking, taking drugs and watching and reading pornographic films and literature, smuggled in by the returning immigrants, were part of everyday life for many. Drinking and taking drugs not only impinged on the religious life of the persons concerned but also reduced the number of worshippers in the *gurdwaras*. These religious and social evils, most probably, caused deep concern among the religious Sikhs.

6. The *Akali's* New Strategy: Anandpur Sahib Resolution

Though the Punjab entered into the new era of economic development, the *Akali* leaders were not pleased because of their failure to secure the political power in the state. There were two key reasons for their inability to take hold of the political power – factionalism within the *Akali Dal* and the Congress government at the Centre. But, the Congress tended to be greater threat to their political success because of the Congress party's unfavourable policy towards the *Akali Dal*. Therefore, the *Akali Dal* devised new religio-political strategy at Anandpur Sahib, *Khalsa's* birthplace, to achieve their political objective. In 1973, at Anandpur Sahib, the Working Committee of the *Akali Dal* passed resolution generally known as Anandpur Sahib Resolution (ASR). The main objective of the ASR is the restriction of the prerogatives of the Central Government to defence, foreign affairs, communications and currency.⁵¹ A political settlement worked out on this line would provide suitable religio-political environment for the *Khalsa* to exercise dominant authority in the state. Besides, the ASR demanded the merging of left-out Punjabi-speaking areas into the Punjab; "economic reform in favour of agricultural sector"; and, "central assistance in the construction of power generation projects."⁵² During the *Akali* agitation (from 1982 to 1984) the

ASR occupied very important position in the socio-political "grievances" of the Sikh community.

6.1. Launching the *Dharm Yudh* (Righteous War)

In pursuance of the ASR, the *Akalis* planned to begin a new phase of agitation known as *dharm yudh* (righteous/holy war) as advised by the World Sikh Convention (held in July 1981). However, in September 1981, before the agitation was launched, they submitted a list of forty-five grievances to the Prime Minister with the prospect that she would address those concerns and find appropriate settlement. Accordingly, three rounds of meetings were held between the Prime Minister and the *Akali* leaders without any concrete outcome. After the last meeting, held on 2 April 1982, the *Akali* leaders returned "with the impression that Mrs. Gandhi had already made up her mind to let the issues wait."⁵³

Before resolving any of the Sikhs' grievances, Mrs Gandhi was keen on letting the work on the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal begin due to the imminent election in Haryana. This was the unilateral decision made by Mrs Gandhi in 1981 to please the people of Haryana for her party's political interest. Thus, the *Akalis*, with the support of Communist parties, organized *nahar roko* (block the canal) campaign in 1982. After a second *nahar roko* agitation, the *Akali* leaders finally decided to start *dharm yudh*, to pressurise the government to accept their political, religious, economic and cultural demands that are stated in the ASR. The agitation began on 4th August and rapidly gained momentum. Many *Akali* leaders and volunteers courted arrest, making it more difficult for the government to find room for them all in the existing jails in the Punjab. On 11 September 1982, a bus carrying arrested volunteers (prisoners) collided with a running train near Tarn Taran and 34 volunteers died on the spot. According to Jeffrey, the agitation "also produced 'martyrs' and further 'evidence' that Sikhs were 'second-class citizens.'"⁵⁴

Mrs Gandhi, instead of addressing the Sikh issues seriously, employed political tactics to buy off time. The *Dharm yudh* agitation became a mounting concern to her government due to its growing popularity among the Sikhs. To stop the agitation, before it took the form of wildfire, she employed the usual Congress tactics of negotiation without true commitment. She appointed Swaran Singh, a Cabinet Minister, to negotiate a settlement with the *Akali* on her behalf. Swaran Singh worked out a mutually agreeable formula with the *Akali* leaders on the issues like Centre-State relations, Chandigarh, river water, and the relay of *kirtan* (singing of hymns from the scripture) from the All India Radio.⁵⁵ A cabinet sub-committee, which was appointed by Mrs Gandhi to consider the formula, accepted it and Swaran Singh communicated that to the *Akali* leaders. However, at the last moment Mrs Gandhi seemed to have turned down the formula worked out by Swaran Singh.⁵⁶ This approach of Mrs Gandhi could have sent out a message to the Sikh community that the Congress government was non-committed and unconcerned towards the settlement of Sikh people's socio-political problems.

7. The Rise of Sikh Religious Terrorism in Punjab

The above reviews assess how religio-historical experiences and symbols and socio-political developments facilitate an environment for rise and sustenance of Sikh religious terrorism in the Punjab in the early 1980s. Besides, the preceding observations make it explicit that, in the Sikh ethnicity, the *miri* (spiritual) and *piri* (temporal) are so finely intertwined that it is not possible to separate them from one another. Such an intricate Sikh socio-religious pattern has been shaped by the process of religious and political transformation and the accumulation of both bitter and cherished experiences, undergone by the Sikh community, down through the course of their history.

7.1. Sikh Resurgence

The Sikh Community did not remain unaffected by the worldwide religious resurgence. The modern communication technologies like radio, television, telephone and newspapers made the people of Punjab aware of religio-political developments that were taking place in other parts of the world.⁵⁷ At the same time, easy and faster means of travel facilities provided opportunity for religious Sikhs to interact with the people of other faiths in other parts of the world.

From 1967, there began a movement for the re-assertion of Sikh religious identity – the Sikh community celebrated the tercentenary of Guru Gobind Singh in 1967 and quinqucentenary of Guru Nanak in 1969. During the mid-1970s, Giani Zail Singh, a Congress Chief Minister of the Punjab, gave a momentum to this movement by organizing the centenary celebration of the founding of the *Singh Sabha* (1873); celebrating the birth anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh; and organizing *Kirtan darbars* (elaborate religious performance) all over the state; and public functions were initiated with *ardas* (invocations) and Sikh rituals.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, it was Bhindranwale,⁵⁹ an obscure preacher who rose into prominence due to his religious zeal to revive Sikhism and to re-establish its pristine glory, who gave impetus to the Sikh religious resurgence from late 1970s. This religious zeal, which was cultivated from his young days in *Damdami Taksal*,⁶⁰ an influential theological institution for preserving Sikh orthodoxy, earned him popularity among the rural Sikhs of the Punjab. His initial mission as a religious preacher was to bring all Sikhs within the *Khalsa Panth* initiated by the tenth guru and to exhort them to renounce the evils of modernity.⁶¹

To carry out his mission, he would travel to villages and exhort people to stop smoking, drinking, taking drugs and disrespecting the visible symbols of the Sikh faith by not wearing them. He was able to establish a close relationship with the rural Sikhs of the Punjab because he spoke the

language they understood. In his preaching tours thousands of young Sikhs promised publicly to abstain from the above-mentioned 'evil lifestyle' and were baptised; and, they began to attend *gurdwaras* regularly and work more hours in the field. Because of the changes brought in the lives of thousands of people through his preaching mission, he was revered by the people as Baba Sant Jarnail Singhji Bhindranwale. He, unlike other religious preachers, tried to make no distinction between high and low castes.⁶² This *modus operandi*, which aimed to re-establish equality and Sikh brotherhood, earned him more praise and popularity among the rural Sikhs. So, in the eyes of his supporters, he was not just a religious preacher/*sant* (saint), but a modern messiah (liberator).⁶³

7.2. Bhindranwale's Theology

According to Bhindranwale, a true Sikh is someone who is formally initiated into the *Khalsa Panth*, who wears the five *Ks* and who refrains from all kinds of addictions. For him a true Sikh should not just be a religious pacifist, but he must be ready to fight in a righteous battle for the sake of justice, Sikh faith and Sikh nation. When Bhindranwale "exhorted his followers to action, he called for 'a struggle ... for our faith, for the Sikh nation, for the oppressed.'" ⁶⁴ Bhindranwale's exhortation suggests that the conflict between evil (the political power which oppresses the Sikhs) and truth (the Sikh faith) has already begun; therefore, all true Sikhs are obliged to participate actively in the battle. Moreover, the conflict is "a conflict between faith and the lack of faith" at a personal level, and "a battle between truth and evil" on the cosmic level.⁶⁵ In this cosmic battle, according to Bhindranwale, enemies arise "from all sides and in all forms" and they use various strategies to destroy the Sikh religion.⁶⁶ Since the enemy's target is to destroy the Sikh religion, all true Sikhs have to fight the battle against these conceived evil forces both for the Immortal Guru and for their ethno-religious nationalistic identity – not only Bhindranwale, but other radical

Sikh leaders too were seriously concerned of losing true Sikh identity. Therefore, by evoking "the image of great war between good and evil waged in the present day," Bhindranwale strongly supported the notion of *miri* and *piri* powers,⁶⁷ to fight the battle against the evil force. In the cosmic battle, evil ultimately will be destroyed by the grace and power of the Immortal Guru. Further, he constantly reminded his followers that the true Sikhs belong to Guru Hargobind, "the Master of *Miri* and *Piri*," "destroyer of armies, the valiant Guru, the great warrior, the great benefactor," and Guru Gobind, the originator of *Khalsa Panth* and "the Tenth King."⁶⁸

From the time Bhindranwale fell out with the Congress leaders, he began to preach anti-Congress and anti-Hindu rhetoric. His speeches clearly indicate that the Congress party and Hindus are not different from each other; they are two different manifestations of same enemy of the Sikhs. He called Hindus "*dhotian wale* (dhoti wearers), *topian wale* (cap wearers)" and "Mrs Gandhi *Bahmani* (Brahmin woman) and *Panditan di dhe* (daughter of pundits)."⁶⁹ Moreover, this demeaning expression of Bhindranwale refutes the Hindus' claim that Sikhism is not different from Hinduism because Sikhism is a branch of Hinduism. Further, the speech asserts the distinctiveness of religious and cultural identity of the Sikhs.

The Congress party, according to him, represented the majority Hindu community and worked for the benefit of the Hindus. He further argued that the Sikhs were discriminated against and victimised from the time of Indian independence by the Congress party and the Hindus. To corroborate his argument he cited the following illustrations: the Indian Constitution did not recognize the Sikh community as a distinct religious community; the Sikhs' demands, listed in the ASR, were not accepted; commitment of atrocities by police personnel against Sikh men and women (the death of 34 volunteers near Tarn Taran was repeatedly mentioned on this account); the dismissal of the

Akali ministry in 1980; the humiliation of Sikhs in Haryana during Asian Games in Delhi in 1982; and the Sikhs were called extremists by Mrs. Gandhi and militant Hindus because they carry arms (one of the five *Ks*) in obedience to the command of their tenth guru.⁷⁰

The above-stated discriminatory activities of the Congress government, according to Bhindranwale, were clear signs of slavery. For this reason, he urged the true (*Khalsa*) Sikhs to throw off the slavery from their necks. They had to achieve the ASR to get rid of this slavery. Therefore, he advised his followers to arm themselves with modern weapons and ride bikes instead of horses, rode by their ancestors, to fight against the enemies. Further, he exhorted them to disregard any government rule that would stop them from carrying arms. They were told that the ASR was their license to carry modern arms and to kill enemies of the Sikh community and the Sikh faith.⁷¹

Thus, violence to achieve the religio-political goal of the Sikhs was justified. However, Bhindranwale denied that he ever initiated violence, and a true Sikh, according to him, is “not supposed to indulge in violence but it is a different matter if one acted in self-defence.”⁷² An act of self-defence, he endorsed, should not be called violence.

During 1980-81, three high profile murders took place – *Nirankari* guru, Baba Gurbachan Singh and his bodyguards were murdered in Delhi on 24 April 1980; in September 1981, eighty-two-year-old Lala Jagat Narain, proprietor of the *Hind Samachar* group of papers, was murdered; on 22 December 1981, *Jathedar* Santokh Singh of Delhi was killed. Then, Bhindranwale was arrested on 20 September 1981 in connection with the murders of *Nirankari* guru and Lala Jagan Narain. In retaliation the followers of Bhindranwale killed four people and wounded eleven with Sten-guns on 22 September in Jullundhar; on 29 September, an Indian airline plane en route to Lahore was hijacked; two people were killed in the Chandigarh Secretariat

and a murder attempt was made on a leading *Nirankari* official on 16 October; a *Nirankari*, a Hindu politician and two policemen were killed in November. From this time Bhindranwale shifted his headquarters to the *Akal Takht* and his armed followers performed their terrorist activities from the temple complex. Besides, modern arms and ammunitions were smuggled inside the temple complex, and at the same time Bhindranwale, with greater force, began to make regular hateful speeches against the “‘Hindu government’ and the ‘Delhi *Darbar*.’”⁷³

On 14th February 1983, Sikhs were burned and publicly humiliated and their gurdwaras were desecrated in Haryana.⁷⁴ This incident led to violence in communal line between Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab and Haryana. Apparently, the incidence of violence against the Sikhs further emboldened Bhindranwale, because his assumption that the Sikh identity would be lost in the sea of resurgent Hinduism proved right. His hateful speeches against the Hindus became louder and clearer. The tape recordings of his hate-speeches were distributed in the Sikh villages. Further, he made it clear that he opposed Hindu-Sikh brotherhood and friendship because of the violent incidents against the Sikhs. As per his calculation only 35 Hindus fell in the share of each Sikh. Thus, to strengthen the militant Spirit of his followers he said:

*Our guru, said one Sikh, ‘could fight, 125,000 (sawa lakh sey ek ladaoon). We have calculated that with a total Hindu population of 66 crores [660 million], it comes to only 35 per Sikh. Imagine only 35, not even a hundred. So don’t think of yourselves as weak.’*⁷⁵

These anti-Hindu speeches of Bhindranwale further escalated the terrorist violence. The violent incidents included bank robbery, stealing weapons, cutting telephone wires, burning railway stations, attacks on police personnel, bombings, killing *Nirankaris*, killing civilians and attacks on ministers and high profile officials.⁷⁶ Some of the prominent incidents were: killing of Deputy Inspector General, A S Atwal, at the Golden Temple on

25 April 1983; the cold blooded murder of Hindu bus passengers in October 1983; and the killing of thirty-five Hindus in retaliation to eight Sikhs killed in Haryana on 19 February 1983 due to mob violence against the Sikhs.

Consequently, on 6 June 1984, a military operation, code named Blue-star, was launched against the Sikh militants. In the operation, Bhindranwale along with his right hand men Major-General Shahbeg Singh and Amrik Singh and many of his followers were killed, some militants surrendered and about 200 escaped.⁷⁷ Although the operation⁷⁸ was successful in flushing out the militants from the temple complex, it was a serious political miscalculation. Blue-star rocked India due to two incidents that followed – mutinies in several places by young Sikh soldiers,⁷⁹ the assassination of Mrs Gandhi by her Sikh security guards, and the anti-Sikh pogrom in Delhi and other parts of India. The Blue-star Operation horrified and wounded the religious sentiment of the Sikhs in general; therefore, the Sikhs “were strikingly unanimous in their condemnation of Operation Blue-star as an unnecessary overkill.”⁸⁰

Conclusion

The emergence of Sikh religious terrorism in Punjab can be related to various ethno-religious issues, and among those factors most important one is the concern of ethno-religious identity crisis. An apprehension of losing the religious identity of the Sikh community has played a dynamic role in the innovation of modern Sikh (*Khalsa*) ethno-religious identity. However, the fear of losing their ethno-religious identity in the sea of resurgent Hinduism remained constant. The partition of the Punjab and partition of Sikh sacred places between two nations reaffirmed the conception that their faith and community is at great threat. This view was further substantiated by adverse socio-political developments after the Indian independence.

In such context, reaffirmation of Sikh ethno-religious identity, which was started in the late 1960s, gained popularity

all over the Punjab due to the involvement of both political and religious elements. The religio-historical symbols played a pivotal role in the reassertion of Sikh ethno-religious distinctiveness. In 1970s, there began the religious drive to persuade non-*Khalsa* Sikhs to embrace *Khalsa* identity, which has already been associated with the modern Sikh identity. The leader of this religious campaign was Bhindranwale. From 1978, he began to propagate his theology of just war against the enemies of the Sikhs. According to him, the enemies have been perpetrating injustice upon the Sikhs applying various strategies, because the chief purpose of the enemies is to destroy Sikh faith. Therefore, it is religious duty of the Sikhs to take up arms to protect Sikhism as commanded by the tenth guru. The radical religious ideology of Bhindranwale is based on religio-historical symbols, like *miri-piri* and the institution of *Khalsa*. Hence, this religious ideology provided strong incentive and cultivated militant spirit among many young Sikhs to take up modern arms for the sake of Sikh faith. This militant spirit was further boosted by the military attack on the holiest place of the Sikh religion. Although the Indian government, applying anti-terrorist strategies and military might, was successful in crushing Sikh terrorism in the Punjab in 1993, the spirit of Sikh terrorism continues to haunt India even today.

Endnotes

- 1 Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, “Sikh Rebellion and the Hindu Concept of Order,” in *Asian Survey*, 29/3 (March, 1989): 329-331. Henceforth Mahmood, “Sikh Rebellion and the Hindu Concept of Order.”
- 2 Mahmood, “Sikh Rebellion and the Hindu Concept of Order,” 336-340.
- 3 “Text of the White Paper on the Punjab Agitation Issued on 10 July 1984,” in *The Story of Punjab: Yesterday and Today* (Documents, Treaties and Exhaustive Bibliography), edited by Varinder Grover, Second Edition, Vol. III (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications PVT. LTD., 1999), 335. Henceforth “Text of the White Paper on the Punjab Agitation Issued on 10 July 1984.”
- 4 “Text of the White Paper on the Punjab Agitation Issued on 10 July 1984,” 335.

- 5 See "Text of the Speech made by Sh. Parvathaneni Upendra on White Paper in Rajya Sabha on 25 July 1984," in *The Story of Punjab: Yesterday and Today* (Documents, Treaties and Exhaustive Bibliography), Edited by Varinder Grover, Second Edition, Vol. III (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications PVT. LTD., 1999), 372.
- 6 Mahmood, "Sikh Rebellion and the Hindu Concept of Order," 330.
- 7 According to David N. Lorenzen, "In the context of north India, all Sikhs as well as almost all Hindus may be called followers of bhakti religion since their dominant mode of worship is one of 'devotion' (bhakti) toward a divine being." David N. Lorenzen, "Introduction - The Historical Vicissitudes of Bhakti Religion," in *Bhakti Religion in North India: Community, Identity and Political Action*, ed. David N. Lorenzen (New York: State University of New York, 1995), 1.
- 8 J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, revised edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 28. Henceforth Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*.
- 9 Gurharpal Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India: A Case-Study of Punjab* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press LTD, 2000), 80. Henceforth Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*.
- 10 C. Shackleton, *The Sikhs* (London: Minority Rights Group Report, No. 65), 3; quoted in Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 80.
- 11 W.H. McLeod, *Who is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1. Now on McLeod, *Who is a Sikh?*
- 12 McLeod, *Who is a Sikh?*, 2.
- 13 McLeod, *Who is a Sikh?*, 2.
- 14 The word "Panth" literally means "path" or "way". This term "has traditionally been used to designate the followers of a particular teacher or of a distinctive range of doctrine." McLeod, *Who is a Sikh?*, 7.
- 15 McLeod, *Who is a Sikh?*, 7.
- 16 W. H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 7.
- 17 Singh, *A History of the Sikhs I*, 60.
- 18 Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 80.
- 19 K.P.S. Gill, *Punjab: The Knights of Falsehood* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1997), 114.
- 20 McLeod, *Who is a Sikh?*, 24.
- 21 See McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, 14-15.
- 22 J. S. Grewal, *The Akalis: A Short History* (Chandigarh: Punjab Studies Publications, 1996), 87. Henceforth Grewal, *The Akalis*.

- 23 See Singh, *A History of the Sikhs I*, 86 (see Appendix 8)
- 24 Singh, *A History of the Sikhs I*, 86.
- 25 Singh, *A History of the Sikhs I*, 90.
- 26 A. C. Banerjee, *The Khalsa Raj* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985), 19.
- 27 Singh, *A History of the Sikhs I*, 102. (for further clarification see Appendix 9)
- 28 S. S. Gandhi, *History of the Sikh Gurus* (Delhi: 1978), 465; quoted in A. C. Banerjee, *The Khalsa Raj* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985), 32. This slogan, which is an important part of the Sikh prayer now, "was composed and first sung by the *Khalsa* during the days of Banda." Banerjee, *The Khalsa Raj*, 32. According to Khushwant Singh, "The lines *Raj Kare ga Khalsa* [the *Khalsa* shall rule] are not found in the *Dasam Granth* but are by tradition ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh. They are repeated every time after the supplicatory prayer, the *ardas*." Singh, *A History of the Sikhs I*, 90.
- 29 Harkisahn Singh Surjeet, *Deepening Punjab Crisis: Democratic Solution* (New Delhi: Patriotic Publishers, 1992), 13. Now on Surjeet, *Deepening Punjab Crisis*.
- 30 Surjeet, *Deepening Punjab Crisis*, 13.
- 31 See Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 24.
- 32 McLeod, *Who is a Sikh?*, 63-4.
- 33 See Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* (1839-1988), vol. II (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), 137. Henceforth Singh, *A History of the Sikhs II*.
- 34 Singh, *A History of the Sikhs II*, 138.
- 35 Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 157.
- 36 These *mahants* "lived as ordinary Hindus." McLeod, *Who is a Sikh?*, 88-9. According to Gurharpal Singh, the *Mahants* were Hindu Priests. Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 83.
- 37 According to Fenech, "One must, therefore, understand the Gurdwara Reform Movement not simply as a political or religious activity but as the stage upon which the ritual of martyrdom was played out." Louis E. Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition: Playing the Game of Love* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 227.
- 38 According to K P S Gill, independence of India only changed the masters of the Sikhs – "black for white". See K P S Gill, *Punjab: The Knights of Falsehood* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd, 1997), 35.

- 39 See Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 291.
- 40 Grewal, *The Akalis*, 112.
- 41 Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 182.
- 42 Paul R. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 338. Henceforth Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics*.
- 43 Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics*, 344.
- 44 Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 186.
- 45 Oberoi, "From Punjab to 'Khalistan': Territoriality and Metacommentary," 38.
- 46 Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 91.
- 47 Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 91.
- 48 See S. Bhatnagar and P. S. Verma, "Coalition Governments (1967-80)," in *The Story of Punjab: Yesterday and Today*, edited by Verinder Grover, second edition, Vol. 2 (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications PVT. LTD., 1999), 409; henceforth, Grover (ed.), *The Story of Punjab* 2.
- 49 Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 93.
- 50 Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 93.
- 51 Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 212.
- 52 Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 96.
- 53 Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 221.
- 54 Robin Jeffrey, *What is Happening to India?* (Houndmills: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1986), 164.
- 55 Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 222.
- 56 Mark Tully & Satish Jacob, *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's Last Battle* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1985), 83.
- 57 See Jeffrey, *What's Happening to India?*, 130-31.
- 58 Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 213. According to Tully and Jacob, Giani Zail Singh "went so far that more than one senior member of his own party complained to Mrs Gandhi that the Punjab government was communal." Tully & Jacob, *Amritsar*, 45.
- 59 He was born in 1947 in a poor *Brar Jat* peasant family in the village of Rode in Faridkote district, in Punjab. *Struggle for Justice: Speeches and Conversation of Sant Jarnail Singh Khalsa Bhindranwale*, translated from Punjabi audio and video recordings by Ranbir Singh Sandhu (Dublin: Sikh Education & Religious Foundation, 1999), i. Because of poor background, most likely, he had very little formal education.
- 60 See G.S. Dhillon, *India Commits Suicide*, 2nd edition (Chandigarh: Singh & Singh Publications, 1993), 138.

- 61 See Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 329.
- 62 The ideas up to this point in this paragraph are based on, Dhillon, *India Commits Suicide*, 138f; Sandhu (trans.), *Struggle and Justice*, i-viii.
- 63 Jeffrey, *What's happening to India?*, 164.
- 64 Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (London: University of California Press, 2003), 151.
- 65 Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalist Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 158.
- 66 Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, 158.
- 67 Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, 94.
- 68 Sandhu (trans.), *Struggle for Justice*, 336.
- 69 Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 330.
- 70 See Sandhu (trans.), *Struggle for Justice*, xxviii.
- 71 Sandhu (trans.), *Struggle for Justice*, 312-313.
- 72 Prithvi Chakravarti, "Sikhs are Split on Morcha Aims," in *The Story of Punjab: Yesterday and Today*, ed. Veriger Grover, second edition, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications PVT LTD., 1919), 440.
- 73 Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 357-8.
- 74 Tavleen Singh, "Terrorist in the Temple," in *Punjab Story*, ed. Amarjit Kaur et al, third impression (New Delhi: Roli Books Pvt. Ltd., 2005), 61.
- 75 Singh, "Terrorist in the Temple", 61.
- 76 Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 357-8.
- 77 According to Tully & Jacob "200 followers of Bhindranwale escaped on 3rd June when curfew was lifted," and "about 250 people surrendered in the Temple complex and 500 in the hostel complex after the two battles were over." Tully & Jacob, *Amritsar*, 184-5. Among the surrendered, no doubt, many were either pilgrims or temple officials and attendants. According to Gurpreet Singh, the "Operation left some 1,000 terrorists and 200 soldiers dead." Gurpreet Singh, *Terrorism: Punjab's Recurring Nightmare*, edited by Gaurav Jaswal (New Delhi: Sehgal Book Distributers, 1996), 2.
- 78 Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 227; Tully & Jacob, *Amritsar*, 183.
- 79 Gurpreet Singh reports, "More than 2,000 Sikh troops revolted in different parts of the country." Gurpreet Singh, *Terrorism: Punjab's Recurring Nightmare*, 2..
- 80 Dipankar Gupta, *The Context of Ethnicity: Sikh Identity in a Comparative Perspective* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 77.

Indian Journal of Theology 66:1, 2024, pp. 28-46

Christians and Nation-building in India: An Appraisal

D. Isaac Devadoss

Introduction

Nation-building is a continuous and ever-going process. The word 'nation' means 'coming into being' or 'being born'. It derives from the French 'nacion' and the Latin 'natio', meaning 'birth'. It denotes that 'which has come into being', i.e., 'people, tribe, kin, genus, class, flock', and the like.¹ Evidently, the meaning of the word is highly rich and it contains extensive implications in respect of the fundamental dynamics of a nation. In the general sense, nation is basically a geographical, social and cultural concept. The given piece of land is composed by a variety of items, like its surroundings, climate, sea, mountains, valleys, rivers, and the like. It doesn't quote any particular language, religion, ideology or culture as its own rightful setting. It includes varied traditions, customs, habits as well as ethnic and cultural traits.

The idea of the nation is often openly political than an ethnic group. It is a cultural-political community that has become conscious of its autonomy, unity and particular interests. The international system of the society requires political overtones in any nation for governing its interests. But, the political sense of the nation has to maintain balance with the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social, religious and other characteristics. The spirit of

group solidarity among the citizens is the essence of a nation. The core attribute of a nation is consciousness of the common and shared characteristics.

As far as India as a nation is concerned, recent times are not very encouraging. There are obvious signs of disorientation and disintegration. Selfish and divisive voices and attempts are becoming powerful and that is detrimental to the future of India as a nation as well as its great Constitution. Affiliation to a certain region, religion, caste, ideology and language seem to take the upper hand and the shared identity of Indians as citizens of the same nation appear to be systematically suppressed. In this scenario there is a need of the Christians in India to re-call and re-claim the contributions made by them towards the nation building. So, this article briefly records the contributions of the Christians towards nation-building. Economic, social, science and art development are important, but more important is the integrity of the nation that is India.

This article also analyses the present situation of the Christian institutions in India. In today's India the image of Church is also changing from one of benefactor to competitor. In this scenario, what is the role of Christian educational and other institutions? What is their place in the life of the country? What is the contribution they want to make? Does it want to compete or serve? These are the areas the Indian Christians need to re-think and re-work.

Nation-Building

'Nation-building' signifies constructing or structuring the national identity of a nation. It also implies strengthening the sense of solidarity as part of the nation. It includes the initiatives of the citizens as well as the measures of the state. Though the initial steps to forming the nation are monitored in a time-bound and formal way, nation-building, as a matter of fact, is a continuous and informal process, geared towards sustaining the nation in a progressive way. Nation-building

* Rev. Dr. D. Isaac Devadoss is an Associate Professor of History of Christianity & Mission at Bishop's College, Kolkata.

would mean keeping this process alive, in an all-round manner. Diversities of India are spread over climatic and geographical conditions, social customs, food tastes and dress habits as well as ethnic, linguistic, ideological, cultural, social and religious characteristics. Attempting constantly to remain united as one people while being diverse is to build up the nation.

Christianity and Nation-Building

The Christian concept of nation is fundamentally inclusive and wide-ranging. It has two dimensions – the context of the particular nation and the context of the larger society. Nations cannot be understood as isolated and self-contained entities that are cut off from others, like islands. They cannot be thought of as units that compete with others and progress, like parallel lines. Nations have to be inter-connected and networked as a global reality. Christianity entertains such a global outlook to what a nation is. All the same, it is true to the fact that every nation has a specific autonomy and has certain sacred areas of concern. Accordingly, the sovereignty, integrity, unity and solidarity of the nation are not to be violated in any way. Therefore, on-going efforts for strengthening the nerve of the nation are foundational to social wellbeing at the global level.

The most primary and characteristic Christian value is commitment to the weaker human beings in a preferential manner. Motivated by Jesus' model of mission, that can be summarized in the efforts for being on the side of the voiceless, the poor, the weak, the marginalized, the last, the lost and the least. Such a preferential commitment to the deprived sections of the country is geared towards nation-building in a major and admirable way. In the early 19th century, Christian social activities started in India. In the first half of the century, the social activities of the mission were directed towards bringing about three moral reforms in Indian society and emancipate individuals from the age-old superstitions and tyrannical power exercised by Hindu Religion.² Christian Mission addressed the inhuman activities

and tried to eradicate them from the above said sections of the people of India through various methods.

Christians and the National Movement

The Indian National Congress (INC) was founded in 1885 by the initiative of Allan Octavian Hume. The INC demanded that Indians should be given more freedom, more opportunities in administration, more room to administration themselves and more cooperation and understanding from the British for such aspirations. Indian Christians enthusiastically supported the INC and attended its annual meetings. The prominent Indian Christian leaders who participated in the national movements were Kali Charan Banerji, Madhusudan Das, G. G. Nath, Peter Paul Pillai, K. T. Paul, Pandita Ramabai, Trimbuck and Nikambe. From 1920 onwards the National Movement became vigorous. There were some missionaries such as C. F. Andrews, Jack C. Winslow who extended their support to the cause of the National Movement. In 1920, twenty-five British missionaries signed a statement to express their protest against the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh tragedy. There were Indian Christians who participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement started in 1920. Many Christians participated in the Quit-India Movement. Paul Ramasamy was one such person who was jailed for six months, later he was ordained as a pastor after the independence.³

In 1945, there was a suggestion to form a League of Minorities to safeguard the political interests of minorities. However, it was not acceptable to the Christian leaders. Even they rejected the suggestion of a separate electorate for the Christians. The Christian leaders were very clear that they were not to fight for their own advantage but to dedicate themselves for the common good.⁴

Education and Nation-building

The Christian community is known as the pioneer of modern education. It opened up educational opportunities to the victims

of social, religious and economic deprivation. All the facilities have been kept open to people of all communities, irrespective of all differences. Innovative programs in human development, like moral instruction, National Service Scheme (NSS), and involvement of students and teachers in development of the less privileged and rural based groups were introduced. Christians are originators of education as a private venture, with Government aid or without it.

When the European missionaries came to India to convert the local people to Christianity, they saw that people were ignorant and illiterate so they were in bondage of various superstitious beliefs and practiced so many inhuman customs. The missionaries were under the impression that unless they educate them it was not possible to bring them out from these bondages and customs. So, giving them education became a primary task of the Christian mission. The early Roman Catholic missionary Francis Xavier started a few schools for the local children. He also started the St. Paul's College at Goa in c1542.⁵

In 1707, the first Protestant missionary Bartholomew Ziegenbalg opened a school in Tranquebar, Tamil Nadu. Later in 1781, the East India Company started a Madrassa for Muslims at Kolkata where Persian was taught. In 1791, the Hindu College was opened at Banares where Sanskrit was the medium of instruction. In 1813, when the British Parliament renewed the Charter of the East India Company, Indian territory was made open for evangelistic and educational work. Many Elementary Schools were started all over India during the period of 1813–1833. The Serampore Mission established an Arts and Science College at Serampore in 1818. By 1821, the Serampore Mission was running 126 village schools. John Wilson, a Scottish missionary started a college at Mumbai in 1832. John Anderson established Madras Christian College at Tambaram in 1837, and Stephen Hislop started a College at Nagpur in 1844. The Noble College was established by Robert T. Noble in 1843 at Masulipatnam, St. John's College at Agra in 1853 by Thomas

Valpy French, and Findlay College at Mannargudi, Tamil Nadu by the Wesleyan Methodist Mission in 1862.⁶ Thousands of schools and hundreds of colleges were established all over India by the Christians throughout the centuries. The recent data shows that there are about 13,000 schools and 228 colleges run by the Christians in India.⁷

A good number of Christian colleges were granted autonomous status, which emerged as Deemed Universities. Roughly 25% of the educational services in India is contributed by the tiny Christian community. Christian missionaries had developed in India several languages, invented printing presses, written grammar books and dictionaries, written the first books in philosophy, religion, literature, language, art, culture, agriculture and cross-cultural areas. The Christian community in India has produced hundreds of scholars on other religions, languages, disciplines and secular themes. The contribution of the Christian community to nation-building through educational efforts is more than obvious and extraordinary.⁸

Health Care Service and Nation-building

The Christian community has been very much a pioneer in medical and health care services also. Care for the sick and the suffering is a service that is most vital in life and that has been at the core of the Christian mission which was backed by allopathic medicine developed in the Christian West. The American Board of Mission was the first one to send medical missionaries to India. Dr. John Scudder came to Chennai as a first medical missionary in 1836, later his two sons joined him in 1851. The London Mission started their medical work at Neyyoor in South Travancore in 1838. The American Baptist sent their two medical missionaries to South Bengal in 1840. The first doctor reached Ludhiana in Punjab in 1842. The Scottish United Presbyterian Mission began its medical ministry in Rajasthan from 1860 onwards. The medical evangelists Schoolbred and Valentine extended the medical mission to the villages and combined

vaccinations and other medical treatments. They established dispensaries and hospitals at Beawar, Ajmer and other stations. Similarly, the Basel Mission established hospitals at Calicut, Betgeri, Udipi and Miraj in North Karnataka from 1885. The health care service grew drastically all over the Indian territory. In 1858, there were only seven in all India but in 1895, the number had risen to 140 and in 1905 to 280.⁹

In 1870, Dr. Clara Swain, an American Methodist missionary started her work at Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh and established a Women's Hospital in 1874. Dr. Sara Seward, an American Presbyterian Mission missionary came to Allahabad in 1871 and other lady doctors followed. From 1880, the British un-denominational Zenana Mission, specially founded for work among women, established hospitals for women and children in different parts of India from Amritstar to Krishnagar and from Benares and Bangaluru. Agra Medical Mission Training Institution was started in 1881 by Dr. Valentine of the United Presbyterian Mission. The North Indian School of Medicine for Christian Women was established at Ludhiana by Dr. Edith Brown and Miss. Greenfield in 1894. In South India, a Medical school for women was founded at Vellore by Dr. Ida Scudder. It became a union institution supported by ten other missions.¹⁰

The Protestant medical missionaries joined together in India and formed a Medical Missionary Association in 1905. It was renamed as Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI) in 1926. Under CMAI, there are 330 institutions which include hospitals, health care centres and community programmes.¹¹ The Catholic Hospital Association of India was registered in 1944. There were 620 hospitals with 6 or more beds and 570 dispensaries were functioning under the Association in 1968. Later it had changed into Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI). Currently, CHAI has 3,570 Health Care Institutions and Social Service Societies. Of these, 2,333 are small health centres in remote areas, 628 of them are secondary and Tertiary Hospitals

mostly in small towns, and 5 of them are medical colleges. The CHAI network also has 780 care and support centres for People Living with HIV, children and youth with disabilities and terminal illness.¹²

The most noticeable work of the Christian mission was in the field of caring the leper and tuberculosis patients. In 1915, the United Mission Tuberculosis Sanatorium was established at Arogyavaram in Andhra Pradesh. Beside this, there are eleven other Sanatoria in different parts of India. Founding an Asylum for lepers has been a special field of Christian service. In 1874, the Mission to Lepers started as an international and interdenominational society at Dublin in Ireland. Wellesley Bailey, a layman started to take care of lepers in Ambala. By his initiative it became an organization and established centres for lepers in different places in India. It had 26 institutions and 34 homes and clinics exclusively for lepers. The larger settlement at Purulia, West Bengal and Dichpalli, Andhra Pradesh, had large farms and dairies and carried out well organized programmes of occupational therapy and educational and social activities for lepers.¹³

Christian nuns and women from Kerala initiated nursing care and later it spread to other areas. Until recently, nursing care was considered a menial job by other communities and was not attempted. In spite of the entry of nurses from other communities to this field, even now, over 35% of the nursing graduates hail from the Christian community. Besides, the spirit of service displayed by the Christian nurses and doctors stands unparalleled. The dispensaries in rural areas and hospitals in towns and cities established by the Christian missionaries have been revolutionary and outstanding and have been iconic symbols of building a developed and national society.¹⁴

Social Welfare Schemes

The Christian community has been running thousands of social welfare schemes in India through various NGOs. Most

of them have been supported by Christians from developed countries as a symbol of global solidarity with the poor and the needy in India. These schemes cover almost all areas of the disadvantaged sections. Several hundreds of Christian social service societies are functioning in the country with a focus on the poor and the down-trodden in the villages and slums. What is uniquely impressive about the Christian community is that 70% of its schools are in rural areas, serving the poor, especially the Dalits, the Adivasis and other disadvantaged groups. 85% of the healthcare institutions run by the Church in India are in remote villages that are totally or partially deprived of adequate healthcare and other infrastructures and services too. The Christian community has been a champion of equality of genders and women empowerment through diverse schemes, especially in villages. New methods of irrigation and crop rising were introduced by missionaries as well. As the real India is mostly rural, the grass root development contributed by the original and laborious service of the Christian community in the rural India has been historic.¹⁵

Missionaries were concerned about improving the economic status of the local people. So they started industrial and agricultural projects. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Mrs. Mault in Travancore, began teaching the Christian girls in their boarding homes lace-making, sewing or embroidery. The Basel Mission on the west coast started tile-making and textile industries. The Anglican Mission introduced carpentry, furniture making and other crafts in Nazareth, Tamil Nadu. The American Arcot Mission established an Agricultural Institute at Katpadi, Tamil Nadu. The Slater Poultry Farm was started by the American Presbyterian Mission at Etah, Uttar Pradesh. They introduced scientific methods and introduced varieties of seeds and superior breeds of animals and poultry. It had developed as a Christian Agricultural Inter College. Similar type of greater institute called the Allahabad Agricultural Institute was

founded in 1910 by Sam Higginbottom. Since 1932, it has been associated with the University of Allahabad.¹⁶

Women Empowerment and Nation-building

The Christian community has been a great supporter of the education and empowerment of women. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the most important social movement in Travancore Province perhaps in the whole of south India was the '*upper-cloth movement*'. The conditions of the women were appalling. Without education, moral teaching and real knowledge of the world, the majority of women spent their time mostly within the four walls of the kitchen. Particularly the social conditions of the Shanar women were deplorable. To mark their degradation, women were forbidden to wear any cloth above their waists, they were not allowed to carry umbrellas, wear shoes and gold ornaments.¹⁷

When the Christian missionaries arrived, they felt the pulse of these people and urged them to cover their bosoms with jackets. In 1814, Resident Col. Munro issued an order permitting the Christian women to cover their bosoms with any types of clothes they liked. The Christians of the Shanar community in addition to wearing jacket used upper-clothes, like the women of the privileged classes.¹⁸ But this was met with violent attacks from the other side. The women were beaten up in the public bazaar for wearing the upper cloth over their bosoms and the clothes were stripped from their bodies. Finally, troops were sent into the area to control the riot. The Travancore state sided with the Nairs who were the main rioters. The royal proclamation of 3rd February, 1829 stated, "as it is not reasonable on the part of the Shanar women to wear clothes over their breasts, such a custom being prohibited, they are required to abstain in future from covering the upper part of their body."¹⁹ The persecution of the Christian converts continued as a regular affair in the subsequent years.

In July 1855, the Missionaries presented a joint petition to the government of Madras giving details of the difficulties faced by the Christians. Thus, the Church turned over politically as an ally of British power, while facing opposition from the upper caste people and the Travancore state. The last major riot led by Nair against the Shanar Christians in South Travancore, started in October 1858 and continued till February 1859. The Dewan reported to the British Resident. Through legal sanctions the Shanar women received certain freedom. But their everyday social life continued to suffer from several civil disabilities such as access to public roads. Finally, on 24 November 1868, Dewan T. Madhava Rao drafted a proclamation granting the Shanar women liberty to cover the upper parts of their bodies. Thus, Christian missionaries created awareness among the women and empowered them to fight against the oppressive structure of the society.²⁰

Moreover, Christian missionaries worked against **Devadasi System, Sati** and **Female Infanticide**. The parents dedicated one of their children, normally a girl child, to a deity, and that child came to be named as '*Devadasi*'. Amy Carmichael (1867 – 1951) came to India in 1895 as a missionary of the Church of England Zenna Missionary Society (CEZMS). From 1900, she made Dohnavur in Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu as her base. In 1925, she ceased to be a missionary of the CEZMS. She formed Dohnavur Fellowship in 1926. It became the nucleus of various activities of social upliftment of girls from the clutches of the **Devadasi System** and adopting abandoned children.²¹

In 1818, the Serampore missionaries used their weekly newspaper in Bengali called *Samachar Darpan* and an English monthly *The Friend of India* to promote social reforms. **Sati** is the act of burning alive of Hindu widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands. The newspapers continued to keep the matter before the public by reporting actual cases as they appeared. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and a few educated Hindus also raised their

voices against it. In 1829, Lord William Bentinck issued an order prohibiting *Sati* in the East India Company's territories.²²

In 1802, William Carey was requested to prepare a report on infanticide at Sagar Island. Within a month he had gathered relevant data and submitted a report to the government. On the basis of his findings, on 20th August 1802, resolution was passed by the Governor General in Council prohibiting the practice of infanticide. The prohibition was enforced in the Provinces of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Banares.²³ At a time when women were almost totally kept behind the curtain, Christian missionaries opened education to girls and women. Women's education meant a lot more than literacy. Equipping women to take up leadership roles in the family, society and in various fields of specialization was the objective. The Christian community is very much ahead, in comparison to other communities, with regard to promoting equal dignity, opportunities and empowerment of women.

As an Indian Christian woman, Pandita Rama Bai (1858–1922) was the one who greatly worked for the emancipation of women in India. After equipping herself in England and America she returned to Mumbai where she was associated with the Prathana Samaj and became an advocate of social reform, especially the education and rehabilitation of child-widows. She opened the *Sarada Sadan* (Home of Wisdom) in Mumbai on 1st March, 1889 with the co-operation of the leaders of the Prarthana Samaj. She shifted the Home to Kedgaon near Pune. She rescued orphan girls during the famine of 1896 in Central India. She also formed a settlement called *Mukti* (Deliverance) at Kedgaon. *Mukti* developed into a great institution with a lot of well-wishers, caring for an increasing number of widows, girls left orphans in the successive famines of the period, and for girls of lower castes in need of help. Over a thousand inmates were given a variety of occupations such as dairy farming, weaving, and sewing, rope making and so on.²⁴

The status of women in the Christian community is significantly a lot better when compared to women in other communities. The community monitors lots of schemes for women in both rural and urban areas. Making all possible efforts for assisting half of the women in the country in being abreast of the men group, without doubt, is a remarkable way of building the nation at the ground level.

Christian Influence in Nation-building

The Christian community in many several major respects has been a source of inspiration in India as well as the world. Respect for life, regard for ethical principles and loving service of all are distinguishing characteristics of the Christian community. Several religious movements emerged from the Hindu community mainly in the 20th century, as a result of the interplay of socio-economic, political and cultural ideologies, especially from the Christian community. Brama Samaj, Arya Samaj and Ramkrishna Mission are some of them and they have immensely got influenced and motivated by Christian models of thought and social service. The Christian Community has also made a significant contribution to the secular character and ethos of the country. The interfaith concept that emerged from the Christian community has permeated very much into almost all communities in India, though in a more or less manner. Christian community continues to remain a positive and strong force for secularism, peace and communal harmony in the multicultural and multi-religious society that India is.²⁵

Social Transformation and Nation-building

The Christian community has been a powerful campaigner of social transformation. It stands out in the promotion of ethical values. The policy of Christians has been inclusive, irrespective of caste, colour, creed, gender or socio-economic status. The community took active part in the freedom struggle. Christian community is unique for the pioneering commendable service it

has been extending to the human society and the country in the area of education, medical care, social welfare, special care of the differently-abled, inter-faith relations, social wellbeing, and the like. It has been a promoter of the education and equality of women. The Christian services have been extended to persons of all communities, irrespective of community-affiliations of caste, class, ideology, culture, gender, religion, and the like, just as entry to the church is open to all. It has been spreading inter-faith perspectives and inter-community relations as well. It could be stated without exaggeration that the Christian community, though a tiny group in India, has contributed pioneering service, and continues to contribute in diverse ways and in a large range of areas, for advancing social transformation and for making a better and more harmonious society in India. Obviously, all the above-mentioned services undeniably state that the Christian community has been a singular champion of national solidarity, integrity, development, progress and wellbeing.²⁶

Fostering Interfaith Relations and National Integration

The current wave of inter-faith dialogue and relations is a Christian initiative in the world and in India. It evolved from the epoch-making Second Vatican Council in 1962-65. The Council made history in redefining Christian faith and relation with other believers in a broad and inclusive way.²⁷ Accordingly, it became obligatory for every Christian believer to interact with believers of other faiths, learn from them and to establish a fellowship with them as he or she makes the earthly pilgrimage to the same God of all. Indian Christian theologians were pioneered in this venture. Since then, a lot of initiatives have been taken by the Christian community in this direction. The NCCI is also constantly working for promoting interfaith perspectives, inter-community relations and social harmony. Organisations like Henry Martyn Institute, Interfaith Coalition for Peace, India Peace Centre, Christian Service Agency are working for religious harmony which play major role in the process of nation

building.²⁸ It is more harmonious and the Christian community has been ground-breaking and exceptional in this noble mission.

The Context of the 21st Century India and the Mission of the Church

Many new developments in India led to a feeling of threat on the part of Christian community in India such as the change in policy regarding foreign missionaries, the issue of conversion, the increasing restrictions and harassment by various state governments on the running of minority institutions, the violent attacks on Christians in various parts of the country. The rise of religious nationalism and the growth of *Hindutva* ideology led to these situations. The minority rights became an issue for the majoritarian politicians. Indian Christians often seem to define themselves first as minorities and then as citizen. This attitude alienated them from the rest of the community. To avoid this dangerous situation, minorities need to have a better relationship with the larger community. Equal treatment of all citizens and groups is a primary principle of any democratic polity. Eventually, it is the wellbeing of all the people of the country that lies beneath the minority issues.

Analysis of communal violence in recent years revealed complete apathy in manifest cases of violence and even collusion of bureaucracy and police with the perpetrators of crimes against innocent citizens. The states themselves communalized this attitude and practice of the state had been illustrated by the communal riots in Gujarat (2002) and in Kandhamal (2009) in Odisha. The contribution of the Christians to the nation building in India can materialize only through collaboration with civil society. The basic freedom of expression, movement, the right of choice among many political streams are shrinking. Strengthening of democracy in the country requires the contribution of all segments of society, including religions. Democracy is a mode of governance with accountability. The Church needs to be in the forefront in this venture of the nation.

Wherever injustice keeps growing, social contradictions get sharpened, and the gap between the rich and poor keep widening. During the last decade there were worst visible social contradictions and gap between extreme poverty and fabulous riches being developed in India. The quest for justice coupled with disappointment with the state on its outrageous neglect of the poor, the Adivasis and the Dalits has created a strong resurgence. The Church should work for justice to the poor, the Adivasis and the Dalits. It needs to address the basic model of development that is being pursued and the Church also should follow the model which may help the poor to get the economic justice within the Church structure.

In the context of rising communalism, inter-religious dialogue acquires new and crucial political overtones. Inter-religious dialogue is no longer a matter among religions; it is crucial in India for peace, harmony and security of the people and for freedom from violence. The Church needs to look at inter-religious dialogue from this larger perspective. Caste oppression is another source of violence so the Church should be outspoken to condemn caste and its evils in practice. There is need to go beyond a patronising approach towards the caste issue and view it as a national question of peace, harmony and justice.

Growing corruption in India is another big issue. Greed is the root cause of corruption. Greed sucks ever more people. It is also the catalyst of violence, since it promotes aggressive competition. The whole society needs to be educated with a new set of values such as solidarity, sharing, compassion, commitment to common good. The phenomenon of corruption needs to be viewed from the perspective of the subaltern groups. It is a matter of injustice and violation of human rights. The Church should fight against corruption and join the subalterns in their efforts to challenge corruption at the micro as well as macro level. It should also help to establish everywhere mechanisms to check abuse of power and erosion

of common good. Most importantly, the Church should promote transparency and accountability among all those in charge of governance. Unfortunately, the Church leaders are caught in corruption and it spoiled the witness of the Church in the public domain. Church does not give the best example for the country to imitate. The Church could make for a better and corrupt-free India and make its own functioning transparent and accountable.

The multifaceted situation in the country should lead the Church in India to rethink the nature of its presence and action. The early mission work was followed by the institution-building phase. These institutions have given great visibility to the Church and have contributed very significantly towards the nation-building. Those works were urgent response to the needs of the times, and no other agencies in the field. Now, the situation has changed very significantly. Christian institutions with long years of history are not clear about their mission today. They lack vision and qualities of leadership. Now there are many private agencies running schools, colleges and other institution, competing with Christians and challenging the services of the Christians. It is right time now to examine how these traditional works and institutions continue to contribute towards the nation-building.

Conclusion

In the larger context, religion is more of a social phenomenon. Its social character is inherent in producing fruits of values required for a meaningful social life. Those who are religiously tuned have to engage themselves all the more in interacting with all communities in the country and feel united as citizens of the same nation, irrespective of the religious belonging. The religious sense has to inspire and facilitate transformative process of becoming enlightened and empowered social beings. Building a progressive society in the country requires transforming religion into a blessing, by selective, purposeful and fruitful engagement with religion. Religion has an important role to play in the society. It has served solid foundations for

major civilizations and cultures of the world. Accordingly, the diverse religions in India are capable of contributing much to the building up of a nation as well. They can provide solutions to address social problems. Leaders and followers of diverse religions have to rise above petty feelings of prejudice, rivalry and indifference. They need to have an all-inclusive perspective of life. All religious traditions should have the basic focus on national solidarity and fellowship. An integrated approach to the nation and the society is the core spirit of religions and religious traditions in India have to prove their ethical fibre to this effect.

Endnotes

- 1 Angus Stevenson (Ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of English*, Oxford University Press (New Delhi, 1998), 516.
- 2 H. C. Perumalil and E. R. Humby, *Christianity in India: A Historical Perspective* (Alleppey: Prakasham Publication, 1972), 273.
- 3 D. Arthur Jeyakumar, *History of Christianity in India: Selected Themes* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), 71.
- 4 Perumalil and Hamby, *Christianity in India*, 283.
- 5 C. B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), 58.
- 6 Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, 185.
- 7 *The New Indian Express*, 12 August 2021.
- 8 M Ezra Sargunam, Samuel Jayakumar, S. Devasagayam Ponraj, *Christian Contribution to Nation Building* (Chennai: Mission Educational Books, 2006), 230-234.
- 9 Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, 206.
- 10 Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, 207.
- 11 Perumalil and Hamby, *Christianity in India*, 277.
- 12 *History-Catholic Hospital Association of India*. https://www.chai-india.org/history_who-we-are. Accessed on 09/04/2024.
- 13 Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, 209.
- 14 Binu John, *A Study on Christian Contribution to the Nation Building* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2001), 50-52.
- 15 John, *A Study on Christian Contribution to the Nation Building*, 55.
- 16 Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, 213.

- 17 R. N. Yesudas, *A People's Revolt in Travancore: A Backward Class Movement for Social Freedom* (Ernakulam: Kerala Historical Society, 1975), 5.
- 18 Yesudas, *A People's Revolt in Travancore*, 115.
- 19 Sheeju N. V. "The Shanar Revolts, 1822 – 1899: Towards a Figural Cartography of the Pretender" *South Asia Research* 35/3: 303.
- 20 Yesudas, *A People's Revolt in Travancore*, 224.
- 21 Jocelyn Murray, "Carmichael, Amy Beatrice," in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1998), 116.
- 22 Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, 154.
- 23 M. K. Kuriakose, *History of Christianity in India: Source Material* (Madras: CLS, 1982), 75.
- 24 Nicol Macnicol, *Builders of Modern India Pandita Ramabai* (Calcutta: Association Press. 1929), 100.
- 25 Rajendra K Sharma, *Indian Society, Institutions and Change* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2004), 271.
- 26 Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, 214.
- 27 Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II* (Bombay: St. Pail Publication, 1975), 669.
- 28 <http://ncciassembly2016.com/wp/wp/content/uploads/2016/05/preassembly-statements-all.pdf>. Accessed on 27th April, 2023.

Inculcating a sense of Wholeness to the Despair: Challenges for Christian Ministers

Lalhriatkima

Introduction

Christian Ministers today are faced with the responsibility of dealing with multiple issues of individual problems encountered by parish members in addition to their usual church programmes. Whether they like it or not, it is a task that comes with the vocation. Wayne E. Oates wrote that when people bring their problems to the Pastors, the choice "is not between counselling or not counselling, but between counselling in a disciplined and skilled way or counselling in an undisciplined and unskilled way."¹ This clearly suggests that Christian ministers are confronted with situations where they have to care for those in despair and cannot refuse counselling them. There may be several reasons why many people turn to the church and its ministers for help rather than to other helping professions. Among the several possible reasons, one could be that psychiatrists can be quite busy, and scheduling an appointment with them may require a lengthy wait, and the time spent with them may be highly expensive. Another reason why clergy are sought after for help could be that problems are seen by many, particularly in the past as basically religious.² Whatever be the reason, Christian ministers have an important role to play as

* Rev. Lalhriatkima is an ordained minister under the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. He has been working as an Assistant Professor of Christian Ministry in Serampore College from 2017 till date. He is also currently the Secretary of the Faculty of Theology, Serampore College.

a caregiver especially during crises. People come to them and expect help and healing from them. As such, helping people with their diverse needs and bringing wholeness are basic to Christian ministers in today's complex world.

However, many ministers often fail to provide the emotional and psychological needs of their people because of several reasons. Some are incapable or incompetent to tackle and deal with many of the problems which parish members bring to them. Others lack awareness of various treatments or therapies that might assist individuals in crisis situations. Still others could not manage with the many tasks shouldered upon them. It is due to these and several more reasons that ministers are not able to inculcate a sense of wholeness to individuals in need.

So, this paper attempts to highlight some of the barriers that hinder Christian ministers from inculcating wholeness while at the same time addressing the issue and providing suggestions that will help the Christian ministers in their effort to instill wholeness.

Meaning of Wholeness

The concept of wholeness suggests that one cannot understand the system by separating it into its distinct parts. In fact, the only way in which one can understand the system is by observing the whole parts.³ Therefore, to claim that the mind is 'holistic' implies that each element is related to, or integrated with, every other element.⁴ The concept of wholeness also carries with it the idea of "emergent properties." Emergent properties are "the properties of the system that exist only when the system is whole and functioning; conversely, if one takes the system apart, then the emergent properties no longer exist."⁵

Wholeness can have different meanings in various contexts and can be applied to various aspects of human life. It encompasses the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual well-being of a person. It is a state of being completely free of physical, emotional and mental wounds or injury with nothing

missing and everything complete, perfect, unbroken – a state of undivided oneness or total unity, or perfect peace. The quest for wholeness drives and motivates most people to develop further. Many find it in a variety of spiritual connections and study. Others find it in various forms of meditation. The discovery of wholeness is unique to every individual.⁶

In the language of the Bible, human wholeness may be described as "life... in all its fullness (John 10:10).⁷ Fullness of life should be enjoyed in the mind, body, spirit, and also in one's relationship with oneself, with others and with God. John B. Cobb believes that the idea of Christian wholeness incorporates "the idea of a strong and healthy body, strong and healthy emotions, a strong and healthy reason, a strong and healthy imagination, and a strong and healthy will, as well as a strong and healthy spirit."⁸ In other words, it implies a state of completeness, unity, and balance of a person's life.

Six Dimensions of Wholeness⁹

Howard J. Clinebell enumerates six dimensions of wholeness which are as follows.

- 1) Enlivening one's mind
- 2) Revitalizing one's body
- 3) Renewing and enriching one's intimate relationships
- 4) Deepening one's relationship with nature and the biosphere
- 5) Growth in relation to the significant institutions in one's life
- 6) Deepening and vitalizing one's relationship with God.

Holistic Pastoral care should therefore direct a balanced growth in all the six aspects mentioned above if wholeness is to be achieved. If one aspect is deficient, it hinders the growth of other aspects and therefore hinders the attainment of wholeness.

Barriers that Hinder the Efforts of Christian Ministers

Christian ministers face a myriad of challenges in their efforts to instill wholeness among the congregation. There are various factors that can sometimes hinder the efforts of clergies. It is important to note that the difficulties faced by clergies in nurturing wholeness in their parishioners are not universal and may vary widely based on individual circumstances, communities, and congregations. Here are some common reasons why clergies might face challenges:

- 1) **Changing Societal Dynamics:** The fast and constant changes that take place in the world around us affect the lives of everyone. With the fast change of pace, people are overwhelmed with busyness and therefore have little time and energy for religion and religious activities, their marriage and family, or even counselling.¹⁰ There is also a shift towards secularism, with less religious influence in both public and private life. Many people do not look to spiritual or religious leadership in the same way they did in the past. In addition, the growth of individualism places great emphasis on personal liberty and independence, sometimes at the cost of community and religious ties. Christian ministers face challenges when parishioners are less likely to look to communal or religious solutions for their problems.
- 2) **Stigma Surrounding Mental Health:** Wulf Rössler said, “There is no country, society or culture where people with mental illness have the same societal value as people without a mental illness.”¹¹ The stigma surrounding mental health issues often prevents individuals from seeking help. Many parishioners might be dealing with mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, or trauma, but due to societal stigma, they may not feel comfortable discussing these issues openly or approaching Christian ministers on matters related to mental health. Therefore,

ministers often find it difficult to address mental health concerns effectively within their congregations.

- 3) **Lack of Training:** Some Christian ministers lack adequate training in mental health issues or counselling techniques. Besides, not all are interested in the area of mental health and counselling. They offer assistance just because it comes with the vocation. Therefore, even though they offer spiritual guidance, they may not always possess the professional skills required to address complex psychological challenges.
- 4) **Pressure and Burnout:** Christian ministers often face immense pressure to meet the spiritual, emotional, and practical needs of their parishioners besides their regular tasks in the church. This pressure, combined with the emotional toll of dealing with the problems of others, can lead to burnout, affecting their ability to consistently provide effective pastoral care.
- 5) **Lack of Community Support/Support System:** The unmet human needs in every church and community are so numerous and varied that a Christian minister working alone cannot possibly meet more than a small fraction of them. The lack or absence of a strong and supportive church community can further make it difficult for individuals to experience a sense of belonging and healing. A minister, whose church lacks a sense of support might struggle to provide the support needed for parishioners to find wholeness.

Addressing these and other challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including ongoing education and training for clergies, fostering inclusive and supportive church communities, promoting mental health awareness, and encouraging open dialogue about faith, doubt, and emotional well-being. Collaboration between religious organizations and mental health professionals can also

play a crucial role in supporting both Christian ministers and their parishioners on their journeys towards wholeness.

Exploring Available Intervention Strategies and Psychotherapies

A variety of strategies or therapies are available for Christian ministers to facilitate the process of bringing wholeness to individuals within their care, provided they have proper training. It would be helpful if Christian ministers equipped themselves with some working knowledge about some of the therapies or psychotherapies available. This knowledge about the different psychotherapies would help them employ therapy or therapies based on the unique needs and circumstances of the individuals they are assisting. The goal is to provide comprehensive care that addresses the spiritual, emotional, and practical aspects of a person's life, fostering a journey toward wholeness.

Clinebell, in his book, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counselling* divided the different areas of psychotherapy into five categories from which Christian ministers could draw appropriate techniques for the particular needs of the individual. They are briefly highlighted as follows:

1) Stream 1: Traditional Insight-oriented Therapies.

This stream includes the work of Freud, and the many variations on the psychoanalytic insight model of therapy. Freud and the Ego Analyst, Alfred Adler, Otto Rank, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, Harry Stack Sullivan, and Carl Rogers are included in this stream.¹² Insight-oriented therapy, a type of psychodynamic therapy,¹³ helps people understand and express their feelings, motivations, beliefs, fears and desires. This understanding develops in the context of a therapeutic relationship. The central concepts of this therapy is based on the idea that psychiatric symptoms and patterns of behaviour stems from the kind of inner conflicts

between our primary sexual and aggressive urges (the id impulses) and the ego.¹⁴

- 2) **Stream 2: Behaviour/Action/Crisis Therapies.** This stream includes a cluster of diverse therapies linked by the common assumption that all the problems which a client brings to therapy are essentially 'unconstructive behaviour' resulting from 'faulty learning.' Using many different techniques like Skinnerian therapies, Albert Ellis's Rational Emotive Therapy, Aaron Beck's cognitive Therapy, etc., these therapies apply the basic principles of learning theory to enable people to unlearn 'ineffective behaviour' and learn more 'constructive behaviour' in its place. These behaviour therapies are also called 'action therapies' because of their emphasis on using direct, action-oriented methods to enable clients to learn new behaviour.¹⁵
- 3) **Stream 3: Human Potential Therapies.** Human-potential movement is the name given to a type of humanistic psychotherapy that originated in the 1960's and 1970's. Human-potential psychotherapy or Humanistic-existential therapies, as it is sometime called, emphasizes the growth of the individual through the use of encounter groups, sensitivity education, and primal therapy.¹⁶ This stream includes those therapies whose explicit goal is the actualizing of a person's full potential. It includes therapies like transactional analysis, gestalt therapy, person-centered therapy, logotherapy and body therapies.¹⁷
- 4) **Stream 4: Relational/System/Radical Therapies.** This therapy includes a variety of therapies which focus on changing social systems that would free the members to grow towards wholeness. Among these approaches are the various group therapies, growth groups, self-help groups, and radical therapies (including feminist therapist) as well as those therapies which seek to enable healing and growth in natural groups such as families.¹⁸

5) **Stream 5: Spiritual Growth Therapies.** Spiritual Growth therapy consists of those therapies which regard spiritual growth as central and essential in all healing and growth processes. Spiritual growth aims at “the enhancement of our realistic hope, our meanings, our values, our inner freedom, our faith systems, our peak experiences, and our relationship with God.”¹⁹ The Jungian, existentialist therapies, and pastoral psychotherapy are a part of this stream.²⁰

The Christian ministers, depending on the personality and condition of the person he/she is dealing with, can choose which technique is helpful from the different streams mentioned above. It is important for the minister to have a working knowledge of the particular theories which he/she will implement. At the same time, due to individual differences, there are times it may be useful to integrate components of different psychotherapies to create a unique approach which takes diversity into account. It is at this stage that I want to propose the use of an eclectic approach to counselling.

Eclectic Therapy

Eclectic therapy is a therapeutic approach that incorporates a variety of therapeutic principles and philosophies in order to create the ideal treatment program to meet the specific needs of the patient or client.²¹ Therefore, instead of insisting upon strict adherence to one particular approach or technique, eclectic therapy employs elements from a range of therapeutic techniques, with the goal of establishing a course that is adapted for the patient or client.

In a paper that was published on *Psych Central*, therapists John M. Grohol, described eclectic therapy in the following terms:

Eclectics use techniques ... from all schools of therapy. They may have a favorite theory or therapeutic technique that they tend to use more often or fall back

*on, but they are willing and often use all that are available to them. After all, the key here is to help the patient as quickly and as effectively as possible.*²²

Thorne, another prolific writer on eclecticism wrote,

*“... to collect and integrate all known methods of personality counselling and psychotherapy into an eclectic system which might form the basis of standardized practiced;... to be rigidly scientific... (with) no priority given to any theoretical viewpoint or school... (but) to analyse the contributions of all existing schools and fit them together into an integrated system... (that) combines the best features of all methods.”*²³

Different individuals cannot be confined to a single system. In order to treat a client effectively, the therapist must select from many systems those elements that promise to be most useful in given situations.²⁴ Therapy must match the personality of the particular client or the individual he/she is dealing with and cannot afford to neglect or ignore any therapy which is found to be effective.

Therapists who practice eclectic psychotherapy also accept the inherent worth of the client, and acknowledge that every client has a different cognitive, behavioural, and physiological level of functioning.

Therefore, eclectic therapy is the synthesis and combination of directive and non-directive counselling. It represents a middle status between the two extremes represented by the non-directive technique on one hand and the directive technique on the other. In eclectic counselling, the counsellor is neither too active as in the directive counselling nor too passive as in the non-directive counselling. He/she just follows the middle path between these two.

Of course, it is also important to recognise that Christian ministers need to commit themselves to the process of counselling. There has to be a focus and dedication to the personal integration within themselves. Yet, even though a focus on personal growth in the ministers is essential, there should also be a commitment to the pursuit of knowledge in the area of psychotherapy and its related fields. A Christian minister must remain informed and updated about the developments in different fields and techniques of counselling if he/she is to be an effective helper. This is where the importance of pastoral counselling must be stressed even among the Christian ministers since it is an important ministry that comes along with their vocation.

Pastoral Counselling

Pastoral Counselling is “a specialised type of pastoral care offered in response to individuals, couples, or families who are experiencing and able to articulate the pain in their lives and willing to seek pastoral help in order to deal with it.”²⁵ It simply means ‘counselling done by the pastors’ as opposed to any other professional counselling. Pastoral counsellors seek to integrate their counselling practice with the theology and spirituality of their faith community.²⁶ Since it is offered by the religious community, pastoral counselling is not a “profession but a function performed by persons in the profession of ministry.”²⁷ It must be noted that pastoral counselling is under the umbrella of pastoral care and is one of the ‘sub-type’ of that larger ministerial function of pastoral care.²⁸ Pastoral counselling often integrates psychological and theological theories along with the ministerial functions in an effort to address psychospiritual issues.

Seward Hiltner, one of the pioneers of Pastoral Counselling observes that the aims of pastoral counselling exhibit its true meaning when the following points are taken into considerations in the process of counselling:

- 1) *The ‘parishioner’ or the client feels that something is not right within himself/herself:* Although the client may not literally express this at the initial stage, there should be some ‘degree’ of uneasy feelings as the counselling progresses. If the client fails to identify these uneasy feelings, then it would be difficult for the Christian minister to help the client to help himself/herself.²⁹
- 2) *Counselling progresses not by “agreeing” or “disagreeing;” it advances by “understanding”:* When the Christian minister or the pastoral counsellor simply agrees or disagrees without trying to understand the situation that the client is going through, there is a tendency that judgement will be made without considering the reality. This may result in moving the client “further from understanding what is really the best thing under the circumstances,” and this will not help the client to understand his/her real situation.³⁰
- 3) *Counselling is to help another person to help himself/herself, not simply doing something for him/her:* Whatever creative and resourceful suggestion or advice is given to the client, there is a tendency that the advice or suggestion might not work because it was given by the counsellor and not the client’s own initiative. Since counselling, particularly pastoral counselling, is an attempt by the minister or the counsellor to help the client help himself/herself, it is always advisable to work on what measure should be taken with the client, and not depend wholly on the advice of the counsellor. It is also advisable to let the client understand that the counsellor could only help the client to help himself/herself.³¹
- 4) *Counselling does not pressurize or force the client to take action, but illuminates the client regarding ‘ethical issue’:* Even though the counsellor may be aware of the fact that the behaviours, actions or the thoughts of the client is

ethically wrong, it is best not to judge the client quickly and also not to use “moral coercion.” It is advisable not to force the client to make any commitment just because the counsellor has a good answer, but try to make the client realize that what he/she “sees and does” is up to him/her. This way a counsellor can help the client to “gain in capacity to be ethical.”³²

- 5) *The Counsellor should respect the client and should not try to “proceed through the use of a bag of tricks:”* In a counselling session, the counsellor should respect the capability or potentiality of the client to handle himself/herself and also should have ‘faith’ in the client. By “concentrating on methods as if it were a series of tricks and neglecting entirely the real emotional tone of the situation”, a counsellor may lose the trust of the client.³³
- 6) *Both the counsellor and the client should view the ‘situations’ that give occasion for counselling’ not only as a problem to ‘overcome’ but also as a means for ‘growth and development.’* The counsellor and the client should view the problems that occur in one’s life as an agent for ‘growth and development’. They should also trust that God can turn our suffering into a blessing and also as a constructive instrument for changing one’s life.³⁴

Clinebell argues that the goal of caring and counselling is to “enable people to respond to their crises as growth opportunities,” and the aim of pastoral counselling is to help “persons deal constructively with their immediate problems, make decisions, face responsibilities, and make amends for self-other hurting behaviour, as well as expressing, experiencing, and eventually resolving growth-blocking feelings, attitudes, and self-perceptions.”³⁵ When despair and crisis strike, it opens up an opportunity for individuals to struggle and learn new coping skills. And if one is able to achieve that, he/she develops ‘stronger resources’ for managing crisis in his/her later life. But if he/she

is unable to achieve it, he/she will be less ‘cope-able’ in later life when crisis hits.³⁶ For such a time, the Christian minister or the pastoral counsellor’s task is to act as a facilitator, to enable and help the client to help him/herself.

Applying the Principles of Holistic Approach in Pastoral Counselling

In addition to employing the eclectic approach, several principles must be noted while giving counselling to the despair. Here are some of them as listed by Clinebell:

- 1) The counsellor or the minister should have a goal of attaining wholeness which includes the six dimensions of wholeness that was mentioned earlier.³⁷
- 2) To be aware and affirm whenever necessary the ‘hidden strengths and potential resources’ of the parishioners or the counsellee.³⁸
- 3) The counsellor or the minister should wisely balance the use of both ‘caring and confrontation’ throughout the counselling session.³⁹
- 4) The pastoral counsellor should “hold the goal of growth-toward-wholeness in mind throughout the relationship and to articulate this as an expectation and challenge” whenever applicable.⁴⁰
- 5) The pastoral counsellor should relate the personal problems of the counsellee in the broader societal context.⁴¹
- 6) The Christian minister throughout the counselling process must be aware that the counsellee needs to develop his/her values and faith.⁴²

It is vital for a Christian minister to understand the importance of pastoral counselling in his/ her ministry and gives a serious thought to the way in which he/she practices it.⁴³ Pastoral counselling has its advantages over secular counselling in that ministers need not wait for people to ask or come for help. They can reach out to

those in crisis who usually accept them right away. Therefore, they may make use of this privilege to their advantage in instilling wholeness to those who need it.

However, there are some psychologists like Richard L. Kerbs who assert that ministers should not get involved in counselling (long term counselling) because there is a danger of role confusion and also the danger of misplaced priorities on the part of the minister. They cannot afford to get involved in counselling because they rarely have time to give counselling if they are to keep up with their other work as ministers.⁴⁴ This assertion is true and is coupled by the fact that many of the Christian ministers are not interested and are not skillful.

But in response to this, David K. Switzer, a pastoral theologian, said that even though long-term counselling would have been inappropriate, ministers cannot turn people away, as many of them are not in a position to make referrals because they are either in isolated rural areas or often deal with very poor people. In fact, they can be, in some instances, the most effective helping person when it comes to giving individual, marriage, and family counselling. In addition, he also argues that the minister, who is by virtue of his/her work, interacts with people in different types of relationships while performing various functions. So, people expect that their minister will engage with them in times of distress, crisis, problem solving and decision making.⁴⁵ People hope to find someone who will listen to them, understand them, whom they can talk to, and to whom they can find a “light in the midst of their inner confusion in which they find themselves.” They feel that with the help of the pastor they can discover “a new avenue in their marriage, in their despair, in their uncertainty, in their weakness of will – an avenue which they can take, knowing that the pastor is behind them.”⁴⁶

Conclusion

Every individual is subjected to some degree of pain in his/her lives. The level or the intensity of pain he/she encounters may

be different. However, nobody gets by without any pain at all, and it is not unusual for distressing incidents of the past to affect them physically, psychologically and spiritually in the present. Bringing healing and wholeness in people’s lives was central to the ministry of Jesus Christ when He was physically present on earth. As Jesus was preparing His disciples for His departure, He specifically instructed them to continue to do what He had done on earth. Therefore, bringing healing and wholeness to people’s lives needs to be central to the ministry of the Church and its ministers today.

It is at this juncture that we need Christian minister to step up and take on the task of inculcating wholeness to the despair. And to achieve this, we need our Christian ministers to be more trained and competent so that they can employ the available techniques and strategies to become an expert. Scott Floyd asserts that to become an expert “...necessitates that a counsellor takes risks, be involved in difficult cases, and possibly move out of the comfort of the counselling office.”⁴⁷ Unless there is willingness and commitment from the part of the Christian minister, the task of inculcating a sense of wholeness to the despair will never be realised.

Endnotes

- 1 Wayne E. Oates, ed., *An Introduction to Pastoral Counselling* (Nashville: Broadman, 1959), vi.
- 2 Douglas G. Burgoyne, “Some Basic Concerns for the Clergyman as a Counsellor,” in *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, Vol. XV/2 (Summer, 1961): 72-85.
- 3 Patricia W. Stevens, “System Theories” in *The Handbook of Counselling*, edited by Don C. Locke, et al (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), 181–195.
- 4 Andrew R. Woodfield, “Holism” in *The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Psychology*, edited by Rom Harre and Roger Lamb (England: Basil Blackwell Publisher Limited, 1983), 278.
- 5 Patricia W. Stevens, “System Theories” in *The Handbook of Counselling...* 187.

- 6 “Wholeness, Meaning and Connection” in <http://www.utexas.edu/hr/current/wellness/spiritual.html> (7th Nov. 2012).
- 7 Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counselling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth* (Thiruvalla: SuVartha Bhavan, 1984), 29.
- 8 John B. Cobb, *Theology and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 28.
- 9 Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counselling...* 32
- 10 Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counselling: A Comprehensive Guide, Third Edition* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 11.
- 11 Wulf Rössler, “The Stigma of Mental Disorders: A Millennia-long History of Social Exclusion and Prejudices,” *EMBO Reports* 17/9 (Sep, 2016): 1250-1253. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5007563/> (12th Nov. 2023).
- 12 Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counselling...* 394
- 13 Arlin Cuncic, “What Is Insight-Oriented Therapy?” in <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-insight-oriented-therapy-5211137> (12th Nov. 2023).
- 14 Robert A. Baron and Girishwar, *Psychology, Indian Subcontinent Edition* (Uttar Pradesh: Pearson, 2019), 510.
- 15 Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., *Contemporary Growth Therapies*, in <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-5-growth-resources-in-behavior-action-therapies/> (12th Nov. 2023).
- 16 “Human Potential Movement” in *Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology*. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/medicine/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/human-potential-movement-0> (12th Nov. 2023).
- 17 Richard Nelson-Jones, *Theory and Practice of Counselling and Therapy, Fifth Edition* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2011), 83
- 18 Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counselling...* 395.
- 19 Howard Clinebell, *Growth Counselling: Hope Centered Methods of Actualizing Human Wholeness* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 37.
- 20 Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counselling...* 396.
- 21 *Ibid.* 394.
- 22 John M. Grohol, “Types of Therapies: Theoretical Orientations and Practices of Therapists,” in *Psych Central* <http://psychcentral.com/therapy.htm> (7th Nov 2012).
- 23 Frederick C. Thorne, *Psychological Case Handling: Establishing the Conditions Necessary for Counselling and Psychotherapy*, Vol. 1 (Brandon, Vt.: Clinical Psychology Publishing, 1968), vi.
- 24 D. Smith, “Eclecticism in Psychotherapy,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology*, edited by G. Benner (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 337–339.
- 25 J. Patton, “Pastoral Counselling,” in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling*, edited by Rodney J. Hunter (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2007), 849–854.
- 26 “What is pastoral counselling?” in <http://www.pastoral-counselling.co.uk/pastoralcounselling.html> (12th Nov. 2023).
- 27 J. Patton, “Pastoral Counselling,” in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling...* 850.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 Seward Hiltner, *Pastoral Counselling* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1949), 20.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 *Ibid.* 21.
- 32 *Ibid.* 22, 23.
- 33 *Ibid.* 23, 24.
- 34 *Ibid.* 25.
- 35 Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counselling...* 36.
- 36 Howard Clinebell, *Growth Counselling: Hope Centered Methods of Actualizing Human Wholeness...* 56.
- 37 Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counselling...* 92.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 *Ibid.* 94.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 *Ibid.* 95.
- 42 *Ibid.* 95, 96.
- 43 Douglas G. Burgoyne, “Some Basic Concerns for the Clergyman as a Counsellor,” in *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, Vol. XV/2 (Summer, 1961): 72–85.
- 44 David K. Switzer, “Why Pastors Should be Counsellors (of a sort): A Response to Richard L Krebs,” in *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, Vol. XXXVII/1 (March: 1983): 28–32.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 Heije Faber, “Is the Pastor a psychotherapist?: A Discussion by a European Pioneer in Pastoral Care Prompted by the Taggart Report” in *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, Vol. XXVII/2 (June, 1973): 100–106.
- 47 Scott Floyd, *Crisis Counselling: A Guide for Pastors & Professionals* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2008), 187.

Indian Journal of Theology 66:1, 2024, pp. 64-88

A Socio-Ecological Reading of Dreams in Joseph Narrative

Jonathan Vijay John

Introduction

Along with Canaan, Egypt is a place having a significant ecological value. In the Bible, Egypt can be seen as an ecological centre with different ecological phenomena. Being one of the major power centres of the Ancient west Asia (AWA), Egypt was seen as a constant place of refuge during times of crisis and famine. Moreover, God's judgment through the ten plagues was a peculiar feature concerning Egypt when the Hebrews were in captivity. Egypt is faced with another ecological issue of a seven-year famine which can be found in the Joseph Narrative. Though the subject is rich in exegetical significance, it cannot be dealt with extensively. Hence, the current study will attempt to approach dreams in Joseph Narrative (JN) from a socio-ecological perspective rather than an anthropocentric perspective, making use of key exegetical and syntactical tools of the text.

1. Dreams in Joseph Narrative

In the JN, the author uses six dreams in his life from the beginning to the end which can also be seen as three pairs of dreams. The author begins by making use of the dreams to develop the plot "Sibling Rivalry" between Joseph and his brothers. Two dreams are dreamt by Joseph (Gen 37:5-11)¹ which increases the hatred of the brothers towards Joseph. Two dreams were dreamt by the

* Mr. Jonathan Vijay John is an Assistant Professor of Old Testament at Serampore College.

two prisoners (Gen 40:8-19)² where each had a dream and these dreams serve as a medium for Joseph to be brought to the king. Finally, Pharaoh's two dreams (Gen 41:1-7)³ are used by the writer to bring Joseph's entry and the fulfilment of the narrative which also fulfils the first two dreams of Joseph. The dreams become the central importance in the whole narrative as major turning points are affected by the dreams. The dreams are also used as key unifying elements which hold the story together which calls for an analysis of the "dream" elements in the JN. The dream elements of the JN consist of elements such as field, corn, branches, grape, bird, and river (Gen 37:7-9, 40:10-11, 16-17, 41:1-7). These elements are closely tied to nature. Farmers and agricultural people were very much attached to the land and their dreams composed of such elements. Even elements like sun, moon and stars found in the dream connect the agricultural people to the sky since they are dependent on the sky for rain and light for their sustenance. According to William Green, the main sources of the JN are Jahwist (J) and Elohist (E) which were subject to the priestly editing using connecting elements and other literary materials.⁴ The J and E timeframe and insertion of Judah (Gen 38) is indicative of the divided kingdom.⁵ Peculiar to the dreams in the JN, God does not seem very active as in the case of Abraham or Jacob. Rather, the dreams seem to contain divine messages independently that need to be unveiled.

2. Ecological Hermeneutics

Greek philosophy saw the world as an ordered hierarchy with nature being placed very low on this hierarchy.⁶ John Passmore, sees the Greco-Christian arrogance responsible for influencing the idea that all things are made for humanity.⁷ Early Gnostic dualistic frameworks that were based on a hierarchy sought to divide the profane from the sacred and the spiritual was lifted higher than what was physical.⁸ Moreover, western interpretation inclined towards an anthropocentric and

patriarchal approach which devalued the earth while reading the texts. This influences one to think that the human community has exploited and oppressed the earth community.

For this endeavour, the hermeneutic of suspicion will be used to glean the anthropocentric perspective and biases within the text and traditional interpretations. This counterfeits the bias that nature is an object and humans are different from nature. Secondly, the task of empathy and identification with the earth community is emphasised and our kinship with earth is realised. Finally, the hermeneutic of retrieval is used where the earth is seen as the “subject.” Though the voice of the earth is not explicit in some cases, they are still present and strong. These subjects play important role in the text and are not mere scenery.⁹ Ecological hermeneutics seeks to rediscover, reinvestigate and renew the traditions in light of ecological challenges.¹⁰ A typical question that must be asked is do readers view the earth merely as an object and resource for humans or is earth treated as a subject with a “voice.”? In the hermeneutical process, firstly, there are anthropocentric¹¹ bias that are likely to be found both in the text and the readers which consists of two faces. It includes the assumption received from the western culture where humans are prioritised over the rest of creation and viewing nature as mere “object” and not “subject.” As human beings, readers are inclined to the tendency of unconscious identification (whether it is an empathetic or antipathetic) with characters in the biblical story.¹²

However, in the second stage, the reader is expected to come to terms with his or her deep ecological connections to some extent. Finally, at the final stage, as anthropocentric dimensions within the text and bias are sustained either by the author or the reader, a number of surprises about the nonhuman characters in the story may be revealed. The communication of non-human figures cannot be treated as mere anthropomorphisms or secondary images. Their voice need not correspond to the languages of words we commonly associate with human

voices but discerning this voice may even take the form of reconstructing the narrative in which the Earth becomes the narrator of the story.¹³ In this expedition, the grammatical and exegetical clues also play vital role which will be dealt with.¹⁴ These hermeneutical principles are not definitive and may be subject to ongoing dialogue with ecologists leading to further refinements of the process. However, an ecological reading of the dreams in the JN begins with the premise that Earth is an intrinsically worthy subject and the earth becomes the interpreter.

3. Ecological Background

The simplification of the geography of the AWA is the “Fertile Crescent,” a semicircle of fertile and irrigated lands prone to agricultural and urban settlements, ranging from the Levant to Syria and Mesopotamia. The area borders Syro-Arabian desert to the South and the Anatolian, Armenian and Iranian highlands to the North. The most significant factors influencing the changing landscape of the AWA were human activities. At times, these activities led to a violent exploitation of resources that often-initiated processes of decline. In the Iron Age, agropastoral exploitation of the mountains and hills increased. Deforested areas that were used for grazing caused damage to the land in terms of vegetation and soil depth. The environmental diversity also caused the population to be distributed unevenly. Communities mainly settled in alluvial plains, hilly areas and plains and avoided mountains and steppes which were accessible on a seasonal basis by smaller nomadic communities. Moreover, factors like wars caused dramatic disasters of the environment in the AWA.¹⁵

Most of the content of the dreams is attributed to the J and E sources,¹⁶ though they may be Priestly redactions.¹⁷ The timeframe of the J or E source encircles the tenth and eighth century BCE. In this respect, the Solomonic reign cannot be ignored. Westermann¹⁸ and von Rad¹⁹ both agree that this single document was formed during early monarchy. The contrast

between “Family” and “Monarchy” and Egyptian influences in the text point to the time of Solomon. In pre-national Israel, most families acquired living through agriculture.²⁰ Soon, the adoption of an agricultural life seemed to bring no change in the constitution of the household and the reign of Solomon became a turning point in the life of Israel. It marked the conclusion of the process by which Israel was transformed from a pastoral to an agricultural people and the beginning of the process by which it became an industrial and commercial people. City life promoted the growth of new industries, and an industrial class in Israel emerged.²¹ This industrialisation and monarchical structures not only created a gap between humanity and the ecosystem but resulted in humanity’s dominion over land and nature as rightly pointed by Brueggemann in his writings.²²

In regard to the JN, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook observes that during this time, many chose to become shepherds. Moving from the noise of the society and engaging with flocks and nature provided ample time for inner reflection.²³ Joseph’s brothers feeding the flock (Gen 37:14) and reference to an empty pit (Gen 37:24) indicating shortage of water, show a concern towards animals.²⁴ In regard to Egyptian spiritual practice, nature was given deep reverence. Natural forces like the fruitfulness of the land, movement of celestial bodies and flooding of the Nile were seen as expressions of the divine.²⁵ Even Pharaoh’s name is connected to the “sun.”²⁶ Ancient Egyptians paid careful attention to details of interaction between creatures. The Egyptian principle of *Ma’at*, “order,” embodied in the goddess of order and balance, encouraged harmony in society.²⁷ Thus, the people in AWA were closely tied to nature and land.

4. Traditional Understanding of Dreams in Joseph Narrative

Early church fathers like Origen in his answer to pagans defended the dreams of the Bible by arguing that dreams often brought matters of future events and divine things for the benefit

of an individual which reaffirms the doctrine of providence.²⁸ With regard to Genesis 37, Hippolytus connects it to the advent and exaltation of Jesus. Joseph is paralleled with Jesus. Jesus, like Joseph was hated by his own people. Yet, he was loved and honoured by the father more than others and was sent as a shepherd. Just as the sheaf was raised and others bowed down to him, Jesus was the first fruit that was raised from the dead, a holy first born.²⁹ Unlike other writers, patristic texts concerning such accounts do not relate to the literary or mythological purpose but uses them to propagate certain Christian doctrines such as the doctrine of God or Christology, representing the divine attributes. Reformers like Luther takes a homiletical approach and interprets the narrative in light of New Testament truths³⁰ whereas Calvin sees the dream in Genesis 37 from a theocentric and psychological perspective where God uses the dream and favour upon Joseph to excite the hatred of his brothers.³¹

According to Jewish tradition, the dreams in JN are often interpreted in light of the nation of Israel. For instance, in a Midrash based on Chullin 92, the word *פנ*, “grapevine” refers to Israel (Ps 80:8). The three tendrils refer to the three festivals a year when the Jewish people make their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Just as the grapes blossomed, the people also blossomed (Exod 1:6).³² Similarly, the Midrash Tanchuma³³ makes many comparisons between Joseph’s dream and Zion. For instance, in Genesis 37:7 it says, “behold, we are binding sheaves” and in regard to Zion it says “You shall come home with song, bearing sheaves (Ps 126:6).” The question is asked to Joseph: “Shalt thou indeed rule over us? (Gen 36:8) and for Zion it says, “That says unto Zion: “your God reigns” (Isa 52:7). Several such parallels are made between the dreams and Zion.³⁴ The Zohar³⁵ also makes such parallels from a mystical perspective.

The twentieth century brought a turning point in Christian interpretations where different literary and critical approaches

began to develop. von rad being historically oriented uses the vision of the sheaves to prove the agricultural practices of nomads.³⁶ Hermann Gunkel, known for his form criticism, sees a faded-out myth in Joseph's dream where the sun, moon and eleven stars bow down before Joseph. This might have originally been an oracle that referred to the lord of the heaven, before whom the highest powers of heaven bow before.³⁷ Similarly, Claus Westermann acknowledges the deep Egyptian influence on the narrative.³⁸ Walter Brueggemann points out that the theme of "power" dominates the JN (Gen 42:6, 43:26, 28). The words "reign" and "rule" dominate the dreams and the plot focuses to carry Joseph to an elevated position.³⁹ The context surrounding the dreams in JN is "Sibling Rivalry." The brothers hate Joseph but their hatred reaches its peak with the narration of Joseph's dreams. The dreams in JN serve as catalyst that creates a transition from one stage to another in the flow of the narrator. Dreams are seen from an anthropocentric lens where dreams are divine messages sent by God to specific individuals such as a prophet, priest or king (Num 12:6),⁴⁰ Joseph is also seen as one such individual in whom the spirit of God dwells. He is described as wise and having discernment (Gen 41:38) and everything seems to depend on the interpretation of dreams given by Joseph. In either case, the ecological elements seem to be hidden at the background and is approached from a historical-critical and theocentric approach.

5. Ecological Reading of Dreams in Joseph Narrative

5.1. First Pair of Dreams: An Ecological Reading

The dreams can be termed as "ecological dreams" due to its rich ecological content, and "inter-relational symbolism"⁴¹ due to its inter-relationship with humanity and ecology. The dreams in JN are distinct from previous dreams of Genesis where God is seen speaking to people.⁴² The dreams in JN are solely composed of nature and the meaning to these natural elements hold the key to

human destiny. In spite of anthropocentric biases in the text, the imbedded ecological voices is evident. The content of the dream is sibling rivalry where the contrast between love and hatred can be seen in Genesis 37:4 where Joseph is loved and brothers hated Joseph.⁴³ Even when the dreams imply the promotion of Joseph over his brothers, this again results in hatred (vv 8, 10).

In the first dream of Joseph, the sheaves represent Joseph and his brothers. With the narration of the dream, the immediate response from the brothers to the dream is in a form of a question: "are you indeed to reign over us?" Similarly, at the response to the second dream, Jacob compares himself and the family to the celestial bodies. In other words, they identify with nature which shows the synchronicity and interconnectedness of the earth community. Not only is their eco-consciousness reflected but a kinship to nature is revealed where each living thing is mutually dependent on each other for survival. Such quick interpretation is an indication of the family attachment to nature. The dream opens with the "binding of sheaves in the field" (v 7). The usage of the piel participle *מְאַלְמֵם* from the verb *אַלַּץ* "binding"⁴⁴ is used to describe the action of binding sheaves. Interpreting the piel participle adds an emphasis on the causative or intensive nature of the binding. It may imply that the process of binding sheaves is not just a casual activity but has a deeper significance. It symbolises a more intentional gathering and arrangement of resources, adding a layer of intensity and purpose to the action. The Hebrew word for "field" *שָׂדֶה* *sadeh* is connected to one of God's sacred names *שְׁדָי* *shaddai*⁴⁵ (17:1). This name identifies God to the field which provides for humankind. The divine provision of land is emphasised which is part of the spirituality of the people. This shows the dependence of humanity on the land and how dream becomes the voice of the land to humanity.

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin teaches that Joseph's dream was agricultural while Joseph's brothers were shepherds. This was frightening to the brothers since this meant that Joseph was longing for the Egyptian ways of agriculture more than his

family's path of shepherding since Egypt was a preeminent agricultural civilization.⁴⁶ Here one can see a call for exchanging animals for grain. Since it is difficult to feed animals during a famine as they would eat crops that sustain humans, the cattle were exchanged for grain during the famine.⁴⁷ During the famine, the Egyptians exchanged their animals for plant derived food-bread (47:17) conveying that a plant-based diet consumes fewer resources of land, water and nutrients and eating less meat is associated with better health. Comparatively, we rely less on animals for substances like agriculture and clothing in our society. Our society has replaced sheep's wool with other fibers and many use protein with soy or other products rather than plant-based proteins. The enhancing technologies have made us less in touch with the natural sources of survival, with the earth that provides nourishment and weather patterns that governs our fate.⁴⁸

Furthermore, in the second dream, the celestial bodies seem to evoke nature. If Joseph rules over famine then, he rules over nature, and the nature bows down to him. This emphasis on nature resonates with Genesis 1-11, especially the creation texts.⁴⁹ The order of sun, moon and stars in the given order is implied in Genesis 1:16. In this verse, the same word מְשֻׁלָּה "dominion"⁵⁰ is used in the context of wellbeing of creation. The sun, moon and stars are purposed to rule and point to different seasons for humankind whereas in Joseph's dream, the sun, moon and stars bow down to humans.⁵¹ When considering the structure of Genesis 37:7-10, the phrase "bowing down" coming from the root שָׁרַף⁵² is key to both dreams namely *bowing* of the sheaves and *bowing* of the celestial bodies and can be seen in two aspects. Firstly, the fact that the sheaves of Joseph's brothers bow down to Joseph's sheaf does not emphasise subjugation of nature but is viewed as a contrast of "irresponsible custodianship" with "faithful stewardship" in which the evil dominating structures of evil custodianship must

submit to a just and faithful stewardship. This can be seen as the reason why the brothers do not interpret the sheaves to be mere "sheaves" but rather see *themselves* in the sheaves and interpret it to mean "shall you indeed *reign over us*" (v 8). Words like 'reign' and 'dominion' are mainly used by the brothers. Joseph stands in contrast as a "good steward" to his hateful brothers who take a goat and put its blood on Joseph's coat just for the sake of deceiving their father (37:31-33) indicating misuse of resources.

Secondly, the phrase שָׁרַף "bowing down" conveys the idea of "reverence" and "respect"⁵³ indicating a "respectful interdependence" of the ecosystem. The final interpretation by his father Jacob is very well concluded in verse 10: "*Shall we indeed come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?*"⁵⁴ Ultimately, observing the flow of the narrative, the brothers bow down *to the ground* before Joseph. Since humanity depends on nature, the incident of the famine compelled the people to submit to nature. Moreover, rather than the anthropocentric dominion over nature, the custodianship of humans can be seen especially in light of Genesis 41 onwards.

5.2. Second Pair of Dreams: An Ecological Reading

Dreams in JN contain many human derogatory terms. For instance, the sheaves and celestial bodies bow down to Joseph. Similarly, in the ministers' dream, wine is preferred *more* than bread. In light of this, the dreams still have rich ecological basis. In the first creation account, the crops are created on the third day and following it is the creation of the celestial bodies on the fourth day. In this pattern, Joseph's first dream includes the sheaves while his second dream is oriented towards heaven which speaks of the celestial bodies. Similarly, the butler's dream includes agriculture while the baker's dream includes the birds of the sky.⁵⁵ This interrelation between heaven and earth connects the agricultural people to the sky since they are

dependent on the sky for rain and light for their harvest and sustenance.

The dreams begin with the Hebrew demonstrative הִנֵּה “behold” (v 9) and is used peculiarly in the dreams to divide the minor segments (37:7, 9; 40:16; 41:1-3, 5-6). This word is an interjection that demands attention and means “look! see!” The word הִנֵּה “behold” is used and an important action is followed by it (*cf.* Gen 17:20, 41:17).⁵⁶ This word calls for attention and demands one to pay close attention towards the subject. The word can also mean to “look toward something *continually*.”⁵⁷ The baker’s narration begins from verse 9 in which he says “a vine (is) before me.”⁵⁸ Young’s translation proposes to add the present “is” within several places of the dreams instead of the common “was” that denotes a past event. In other words, a close attention and focus of the reader is drawn towards the vine. Similarly, the word הִנֵּה “behold” is used to call the reader’s attention to the sheaves, the bread, the cows and the corn (37:7-9, 40:16, 41:1-3, 5-6). A special call of attention is evoked for the environment which demands an eco-consciousness.

The opening section (40:10) begins with the nominal clause שְׁרֵיגִים שְׁלִישָׁה וּבְגִפְנֵי “and on the vine there were three branches,” adding a description of the vine and drawing focus on the static imagery of the vine. This is followed by the Hebrew pronoun וְהִיא “and it.”⁵⁹ The Hebrew pronoun does not necessitate a difference such as “it” for inanimate objects and “she/he” for a person.⁶⁰ A literal usage provides equal value to the vine and ignores differences between animate and inanimate objects. The following phrase פָּרְחָה “as though it budded” is Qal active participle.⁶¹ The budding imagery symbolises the potential for new beginnings or a turning point in one’s respective destinies. The use of the Qal active participle emphasises the ongoing nature of the budding process, where growth and renewal are continual aspects of life in the cyclical nature of regeneration. In addition, the use of the Hiphil perfect tense in this verse for

הִבְשִׁילוּ “brought ripe” speaks of fruit ripening in a causative sense.⁶² The ripening of fruit does not only suggest evolved mechanisms that help in such process but also depends on external factors such as sunlight, humidity and temperature. Contrary to the treading of wine which was commonly practised in ancient times (Isa 16:10; Jer 48:33), the butler uses his “hand” (as implied in the text) and presses the grapes into the cup. The word שָׁחַט “press” used here is unique and is the only occurrence in the Hebrew Bible.⁶³ This shows the respect of the butler towards the grapes in his use of hands to acquire the wine. According to Gesenius, the word כּוּס “cup” can be derived from the word כָּסָה, “to cover” which signifies “to hide, preserve, cover.”⁶⁴ The word suggests the responsibility to protect and preserve the wine.

In verse 16, just like other occurrences, the phrase הַשְּׁלֵשׁ יָלֵם יְרֹחַ: יִשְׂאֲרֵלֶע “three baskets of white bread upon my head” is a nominal sentence which emphasises the static nature of the imagery, allowing the focus to remain on the objects themselves. The repetition of the phrase תִּלְקַח הַשְּׁלֵשׁ “three baskets” here again emphasises the significance of three days (vv 12, 18)⁶⁵ drawing attention again to the life and nature or the cyclical nature of regeneration. This visual imagery evokes connections to ecological themes such as abundance, sustenance, and resource distribution. The chief butler narrates his dream to Joseph at Joseph’s plea whereas the baker only narrates his dream after observing that a good interpretation was given.⁶⁶ This is shown in the affirmative segment יִנְאֲרֵי “Also I.”⁶⁷ This indicates that the baker was self-indulgent and sought to escape his punishment in spite of his carelessness towards the food. A decisive difference between the dream of the butler and the baker is that in the former the grapes were picked and pressed freshly into Pharaoh’s cup whereas in the latter, the birds pick up the bread from the basket. Based on this difference, Joseph could understand that the chief butler would

return to his position while the baker would be hanged since the dreams depicted their faithfulness in their responsibilities. Thus, the main sign in the dream was that the bread had gone to waste.⁶⁸ Similarly, massive amounts of grain are lost in fields due to crop damage and unforeseen circumstances and in factories of food processors during time of production. During the end of a supply chain, retailers dispose food that are damaged or have past their sell-by-date even if they are safe to eat. This includes good food that is disposed from satiated meals and eatables discarded from the refrigerator. Considering the increasing hunger faced worldwide, food consumption must be controlled. Similar to ancient times, wine is less wasted than bread or food.⁶⁹

In March 2022, the *Hindustan Times* reported that during the last three years, India lost 406 crore worth of grains due to damages in granaries and 1.39 crore worth cereals were pilfered during the past five years. Calculations showed that these grains could feed half of India's census recorded 1.7 million homeless people with a minimum of 1,200 calorie diet for a quarter.⁷⁰ Similarly, mountains of food grains get wasted every year, due to unscientific methods of storage or lack of storage facilities. In contrast, the butler serves as an iconic custodian who oversaw the royal beverages. As a supervisor over the eating, utensils and drinks, he was in-charge over the drinks so that nothing is wasted.⁷¹ His duty would demand him to taste the wine before serving to be sure of its freshness or impurity. The butler's faithfulness in performing his duties is reflected in his dream where he performs his usual duties, whereas the baker's dream depicts his faults for which he was punished.⁷² One can again observe the contrast of two models namely: "irresponsible manager" and "faithful steward" as conveyed in the portrayal of the butler and the baker.

5.3. Third Pair of Dreams: An Ecological Reading

Similar to the previous dreams, Pharaoh's dream also contains derogatory terms and distinguishes between fat cows and thin cows. The bad cows are described using the word עָרָב meaning "evil, bad."⁷³ The same is seen for the good and thin years (41:5-6). The three of pairs of dreams in JN have numerological significance. The first pair of dreams are related to the number "eleven" (37:7,9). The second pair of dreams is related to number "three" (40:10,16). Similarly, Pharaoh's both dreams are connected to the number "seven" (41:4,6). There seems to be a parallel construction of both verses 4 and 7 in chapter 41 respectively. The parallel construction can be emphasised where in both the dreams, there are *seven thin* cows and *seven thin* grains which is described using the root word קָרַח meaning "thin."⁷⁴ In both instances, the thin cows or grains devour the healthy cows or grains. Both dreams end by using the phenomena הָעֶרְבָּה זָקְנָה "and Pharaoh awoke" (vv 4,7).⁷⁵ Such parallel connections between the dreams draws attention to the deep interconnection of nature; as in this case, the animals and plants are mutually related. In chapter 41:1, Pharaoh is standing *by* the river (41:1) in which the preposition "by" is בָּ meaning "above, over, on, against."⁷⁶ Literally, the translation could mean that Pharaoh stood "above the Nile." However, in verse 17, Pharaoh narrates that he stood *upon* the "bank of the river."⁷⁷ In verse 17, the word בָּ is used but this time it speaks of the "bank of the river."⁷⁸ The bank is the "margin" or "boundary" of the river. In other words, firstly, Pharaoh seems to be "over" or "upon" the river. This can be seen in light to the desires of humanity today, to be Master *over* nature. Whereas, the textual alteration through Pharaoh's words of standing near the edge of the river in verse 17 is a call for respecting boundaries.

This motif can be gleaned right from Genesis 3 where the concept of "boundaries" become relevant. The act of the baker depicts the common practise of food wastage

and overconsumption. The Nile represents the “established boundaries” that have been set at the creation of air, earth and water. Boundaries protect and safeguard the integrity of that which is bounded off. Boundaries and limits are not respected wherein lies the primary reason of environment crisis in our times. Similar to the narration of Adam and Eve, people crave for more and the ground which was once fruitful would begin to yield thorns and thistles. Similarly, not respecting the boundaries of food consumption made Egypt to yield thorns and thistles in the famine. Egypt which was a power centre has now become infertile.⁷⁹ In Joseph’s advice to Pharaoh, the implication is made that food needs to be stored and not be consumed beyond one’s need.

When Joseph interprets the dreams, the famine is the key problem from the very beginning. Everything in the story of Joseph occurs in response to the famine. Land infertility or degradation is a sign that humans have turned away from God. In contrary, land flourishing is a sign of humanity’s return to God. Thus, the condition of the land acts as an index of human responsiveness to God.⁸⁰ At the same time, Joseph can be seen as a mutual custodian of the earth. The earth is a diverse domain where his responsible action can be seen as partnering with the earth rather than ruling over the earth. This balanced custodianship sustains the diverse earth community.⁸¹

The interpretation of Joseph saying, “The dream of Pharaoh is one” given to Pharaoh, summarises the three pairs of dreams (41:25). This interpretation of the dream can be seen as an ecological interpretation. Joseph interprets that the thin cows are seven years and the seven years of corn are seven years and the dream is one (v 26). This same “unity” is implied in Joseph’s dream (37:7-9) where the sheaves and the eleven stars referred to Joseph’s brothers and in the minister’s dream (40:10-11, 16-17), where both the three branches and baskets pointed to three days. The word *אחד* “one” also used in Genesis 1:9,⁸² denoting

“unity”⁸³ is summed up by Joseph to show that the plants and animals are connected in unity. This reveals the unity and interconnectedness of each living thing in the Earth community. The celestial bodies, the plants, animals and humans depend on one another for life and sustenance.

The magicians of Pharaoh could not interpret Pharaoh’s dream since they could not imagine that the Nile would stop flooding, resulting in the failure of the crops. Whereas Joseph experienced scarcity in Israel and was able to visualise an impending famine in Egypt. Even with regard to the famine, the problem of storage is brought to light. According to *Malbim*, rather than having a central storage for food, there were local storages for each city which prevented the food from rotting. Thus, when food is sourced from local suppliers, this helps in cutting down waste and transportation costs. In a globalised world, when such disciplines are maintained, it helps the environment and budgets. During great deprivation, population growth becomes significant and Joseph is seen limiting his children in this time, considering that resource limitations were imminent (41:50).⁸⁴ Finally, the dreams contain numerals as a common feature and the “elements of nature” depicts times and seasons. The sheaves represented an impending time of famine (37:7). The celestial bodies not only point to Joseph’s family but pointed to a season of famine, since they were created for times and seasons (Gen 1:14).⁸⁵ In the ministers’ dreams the branches and baskets of bread pointed to a certain time: three days (40:12, 18). Similarly, the cows in Pharaoh’s dreams represented two sets of seven years (41:26-27). Times and seasons depict life of the earth. Time is the guiding principle of the earth community and it is inter-connectedly governed by nature. Thus, nature dictates and controls the destiny and fate of humanity.

In our present context, the Covid-19 pandemic did cause much disruption in the food supply chain. Export restrictions became responsible for pushing world prices of stable food

commodities like wheat, rice and maize that resulted in reduction of quality and quantity of food eaten.⁸⁶ The Global Food Insecurity Experience Scale (GFIES) in their survey, showed that 79% of the households faced some form of food insecurity while 25% faced severe food insecurity and more than 60% of people could not eat healthy food or obtained only few kinds of food.⁸⁷ Furthermore, war like scenarios have made huge impact on food supply. On March 6, 2022, the *Times of India* reported that the attempt of military siege on Ukraine by Russia has also threatened the food supply of people in Europe, Asia and Africa who depend on the fertility of the Black Sea area, also known as the “breadbasket of the world.”⁸⁸

Conclusion

Dreams in JN is ecological at its core. The three pairs of dreams can be titled as “ecological dreams” due to its rich ecological content. One can trace the deep ecological background of the AWA in the pre-monarchial era and the changes introduced in the monarchial era. Social, political and economic structures also tend to play crucial role in the life of nomads and agriculturists. The emergence of industrialisation and the quest for dominion in the monarchial period resulted in exploitation of land and resources. The dreams reflect the attachment of the people with nature and prove that nature controls the destiny and fate of humanity. Moreover, rich ecological implications from the dreams for today’s ecological crisis can be drawn and one is reminded not to over-consume the resources. The doubling of the dreams not only emphasise their confirmation but show their unity. The land, sheaves, crops, animals, celestial bodies and humanity are all interconnected and are mutual custodian who serve as partners for one another in the Earth community.

With regard to the ecology of AWA, recurrent anthropocentric phenomena often disrupted the land. Anthropocentric concepts like wars, slavery, oppression and monarchial rule encouraged extreme anthropocentric

behaviours, causing negative impacts on the shape of the ecosystem. Emergence of industrialisation and development disrupted the relationship of humanity from the earth community. Though the dreams unveil the anthropocentric biases, it reflects the attachment of the people with nature and prove that nature controls the destiny and fate of humanity. The dreams reveal that humans must be a “custodian *with*,” rather than a “ruler *over*” nature, since they are an interconnected part of the earth community. Pharaoh’s standing “over” the river in the dream points to an anthropocentric quest. In contrast, Joseph and the chief butler can be seen as good custodians. Food must be respected and not be wasted as seen in the dream of the baker. Overall, the central ecological problem of famine serves as ample response to our current ecological crisis. In the Covid-19 pandemic the food supply chain in India was threatened and war like situations did jeopardised food resources in several countries. In other words, humanity’s dreams today are anthropocentric and not ecological. Analysing dreams in JN extracts the anthropocentrism imbedded within the text while retrieves the voice of the earth. It displays that we are part of one earth community and there is a need to dream ecological dreams.

Endnotes

- 1 Gerhard Von rad assigns the narrative to the Solomonic period. Westermann, agreeing with von rad observes that the narrative as a single document comes from the early monarchy since the narrative shows a contrast between “Family” and “Monarchy.” Egyptian influence upon the text points to the time of Solomon and the style of the text seems different than the J. Brueggemann, observes priestly elements in the text (17:6; 35:11), which seems to be thin and dependent on other sources. cf. Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, translated by D. M. G. Stalker, Vol. 1. (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 48-86.; Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, translated by David E. Green (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 257.; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary For Teaching And Preaching*, edited by James Luther Mays (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 2010), 301.

- 2 Traditionally, chapter 40:21-23 is attributed to J, and majority of chapter 40 is allocated to E. The word אָפֵן “sin,” in verse 1 is characteristic of J. Identical words for “bound” רָבַח and “the prison” תִּבְּרֵי רְהִיבֵהּ appear in vv. 3 and 5. Hermann Gunkel observes that though, chapters 39 and 40 come from two different sources, their differences can be explained exegetically and seen as plot development. Both chapters 40 and 41 consisting of three closely related themes or parts, argue for their unity. Westermann, and Coats accept that chapter 40 comes from a single source. This source is most likely J. We may attribute the chapter to J though it may have strands of E, considering the emphasis on prophecy and dreams. cf. Hermann Gunkel,” cited in Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50*, edited by David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, Vol. 2. (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1994), 381-382; Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, translated by David E. Green (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 258. ; George W. Coats, *Genesis: An Introduction to Narrative Literature: The Forms of the Old Testament Literature*, Vol. 1. (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 282-283.; Wenham, *WBC: Genesis 16-50...*, 382-383.; Corrine L. Carvalho, *Encountering Ancient Voices: A Guide to Reading the Old Testament* (Minnesota: Saint Mary’s Press, 2006), 34.
- 3 The portion vv. 1-32 is from a single source, probably E which continues the account of chapter 40 whereas scholars disagree in regard to rest of chapter 41. However, careful analysis of words reveal its literal unity. cf. Wenham, *WBC: Genesis 16-50...*, 388.
- 4 William H. Green, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1895), 433.
- 5 Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 355.
- 6 Most of the pre-Socratic philosophers in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE were dualistic in many forms cf. *Plato’s Phaedrus*. Translated with an introduction and commentary by R. Haackforth. Edinburgh: Cambridge University Press, 1952.
- 7 Jose Matthew SJ, *The Green model of the church: A Theological Response to the Modern ecological crisis for a Meaningful social change* (New Delhi: Christian World imprints, 2018), 138.
- 8 Ernst M Conradie, “The Whole Household of God (*oikos*) Some Ecclesiological Perspectives: Part 1 & 2,” *Scriptura* 94 (2007): 1-28.
- 9 Norman C. Habel, “Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics,” in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, edited by Norman C. Habel and Peter Trudinger (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 4-5.
- 10 Ernest M. Conradie, “Towards an Ecological Biblical Hermeneutics: A Review Essay on the Earth Bible Project,” *Scriptura* 85 (August 2013): 295.
- 11 The term anthropocentric is different from anthropogenic (a text originating from humans) and anthropotopic (a text in which humans hold a central theme. cf. Habel, “Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics,” 4.
- 12 Habel, “Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics,” 4.
- 13 Habel, “Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics,” 5.
- 14 The Eco-theologian, Paul Santmire makes significant grammatical and exegetical observations for this endeavour in his book, “Behold the Lilies.” This approach is identified as uncovering an “eternal truth” of a text. cf. Paul Santmire, *Behold the Lilies: Jesus and the Contemplation of Nature* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2017), 6.
- 15 Mario Liverani, *The Ancient Near East: History, Society and Economy*, translated by Soraia Tabatabai (New York: Routledge, 2014), 17-24.
- 16 Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50*, edited by David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, Vol. 2. (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1994), 383-391.
- 17 Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, edited by James Luther Mays (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 2010), 301.
- 18 Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, translated by David E. Green (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 257.
- 19 Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, translated by D. M. G. Stalker, Vol. 1. (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 48-86.
- 20 Niels Peter Lemche, *Ancient Israel, A New History of Israel* (London: T&T Clarke, 2003), 110-111.
- 21 Lewis B. Paton, “The Social, Industrial, and Political Life of Israel between 950 B. C. and 621 B. C.,” *The Biblical World* (July 1897): 28.
- 22 Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation...*, 288-301.
- 23 Yonatan Neril and Leo Dee, *Eco Bible: An Ecological Commentary on Genesis and Exodus*, Vol. 1. (Jerusalem: Interfaith Centre for Sustainable Development, 2020), 86.
- 24 Neril and Dee, *Eco Bible: An Ecological Commentary on Genesis and Exodus...*, 89.
- 25 Sarah Janes, “Egyptomaniacs: Nature Worship in Ancient Egypt,” *The Mysterics* (2020): 2.

- 26 In Exodus 10:10, during one of the ongoing exchanges between Moses and Pharaoh, Pharaoh states “behold evil is before you.” In this statement, there appears to be a bilingual pun where the Hebrew word רָעָה *Ra’ a* “evil” is the name of the Egyptian sun-god *Ra*. Not only does Pharaoh deny the request of the Israelites but declares that “*Ra* is before you.” cf. Gary A. Rendsburg, “The Egyptian Sun-God Ra in the Pentateuch,” *Henoch* 10 (1988): 3-15 cf. William Smith, *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, 1990), np.
- 27 Sarah Janes, “Egyptomaniacs: Nature Worship in Ancient Egypt,” *The Mysteries* (2020): 1-4.
- 28 “Origen of Alexander,” cited in Mark Virkler, “Dreams and visions throughout Church history,” <https://www.cwgministries.org/dreams-and-visions-throughout-church-history>, accessed on 19.02.2022.
- 29 “Aurelius Ambrosius,” cited in Mark Sheridan, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 12-50*, Vol. 2. (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 233-234.
- 30 Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 6. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing house, 1970), 132-138.
- 31 John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, Vol. 2. (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, nd), 223-225.
- 32 “Genesis 40: Rabbeinu Bahya,” https://www.sefaria.org/Genesis.40.10?ven=The_Contemporary_Torah,_Jewish_Publication_Society,_2006&vhe=Miqra_according_to_the_Masorah&lang=bi&with=Rabbeinu%20Bahya&lang2=en, accessed on 16.02.2022.
- 33 Midrash Tanchuma was compiled around the late eighth or ninth century CE, contains discussions on specific laws and homilies connected to the Torah. cf. Jill Jacobs, “Midrash Tanhuma,” <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/midrash-tanhuma/>, accessed on 12.02.2022.
- 34 *Midrash Tanhuma: Genesis*, translated by John T. Townsend, Vol. 1. (Hoboken: KTAV Publishing House, 1989), 231-240.
- 35 The Zohar, meaning “radiance” is a mystical commentary on the Torah which contains the work of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai. cf. “Kabbalah: The Zohar,” <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-zohar>, accessed on 18.02.2022; Daniel C. Matt, ed., *The Zohar: Genesis*, translated by Daniel C. Matt, Vol. 3. (California: Stanford University Press, 2006), np.
- 36 Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 351-352.
- 37 Hermann Gunkel, *The legends of Genesis*, translated by W. H. Carruth (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1901), np.
- 38 Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, translated by David E. Green (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 258.
- 39 Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation...*, 288-301.
- 40 Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, translated by A. A. Brill (Great Britain: Wordsworth, 1997), 7.
- 41 Franziska Ede, “Dreams in the Joseph Narrative,” *Dream Divination in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* 21 (2018): 100.
- 42 Dreams itself can be seen as an ecological phenomena with rich significance since dreams often occur when the body is at rest, allowing for mental and physical renewal. This restorative function mirrors the cycles of rest and renewal that occur within ecosystems. Just as sleep restores the body, periods of rest and regeneration in nature contribute to health and strength of the nature. The body’s need for rest and timing of sleep are linked to natural cycles of light and darkness. There seems to be a symbiotic relationship between human physiology and the patterns of the natural world.
- 43 Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation...*, 288-301.
- 44 Brown, Driver and Briggs, *The Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon...*, H481.
- 45 Walis, “הָרָעָה,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, translated by Douglas W. Stott, edited by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, Vol. 14. (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, nd), 37-38.
- 46 Neril and Dee, *Eco Bible: An Ecological Commentary on Genesis and Exodus...*, 89.
- 47 Neril and Dee, *Eco Bible: An Ecological Commentary on Genesis and Exodus...*, 98.
- 48 Neril and Dee, *Eco Bible: An Ecological Commentary on Genesis and Exodus...*, 90-105.
- 49 Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 358.
- 50 Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *The Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Bellingham: Logos research Systems, 2000), H4475.
- 51 Non-human creatures in Genesis can be seen to hold primary existence before the creation of Humans. The existence of water, air and lights(sun,

- moon and stars) as mentioned here were all created before the creation of humans and can be seen as partners in creation. However, anthropocentric texts like Gen 1:26-28 now seek the subjugation of nature by humans. cf. Habel, "Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics," 6.
- 52 Brown, Driver and Briggs, *The Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon...*, H7812.
- 53 J.D. Watson, *A Hebrew word for the day: Key words from the Old Testament* (Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 2010), np.
- 54 In the book of Genesis, there is an incident involving Jacob and Rachel that can be viewed as mismanagement of nature. In Genesis 30:14-16, Rachel bargains with Leah for mandrakes that had been found by Leah in the field. Mandrakes were believed to enhance fertility. cf. John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2000), 62. Rachel, who was barren, desired them to improve her chances of conceiving. The incident is anthropocentric as it revolves around human desires and fertility, whereas ignoring the broader ecological context. In addition, Genesis 30:37-43, describes Jacob's selective uses of breeding techniques to increase his own wealth. This is once again an anthropocentric manipulation of nature for one's personal gain.
- 55 Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 232.
- 56 R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer and Bruce K Waltke, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 220-221.
- 57 Jeff A. Berner, *The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible: Hebrew Letters, Words and Roots Defined Within Their Ancient Cultural Context* (Texas: Virtualbookworm Publishing, 2005), H2009.
- 58 Robert Young, *Young's Literal Translation* (USA: Delmarva Publications, 2014), Genesis 40:9.
- 59 Elliger and Rudolph, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia...*, Genesis 40:10
- 60 Brown, Driver and Briggs, *The Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon...*, H1931.
- 61 "Genesis 40," https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/40/10/t_conc_40010, accessed on 07.02.2024.
- 62 "Genesis 40," https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/40/10/t_conc_40010, accessed on 06.02.2024.
- 63 James Strong, *King James Version New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), H7818.
- 64 Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon...*, 374.
- 65 "Genesis 40," https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/40/10/t_conc_40010, accessed on 07.02.2024
- 66 The chief cupbearer's request for Joseph's assistance embodies the concept of reciprocity, as he hopes that his request will be met with support from Joseph. This reciprocity reflects the interconnectedness and mutual dependence inherent in both ecological and social systems, emphasises the mutualistic relationships between species, where both parties benefit from their interaction and mutual function.
- 67 Elliger and Rudolph, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia...*, Genesis 40:16
- 68 Neril and Dee, *Eco Bible: An Ecological Commentary on Genesis and Exodus...*, 92.
- 69 Neril and Dee, *Eco Bible: An Ecological Commentary on Genesis and Exodus...*, 93.
- 70 "₹ 406 crore grains lost in storage: House panel," *The Hindustan Times*, epaper, 11 August, 2022, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/rs-406-cr-grains-lost-in-storage-house-panel-101628621965249.html>, accessed on 19.03.2022.
- 71 Nili Shupak, "A Fresh Look at the Dreams of the Officials and of Pharaoh in the Story of Joseph (Genesis 40-41) in the Light of Egyptian Dreams," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 30/1 (January 2006): 129.
- 72 Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary...*, 232.
- 73 Brown, Driver and Briggs, *The Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon...*, H7451.
- 74 Brown, Driver and Briggs, *The Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon...*, H1851.
- 75 "Genesis 41," https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/41/1/t_conc_41004, accessed on 06.02.24.
- 76 Brown, Driver and Briggs, *The Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon...*, H2009.
- 77 Young, *Young's Literal Translation...*, Genesis 41:17.
- 78 Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph, ed., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 5th ed. (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, 2006), Genesis 41:17.
- 79 *The NRSV Green Bible* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), np.
- 80 *The NRSV Green Bible...*, np.
- 81 Habel, "Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics," in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics...*, 2.

- 82 Strong, *King James Version New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance...*, H259.
- 83 The word used here for unity אֶחָד "one" is not only used in the Old Testament for the numeral one but encompasses the idea of unity in diversity. The word also appears in Genesis 1:5 where evening and morning become *one* (אֶחָד) day and in Genesis 2:24 where man and woman become *one* (אֶחָד) flesh. cf. Berner, *The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible...*, H259.
- 84 Neril and Dee, *Eco Bible: An Ecological Commentary on Genesis and Exodus...*, 97-101.
- 85 The Hebrew word used for "seasons" here is מוֹעֵד *meod* and is used for the appointed times and festivals of the hebrews, signifying its participation in divine role and creation. cf. Strong, *King James Version New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance...*, H4150.
- 86 Serpil Aday and Mehmet Seckin Aday, "Impact of COVID-19 on the food supply chain," *Food Quality and Safety* 4/4 (December 2020): 172.
- 87 Ambika Pandit, "2 years into pandemic, 66% report decline in income, food insecurity hounds 79%: Survey of economically weak households," *The Times of India*, epaper, 24 February, 2022, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/2-years-into-pandemic-66-report-decline-in-income-food-insecurity-hounds-79-survey-of-economically-weak-households/articleshow/89784862.cms>, accessed on 24.02.2022.
- 88 "Russian war in world's 'breadbasket' threatens food supply," <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/europe/russian-war-in-worlds-breadbasket-threatens-food-supply/articleshow/90032035.cms>, accessed on 10.03.2022.

The Economic Justice Challenge from the Book of Amos 5:21-24 and the Experiences of the Victim of Economic Injustice

A. Abeni Patton

Engaging, listening, discussing and reflecting on the theological challenge from the Book of Amos 5:21-24 was a humbling experience, a learning curve and a new journey of faith based on the academy and ordinary readers of the Bible. Their interpretation of Scripture continuously reminded me to be a listener, learner and student, to sacrifice my teacher complex, and listen to new paradigms informed by the epistemological privilege of the economically helpless and victim of injustice. Before discussing the interpretation of economic injustice victims, it is important first to reflect, understand and unpack the challenge of social justice contained in Amos 5:21-24.

During the Bible study in the church and also classroom discussion with the students who are undergoing theological training, we reflected on the selected verses in the Book of Amos, dealing with the themes of worship, wealth, righteousness and justice, which form the basis of the struggle for economic justice within the biblical paradigm. In this essay, I would like to reflect the responses that have been made by the participants and bring some appropriate suggestions where we all can participate in bringing economic justice to the society.

* Dr. A. Abeni Patton is an Associate Professor of Old Testament at Baptist Theological College, Pftusero.

The Etymology of “Justice”

Two words from the Scriptures are translated by the word justice: *mishpāt* (justice/ judgement) and *tsedaqah* (righteousness/ justice). *Tsadiq*, referring to the one who practises justice and righteousness, is at the centre of the teaching of the prophets. Justice and righteousness are synonymous terms grounded in God’s divine nature, revealed in God’s law and covenant. The words “justice and righteousness” abound in biblical passages with a prophetic perspective. It is true that the prophets of Israel were not primarily interested in abstract philosophical issues, nor in definitions and intricate arguments. They speak about the lot of simple people: widows, orphans, and strangers. They also speak about the daily conduct of the rich, public officials and heads of state. The prophets felt intensely about injustice and their oracles were their way of expressing their agonised struggle over it. Justice, right and righteousness are concrete practical concepts that emphasise the importance of doing justice, not mere abstract theoretical issues or merely just rational thinking.

Among the prophets, Amos consistently used “justice and righteousness” as terms for the qualities which ought to be present in the social order of a covenant society (Amos 5:7, 24; 6:12). “Justice” was associated with the judicial process by which right order is maintained in social relations, especially the protection of the weak and the poor. “Righteousness” is the rightness belonging to those who fulfil the responsibilities which may be expected from them in their relationship to others.¹

“Justice and righteousness” are now at the centre of what Israel disregards and abuses, rather than allowing the legal system to flourish as a constructive benefit so that all receive their due. J. Carl Laney remarks that “Amos appealed for people to let these two qualities characterize their dealings with God and other individuals. Only then would society function according to divine norms.”² This is because according to

Prophet Amos the nation and its leaders pervert it and change it into a bitter herb; they toss it to the ground as something of little importance, as something to take advantage of and trample on even as they trample upon the needy. Amos 5:7 and 6:12 reveal that the pursuit and maintenance of justice is not simply an abstract ideal. Justice requires a certain attitude, an active inner interest in fairness and lawfulness. Unfortunately, the Israelites failed to act out both justice and righteousness in their day-to-day living. The leaders knew the right thing to do for the deserving people, however, they failed to act out for the right cost. The elite faithfully participated in and were actively involved in religious practices, but inwardly they denied justice and righteousness to all. Yahweh did not want their outward observance of religious practices and ceremonies because they were worthless and valueless without true godliness.

Justice from Amos 5:21-24

In discussing the biblical, theological and ethical context of the Book of Amos, particularly Amos 5:21-24, I do not mean to impose my views nor dictate my understanding of Scripture to the victims of economic injustice, but to contextualise this passage so that we can appreciate the views from below, as expressed by the people who have experienced the reality of life.

When Amos was called as a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel (by the middle of the eighth century BCE), he was a stock trader from Judean town of Tekoa. The scene here is: it was a time of reasonable prosperity and political stability, but also of grave social abuses. The poor were the prime victims of economic injustice. The people with economic power were the ones that were most insensitive to the lot of the poor. Amos 2:6 and 8:6 indicate that the situation was so unjust in the northern kingdom of Israel that the Israelites “sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes.” Amos could not tolerate such miscarriage of justice, for the poor were quite shamelessly exploited by those with economic power. Moreover, Amos

5:12 declares that the courts of justice and those with political authority trampled on justice and served the status quo.

Amos 8:4 clearly indicates the miserable condition of the economic victims that the price increase forced the poor peasants to borrow money and pledge their properties to make a living until they had lost the land and were forced to work on their property “their land” for somebody else. Ultimately, the poor were sold into debt slavery (Amos 2:8). This led to a situation where the poor were working for someone else on what had been their own land, simply in order to meet their commitments to their creditors. Eventually, some of the poor were sold into debt slavery, as people who were enslaved for non-payment of debt were often sold to foreigners. Such people could rightly claim to have lost everything. In that context of injustice, Amos 5:21-24 exclaimed in God’s name.³ J. Alec Motyer comments that this passage reveals the practice of a “wealth religion” consisting of festivals, sacrifices, and music – all evidence of abundance.⁴ The Israelites took their religious duties seriously; they entered fully into their religious privileges, bringing burnt offerings, cereal/grain offerings, and peace/well-being offerings symbolic of their status as God’s people. They gave full expression to their religious joys with singing but all that God heard was noise. John C. Shelley points out that the cumulative image of Amos 5:22-23 is “God’s holding the nose, shutting the eyes and closing the ears to Israel’s ceremonies.”⁵ Amos main concern here is that the people’s religious celebrations were abhorrent while injustice was rife among them. The Lord is not to be simply “celebrated;” he wants to guide the people towards greater justice and righteousness. Thus, these words form the climax of an oracle which is recognised as being of central importance in the message of Amos.

According to J. Jeremias, Amos chapters 5 and 6 (of which Amos 5:24 forms such as central part) are the Amos’ prophetic speech in respond to God’s word of disaster over

Israel in chapters 3 to 4.⁶ In Amos the terms “justice” and “righteousness” are used throughout as something which God expects from his people. Consequently, most commentators quite correctly interpret Amos 5:24 as a divine summon to Israel to practise justice. God’s rejection of Israel’s feast, offerings and songs in Amos 5:21-23 does not mean that his call for justice in verse 24 is to be understood as a call for morality without religion, without services.⁷ But simply because “justice and righteousness” are essential activities of the covenant God of Israel, they should be prime covenant duties of his people.⁸ In this situation Amos 5:24 might well be called the golden verse of Amos, for it sounds the keynote for the entire book. Amos had caught a vision of a just society, a society in which religion was no longer a matter of rites and ceremonies, but where the true service of God was the service of the poor and more specifically the economically oppressed.

Amos uses two similes from nature, in his call for justice and righteousness in the name of God: justice must roll on like waters and righteousness like a never-failing stream. Mays argues,

*Justice and righteousness roll down like the floods after the winter rains, persist like those from wadis whose streams do not fail in the summer drought. That is, the response should smell with sudden force, and continue unabated.*⁹

The interpretation of the first simile is pointing to a sudden overflow of justice and righteousness, and the second could be as expressive of the unceasing application thereof in society. For some commentators, this may be a plausible interpretation of Amos 5:24. However, there are those who prefer to understand the verse in terms of synonymous parallelism. The two similes both point to the one idea of constancy in exercising justice and righteousness. For instance, Stuart explains as follows:

*Israel's God requires regular, consistent keeping of the covenant. A society truly in harmony with Yahweh's will must practise justice and righteousness and routinely: always and everywhere.*¹⁰

The first simile in terms of the waves of the sea, Page H. Kelley says, let justice through society unimpeded by selfishness or cruelty roll on without hindrance like the waves of the sea let it roll on unintermittently (without stopping) all the year round whatever be the political weather let it roll on like a perennial stream which even in the fiercest heat of summer never dries up.¹¹ The Hebrew word *gālal* “to roll” in verse 24 may suggest the rolling on of waves of water. This is perhaps why some versions speak indeed of justice that should “roll on the waves of waters.” The question one may ask here is, could it not be that Amos had the rolling waves of the sea in mind when he wrote verse 24? He must have been well acquainted with the sea, for explicit mention of it in his prophecies, in Amos 5:8 and 9:6, where he says God calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the land. In Amos 8:12 he sees staggering “from sea to sea” and in Amos 9:3 he refers to the bottom of the sea as a futile hiding place for the godless.

If the first of Amos 5:24 may indeed be understood as referring to the waves of the sea, it would mean that the prophet here makes use of two striking phenomena of nature in order to explain the urgent call for the constant pursuit of justice and righteousness in Israel – the uninterrupted rolling on of the waves of the sea and the unceasing flow of a never-failing stream. Thus, by making use of a double image from nature Amos underscores emphatically the divine summons for the constant pursuit of justice in society – a summons which may well strike the keynote of the entire urgent and lasting message of the prophet's book for all times and all peoples.

The justice which is the fruit of righteousness is not some psycho-spiritual matter, concerned about the personal prosperity of individuals. This justice is a social, political and economic

one that removes obstacles that bind the poor, unemployed and landless people to poverty. The God of justice is not found in wealthy religious festivals where justice is neglected, but demands equality among human beings.

Experiences of the Victim of Economic Injustice (poor people)

Here I want to bring the outcome of the group discussions in Bible study with mostly ordinary people and also classroom discussions from students who are undergoing theological training. In most of the discussions we looked at the following questions: “Why does God reject the fat and rich offerings of those who practise economic injustice, political corruption, abuse of state power, gender oppression and self-enrichment? Why is Amos 5:21-24 crucial for the emancipation of the economic injustice upon the poor people in the society?” During the discussions, some participants felt that “God is righteous and therefore he dislikes people doing things from an evil heart. God does not want offerings from rich people who oppress and exploit poor people.” These observations by the members are critical in constructing especially urban local theologies, because the voices of the poor are critical and serve as the formative and foundational basis of liberation theologies. The righteousness of God is raised within the fact that God is a God of justice who protects the poor: orphans, widows, daily wage earners and strangers/immigrants in the society. The fact that the members speak about “God rejecting the offerings of rich people who oppress and exploit the poor” is a great observation. The members also felt that “rich and powerful people make offerings to impress.” They argued that these kinds of offerings are meant to silence the ministers of religion from being critical of economic injustice against the invisible members of the community, whose rights are trampled upon by the rich people who bring fat offerings, not out of a

genuine heart, but rather to impress others and trash the poor as the lazy ones.

At the course of discussion someone said, “social equality means us being equal in the eyes of God.” Another stated, “true worship leads to social equality, *shalom* and the Reign of God, but where there is no equality, the righteousness and justice of God is absent and there is only the noise of worshippers.” The members made the comments that “Justice is like the flowing of a stream and righteousness is like a river that never runs dry. God knows how the rich have prevented the poor from justice.” Prophet Amos condemns shallow and insincere religious practices in Israel that fail to foster a just society. God is not opposed to sacrifices and worship, but God “hates” that Israel is going through the religious motions of required ritual practice while its everyday economic behaviour fails to reflect the God they claim to worship. Considering the discussion, the members observed that “justice is like the flowing of a stream that must not be prevented or poisoned by political corruption, abuse of state power and economic inequalities.” They further commented that righteousness, which is the fruit of justice, must be like a river that never runs dry, for when it runs dry the poor suffer malnutrition, women are abused, workers are underpaid, and social justice is perverted.

Conclusion

Our economic conduct and how it affects the poor and marginalized, is and will always be a matter of Christian faithfulness, theologically speaking. Have we effectively divorced our orthodox religious claims from our economic practices? To what extent might God be tired of our worship of our religious rituals, given the ways the poor and marginalized are affected by our economic priority and choices? We must continually be engaging in the struggle for economic justice side by side with the victims of injustice, and be in solidarity with those on the streets of our towns begging for meal, sleeping in inhuman

conditions, and with those in the villages or small towns daily wage earners. To the victims of economic injustice, poverty is not a theoretical, abstract or scientific question, but a daily reality. To them, economic poverty is not just some statistics, but the painful reality of: Where do I take shelter? Where is my next meal going to come from? As a theological community we must also form partnerships with abused, violated and enslaved women, migrants and homeless people, and daily waged earners in the villages. From this discussion, the major themes of social justice and God’s righteousness can be developed to engage in the holistic struggle for economic justice of the poor people in our society. Any solution to the problems of economic injustice victims must be based on the agency of those on the social margins. The voices of the common people (theologically untrained) readers of the Bible must inspire and direct the vision and mission of our theology in the current elitist dispensation.

Endnotes

- 1 James L. Mays, *Amos* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 108; J. Du Preeze, “Social Justice, a Motive for the Mission of the Church,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 53 (1985): 36-37; Max E. Polley, *Amos & the Davidic Empire: A Socio-Historical Approach* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 133-135.
- 2 J. Carl Laney, “The Prophets and Social Concern,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (1990): 36.
- 3 “I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” NRSV.
- 4 J. Alec Motyer, *The day of the Loin: The Message of Amos* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 130-131.
- 5 John C. Shelley, *Amos* (ed., W.E. Mills, et al., Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1994), 751.

- 6 J. Jeremias, "Amos 3-6 from the Oral Word to the Text," *Canon, Theology and Old Testament Interpretation* (eds., A.M. Tucker, et al., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 221-222.
- 7 J. A. Motyer, "Amos," *New Bible Commentary* (ed., G. I. Wenhan, et al., Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 802.
- 8 David A. Hubbard, *Joel and Amos* (ed., G. I. Wenhan, et al., Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 167.
- 9 Mays, *Amos*, 109.
- 10 Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WTC; Texas: Word Books, 1987), 355.
- 11 Page H. Kelley, *The Book of Amos* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966), 69; Cf. John E. McFadyen, *A Cry for Justice* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912).

Comparative Study of "Born from Above" in Christianity and "Bhakti Marga" in Hinduism

Lalramnghahmawia

Introduction

In Christianity, being born from above is frequently understood as "spiritual vivification," which is necessary to enter the Kingdom of God (salvation), while in Hinduism, Bhakti Marga is sometimes referred to as "Hindu spirituality" which is a way to reach Moksha (salvation). Despite coming from quite distinct theological backgrounds, Christianity and Hinduism may share certain conceptual parallels and differences. This study looks at if there is a parralelism between the two notions that could aid in their complementarity through a comparative analysis. In the context of pluralistic society like Inida where the diversity of religions, cultures and lifestyles is recognised, it is important to know each others belief as it may enhance the understanding amidst diversity. For that purpose, the comparative study of the two concepts, teachings and practices might be helpful. Inorder to find the points of contact, the research will mainly aim to study the etymological meanining, historical condition/context of both the concept and how it developed out of history, and the practices in relation to born from above and bhakti marga.

* Mr. Lalramnghahmawia completed his M.Th. (New Testament) from UBS, Pune. He teaches at Faith Theological Seminary and Mission in Aizawl.

1. Born from Above in Christianity

1.1 Etymology of “ἄνωθεν - Born from above”

Greek ἄνωθεν in John 3:3 can mean “from above,” “anew,” or “again.”¹ The expression “γεννηθῆ ἄνωθεν” (born from above, born, anew, born again) which is found in verse 3 is expounded as being “γεννηθῆ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ Πνεύματος” (born of water and spirit) in verse 5.² Verse 5 closely parallels v. 3. Jesus’ replacement of ἄνωθεν with ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος in v. 5 strongly suggests that he is describing the same type of birth in both verses.³ This shows that the term “Born from above,” “born of water and spirit,” and “born again” are synonymous words which can be used interchangeably. Greek thinkers could speak of God or gods as “above.” “Above” or “the one above” in fact became standard Jewish indirect way of speaking for God, as elsewhere in this Gospel (19:11), so because of these reasons we can interpret born from above as born from God.

1.2. The Discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus

The concept of “γεννηθῆ ἄνωθεν” (Born from above) is seen in the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3.⁴ The chapter opens with a dialogue between Nicodemus and Jesus concerning participation in the kingdom of God,⁵ the basic question of what is necessary for salvation.⁶ Nicodemus was a man of the Pharisees, a member of the Jewish ruling council, the highest governing body of the Jewish community. Nicodemus would be a teacher and an expert on the law (v. 10). He was a man, high in the society of his age and country, invested with civil authority, seeking knowledge from the hands of the reputed son of a carpenter, who came to Jesus at night. The use of the first-person plural - we know - may imply that Nicodemus is speaking not only for himself but also for others. He could be speaking on behalf of the Pharisees as a trained or learned community because the Pharisees normally used collective speech (9:24;

Mk 12:14). He could also be speaking on behalf of those who have come to believe in Jesus as a result of his miracles.⁷

The Jews held that God hears the prayers of the just (cf. 9: 31 ff.), and famous rabbis were credited with all sorts of miracles which guaranteed their piety and confirmed their teaching. Nicodemus concludes that Jesus must also be a divinely-enlightened teacher.⁸ He begins his conversation with Jesus Christ, saying, “Rabbi, We know that you are a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles except God be with Him.” Jesus responds to Nicodemus’s friendly statements by coming directly to the heart of the matter saying “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above (γεννώω),” (v. 3). Nicodemus was brought up short, baffled and confused as this is not what he expected. Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus was talking about at all. At this point he could not believe (v. 12) that new birth was a requirement for entrance into the kingdom and was amazed (v. 7) by the very category.⁹ Then he says, “How is a man, being old, able to be born? is he able to enter into the womb of his mother a second time, and to be born?” (v. 4). Jesus makes no direct answer to the objection, but goes on to define the ἄνωθεν. The “birth” or “begetting” of which Jesus speaks is of a completely different nature. It comes about “from water and Spirit.”¹⁰

1.3. Contemporary Scholarly Interpretations

In contemporary scholarship, several interpretations have been made on “Born from Above.” McCabe stress that this birth of regeneration is a sovereign work of God alone.¹¹ R. E. Brown considers it as “begotten of the Spirit.”¹² Keener refers it as “baptism in Holy Spirit.” He stated that the emphasis is here on the Spirit which is repeated in the context (3:6,8).¹³ Hugo Odeberg considers it rebirth of spiritual seed, as in 1 John 3:9.¹⁴ Leon Morris presented it as spiritual regeneration.¹⁵ In order to understand and expound the meaning of these interpretations,

analysis of the historical development of "Born from above" is necessary.

1.4. Historical Development of Born from Above

The prophetic texts present the individual, spiritual concept of being "born from above," which entails a new beginning and a significant inward transformation of a person's existence. The prophetic writings of the major and minor prophets (Isa 32:15; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28–29; Zech. 12:10) are the source of the idea that the Holy Spirit is flowing out in a fluid form. Additionally, Isaiah 44:3-5 and Ezekiel 36:25-27 relate water and the Spirit. Water is connected to the land's restoration in Isaiah 44:3-5, and God's spirit is connected to transformation of God's people. This text illustrates how closely water and spirit are related. "I will pour out my Spirit" and "I will pour water" are synonymous.¹⁶

Accordingly, the Holy Spirit's activity is here presented as an effusion of water from above, the effect of which in those on whom it falls is that they spring up like freshly watered plants (v. 4)...Hence it would be difficult to discover a passage more apposite to the experience of new birth than this, and one might reasonably describe the recipients of such an experience as "born of water" and "born from above."¹⁷

In Ezekiel 36:25-27, two facets of the water and Spirit's quickening work are stressed; cleansing and transformation.¹⁸

Yahweh provided the Mosaic covenant (Exo. 20; Num. 9; Deut.) to the people as their constitution when he founded the nation of Israel. This covenant taught them, since they already were the people of the Lord, how to live for him. The law was given to the Hebrews for their benefit and to enable them to be blessed (Deut. 5:28–33), not to burden them. However, Israel's history is characterized by its violation to this covenant. She frequently obeyed the gods of the local populace

(idolatry), including the Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and Canaanites.¹⁹ The kingdom of Israel and Judah became increasingly corrupted and ultimately forgot their constitution, which result in the separation of Israelites from Yahweh.

Because of the failure of this Mosaic covenant, Yahweh promised the "new covenant". The new covenant was explicitly announced by Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34).²⁰ When Jeremiah announced the new covenant, Israel was going through a very difficult time. The Assyrians had previously conquered the northern kingdom and taken its people as prisoners (2 Kgs 17:5-6). To repopulate the area, foreign colonists were brought in (2 Kgs 17:5-6, 23-24). The kingdom to the south was similarly in terrible shape. The prophet had started his career during Josiah's reign and had survived to witness the start of the Babylonian captivity. Yahweh gave him the prophesy of the new covenant, which promised better things for the afflicted country, during those historic days. Jeremiah 31:31 states that a new covenant would be made with both the house of Judah and the house of Israel. This implies that the two kingdoms would both exist and presumably be united, inasmuch as only one new covenant is mentioned. The Jewish contemporaries of Jeremiah would have understood that Yahweh was promising to them a new kind of relationship.²¹

The promises of the new covenant were found in a variety of prophetic expressions that predicted a new era with: (1) a new presence of the Holy Spirit in human hearts providing (2) a divinely immanent impulse to know and obey Yahweh's will that would (3) entail radical changes in the operation of the Law and the Temple institution to which it was connected.²² Fundamental to each of these, however, was the fact that there would be a gracious and divine movement against sin that had never occurred before (Jer. 31:34).²³ Yahweh promised that the new covenant would be distinct from the one he had established through the Mosaic law in Jeremiah. By bringing about an internal shift rather than

just imposing an external code, it would bring about a spiritual transformation (31:33). The knowledge of Yahweh would be universal among participants, and forgiveness of sin would be complete (31:34). In 32:40, Yahweh also referred to it as an everlasting covenant.²⁴

Isaiah 55:3, 59:21, and 61:8 all reference the idea of a new covenant. Isaiah looked forward to an all-encompassing period of peace. In phrases that allude to the return to the ideal conditions and traits before the fall in the garden of Eden, the prophets express the prospect of restoration in the future. The passage in Ezekiel 36:35 contains the most direct allusion.²⁵ In Ezekiel, the new covenant theme first surfaces implicitly in 11:16-20, at the end of a section describing the consequences of Yahweh's withdrawal from Jerusalem. In order to maintain the divine-human relationship, Yahweh promises to bring Israel together in the Promised Land and to bring about inner transformation (vv. 19-19). This inner transformation results in a new perspective on Yahweh's will (vv. 20-20a), which is denoted by the covenantal formula, "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God" (vv. 20-20b). Ezekiel concludes his allegory of Jerusalem's disobedience in 16:60-63 by declaring that Yahweh will make "an everlasting covenant" with Israel in the future because he will remember his "covenant with [them] in the days of [their] youth." In Ezekiel 36:22-38, Yahweh promises inner transformation of his covenant people, largely echoing 11:17-20, but emphasizing cleansing from spiritual defilement.²⁶

Here we can clearly see that the main aim of the "new covenant" is the restoration of the divine-human relationship. A divine impulse to do Yahweh's will, the gracious and divine movement against sin that would occur and spiritual transformation/vivification by an inward change leading to a new attitude toward Yahweh's will, and the work of the Holy Spirit to make this possible, are the motives to restore a divine-human relationship that would last forever ("everlasting covenant"). In

John 3, this is mentioned as "new birth/born from above." Thus, looking from the historical development of "born from above" through the theme of "new covenant," it is possible to interpret "born from above" as a restoration of everlasting/continuous/ongoing relationship between human and God through the work of the Holy Spirit. And looking specifically from the context of John, those who receive Christ in 1:12-13 are "born from God." Thus, born from above/God can particularly mean receiving Christ or in other words, having ongoing or continuous relationship with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

And looking into contemporary scholarly interpretations as mentioned earlier, being born from above focuses on the sovereign work of God/ Holy Spirit alone and the moral decisions of human are often neglected. But, the discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus contains crucial statements like 'You must be born from above' which Jesus asked to Nicodemus. And as mentioned above, from verse 1:12-13, we also see that those who receive Christ are "born from God." From these statements, we can see that the will to receive, where the moral decision of a person plays the main role, cannot be neglected.

1.5. Practice Relating to being Born from Above

As born from above can be interpreted as a continuous relationship with Jesus, the following are the practices followed by Christians to maintain an ongoing relationship with Jesus.

1.5.1. Baptism: From as far back as the early church and the church till today, many have indicated that when Jesus talked about water, he was referring to baptism. This point of view elevated baptism to the level of a conversion, being a precondition for establishing a relationship with Jesus and entering the kingdom of God.²⁷

1.5.2. Prayer: Prayer is a way of communicating with God. Building a connection with God via prayer is possible, and it can be done in both public and private settings. The goal is for the

devotee to increasingly align themselves with God and carry out God's plan. Experiences and practices include liturgy, centering, quiet/silence, fasting, solitude, and other types of prayer that have facilitated deeper communion with God.

1.5.3. Bible Reading: The Bible is authoritative source for learning about who God is. It is the way God has revealed in history and today.²⁸ It is the discovery of God's identity through reading. The Bible teaches about relationships, life, and work basically, everything that makes life meaningful. It demonstrates God's concern for people. As mentioned earlier, the Bible explains clearly how to have a personal relationship with God.

1.5.4. Worship: Worship is a declaration that one's life is a gift from God. It is praising God in the good and the bad. It is an act of submission, a guide to understand the reality of God's indwelling presence in all facets of life by expressing through the vehicle of music, preaching, singing etc. It demonstrates joy in worshipping God, understanding the importance of declarations of praise or thanks as a means of contemplation.²⁹

1.5.5. Fellowship: Throughout the Bible, we see the importance of being in community. In fact, authentic life-change happens in the context of relationships. (Acts 42-47).³⁰ Fellowship in the New Testament and today mean essentially a partnership to the mutual benefit of those involved. It is the mutually beneficial relationship between groups, which further strengthens relationship with God.

1.5.6. Givings: We find that born from above is the highest evidence of God's compassionate nature towards people by building relationships with the rebellious Insraelites who stray constantly through worship of other idols. This spiritual relationship between man and God teaches that God blesses man/woman so that he/she might bless others. (1 Cor. 12:7) It includes generosity with our resources. God has lavishly

gifted humanity with the ability to liberally help others and create God's kingdom on earth.

2. Bhakti Marga in Hinduism

2.1 Moksha and Previous Traditional Margas

As mentioned in the introduction, Bhakti Marga is the path to attain Moksha. Hinduism uses the words Moksha and Mukti for the final release of the soul from recurring transmigration, the root meaning of the Sanskrit words being liberation or setting free.³¹ It is the achievement of salvation, particularly the union with the Supreme and the emancipation from the cycle of life and death. Appasamy saw moksha, or eternal life, as genuine peace and personal communion with God. He also thought that one could get moksha in this life. The traditional paths of Karma-Marga (The Way of Works) and Jnana-Marga (The Way of Knowledge) lead to this emancipation.³² The Gita shows us a threefold path³³ but with special prominence given to Bhakti-marga. The two traditional paths are:

2.1.1. Karma Marga: Karma-Marga is, in Noss' Words

Not markedly emotional and still less intellectual, it is a methodical and hopeful carrying out of rites, ceremonies and duties that add to one's merit.³⁴

It means performance of moral duties with total disregard to its consequences, in discharging one's normal duties; one should not keep any hope for its reward. One ought to carry out their responsibilities with complete impartiality. There should never keep any attachment for the work done. One is to carry out one's responsibilities indifferently.³⁵ In both Vedic and Mimasaka senses the karman meant yajna or a ritual action, performed with a view to getting one's personal desire. However, in the sense proposed by Gita the action meant performing of one's duty without any personal desire, but simply as in a sacrifice to the benefit of the world and by surrendering all actions to God. A

person has a set of specific social and religious obligations that must be fulfilled.³⁶ For example, he/she has obligations to his caste, such as adhering to his occupation, getting married within his caste, eating or not eating particular foods, and having a kid who can do various tasks and offer a sacrifice to his ancestors.

2.1.2. Jnana Marga: Jnana-Marga is a path of unbiased enthusiasm for learning. This is the manner of the learned, particularly the Brahmins. The foundation of Jnana-Marga is the idea that ignorance, or avidya, is the source of all evil.³⁷ It maintained that man can control his destiny and that freedom comes from having perfect knowledge. The magical power of knowledge is a belief shared by most Indian philosophical systems. With knowledge, we may further eliminate the negative effects of our acts. Thus, the Gita teaches that knowing God's actual nature constitutes knowledge. A true believer in the Divine birth and works is not susceptible to reincarnation. Knowledge can only be attained by faith and sensory control, and the one who does so swiftly achieves the highest state of tranquility.³⁸

2.1.3. Bhakti Marga: In contradistinction to Karma-Marga and Jnana-Marga, Bhakti-Marga may be regarded as The Way of Devotion.³⁹

2.2. Etymology of "Bhakti"

Bhakti-marga means "the way of devotion," meaning that devotion to god is the path that leads to ultimate liberation and everlasting bliss.⁴⁰ The parallel English word for Bhakti is (loving) devotion.⁴¹ The word "bhakti" is derived from the verbal root *bhaj*, meaning: to serve, to love, to worship, to unite etc.⁴² It refers to a sense of love, obedience, devotion to God.⁴³ Three most prominent marks characterizing bhakti are: (1) Choosing the deity, (2) sharing with the deity and (3) worshipping the deity. The behavior that a person adopts must be decided upon and willed by him. By doing so, he/she selects his god. He/She then divides his/her lot with his/her god. This sharing should

be interpreted as the individual's inner voice and spontaneous outpouring of their soul. Finally, when he/she worships the selected deity, this utterance is expressed in a concrete way. In other words, he/she gives his/her god his/her entire self in every thought, speech, and deed. It is a peculiarly divine-human encounter in which God overpowers man and guides him in the path of liberation.⁴⁴ Love is reciprocal between God and human beings.⁴⁵ Thus, etymologically Bhakti is the human encounter with God which hugely relies on the will of a person in expression for his/her love of/for God.

2.3. Contemporary Scholarly Interpretations of Bhakti

Biren Kumar Nayak states that "Bhakti is the loving devotion to a personal God."⁴⁶ T. Dayanandan Francis considers that Bhakti is the soul's deep yearning to worship and be united with God.⁴⁷ According to Augustine Thottakara, the concept of bhakti contains a collective sense of loving devotion and selfless service.⁴⁸ Bhakti was defined by Martin Alphonse as a spiritual act of love or devotion performed by a bhakta (devotee) towards a particular god.⁴⁹ Appasamy quotes L. J. Sedgwick's definition on Bhakti, "Personal faith in a personal God, love for Him/Her as for a human being, the dedication of everything to His/Her service, and the attainment of "Moksha" (final bliss) by this means, rather than by knowledge, or sacrifice or works."⁵⁰ According to Appasamy, Bhakti refers to the universal human race's profound and selfless love for God, which finds ultimate happiness in unity with God.⁵¹ The bhakta seeks a God who can be loved and worshiped and who remains distinct from the worshipper, a God who can be approached with feelings of deep love and personal devotion.⁵² To put these definitions in a simple manner, Bhakti can be interpreted as devotion/dedication which is carried out for the love of God.

2.4. Bhakti Marga in Bhagavat Gita

The Bhagavad-Gita contains one of the clearest explanations of Bhakti-Marga. Without a doubt, Krishna gives bhakti-marga the

highest priority among all the paths.⁵³ Krishna teaches the religion of devotion and love, of seeing all things as one's own self, and of dedicating all actions to the service of God. He also reconciles the opposing viewpoints of the various schools of thought. The primary goal of humanity should be to achieve mukti, often known as salvation or eternal bliss, and the only path to this is through Bhakti.⁵⁴ According to the Gita, one can enter God's presence by focusing on Him/Her, being devoted to Him/Her, worshiping and honoring Him/Her, and disciplining one's soul in total devotion to Him/Her.⁵⁵ Krishna states in the Gita, "... them (Bhaktas) do I consider most perfect in yoga" (12:2).⁵⁶

The word Bhakti occurs 48 times in the Bhagavat Gita verses. The Central section of the Gita (Chapters 7-12) focuses on God and bhakti. The pattern of distribution of the key word bhakti confirms the fact that bhakti is the essential message of the Gita. The message of bhakti develops in three stages: The Absolute Brahman, the "man-of-steady-wisdom," is the main focus of chapters 1-6 (2.72), with the sannyasa, jnana and karma yogis in the background. Chapters 7-12, by contrast, focuses on God, and His/Her winning team of free-spirits, the bhaktas (loving devotees) revealing the superiority of God over Brahman. In chapters 13-18 the message concentrates on the supreme, loving and gracious God, the mystery of His/Her victory (final salvation) through the strategy of joyous bhakti.⁵⁷ According to the Gita, the God of Bhakti is kind and merciful to everyone, but He/She is especially generous in returning the affection of those who adore Him/Her (4.11). Bhakti on man's side is the loving response to God, on whom he/she acknowledges his/her utter dependence for gaining liberation from the cycle of rebirth. In the Gita's bhakti theology, liberation does not appear to be the outcome of yogic techniques or ritual practices but of God's grace and human's cooperation with it (10.10). It implies self-surrender of the devotee and God's own gift (10.9). God is the darling of the devotees and the devotees are dear to Him/Her

(12.13-20): God reveals the highest mystery of His/Her love to the "perfected devotee" (18.65-66).⁵⁸ Here we see the contrast between etymological/scholarly interpretation and chapter 10 verse 10 of Bhagavat Gita in their expression/definition of Bhakti. According to the former, bhakti is the human experience of God that primarily depends on an individual's desire to show their love and devotion for God. But from chapter 10 verse 10 of Bhagavat Gita, it seems that God's grace and man's collaboration with it lead to emancipation rather than yogic procedures or ritual practices. It is feasible to say that Bhakti Marga is not dependent on an individual's volition alone in this situation.

Thus, given that devotion to god is the road that ultimately leads to liberation, it is evident that the path of Bhakti Marga specifically aspires to achieve connection with the Supreme. In this interaction between the supernatural and human, God subdues human and leads him/her towards freedom. God and people are in reciprocal love for one another. Over time, one would become one with God via these constant devotions. A relationship, in my opinion, is a love bond between two entities. Thus, Bhakti Marga can be described as a way to achieve Moksha through developing a continuous relationship with God.

2.5. Historical Development

The Brahmanas and hymns of the Vedic theistic era (1800-1000 BCE) are heavily laden with rituals and sacrifices offered to nature deities like Agni, Indra, and Varona.⁵⁹ This period is also called ritualistic trend. At one point, it tended to be entirely focused on ritualism, while at another, on mystical speculation. The people think they can only contact gods through the priests' mediation, and religion turns into a mechanical and mercenary profession. Priests also demand higher fees for their services.⁶⁰ This shows that the focus of Brahmanas and hymns of the Vedic theistic era is on Karma Marga.⁶¹ Upanishadic literature (Upanishadic period ranges between 1000-800 BCE) (srutis) was a revolt against the stereotypical ritualism of the brahmanic

religion. This period is called trend of Knowledge. It very strongly advocates that rituals and sacrifices are incapable of leading the seekers to enlightenment and liberation. It tried to represent and reinterpret the vedic concept of reality and human existence. The conception of one supreme and absolute being, the Brahman-*Atman*, is the greatest contribution of the Upanishads. But the Upanishads went to the extreme, and made the godhead too transcendent, beyond the reach of ordinary people. This Upanishadic Brahmanism of the next period moved away from the vedic rituals and insisted on an intellectual religious quest, which could quench the thirst of the intellectuals but could not satisfy the psychological and existential needs of the common man/woman for God and religion.⁶² This shows that the focus of Upanishadic literature is on Jnana Marga.⁶³ Thus, Hinduism was originated with the Veda as the sacred book and source of infallible wisdom which was saved by and for the highest caste, the Brahmins, and could be accessed only by the other two twice-born castes. The lower caste sudras, women, (even the Brahmin women), and the out-castes were forbidden access to the Veda. The Upanishads too were forbidden to these disenfranchised groups. Even if they knew Sanskrit, they were forbidden to read the scriptures.⁶⁴

This classical period with Sanskrit as the language of the holy writ comes to an end, when the epics (Bhagavat Gita is a part of the epic Mahabharata whose period ranges between 500 BCE-400 CE) and the puranas (smritis), the storehouses of devotional Hinduism came. This period is also called devotional trend. Both epics have played an important role in the development of popular Hindu religious thought open to all people irrespective of caste and class. It was, then, largely to satisfy the needs of these three lower groups that the epics and the puranas were written in their regional vernaculars.⁶⁵ With the coming of the puranas and the smritis in the local vernaculars, a long awaited need, bhakti was born as a new type

of religion, bearing the love of God for all people. An extensive literature began to develop throughout India, which the people could understand and express themselves. This was the triumph of bhakti, the loving adoration of a personal God. This grand transformation is reflected in the Neo-Vedantin philosophies of later Hinduism in the ninth century CE.⁶⁶ The Hindu saints of the Bhakti Renaissance (12th-17th centuries) were great reformers as well, protesting against inequalities and seeking to broaden the religion and suppress the restrictions of caste. Ramanuja, was such an example, who chose even some of his disciples from the low caste.⁶⁷

The Gita makes no distinction of race, sex or caste. The path of devotion is open to men, women and persons of all castes. Even men of low caste, if they take refuge in God, may attain to the highest goal. It implies that a man should give up not only the fruit of action but also the agency of action. As long as a person has a will of his own, he/she cannot give up the agency of his/her action. He/She can do this only when he/she surrenders his/her will to God in self-forgetting love. The Gita teaches us that by devoted love of God human can know God and thereby attains liberation.⁶⁸ It says,

*By devotion one comes to know Me, what my measure is and what I am in very truth; then knowing Me in very truth, he straightforwardly enters into Me.*⁶⁹

Thus, Bhakti emerged as a movement in reaction against certain dogmatic assertions and practices of ritualism and literalism, philosophy and materialism.

2.6. Rituals and Practices in Relation to Bhakti Marga

Numerous texts in the Bhagavat Gita explain acts of worship and devotion of the devotees to God. "Glorifying me always, striving for spiritual growth, firm in vows, prostrating before me, they worship me with steadfast devotion" (9.14). "With their mind fixed on me, with their life established in me, teaching each

other about me, and always speaking about me, they are happy and contented” (10.9). “Be a devotee according to my mind, be devoted to me, sacrifice unto me, bow down to me. Having thus made steadfast in me, taking me as the supreme goal, you shall come to me” (9.34). All these virtues and practices will strengthen and stabilize bhakti.

The Bhagavata-purana (one among the genre of hindu literatures) enumerates nine expressions or forms of bhakti. They are: (a) Hearing the praises of the Lord (sravana), (b) singing the praises of the Lord (kirtana), (c) remembering the Lord (smarana), (d) serving at the feet of the Lord (peda-sevana), (e) offering sacrifices and oblations to the Lord (arcana), (f) salutation and loving adoration (vandana), (g) servitude to the Lord (dasya) (h) friendship with the Lord (sakhya), and total self-surrender to the Lord (atma-nivedana). Of these nine forms of devotion, the first three are related to contemplation, the second three are based on the sacred service to please the divine person, and the last three project the attitude of self-surrender and subservience to God.⁷⁰

Spiritual Exercises (sadhanas) according to Madhva (philosopher and chief proponent of advaita vedanta) includes (a) No attachment/renunciation (vairdgya) is the first step. This is an aversion to and renunciation of body, matter and material object (b) Religious duties (karma): Madhva exhorts that one should also perform his religious duties, like rituals, rites, prayers and sacrifices. One has to perform these duties in a detached attitude, (c) Meditation (upasana). Madhva sees two stages in the act of upasana: Firstly, the study, reflection and discursive thinking on the scriptural texts, and secondly proper deep meditation. (d) The members of yogic meditation like control of breath, control of senses, etc. are parts and accessories of this meditation. (f) Besides, these aspects of updsana, he speaks of three types of upasana, according to the needs and capacities of the individuals who practise it. They are: God is meditated upon and worshipped as all-pervasive; secondly, internal meditation: God is meditated

upon as present in one’s own heart; and finally, God is meditated with the help of external objects, like images and other sacred material objects.⁷¹

The path of devotion also encourages the candidate to ritual worship to please the Lord of his/her heart. Respect, love and veneration are to be paid to Him/Her not only in private and through and in personal life, but also officially and publicly. Common celebration of feasts, processions, singing and chanting, rituals and offerings become community’s expressions of bhakti. The elaborate, expensive and complicated Vedic sacrifices are no more practised. Today’s temple worship, and worship of God at home are simple *pujas* consisting of symbolic acts of reverence and love to God accompanied by suitable prayer formulae. Besides these, the devotee is advised to observe all the religiously important days of the calendar like fasts, feasts and commemorations and observe the corresponding holy duties. The important moments of life like birth, marriage etc are also to be sanctified by ritual actions and prayer (samskaras). The path of knowledge does not care much for rituals and other external expressions of worship of God. For what is important is the inner preparations for the enlightenment.⁷² Thus, relationship with God is exercised through these different practices which relies hugely on the task of a person in devotion.

Similarities between the two Concepts

After studying the two concepts with special reference to etymology, scholarly interpretations and historical development, following similarities are found through comparative study:

- 1. Divine-Human Relationship:** In relation to born from above, we see that it is the gracious act of Yahweh against sin through the work of the Holy Spirit that would cause a spiritual transformation through inward change of the heart that would further enable a person to do Yahweh’s will. The main aim of this act is the restoration of the

divine-human relationship that would last forever. A person would create an everlasting relationship with Yahweh through this transition, which John refers to as being born again, a relationship with Jesus, which would eventually bring the person into God's kingdom. In relation to Bhakti Marga, it is the love of God which is expressed through devotion that creates connection with the Supreme. In this interaction between the supernatural and human, God subdues human and leads him/her towards freedom. This devotion is a means of achieving Moksha by maintaining a continual contact with God. Thus, we can conclude that the main concern of born from above in christianity and bhakti marga in hinduism is the creation/restoration of a "continuous relationship" between human and the divine.

2. **Against Social Exclusion:** When we examine the historical evolution of born from above, we notice that Yahweh professed the new covenant during a very gloomy age in Israel. The Israelites were subject to the Assyrians, who had already conquered the northern kingdom and imprisoned/deported its residents, and foreign colonists were brought in to repopulate the land. The kingdom to the south was in a similar dismal state, as the Babylonians consolidated their holdings, which marked the beginning of the Babylonian exile. It was during this period of enslavement by large nations that Yahweh revealed to the Israelites-the subjugated section of the society, the prophesy of the new covenant, which would reestablish the relationship between Yahweh and the Israelites. And in studying the historical development of bhakti marga, we witness that it was in reaction against the Brahmanism of the vedic theistic era which largely concentrates on sacrifices and rituals and the Upanishadic philosophical speculations which result in the presentation of God

as transcendental. Both the teachings made god too transcendent, beyond the reach of lower caste such as the sudras, women, and the out-castes. It was in this context that bhakti marga emerged which made possible for the subjugated section of the society to reach God. As a result, we might conclude that through the two conceptions, we see an immanent God who is accessible to all segments of society regardless of social status, gender, caste or class.

3. **Transformation:** From our studies of the concept of being born from above, we see that being born from above entails a new beginning and a significant inward transformation of a person's heart through the work of the Holy Spirit that would drive a person to follow the will of God. It implies entering into a personal and continuous relationship with God. It involves accepting Jesus where the relationship goes beyond religious rituals and become a connection God through prayer, bible reading, fellowship etc. We also see from the etymological studies that Bhakti Marga is a love of devotion, a complete surrender of one's desire through meditation. It requires the life of a person to be a form of devotion to God by surrendering to God's will alone. It implies relying on God's guidance and wisdom rather than solely relying on oneself. So, both the concept focus not only social but personal aspects of life, focusing on the believer's strive to emulate the character of Christ or Brahma. This ongoing relationship prompts the believers towards God, allowing their actions and attitudes to reflect God's nature which would eventually leads to Salvation.

In terms of rituals and practices related to being born from above, we see an act of prayer and bible reading that concerns the personal parts of life, and fellowship, worship, and givings that concerns the communal aspects.

In the rituals and practices of Bhakti Marga, we also see a practice that encourages the candidate to ritual worship to please the Lord of his/her heart, respect, love, and veneration that are to be paid not only privately and through personal life, but also officially and publicly through common celebration of feasts, processions, singing and chanting, rituals, and offerings that become community expressions of bhakti. As a result, both activities have an impact on both the personal and public spheres of existence.

Dissimilarities between the two Concepts

There are differences between the two notions that can be discovered after researching them which are as follows.

- 1. Differences in Divine-human Relationship:** We came to the conclusion that the major goal of born from above in Christianity and bhakti marga in Hinduism is the establishment/restoration of a continuous relationship between human and God. However, in being born from above, it is the work of the Holy Spirit that changes a person's heart and leads him or her to a new connection with Christ/God. And the practices such as bible reading, prayer, fellowship etc are not the main cause of relationship but it is the work of the Holy Spirit that creates relation. However, according to Bhakti Marga, it is the continuous practice of devotion that draws a person into close relationship with Brahma. In other words, relationship with God is exercised through these different devotional practices which relies hugely on the task of a person. In this cycle of divine-human relationship, we can observe that being born again is theocentric, whereas Bhakti Marga is anthropocentric.
- 2. Differences in Spirituality:** Though both the concept of being born from above and bhakti falls under the

umbrella of spirituality, they have distinct characteristics. In the concept of being born from above, we see that the gracious and divine movement against sin that would occur and spiritual transformation/vivification by an inward change leading to a new attitude toward God's will come through the work of the Holy Spirit. In Bhakti Marga, we see that it is the sense of loving devotion that creates intimate union of one's soul with Brahman where devotional techniques outlines a detailed and vivid practices. So, spirituality in born from above concerns with Holy Spirit. And spirituality in Bhakti Marga concerns with human spirit.

Conclusion

The study found that there are several similarities and dissimilarities in the concept of born from above in Christianity and Bhakti Marga in Hinduism. It is evident that parallelism can be found in their concept whose core essence is creation of continuous relationship between human and the divine. Though they have their own differences too, their main objectives remains the same which concerns with the change of character of a person inwardly. And their similarities found in the comparative study are very significant at individual level as well as social level as both activities have an impact on both the personal and public spheres of existence.

Endnotes

- 1 Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Michigan: Baker, 2003), 539.
- 2 David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, eds., *Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 36* (Dallas: Word Book Publishers, 1987).
- 3 Robert V. McCabe, 'The meaning of "Born of water and spirit" in John 3:5,' *DBSJ* 4 (1999): 85-107.
- 4 The Holy Bible, *The New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Addition* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2014), 96.
- 5 George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Dallas: Word Book, 1987), 46.

- 6 Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Wellwood: Burns and Oates, 1984), 364.
- 7 Barclay Moon Newman, Nida, Eugene Albert, *A Handbook on the Gospel of John* (New York: UBS, 1993), 76.
- 8 Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 366.
- 9 D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester: Appolos, 1991), 150.
- 10 Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 370.
- 11 McCabe, 'The meaning of "Born of water and spirit," 88.
- 12 As article is missing (anarthrous construction), he states that Codex Sinaiticus, the Old Latin and Old Syriac insert the phrase "of water and." Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* (TAB; New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966), 131.
- 13 Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 550.
- 14 Beasley-Murray, *John*, 48.
- 15 Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (NICNT; Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 623.
- 16 McCabe, 'The meaning of "Born of water and spirit".'
- 17 Zane C. Hodges, "Water and Spirit-John 3:5," *BS* 135 (1978): 217.
- 18 McCabe, 'The meaning of "Born of water and spirit",' 91.
- 19 Lalfakzuala, *Indepth Study of the Old Testament* (Aizawl: Synod Literature & Publication Board, 2018), 345.
- 20 P.R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath* (NSBT 23; Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), 158.
- 21 Kent Jr., "The New Covenant and the Church," 291.
- 22 Mark Saucy, "Between DaVinci and Rome: The New Covenant as a Theological Norm in Early Christianity," *TJ* 27 (2006): 1-27.
- 23 Saucy, "Between DaVinci and Rome," 5.
- 24 Kent Jr., "The New Covenant and the Church," 291.
- 25 Cooper, Sr., *Ezekiel*, 43.
- 26 Ian Turner, "The theme of the New Covenant" (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2011): 1-11.
- 27 Willem Hendrick Oliver, "The Water in John 3:5" *VE* 43 (2022): 1.
- 28 WMB Church, *Relationship with God: Disciple Maker Devotional* (January 2020), 48. <https://www.scribd.com/document/637939158/Relationship-with-God-Devotional-Web> (Accessed on 20.10.2023).

- 29 WMB Church, *Relationship with God: Disciple Maker Devotional* (January 2020), 61. <https://www.scribd.com/document/637939158/Relationship-with-God-Devotional-Web> (Accessed on 20.10.2023).
- 30 www.newcommunitychurch.com (Accessed on 20.10.2023).
- 31 Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2006), 122.
- 32 Rob Reed, *Bhakti, Buddhism and the Bhagavat Gita* (Eastern Washington State College): 95-108. 97.
- 33 Manashi Bora, "The Concept of Liberation (Moksha) in the Bhagavat Gita" *JHSS* 2, 46-54.
- 34 John B. Noss, *Man's Religions* (New York: Mac Millian Co., 1967), 192.
- 35 Bora, "Liberation," 51.
- 36 <https://oncedelivered.net/tag/bhakti-marga/> (Accessed on 20.10.2023).
- 37 Reed, *Bhakti*, 97.
- 38 Bora, "Liberation (Moksha)," 50.
- 39 Reed, *Bhakti*, 99.
- 40 P. David, "Bhakti-Marga or Deva-Marga" *IJT* 9 (1960): 135-145.
- 41 Gideon Ganesh, "The Contribution of A.J. Appasamy to the Bhakti Tradition in India Christian Theology," *HER* 3 (2008-2009): 91.
- 42 Augustine Thottakara, *Indian Spirituality* (Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2010), 146.
- 43 Laji Chacko, *Introduction to Christian Theologies in India* (Kolkata: SCEPTRE, 2014), 85.
- 44 P. David, "Bhakti-Marga or Deva-Marga," 137.
- 45 Thilagavathi Chandulal, "The Historical Game-Changes in the Philosophy of Devotion of Caste as Used and Misused by the Bhagavat-Gita" (M.A. Thesis., Brock University, 2011), 17.
- 46 Biren Kumar Nayak, "A Biblical, Historical and Theological Reflection on Christology and its Impact on Indian Christian Thought," *NLR* 2 (2013): 89.
- 47 T. Dayanandan Francis, ed., *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of his Writings* (Madras: CLS, 1992), 193.
- 48 Thottakara, *Spirituality*, 146.
- 49 Martin Alphonse, *The Gospel for the Hindus: A Study in Contextual Communication* (Chennai: Mission Educational Books, 2001), 39.
- 50 A. J. Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti* (Madras: CLS, 1970), 1.
- 51 A. J. Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study of the Johannine Doctrine of Love* (Madras: CLS, 1991), 22.

- 52 Laji Chacko, *Introduction to Christian Theologies in India* (Kolkata: SCEPTRE, 2014), 85.
- 53 www.tributetosankaradeva.org/bhakti_marga_II.pdf Reproduced from Maheswar Neog, *Religion of Love and Devotion* (Asam: Sahitya Sabha, 1968). (Accessed on 20.10.2023).
- 54 www.tributetosankaradeva.org/bhakti_marga_II.pdf (Accessed on 20.10.2023).
- 55 Bora, Liberation (Moksha),” 51.
- 56 Reed, *Bhakti*, 99.
- 57 Bora, “Liberation (Moksha),” 20.
- 58 Mariasoosai Dhavamony, *Love of God according to Saivasiddhanta: A Study in the Mysticism and Theology of Saivism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 42.
- 59 Chandulal, “Philosophy of Devotion,” 13.
- 60 Thottakara, *Spirituality*, 18.
- 61 Merwin Marie Snell, “Hinduism’s Point of Contact with Christianity” *TBW* 3 (1984): 189-197.
- 62 Thottakara, *Spirituality*, 18.
- 63 Snell, “Hinduism’s,” 18.
- 64 Chandulal, “Philosophy of Devotion,” 11.
- 65 Chandulal, “Philosophy of Devotion,” 11.
- 66 R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad-Gita* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 13.
- 67 Chandulal, “Philosophy of Devotion,” 14.
- 68 Chandulal, “Philosophy of Devotion,” 51.
- 69 AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Bhagavad Gita As It Is* (USA: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1986).
- 70 Thottakara, *Spirituality*, 151.
- 71 Thottakara, *Spirituality*, 152.
- 72 Thottakara, *Spirituality*, 153.

Book Reviews

Chul Ho Youn. *A Compendium of Christian Theology: A Holistic Approach*. Delhi: ISPCK, 2023. Pp. 310. ISBN: 978-81-19434-03-9

Khamphershisha Kharmawlong

Chul Ho Youn in his book *A Compendium of Christian Theology* has imparted a concise but comprehensive summary of a larger work of Christian theology. Youn has exclusively dealt with some of the important theological themes of Christianity such as revelation, faith and reason, theology and philosophy (science), Christian Scripture (Bible), God, creation, human beings, sin and evil, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, sacrament and eschatology. As far as Christian faith is concerned, these subjects are thought to be highly important and Youn asserts that they have seriously impacted the life of every believer in the church. To argue for the development of these theological themes, the author has done an excellent work by engaging several renowned scholars from the early church, medieval church, modern and post-modern church. The wholesome of this book is built on the basis of the ideas and arguments made by theologians from the past and present times.

While critically appraising the enlargement of these theological subjects in the history of the church, Youn could not deny the fact that numerous church traditions and denominations, especially after the Reformation period, have had their own views and interpretations on these particular subjects. Each

* Khamphershisha Kharmawlong is a doctoral student in the Department of Christian Theology at NIIPGTS, Kolkata.

denomination or tradition stands with its distinct doctrines and beliefs. This led to further advancement of diverse theological explanations regarding the above-mentioned theological themes. This diversity, while reflective of the varied interpretations of sacred texts and theological nuances, has also been a source of division between church traditions and denominations. One thing that the author notices is, while diversity in doctrine can bring depth to theological discussions and foster individual spiritual growth, it has also led to division and fragmentation among the congregations. Thus, Youn sees that these theological trends of diverse churches in the world today seems to be disordered and confused; and these diverse enunciations have brought massive breakups in many churches.

Based on these observations, Youn wrote this book to offer a holistic way of doing theology with an ecumenical spirituality that seeks unity or solidarity in diversity through mutual dialogue amongst the churches. Seeing the problem that occur amongst various churches, Youn emphasizes that the task of doing theology today is to overcome the ramparts of division among the churches and establish a holistic prospect though mutually critical and constructive dialogue between diverse theological constructions in a persistent awareness of the historicity of human existence and understanding. Of course, it is impossible for churches to embrace and integrate all the diverse theologies of various traditions, but to truly acknowledge the historical specificity of one's own existence, one will be able to have a more open and conversational attitude towards the theologies of other ecclesiastical traditions and denominations while cherishing the theological identity formed in the church tradition and denomination to which one belongs.

As clearly pointed out by the author himself, the nature of this book can be described in three points. First, this book seeks to be faithful to the testimony of the Bible (Scripture). All theological discussions that the author has dealt in this

book begins with the investigation of Christian Scripture and develops on the basis of its foundation. Youn believes that every theological argument is built on the basis of the Scripture. He argues that theology is the enterprise of linking the Bible with the contemporary situation. As far as these theological constructions is concerned, Christians need to be faithful to their Scripture. While being faithful to the Scripture, the second part of the argument is respecting the theological constructions and traditions that has been built over two thousand years of Christian theology. Through his writings, one can notice that Youn has a high regard for the arguments made by early church fathers and theologians. Thus, in all subjects, he surveys the important theological contents formulated in the Christian history from ancient times via medieval and modern periods to today. Third, this book shows the author's own holistic perspective and reflects the latest theological trends while respecting and valuing the theological identity of the church tradition to which a person belongs. To support his arguments, the author cited several views and opinions expressed by different theologians and scholars in the history of the church.

This book is relevant and appropriate for the present situation of the churches especially the non-Western churches, partly in Asia. One cannot deny that all churches have their own way of defining and formulating theological doctrines, such as the ones which Youn has already described in his book. Sadly, the differences of one church doctrine to another have led to lots of divisions, confusions, and errors amongst the churches. This is expressed in the number of church traditions and denominations. Each of these Christian body turns to fight the other as they claim to be the true ecclesia that teaches what God recommends. This has brought lots of confusions in the minds of the believers and the non-Christians as they wonder who is truly teaching what God wants. By observing the present situation, this division in the church does not seem to be moving towards its end. Rather, one can

forecast with the present evidence that this division in the church will rapidly double in times to come if nothing is done. This is one of the main concerns that Youn raised in this book and hence responding to it by proposing a new way of doing theology and that is through a holistic approach with an ecumenical spirituality amongst the churches.

The holistic approach towards developing a theology that brings unity in diversity is interesting. By using this approach, one could comprehend that the author's intension is to bring unity among churches. However, there are several issues which the reviewer would like to point out. First, after all the discussions, one may raise a question as to whether this approach, as Youn described, will be effective in a practical manner or not. Second, the reviewer has also felt that the author of the book has failed to address the challenges that might occur when this particular approach is applied in the real sense of the church traditions and denominations. This is important because it will create an easy path for churches to come to a common ground where mutual dialogue takes place.

Above all, this book is worthwhile reading and the reviewer is highly recommending all the theologically trained and the laity to read this book and use it as a source to unite churches today. The book is not a confrontation between churches which are concerned about their own positions and their own structures. It is a collaboration of churches in a common task, an effort to bear joint witness, a desire to obey the Lord whose will it is that they should be one so that the world may believe. As stated by the author himself, though this book is meant for the theological students to read and understand the types and trends of Christian theology, yet it can also be considered for the laypersons in the church and non-believers outside the church who are interested in Christian theology.

Fashion me a People: Curriculum in the Church by Maria Harris, First edition, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989, pp. 204.

Alemkala Imchen

A prolific writer, speaker, and advocate of religious education, Maria Harris (1932- 2005) spent her life to teaching and leading in Catholic parochial schools, as well as teaching in higher education at Immaculate Conception Seminary, Andover Newton Theological School, and Fordham University. Her work reflected her concerns on issues of justice, teaching and aesthetics, the centrality of spirituality, women's spirituality, and curriculum and the church, which have had profound influence on leaders of both Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions on how Christian religious education is understood and practiced.

In the book, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church*, Maria Harris examines the creating of curriculum as artistic educational work contributing to the fashioning of a people, because "we are made in the image of the creator God, we too are fashioners. Our human vocation is to be in partnership with God to fashion even as we are being fashioned, attempting to realize our artistic capacities as this happens" (p.16). Harris begins with an acknowledgment of the first portrait of church curriculum found in the book of Acts 2:42, 44-47. For her, curriculum is more than materials and technique, but it is intended for both adults and children which is offered through different forms of education than what is called schooling.

Part One of the book, "The Context," speaks of the context of educational ministry in curriculum fashioning. Harris offers three points of departure in curriculum fashioning and therefore in people fashioning. *Firstly*, the vocation of the church is expressed in its three components: priestly (the works of

* Alemkala Imchen is currently a doctoral student in the Department of Christian Ministry at SATHRI, Serampore.

teaching, prayer, and preserving traditions), prophetic (to speak the word of justice and embody God's *pathos* over human suffering and human sin), and political (to shape and design our own polity which enhance the proclamation of the gospel, and to bring the institutions and systems of our world into account). *Secondly*, the church is a people with an educational vocation. Education, for her, is the act of giving form. The form already exists waiting to be found, created, and re-created. The imagery of clay which can be moulded into shape teaches of the nature of forming, informing, formation, and form-giving in education. "Education in the church means taking those forms which ecclesial life presents to us, places in our hands, as clay to be moulded. Education is the work of lifting up and lifting out those forms through which we might refashion ourselves into a pastoral people" (p. 41). *Thirdly*, in participating in the educational work of shaping the forms that comprise the church's life, its curriculum is being shaped and that curriculum is shaping people. She develops an understanding of curriculum that echoes to its early meaning of "a course to be run," rather than merely a set of printed materials, and insists that the church is itself a curriculum. "Where education is the living and the fashioning, curriculum is the life, the substance that is fashioned" (p. 64).

Part Two, "The Vocation," is a breakdown of five components/forms of curriculum. While each of the five components/forms of the curriculum are discussed separately in five chapters, Harris emphasizes that they are connected and interact with each other. Each of the basic components/forms of the church's life is essential to the identity of the church, to the pastoral vocation of Christians, and to the educational process. They are: (1) *Koinonia* (community) – community is the starting point in educational ministry. The fashioning of a people does not occur unless a people exist to be fashioned; (2) *Leiturgia* (prayer) – prayer is a component of the curriculum of

educational ministry. Christians are educated to prayer, and are educated by prayer. This education is not limited to classrooms, church, or at home, but also "on a bus, at a ball game, on the job, while going for a walk, or while visiting in a nursing home, holding the hands of someone we love" (p. 95); (3) *Didache* (teaching) – teaching is political, in that, "it impels toward learning in the context of the entire planet and therefore coming to know other peoples' religious interpretations of God and the world as well as our own" (p. 112); (4) *Kerygma* (proclamation) – it is to speak of the word as that *by* which people are educated and *to* which people are educated. It is to come to know oneself as a personal participant in that word: as a subject who speak it, as a mediator who reveal it, and as a listener who hear it, in the image of God; (5) *Diakonia* (service) – the New Testament word (translated as "ministry") is used in two ways: the entire range of the serving and ministering activities of the community, and particular and specific, designating activities such as serving a table, providing hospitality to guests, supplying the necessities of life and ministering to, or acting on behalf of the poor. The author, in the book, focuses on the second meaning of diakonia as particular service and outreach to others, but keeping in mind that the first and general meaning of diakonia must not be lost.

Part Three, "The Planning," calls for planning on the practice of fashioning which, for Harris, is an artistic process. She attempts to look at curriculum planning "from a religious and artistic angle of vision, in contrast to one that is technical and mechanical" (p.170). She designates curriculum design as: (1) contemplation – the human capacity to allow oneself to be receptive to whatever is being addressed. It is giving oneself enough room, enough space, and enough time to see what is really there; (2) engagement – to dive in, wrestle with, confront, discover, act upon and act with what have been contemplated; (3) form-giving – taking in hand the five components/forms of the church's life and choosing to shape and reshape them

in the direction of the vision that have been articulated; (4) emergence – in fashioning the church curriculum, emergence is the step for recognizing the community’s readiness to proclaim its mission, ministry, and identity in the present and be readied for what is yet to be. It is a community’s celebration of the pastoral, educational, and artistic vocation to shape the entire course of their church’s life; (5) release – which is expressed in the routine, day- to-day living of the Christian gospel, as well as being abled, nourished, and nurtured by the prior steps of contemplation, engagement, form-giving, and emergence.

Maria Harris’s book offers a fresh set of procedures and vision of curriculum for the church. It provides the direction needed to move toward a more vital educational understanding and practice. The book is a good addition to the field of religious education and will assist Christian educators to envisage a more transformed educational ministry of the church.

An Integrated Model of Christian Education in Postcolonial Perspective: A Subaltern Approach by Shyam Kumar Basumatary, Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2023, pp. 219, Rs. 950/- Hardcover.

Pramod Chand Lakra

Introduction

The author of this book entitled “*An Integrative Model of Christian Education in Postcolonial Perspective: A Subaltern Approach*” is concerned with contextualizing Christian religious education from the cultural traditions and experiences of the Bodo people of Assam in India. The author skillfully employs the insights from postcolonial theory, especially from the lens of the subaltern approach and brings them into conversation with Christian religious education and musings its pedagogical relevance from the Bodo Saori and cultural practices. The purpose of this book is to provide a theoretical model for Christian religious education, particularly for the subaltern groups of people of Indian churches. The author views postcolonial Christian religious education in India as insular and parochial and has a universal and global outlook that is irrelevant to the context of subalterns. He argues that there is a dialectical tension between two opposing poles such as tradition (continuity) and transformation (change), gospel/faith and culture tradition and contemporaneity, identity and difference, local and global and so on. In addition, there is a dialectical tension between instructional-schooling and pastoral-community models in carrying out Christian education. Therefore, he suggests that the pivotal task of Indian churches is to integrate these opposing poles by encountering through the concept and practices of a community work called “Saori”

* Rev. Pramod Chand Lakra is currently a doctoral student at SATHRI, Serampore.

of an indigenous and aboriginal group called “Bodo” in Assam. Further, he sees that the centerpiece of the socio-economic, and cultural life of the Saori community is replete with pedagogical implications. Drawing from the concept and practices of Saori, the author formulates a catachrestic Christian Education, an integrative model for the churches of India scaffolding from a postcolonial perspective, especially from a subaltern approach. As such he explores and wedges a door open for the dialectical integration of various tensions, i.e., tradition (continuity) and transformation (change), gospel/faith and culture, identity and difference, and local and global.

The author critically evaluates the activities of missionaries in terms of the dissemination of truth and values embedded with power and knowledge of the Western culture and hegemony. Historically and culturally missionaries disavow the semantics and semiotics, rites and rituals, and observances of cultural and seasonal festivals of subalterns which has rich pedagogical implications for Christian education in the Indian context. Therefore, he advocates cultural engagement in pedagogy, a political side of culture to denounce the dominant cultural traditions of universalism and objectivism that dictate master narratives. As such, he opines, Christian education should be a theological praxis, concerned with the fact of learning and knowing based on lived and practical experiences of the marginalized vis-à-vis a critical analysis of the existential, historical, cultural, and experiential contexts of a given community.

For the author, Saori is the embodiment of community and is the epicentre of socio-economic and political life and ethical templates of Bodos. Saori is the entelechy of Bodo pedagogy and epistemology, as a concept metaphor for the community or cultural life of Bodo which imbues with pedagogical dimensions vis-à-vis the templates fosters solidarity, reciprocity, cooperation, and a sense of belongingness in the society or

community. Therefore, the author opines that the culture of the subalterns must be viewed in terms of semiotics (symbols) and semantics (meaning) because a community operates within the dialectics of culture (semantics) and consciousness (ideology) as well as convention (tradition, continuity) and invention (contemporaneity, change). He views Saori as a communitarian mode of teaching/learning. As such author develops a theoretical framework for education in general and subaltern Christian education in particular from postcolonial theory, postcolonial hermeneutics, and postcolonial/postmodern understanding of culture. He critically evaluates the historical analysis of Christian education and investigates cultural imperialism (colonial legacy) in the Bodo context such as the complicity between empire, evangelism and education; the relationship between religious and secular and theology and education and Christian education as preparation of evangelism (*preparatio evangelica*) perpetuate in and through Christian education.

The author analyzes the major approaches/models of Christian education, namely the religious instruction model, faith community model, spiritual development model, liberation model and interpretation model in light of the models of contextual theology put forth by Stephen B. Bevans. He emphasizes that Christian education is a field of theological praxis, that must always navigate the dialectical tensions between dominant and marginal, centre and periphery, east and west, We/Us and They/Them and as well as the local and the global in a pluralistic and polycentric world. He proposes a catachrestic Christian education system in an integrative model, which also can be called a dialogical model, or Saorian model based on pedagogical dimensions drawn from Bodo Saori. He argues that the existing models of Christian education are theoretically, methodologically, and pedagogically unable to address the concerns found in postcolonial churches which are countercultural or anticultural and catalysts to neocolonialism.

Therefore, he advocates for decolonizing Christian education through the theorization and politicization of subaltern groups' experience under the purview of asymmetrical power relations in the context of unstable cultural sites of struggle and ongoing transformation. He suggests few methods of doing Christian education for and with subalterns, particularly for the Bodo churches. Further, he deals with Bevan's synthetic model of contextual theology as a theological approach to the model and proposes a theoretical model of catachrestic Christian education in an integrative way that aims to function in a dialectical integration between self and other, sameness and difference, content and context, gospel and faith, and tradition and contemporaneity. Live community embodies the various pedagogical dimensions of Saori in and through solidarity and reciprocity, dialogue, humility and justice and thrives in a dialectical integration precisely amidst contrasts and differences. In postcolonial and postmodern contexts, an effective, relevant, transforming and emancipatory Christian education has to be an education characterized by hospitality, dialogue, humility and justice. This is how Christian education can transcend the constructive practices of localized solidarity like that of Saori in the case of the Bodos into a broader global solidarity that is hybridic and dialogical.

Comments

Unequivocally, this is a quintessential book of Christian education in a postcolonial subaltern approach developed extensively from the myriad of postcolonial pieces of literature, however, the author has consulted and made few reflections from Christian educationists except Jack Seymour, Donald Miller and John Westerhoff III. Further, the author engenders to dismantle the reified binaries of master/slave, self/other, and west/East, however, his discussion inevitably confronts the unresolved issues of binaries throughout his arguments. He underpins and mesmerizes his past experience in his discussions

where as he could have also reflected on the present experiences with the live-community. He has skillfully established the theoretical framework of Catachrestic Christian education based on a postcolonial perspective in a subaltern approach which is subjected to empirical viability in the kaleidoscopic cultural contexts of Dalits, Adivasis, Tribals, and Women. Moreover, the study needs to look upon the vagabond global context of fascism, fundamentalism, and neo-colonialism in the global and political dialectical scenarios of national and international outlook. Notwithstanding these comments, I acknowledge the scholarship of the author who has set a milestone in developing a theoretical framework of Christian education from the postcolonial perspective in a subaltern approach, especially in an Indian context. It is theologically synthetic, methodologically intercultural and dialogical, learner-centred with palimpsest quality. It seeks to cultivate learning activity by productively harnessing tensions between continuity and change, tradition and contemporaneity, identity and openness, and so on. I strongly recommend reading this book, especially for those who are interested in postcolonial reading and subaltern approaches engaged in research work from the specialized field of Christian education.

Conclusion

In this book the author has proposed an integrative catachrestic Christian education, employing a postcolonial perspective in a subaltern approach, working with pedagogical dimensions or categories of Bodo Saori. He has set a milestone through a theoretical framework of Christian education with a vision of integrating gospel and culture, tradition and contemporaneity, and content/text and context/culture in the context of neo-colonial epistemology of binary antagonism subtly imposed upon the subalterns. The dialogue in the work has sought to bring various ingredients such as hospitality, dialogue, humility, and justice for global solidarity into wholeness in live-community.

Catachrestic catechesis seeks dialectical integration between Christian identity/faith and cultural identity through the retrieval of semantics and semiotics, rites and rituals, and ethos and worldviews of the subalterns. It also works for a dialectical integration between cultural-symbolic (poetics of location) and ethico-political (politics of location) concerns of a community. This promotes among subalterns a way of retrieval and liberation with postcolonial resistance against the perpetuation of domination and exclusion. It anticipates emancipation and works employing improvisation and hospitality toward dwelling together in hybridic solidarity. This is how one can engage the larger historical and cultural process of communities (such as the Bodos) in and through specific cultural practices (like that of Saori), attending to their pedagogical dimensions in light of the vision of God's love for all humanity.

Culture and Religion: A Conceptual Study by Basil Pohlong, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2004, Pp. Viii+121, Rs. 250/- Hardcover.

Ilino L.

Pohlong Basil's book, *Culture and Religion: A Conceptual Study*, was written to give a clear and authentic concept of both culture and religion. In defining both these concepts, the author believes that the concept of religion and culture are filled with complexities and as such, their meaning varies. The common ground or the meeting point of these two concepts would be in accepting them as 'the way of life.' Religion, in aligning with this phrase, influences the behaviour and attitude of the people in the society. Culture also plays an important role in driving the people toward a value-oriented life. Both culture and religion are complementary to one another.

The author started this book with the implication that religion is not limited within theoretical aspects of elements but has its practical concept too which binds people together to form a socio-religious community. Culture is a product of the society and is dependent upon society for its existence. Culture, according to the author, determines the behaviour of an individual like the script which determines the acts of the actors. Culture creates self consciousness and creativity.

According to the author, there are two approaches in the study of religion. First is theological and the second is scholarly. Theological approach refers to the study of one's own religion whereas a scholarly approach is neutral and non-committal. Religion is one of the store-houses of values. But it is not similar to culture. Religion held the highest authority in every aspect of life till the middle age. But with the onset of enlightenment,

* Ilino L. is currently a doctoral student in the Department of Religion (Hinduism) at NIIPGTS, Kolkata.

religion was pushed to the periphery. Faith was replaced by reason and Science became powerful and authoritative. Science came to be considered as competent in all matters of life. Positivism arose and supported science and this shook the validity of the existence of religion or the reality of religion in itself. Religion was privatised and it became subjective. Thus, religion was considered as an obstacle to acquiring genuine knowledge. Since religion was subjective and dependent on one's personal emotions and feelings, it had no influence on the culture, according to the followers of positivism. Because of such reasons science considered religion as unscientific and superstitious.

Interestingly, the author justifies the sacred by refuting the claims of science. His ground for argument was that science is based on sense experience whereas, religion is quite the opposite involving emotions. He also echoed that society cannot function with science alone. For the positivists, religion is meaningless for it cannot be verified but it does not mean religions should be disregarded. To know whether something is effective or not, one needs to approach it and study it with a learning mind. The positivists need to understand religion within its own context, according to the author. It would be deemed as foolish for the non-believers to criticize and shame the beliefs of the believers without understanding the context. It will always be meaningless to the other party when there is no personal effort to understand the system of the other people.

The author continues to justify religion with the concepts of revelation, faith and knowledge. Revelation is the basis of some religious traditions like Christianity, Judaism, etc. Revelation rests in the language which is again preserved in the form of text such as the Bible. So, in revelation, there is a presence of communication or the truth is communicated. Regarding the concept of faith, faith is an act of will and it is a gift from God. Faith also acts as a postulate of religion.

Faith is an important aspect of religion, especially Christianity, because in this religion, forgiveness is achieved through faith from God. Basing on these connections to one another, religion was upheld.

For the author, knowledge is competent in nature and to know means to be acquainted with fostering a sense of relationship. For science, there is no existence on which the senses cannot validate and so it has invalidated the existence of religion and all the elements associated with it. But knowledge includes both the aspects of faith and reason. God can be inferred through personal experiences and also through miracles. Faith advises a person to do something right. Beyond the world of science there is also a world which science cannot penetrate and that is the world of religion which is also the world of values.

The author opines that culture is holistic in nature and it seeps within every aspect of life in a society. In a culture-oriented society every action is driven or motivated by certain set of values and sometimes is not based on facts alone, unlike science. Culture can only be understood better by taking into account both its manifestations and properties. Culture constitutes an understanding from three aspects namely, empirical foundation, value foundation and social foundation. In a society, human beings become both an object of enquiry as well as the enquirer.

The author also emphasised on the danger of science and its effect on the society which has heightened. Though it seems to have contributed to the betterment of the society and human lives, it has also failed to promise security and stability. Peace has no place in a world where there is science at its peak. In contrast to science, value needs a comeback in the society today. Value is at the core of society and the world. Science alone cannot exist sufficiently but both value and science need to complement one another. Similarly, both religion and science need to co-exist together since both influences the lives of the people. Without religion, the society will be secular and only

the existence of secularism is a threat to the society because it will distort the true meaning of religion. Religion gives meaning to all the cultural activities. Culture provides sensitivity within the society and without culture religion becomes only a weapon of violence and subjugation. The author asserts that changing a religion will also lead to a change in culture of a particular religion, for they are inseparable. Hence, if religion determines the identity of the culture, the loss of religious identity will lead to loss of cultural identity.

The reviewer would like to conclude the review with observations she has made in this book. Firstly, there are some repetitions with regard to the concepts of culture and religion which may confuse the readers, if not dealt with carefully. Secondly, the author has not only highlighted clearly on the reason why science replaced religion but has also justified clearly the importance of religion well in the society. Thirdly, the reviewer would like to appreciate the author's effort to mention the dangers of increased dependency on science. Fourthly, his statement on the interrelatedness of religious identity and cultural identity cannot be denied due to its relevancy today in our progressive world. Religion and culture cannot exist in isolation from one another. Lastly, though he has tried well, he could have emphasised clearly on the meeting point between religion and culture since they are both important in their own aspects and they complement one another. The reviewer would recommend this book to enable the readers to understand the place of religion and society in a culture broadly without prejudices. This book would be a good read for any curious mind fond of exploring the relationship between culture and religion in the current context of India today.